

# Camden Proves Police And Community Can Build Mutual Trust

Today, Governor Christie visits Camden County Police Headquarters with Camden Mayor Dana Redd and Chief of Police Scott Thomson to discuss the success of community policing in the city of Camden. Governor Christie signed [Executive Order No. 190](#), which proclaims November 5, 2015 as Law Enforcement Appreciation Day in New Jersey. New Jersey's law enforcement officers demonstrate remarkable courage and commitment by protecting the lives and property of the citizens of our State every day. On Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, New Jerseyans are called upon to express their gratitude for the law enforcement officials in their communities and across our state.

Combating a public safety crisis, Governor Christie took aggressive action and brought about a sweeping reformation of police services in the City of Camden. With the support of the Christie Administration, the City and County of Camden implemented a ground-breaking reform by creating a county-wide force that is putting more cops on the streets of Camden, and more resources at their disposal.

**More Officers On The Streets:** Under the reorganization, the number of police officers patrolling Camden's streets has already increased from 160 to 376. With another class of cadets already in training, the force will increase to over 400 officers.

**Cutting Edge Crime-Fighting Technology:** The new Camden County Police Force is utilizing state-of-the-art technology and techniques to combat the city's crime epidemic. From its Real-Time Crime Center, the new force can monitor over 120 citywide cameras and 35 microphones which can instantly pinpoint the exact location of a gunshot.

**A Focus On Community Outreach:** City and police officials are emphasizing outreach to community leaders and one-on-one interactions between officers and residents as a cornerstone of a positive, trusting relationship with the community. Camden has committed to integrating this approach with partnerships between the officers on the streets they patrol and the people they serve in the effort to curb violence. Police officers are walking the sidewalks and talking with residents on a daily basis with the goal of creating human contact and direct engagement with the public to build trust and protect their neighborhoods. This year alone, these efforts have included:

- **Weekly Summer Block Parties:** Officers grill food and set up basketball courts for kids and parents to play and eat
- **Fall Movie Nights**
- **Meet The Officers Events:** Meet and greets coordinated in conjunction with the county health department and constituent services to build bonds with the community throughout each police district and creating a one-stop-shop for residents
- **Buddy Program:** A mentoring network for young school children
- **Bookmates Program:** Officers go into city schools and read to children during the day
- **School Presentations:** Officers are constantly going into the schools for presentations. Lt. Zach James and his dog Zero have become celebrities throughout Camden schools.

- **Senior Citizen Outreach:** Officers check in on seniors during heavy snow and rain events and are a consistent presence at community centers giving presentations on everything from cybersecurity to senior fraud.
- **Ice Cream Trucks:** Officers utilize ice cream trucks at strategic times and deploy them into hot spot area to engage with the community.



### Signs Of Real Progress:

2012 was the most violent year in the City of Camden's history, and found it ranked as the most violent city in the nation. While there is more work to be done, there have already been signs of progress in curbing crime in the city. As of October 2015, Camden experienced sharp reductions in crime compared with the same point in 2012:

- 53% Percent Reduction In Homicides
- 38% Percent Drop In Robberies
- 18% Percent Reduction In Aggravated Assaults
- 26% Percent Overall Drop In Violent Crime
- 30% Percent Reduction in Non-Violent Crime

### ***BREAKING THE CYCLE***

In efforts to support the Camden County Police Force and law enforcement across New Jersey, the Christie Administration has remained committed to developing a smarter approach to helping ex-offenders re-enter society with the tools they need to reclaim their lives from further criminality, and also achieving reform to keep violent offenders off the streets. Under Governor Christie's leadership, New Jersey has seen reductions in both the prison population and the rate of crime.

**New York University's Brennan Center for Justice:** "Over the last decade and a half New Jersey has reduced its prison population by 26 percent, as violent and property crime declined by 30 and 31 percent, respectively. New Jersey safely downsized its prison population by enhancing the efficiency of its parole process and increasing flexibility in the sentencing of low-level drug offenders. ***From 2011 to 2014, crime in New Jersey fell 20 percent while incarceration fell 9.5 percent.***" (Lauren-Brooke Eisen and Inimai Chettair, "The Reverse Mass Incarceration Act," Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, October 2015)

- [New York Daily News](#): "N.J. A Leader In Reducing Mass Incarceration, Report Says"
- [Press of Atlantic City](#): "New Jersey Ranks Second In Reducing Incarceration Rate"
- [NJ 101.5](#): "Less Crime, Fewer Inmates In NJ, Report Shows"

### Building On New Jersey's Strong Record Of Combating Recidivism:

New Jersey is widely recognized as a national leader in reducing incidents of recidivism and reducing its prison population:

- The state's recidivism rate has dropped from 48% at the turn of the century to approximately 32%.
- Since 1999, New Jersey's prison population has declined more than 29 percent.
- New Jersey's state-sentenced inmate population in county jails, roughly 1,500 before Governor Christie took office, is now below 200, which allows more offenders to begin the New Jersey Department of Correction's (NJDOC) highly regarded re-entry programming as soon as possible.

(NJ Department of Corrections Press Release, 10/26/15)

## ***HELPING NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS RECLAIM THEIR LIVES***

### **Common-Sense Bail Reform To Bring Fairness For Non-Violent Offenders:**

Governor Christie signed bipartisan reforms to New Jersey's bail system that have been in the making for two and a half years. These reforms, along with an amendment to the State constitution approved by New Jersey voters on the November 2014 ballot, will keep dangerous individuals off the streets by allowing people charged with the most serious violent crimes to be held without bail.

- In addition, the reforms will make the bail system fairer by allowing those who commit minor, nonviolent offenses to have nonmonetary options instead of being confined to jail because they simply cannot afford even low bail amounts.

### **A Statewide Expansion Of Drug Court For Non-Violent Offenders:**

Governor Christie has followed through on his commitment to take a smarter and more effective approach focused on treating drug-addicted offenders by signing into law landmark, bipartisan legislation to put in place a state-wide, mandatory drug court program. The legislation acts on Governor Christie's belief that no life is disposable and that it is a commonsense and moral imperative to help individuals dealing with drug addiction reclaim their lives with treatment, rather than warehousing them in prison.

Drug Court Is Helping New Jerseyans Turn Their Lives Around: The rate at which drug court graduates are re-arrested for new offenses is 16% and the reconviction rate is 8%.

- This is compared to re-arrest rates for drug offenders released from prison that stand at 54% with a re-conviction rate of 43%.
- An average institutional cost per inmate is approximately \$44,985, whereas the cost for an active drug court participant is roughly \$11,379.

Governor Christie is further acting on his commitment by increasing funding by **\$8.5 million** for drug court expansion and treatment in the Fiscal Year 2016 budget.

- This additional funding permits the Department of Human Services to expand treatment to approximately 1,000 clients in both inpatient and outpatient facilities, providing the capacity needed to continue drug court expansion.

### **Signing "Ban The Box" To Eliminate Discrimination Against Ex-Offenders:**

In August 2014, Governor Christie took further action to help ex-offenders reclaim their lives and reenter the workforce by signing A-1999, legislation to require employers to wait until after they have interviewed job applicants before asking if he or she has ever been convicted of a crime.

### **Repealing Mandatory Early Release Legislation, And Restoring Parole Board Discretion:**

Governor Christie took action to protect the public safety of New Jerseyans and provide needed reform to state law governing New Jersey's Parole Board with a conditional veto of Senate Bill 2308 in March 2011.

- As written, the legislation would have increased the cycle from every 3 years to every 10 years of mandatory parole review, rather than address the fundamental problems that have stemmed from statutorily-mandated parole review, including the impact on crime victims and their families and the failure to consider inmates' rehabilitative progress in granting a parole review.

### **One-Stop Access To Help Ex-Offenders Battling Drug Addiction:**

In his 2015 State of the State Address, Governor Christie announced the first initiative to be implemented under the Facing Addiction Task Force's guidance: A groundbreaking one-stop model for connecting comprehensive services to ex-offenders re-entering society. Based on the principle of Integrated Reintegration, the Governor announced a program designed to streamline services available to ex-offenders to ensure they receive the kind of support they need to reclaim their lives and eventually move off government safety net programs and into the workplace.

Through the program, The Reentry Corporation has worked to refer to or provide services to reentry clients including sober housing, substance use disorder treatment, employment services, help with an ID or driver's license, pro bono legal representation, and access to wrap-around social service programs such as Medicaid and food stamps.

- The New Jersey Reentry Corporation was formed with initial funding from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and was then provided operational funding for Jersey City, Newark, Paterson and Toms River. New sites are expected late this year/early 2016 in Newark, Paterson and Toms River.

### **Helping Inmates Reclaim Their Lives By Attending College:**

Building on New Jersey's long record of innovative approaches to combating recidivism and Governor Christie's firm commitment to helping non-violent offenders reclaim their lives, a consortium of public and private universities across New Jersey are helping prison inmates attend college.

Led by Rutgers University, the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons Consortium (NJ-STEP) is providing access to college for qualified incarcerated students, while assisting in the transition to college life upon their release into the community.

- NJ-STEP is an innovative four-year program launched at the beginning of the 2012-13 academic year, through which prisoners in New Jersey correctional facilities can work towards the Associate and Baccalaureate degrees in Social Sciences while preparing to transition to full-time college enrollment.

- Currently, there are nearly 500 inmates participating in the program, in 6 of New Jersey's 13 State correctional facilities, with the aim of expanding over the next four years to serve 2,000 inmates in 10 facilities.
  - NJ-STEP institutions offer more than 178 classes across the facilities, and applicants for seats in classes exceeded capacity.
  - According to a May 2013 study, students admitted to Rutgers University under the STEP program perform as well or better than their peers, both academically and socially.

The Vera Institute awarded the consortium, led by Rutgers University, a major multi-year grant from the Ford Foundation and the Lady Sunshine Foundation. This consortium, known as NJ-STEP, works in partnership with the Department of Corrections and the State Parole Board.

### **Parolee Employment Placement Program (PEPP):**

PEPP is a partnership between Labor & Workforce Development and the State Parole Board to leverage resources and maximize the potential for parolees to successfully transition to employment. Through a competitive Notice of Grant Opportunity five community based agency grantees are responsible for providing job coaching, employment preparation, job placement, and case management services for up to 60 parolees. PEPP serves to increase the opportunities for parolees to obtain and retain employment and to reduce the likelihood of a parolee committing future crimes.

### **Federal Bonding:**

Ex-Offenders are one of a number of target groups that are eligible for Fidelity Bonds up to \$25,000 under the Federal Bonding program and employers are eligible for a federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit of \$2,400 to \$9,000 depending on the employment barrier which includes ex-offenders.

### **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS):**

DVRS local offices maintain relationships with their counterparts with Parole and Probation offices to identify the needs of these populations. The Vocational Rehabilitation counselors can direct these individuals into programs that offer short term training. Most recently DVRS has established a relationship with Drug Court which offers stability during the job search and job training.