

## Creating Second Chances for Ex-Offenders Battling Drug Addiction

*Governor Christie Announces One-Stop Approach To Connect Ex-Offenders To Treatment*

---

In October 2014, Governor Christie created the Facing Addiction Task Force, a 12-member team of leaders and experts from inside and outside of government chaired by Pastor Joe Carter of Newark's New Hope Baptist Church and co-chaired by former Governor Jim McGreevey to fight drug addiction through treatment and prevention.

Governor Christie is announcing the first initiative to be implemented under the Task Force's guidance: A groundbreaking one-stop model for connecting comprehensive services to ex-offenders re-entering society.

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

Based on the principle of Integrated Reintegration, the program is 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 services and into the workplace.

By significantly building the ex-offenders' capacity to become self-sufficient, and connecting them directly to coordinated services during the critically important period as they leave incarceration or drug court, the program strengthens their reintegration into the community as well as reducing long-term service costs to the state.

The program will follow the Jersey City Employment and Training Program model which began in the Hudson County Jail. This model has been hailed as a "national model" and "at the forefront of the reentry field" and will be coordinated by the New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC).

The NJRC began with a grant from the Department of Community Affairs and is a non-profit corporation with a blue-ribbon panel of board members including former Governors Brendan Byrne, Thomas Kean, James Florio, Christine Todd Whitman, Jim McGreevey, and Jon Corzine. The cities and counties participating in the program include:

- Newark / Essex County
- Paterson / Passaic County
- Atlantic City / Atlantic County
- Toms River / Ocean County
- Trenton / Mercer County
- Jersey City / Hudson County

A single physical location in each of these cities will be run by a non-profit

organization in coordination with the Christie administration, local officials and community partners. At this site there will be access to the services proven most critical to help ex-offenders move forward from addiction, find stability and re-enter their communities:

- **Addiction Treatment:** Formerly incarcerated individuals often leave prison with chronic addiction issues. Ensuring access to necessary treatment services is the first step for individuals to rejoin society. NJRC will work with local providers to ensure that ex-offenders are receiving the addiction treatment and medical attention they need.
  - According to a 2010 report by Columbia University, 65 percent of inmates nationwide meet the medical criteria for alcohol or drug abuse and addiction.
- **Housing:** Finding a stable housing situation, specifically in a drug and alcohol free environment, is one of the most difficult challenges facing recently released inmates. A 2010 study by the Urban Research Institute found that the lack of a stable living situation was an important factor in ex-offenders who commit new offenses, as well as technical parole violations leading to re-incarceration. In addition, a study by the Council of State Governments found that “without a stable residence, it is nearly impossible for newly released individuals to reconnect positively to a community.” The NJRC will coordinate with the Department of Human Services to ensure stable housing options.
- **Employment Services:** Re-entering the workforce is a critical step for ex-offenders to reintegrate into their communities, avoid relapse and lead productive lives. The NJRC program will provide integrated employment training and job search services such as resume writing, interviewing techniques and computer training. Equally important, the NJRC will coordinate with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to focus on outreach in the business community as well as training to targeted job placements.

The program will coordinate directly with the Department of Corrections, the State Parole Board, and local drug courts to connect those in need of these services with specific local one-stop locations.

- The program will also be able to objectively monitor and measure success through a strategic partnership with the Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice.