

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy and Department of Corrections Commissioner Kuhn Break Ground on New and Modern Correctional Facility for Women

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New State-of-the-Art Facility Will Maximize Safety and Security While Providing a Healthy Environment for Incarcerated Women

Facility is Designed to Promote Family Unification and Visits, Make Staffing More Efficient, and Boost Access to Education, Social Services, Vocational Training, and Addiction Treatment Services

Project Will Save the State Over \$160 Million in Deferred Maintenance and Capital Costs

CHESTERFIELD - Governor Phil Murphy today joined Department of Corrections Commissioner Victoria Kuhn, Treasurer Liz Muiio, formerly incarcerated women, state and local government officials, criminal justice reform advocates, community leaders, and faith leaders to break ground on a new women's correctional facility designed with an emphasis on safety, dignity, and rehabilitation. The groundbreaking ceremony represents a major step in New Jersey's ongoing work to modernize corrections and create an environment that promotes stability, gender-specific treatment, and reentry. The new facility will feature a trauma-informed, normative design with centralized services and expanded program areas to support the success of women in custody and their return to the community.

"Today's groundbreaking represents a new chapter of criminal justice for New Jersey – one built on safety, dignity, and rehabilitation," **said Governor Murphy**. "This new, state-of-the-art facility reflects our dedication to providing a safe, secure, and healthier environment for our state's incarcerated women as they work toward rebuilding their lives for the better. Together with our partners, our Administration is building a more trustworthy and transparent criminal justice system focused on safety, recovery, and redemption."

"This moment signifies a major step toward modernizing and establishing best practices for the incarceration of women in New Jersey," **said New Jersey Department of Corrections Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq.** "By constructing a purpose-built facility, we are creating the normative conditions that are conducive to rehabilitation, successful reentry, and improved conditions for our staff, the women in our custody, and the broader public."

The new 420-bed correctional facility for women will be constructed on a 33-acre parcel of existing NJDOC property in Chesterfield Township in Burlington County. The architecture and design emphasize rehabilitation and community reentry through a "campus" approach, creating a community atmosphere. All essential services – including dining, education, social services, vocational training, medical care, and recreation – will be centrally located to foster an

community
Back
to top

integrated environment. The facility is designed to maximize safety and security, family unification and visits, support efficient staffing, and enable greater connection to vital community resources. This strategically chosen location, adjacent to the former Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility (closed in Fiscal Year 2020), offers centralized access to better enable family unification and visitation.

The new construction features a multiple-building campus layout that blends appropriate safety and security with a normalized, natural environment. This design includes specialized housing units to meet a range of needs:

- General Security: Minimum, Medium, and Maximum Housing
- Specialized Needs: Orientation, Stabilization, Substance Use Disorder (SUD)
- Clinical and Restrictive Care: Rehabilitation Treatment, Protective Custody, and General and Chronic Medical Housing

This project reflects two years of close collaboration by a multi-agency task force established to advance the State's commitment to modern and dignified corrections.

The new facility builds on the commitments made by Governor Murphy following the 2021 decision to close the [Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women](https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210607a.shtml)

(<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210607a.shtml>),

signaling a commitment to rebuild women's corrections in New Jersey on a foundation of dignity and rehabilitation. The project will also save the State over \$160 million in deferred maintenance and capital costs that would have been required to maintain the previous site. It replaces outdated buildings with a campus designed to support safety, learning, treatment, and stability. By bringing education, medical care, and vocational programming together in one setting, the facility creates an environment where rehabilitation and reentry can take hold.

"Governor Murphy's humanitarian responses to the unconscionable abuse to the women at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility in January of 2021 stand as a model for departments of correction throughout the country," **said Bonnie Kerness, Trustee, Edna Mahan Correctional Facility Board of Trustees.** "Today marks more than just groundbreaking of a new women's facility – it's the foundation of second chances, growth, and empowerment. This space will not only house women, but also build hope, healing, and new beginnings. The Board remains committed to community oversight to see this amazing project through. It is an honor for us to be part of this well-deserved joy."

"Under the Murphy Administration, I've witnessed one of the most rapid, humane, and transformational reforms in New Jersey's correctional history," **said Dr. Pamela "Pastor Pam" Boykin Jones, Founder and CEO, Communities in Cooperation Inc.** "This groundbreaking marks the next step forward: the beginning of an even more progressive facility, one designed not just to house women, but to honor their humanity, their rehabilitation, and their return to community. So today, as the plans for a new facility unfold and we break ground, we don't just break earth – we break barriers, we break silence, and we break open the way to a more humane future."

"As I look back, I am filled with gratitude, for the opportunities that shaped me, the people who believed in me, and even the challenges that tested me," **said Myrna Diaz, a commutation recipient formerly incarcerated at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility.** "While at Edna, I was able to graduate with a degree from Rutgers University and the NJ-Step program and flourish as a paralegal—skills and experiences that I currently use at my present job to help others. May this new facility provide an even bigger opportunity for incarcerated women to continue changing their lives for the better!"

For renderings of the new women's correctional facility,
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[Home \(/governor/\)](/governor/)

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[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

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[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

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[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

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