

## Gov. Christie: This Task Force Will Help Remove Stigma And Promote Treatment

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### Transcript:

**Governor Christie:** We need to examine a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to destigmatizing addiction, enhancing prevention efforts, and strengthening treatment services to address the addiction crisis we have here in our state. The Facing Addiction Task Force will be responsible for developing additional strategies to reduce stigma, reviewing the continuum of treatment services and developing recommendations for strengthening the treatment system in our state, developing prevention strategies and efforts in New Jersey and advising me on all other matters related to this issue. I've signed an executive order to this effect already and so Joe you're already on the job. I look forward to working with this team of people as we seek solutions that will broaden our efforts in removing the stigma of drug addiction, promoting treatment, counseling, and other services in order to help people reclaim their lives. I've said this many times before but it bears repeating. Every life, every life is an individual gift from God, and no one is beyond redemption. Everyone deserves a second chance at making their lives exactly what they want them to be, fulfilling the potential that God has given to each and every one of us. This is not just an assignment. This is a mission. It's a mission for us to pursue together, and I think you see the folks represented up here regardless of party or background are together on trying to make this work and work the right way.

**Pastor Carter:** I just want to thank the Governor for addressing issues that are going to help people and putting politics to the side. Addiction knows no party line. Addiction knows no race, and this Governor's heart is in the right place and I'm going to put 110% behind this effort. He said I keep giving you other jobs but I think he needs to know and you all need to know this is my job. There's no way I could lead as a pastor without doing everything I can to help address this demon of addiction that has so many faces and so we're going to roll our sleeves up with this wonderful task force to educate people about addiction, to get people into treatment, and to help with the next step, recovery one day at a

time, and I'm so happy to have my friend and my brother alongside with me to do this, Governor Jim McGreevey. Give him a hand as he comes.

**Governor McGreevey:** I know the Governor is providing the necessary leadership to turn a battleship, and that battleship is the predisposition in American society, in New Jersey and I would argue nationally to incarcerate or attempt to incarcerate as a solution to addiction. We look at the numbers. They're staggering. According to Columbia University's CASA, 70% of those persons incarcerated are clinically diagnosed as being addicts. We look to the exorbitant cost of incarceration, whether they're our county jails or our state prisons, and so the Governor understands that treatment is the preferred option particularly for those 70% of persons who are themselves addicts behind bars. But putting the full strength and intellect and passion and drive of a cabinet to focus on this issue will hopefully provide systemic change, not only to make treatment the preferred option but also to provide for transitional housing and as importantly employment training and ultimately job opportunities. So I believe that the Governor in setting forth this vision here today provides a clear powerful mandate for structural change, using the levers of government to provide for a road map so that New Jersey may do this better. And now it's my great honor to introduce someone who shares the Governor's passion day in and day out in making sure treatment works. Whether it's the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services or the entirety of the department, she's hands on. She returns phone calls at all hours of the night. She's an incredible passionate advocate for treatment and those modalities that work. It's my great honor to introduce Commissioner Jen Velez.

**Commissioner Velez:** Under Governor Christie's leadership there has been an unprecedented laser-like focus on addiction treatment like no other governor I can recall in a way that has defined and shaped a conversation that is necessary, that can be painful, and that will lead to change, and it already has. The Governor has raised awareness about the disease of addiction, dispelled the negative attitudes towards people with addiction disorder and affected substantial changes to laws that directly impact individuals battling drug addiction, including the Good Samaritan Act, expanding Drug Courts with mandatory treatment, and ensuring addiction treatment for individuals who are incarcerated. There are those who simply talk about change, there are those who simply demand change, and there are those who create sustainable change, and I'm so proud to be part of an administration under the Governor's leadership that is creating sustainable change.

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