



# NEW JERSEY STATE PAROLE BOARD

Yolette C. Ross, Chairman

Samuel J. Plumeri, Jr., Vice Chairman

## 2009 Annual Report

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## A. Overview

### *Fiscal Year 2009 Operations*

In Fiscal Year 2009, the Parole Board Members and Division of Release conducted parole hearings for 10,710 State prison inmates and 2,784 county jail inmates. The agency's Revocation Unit initiated 2,432 revocation hearings, and 430 rescission hearings. The Juvenile Unit conducted 2,098 quarterly reviews and 219 annual reviews for juvenile residents, held 621 hearings to set time goals for juvenile residents, and initiated 302 juvenile revocation hearings.

On the last day of Fiscal Year 2009 there were a total of 15,597 individuals under State Parole Board supervision, including individuals released on discretionary parole, those sentenced to a term of Mandatory Supervision (MSV), sex offenders sentenced to Community Supervision for Life (CSL) or Parole Supervision for Life (PSL), and sex offenders subject to Global Positioning System (GPS) monitoring.

The Division of Community Programs provided rehabilitative programs to more than 6,700 individuals under State Parole Board supervision. These programs, including Day Reporting Centers, Halfway Back programs, the Mutual Agreement Program, the Reentry Substance Abuse Program and others, are designed to promote successful and sustainable reentry and ensure public safety.

## B. *Reducing Recidivism: Evidence Based Programs and Supervision Supported by Outcomes and Research*

*Research Shows Parole Works:* During the past year, three scientific studies showed clear reductions in recidivism associated with the New Jersey State Parole Board's use of strict supervision and community-based rehabilitative programs. Specifically:



In December 2008, the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice reported the results of a study that found a 73 percent re-arrest rate for "max-outs" who leave prison without a period of parole supervision, compared with a 51 percent re-arrest rate for general parolees, and a 41 percent re-arrest rate for parolees in a specialized program of intensive supervision and community-based programming.

In February 2009, the nationwide, peer-reviewed Journal of Offender Rehabilitation pub-

lished the results of a study conducted by the New Jersey State Parole Board. The study found a 46 percent re-incarceration rate for “max-outs” who leave prison without a period of parole supervision, compared with lower rate for parolees – most significantly, a 17 percent re-incarceration rate for parolees released to residential Halfway Back programs.

In October 2009, the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations’ Economic Development Research Group presented the results of a study on the Female Offender Reentry Group Effort (FORGE), a specialized initiative for female ex-offenders. The research indicated a re-arrest rate of 68 percent for female max-outs over four years. The research found a 42 percent re-arrest rate for female parolees enrolled in FORGE, and a rate of 28 percent for female parolees who were enrolled in FORGE and who participated in Parole Accountability Conference Team (PACT) support group meetings.

### C. **Enhancing Public Safety and Diverting Taxpayer Costs: The RAC and Technical Parole Violators**

*National Award for Regional Assessment Centers (RAC):* Nationwide, states are seeking ways to address the cost of corrections while enhancing public safety through effective community supervision programs. One key focus of national attention is the re-incarceration of technical parole violators – parolees who have not been charged with a new crime or significantly threatened public safety, but have committed a technical violation of the terms of parole supervision. The New Jersey State Parole Board’s internal research found most technical parole violations are consistent with a relapse in addiction, and indicate intensified supervision and treatment as an appropriate law enforcement response. In New Jersey and nationwide, researchers and practitioners recognize the re-incarceration of low-level technical parole violators creates unnecessary costs without a corresponding benefit to public safety. The Justice Policy Institute reported in May 2009 that states could save \$1 billion nationwide, by returning only half as many people to prison for technical violations.

In July 2008, the State Parole Board worked with private provider Community Education Centers (CEC) to launch the agency’s newest tool for intervention with technical parole violators: Residential Assessment Centers (RAC), a “triage unit” for the lockdown and assessment of



SPB Chairman Yolette C. Ross and Janice L. Kovach, Director, Division on Women sign the "Women's Employment & Reentry Agreement."

technical parole violators. Recognizing the RAC's

The RAC saves taxpayer dollars "up front"

effectiveness as an investment for public safety and taxpayer savings, the Council of State Governments honored the State Parole Board with an Innovations Award in November 2009.

Under the RAC initiative, parolees who have been arrested for a technical parole violation are housed in one of two privately run RAC facilities for 15 to 30 days. They are subject to a barrage of clinical risk and need assessments that consider a range of criminogenic factors such as mental health and social, familial and economic

by housing technical parole violators in a private facility, rather than a county jail, prior to their rev-



**2009 WINNERS**

**NEW JERSEY PROGRAM ASSESSES PAROLEES AT SPECIAL CENTERS**



"Where before we used to do things to the parolee, now we're doing it for the parolee as well. We're trying to reintroduce the fact that there is rehabilitation during the same time while you're incapacitating the parolee. I think that is where we're going to get the better result."

—LARRY WARD  
Director of Community Programs  
NJ State Parole Board

"When parolees in New Jersey commit a technical violation of the terms of their parole, they're not automatically sent to a county jail to await a hearing. Instead, the state's Division of Parole sends those parolees to a Regional Assessment Center where they're interviewed by clinical professionals to determine what happened to impact their negative behavior," said Larry Ward, director of community programs for the New Jersey Parole Board. The Regional Assessment Center program is one of eight national winners of The Council of State Governments' Innovations Awards. Since the Division of Parole operates the assessment centers, officers have immediate access to the parole violator and can get immediate assistance that person may need. "We have a place of our own where officers are present; they can deal with problems of gathering information necessary for the assessment in a faster manner because we have a place for that," said Capt. Hector Reyes, supervising parole officer. In addition, Reyes said, many of those technical violators that would previously have been sent to the county jail for assessment were eventually continued on parole. That means they were in the county jail for a number of weeks before continued on parole. "(Now) they're in a more intimate, more approachable setting," Reyes said. "That's important," Ward said, because the ultimate goal is reintegrating that parolee into society so dealing with the problem helps reach that outcome. Technical parole violators who are sent back to the prison system don't get the help they need, he said. "They're simply going to be incarcerated and they're going to be incarcerated but they're not going to get the benefit of any services under the old system," he said. That changes with the regional assessment centers. The parolee who violates terms of his probation is taken off the street, but has access to services that might help him resolve the negative going on in his life, Ward said. During the 15- to 30-day lockdown, center staff assess the violator to determine whether he should be continued on parole with intensified supervision or treatment, or whether that person should be returned to prison. "Where before we used to do things to the parolee, now we're doing it for the parolee as well," he said. "We're trying to reintroduce the fact that there is rehabilitation during the same time while you're incapacitating the parolee. I think that is where we're going to get the better result." New Jersey has operated the assessment centers since July 2008. Ward said an investment was required up front to provide for the contracted facility, but New Jersey has seen a return on that investment of \$5 to \$6 for every dollar invested. It cost \$23 million to implement the system, Ward said, but that returned a savings of more than \$11 million last year because it's cheaper to serve prisoners in an assessment center than in a jail. Ward said support from Gov. Jon Corzine and the state Parole Board was necessary for the regional assessment center to take hold and grow. And while the monetary savings has been big, Ward said the human outcomes are equally important. Parole officials have seen the success in that, through an internal study. "It makes sense from a humanistic standpoint regarding dealing with the offender," he said. "It really is the right thing to do."

—Mary Benham

**The Council of State Governments November/December 2009**

needs. The findings and data about each individual are presented to the State Parole Board. This clinical information allows the Board to make a much better-informed decision as to whether the parolee should be returned to prison, or continued on parole with intensified supervision or targeted rehabilitative programs.

ocation hearing. Since its launch in July 2008 the RAC has shown real success demonstrated by positive outcomes for those who have been continued on parole after assessment in the RAC; and savings to New Jersey taxpayers by holding technical parole violators in the RAC rather than in county jail. The State Parole Board recently reviewed the cases of 181 individuals who were continued on parole (as opposed to being returned to prison) after having been assessed in a RAC facility. Of the total, 73.4 percent had either successfully completed parole (21.5 percent of the total) or remained successful on parole without another violation or new crime (51.9 percent of the total). Of the rest, 26 percent eventually returned to prison for a variety of reasons. The RAC initiative saved an estimated \$10 million in FY09. It is anticipated the savings related to the RAC initiative will continue in FY10.



#### **D. Sex Offender Supervision: Preventing Further Victimization Through Aggressive Containment, Treatment, & Strict Supervision**

The State Parole Board is New Jersey's primary agency responsible for sex offender supervision. Simply put, the goal of the agency's supervision of sex offenders is to prevent further victimization. The agency's caseload of more than 5,600 sex offenders (as of November 2009) is one of the largest in America, mainly due to Supervision for Life sentencing guidelines for sex offenders. Under State law, the majority of sex crimes committed on or after October 31, 1994 will result in lifetime supervision under the State Parole Board's jurisdiction. Prior to the introduction of this mandate, sex offenders made up less than 5 percent of the agency's caseload. Today they make up nearly one-third of the caseload, with a net increase of about 59 new sex offenders each month.

In order to make the most effective use of available resources in supervising these high-risk, compulsive offenders, and following guidelines recommended by the National Institute of Justice, the State Parole Board has adopted the Containment Approach to sex offender supervision. This approach includes intensive parole supervision, including GPS monitoring and information sharing with partner law enforcement agencies; sex offender-specific treatment to help control sex offenders' impulsivity; and polygraph

examinations to obtain sexual history information and monitor offenders for behaviors that indicate the risk of re-offense. The State Parole Board works closely with law enforcement partners including the FBI, Office of the Attorney General, New Jersey State Police, county prosecutors and municipal police, and with psychological treatment providers including the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), to impose the external and internal controls essential to contain the behaviors of sex offenders who have been released to community supervision.

The State Parole Board began using polygraph testing as a supervision tool in December

2007. Eleven parole officers have completed their polygraph training at the Academy for Scientific Investigative Training in Philadelphia. The training and polygraph equipment were funded by a \$50,000 Bureau of Justice Assistance grant provid-



SPB's polygraph testing of sex offenders. Photo: Star-Ledger

ed to the State Parole Board, matched by \$16,667 in state funds. In November 2009 the State Parole Board released a study that reviewed the cases of 595 sex offenders under the agency's supervision, 40 percent of whom had been subject to at least one polygraph examination. The report found polygraph testing to be an invaluable resource for sex offender supervision and treatment. The State Parole Board's use of polygraph testing has garnered nationwide support. Kim English, a nationally respected researcher and author on sex offender supervision matters with the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, noted in

a November 28, 2009 Star-Ledger article that “If you’re not going to train people correctly, you shouldn’t use (polygraph testing). New Jersey very carefully implemented the polygraph tests.”

Authorized by the Legislature, the State Parole Board subjects 233 of New Jersey’s high-risk sex offenders to round-the-clock GPS monitoring. This monitoring method provides precise information about sex offenders’ locations and movements, serves as a reminder and deterrent to those under supervision, and provides a valuable resource for investigators in the form of data that can be compared with the times and places of new crimes.

### ***E. Targeted Resources for Reentry, Partnerships for Public Safety***

**MH-PACTs:** The State Parole Board develops and maintains innovative resources with reentry providers, and valuable partnerships with law enforcement agencies, in support of the agency’s mission to protect the public and help ex-offenders turn away from crime. These resources include: Mental Health Parole Accountability Conference Teams (MH-PACTs): In August 2009, the State Parole Board received \$750,000 in a federal economic stimulus grant to develop MH-PACTs in Atlantic, Monmouth and Passaic counties over the next three years. The MH-PACTs will create regional coalitions to ensure mentally ill parolees have access to assistance for medication, counseling, supportive housing and other needs while under the State Parole Board’s supervision. Relying on the clinical expertise (MSWs) of two appointed Board members, MH-PACTs will seek to increase at-risk parolees’ compliance to

conditions of parole, while addressing medication and supportive service needs. The MH-PACTs are modeled on successful drug court diversion programs and will build on the successes of the agency’s Program for Returning Offenders with Mental Illness Safely and Effectively (PROMISE). PROMISE, developed and maintained with the support of private provider Volunteers of America-Delaware Valley, is based in Camden and emphasizes transitional services and housing consistent with assertive community treatment modalities.

**Female Offender Reentry Group Effort (FORGE):** As noted above, research released in October 2009 has found FORGE and its PACT support group are associated with significant reductions in the re-arrest rates of female ex-offenders in Essex County. FORGE began with a New Jersey parole officer’s observations about the unique risks and needs faced by the female



FORGE program at Essex County College. Photo: Star-Ledger

parolees on her caseload. Based on that officer’s outreach to reentry providers, FORGE has evolved into a successful multi-agency partnership with a “one-stop shopping” location for reentry services at Essex County College (the location now provides services to male parolees as well). The State Parole Board has taken steps to expand



FORGE out of Essex County, by building partnerships with the New Jersey Division on Women and Volunteers of America-Delaware Valley. The State Parole Board will receive \$200,000 in federal grant monies to take this expansion further, by establishing additional one-stop reentry locations for women.

*Police-Parole Partnerships:* The State Parole Board has launched Police-Parole Partnerships with the municipalities of Camden, Irvington, Jersey City, Newark and Union City, for direct intelligence sharing and joint operations. The agencies combine resources to enhance investigations and other operations, without creating new taxpayer costs. The partnerships vary from city to city, but generally include discussions of strategy and intelligence, the sharing of data about parolees under supervision in the municipality, and joint patrols and warrant operations. The State Parole Board works closely with law

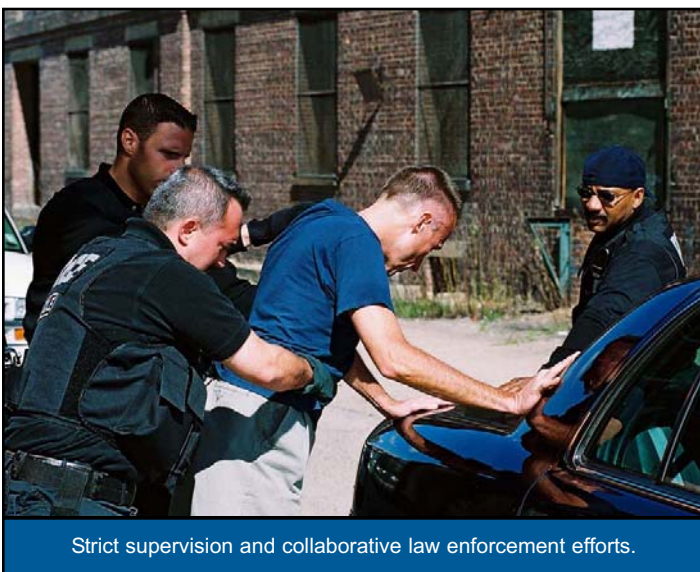
*Greater Mercer Prisoner Reentry Initiative (Greater Mercer PRI):* The State Parole Board joined with the Trenton Mayor's Office of Employment and Training (MOET), Department of Corrections and a private provider Opportunities



Partnerships for employment and job training. Photo: Jersey Journal

for All, to develop Greater Mercer PRI, an employment-centered reentry initiative. The partnership was created with a \$500,000 grant from the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Prison Reentry Initiative. In addition to providing services related to job training and job retention, the partner agencies are collecting data that the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice will use to assess the partnership's effectiveness and judge the best ways it can be replicated. The Greater Mercer PRI is the only PRI in the nation that has been granted to a "stand alone" parole supervision agency. In less than nine months of operation, the State Parole Board met more than 50 percent of the agency's two-year objectives and has been cited by the US Department of Justice as a national example of effective communication and collaboration.

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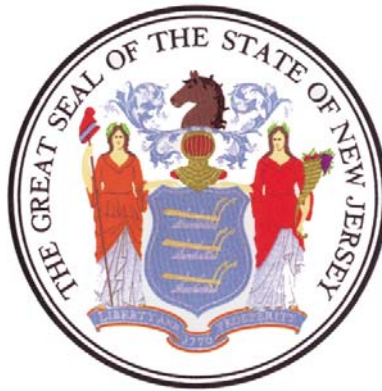


Strict supervision and collaborative law enforcement efforts.

enforcement agencies in every community, and has offered to build specialized partnerships in additional cities.







**New Jersey State Parole Board**

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