

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: AG Platkin Announces Working Group to Examine Uses for Secure Youth Facilities Upon Closure

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New Jersey to Look for New Potential Uses as the New Jersey Training School and Female Secure Care and Intake Facility Set to Close

TRENTON – With plans progressing for new youth facilities in New Jersey and two existing facilities set to close, Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin announced the creation of the Youth Justice Working Group: From Secure Care to Restorative Care, tasked with providing recommendations regarding repurposing the two facilities due to close.

New Jersey’s comprehensive and systemic youth justice reform has transformed the way the State’s youth justice system encounters young people, significantly reducing the number of young people sent to county-operated detention centers and Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) facilities. As a result of these reform efforts, in 2017, the State announced that the New Jersey Training School and the Female Secure Care and Intake Facility would close, and funding would be made available to construct new, smaller, state-of-the-art facilities for youth who need intensive support services. The first of these new facilities is set to open in 2027.

Following the creation by Governor Phil Murphy of the Task Force for the Continued Transformation of Youth Justice in New Jersey in 2018, the Task Force recommended the creation of a group to look at options for repurposing the two facilities. This Working Group is the next step in that process.


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“As a national leader in youth justice reform, New Jersey has much to be proud of for

improving the well-being of our justice-involved youth. I was proud to sign Executive Order No. 42 early in my Administration to establish the Youth Justice Task Force to provide recommendations on strategies to continue the reform of our state's youth justice system. It was these recommendations that were provided in the Youth Justice Task Force Report in 2022 that helped continue to move our state in the right direction," **said Governor Phil Murphy.** "The Youth Justice Working Group will provide recommendations that ensure that, once closed, the New Jersey Training School and the Female Secure Care and Intake Facility are mindfully repurposed to continue our efforts to create a stronger, fairer, more equitable, and restorative juvenile justice system."

"New Jersey continues to be a national model for systemic youth justice reform. Our comprehensive efforts, principally through the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI), have drastically reduced the number of youth entering the justice system," **said Attorney General Platkin.** "These achievements are predicated on our continued commitment to implement innovative rehabilitative and prevention strategies. The working group that we announced is tasked with identifying innovative uses for two facilities set to close so we can continue to design new opportunities for youth to grow and thrive, particularly for youth who come from historically disenfranchised communities. This is an important step in a collaborative process that brings together partners who will lead us 'From Secure Care to Restorative Care.'"

One of the buildings, the Female Secure Care and Intake Facility in Bordentown, is on the site of the former New Jersey Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth, known locally as the Bordentown School. Founded by Rev. Walter A. Rice, the Bordentown School was once one of the nation's most important secondary schools for African Americans, and became known as the "Tuskegee of the North." The school was closed in the 1950s. The Working Group will be guided by the Bordentown School's legacy and informed by the strides the State has made to transform youth justice in New Jersey.

Attorney General Platkin was joined by Ryan P. Haygood, President and CEO of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice; Rev. Dr. Charles Boyer, Executive Director of Salvation and Social Justice and Pastor of Greater Mt. Zion AME Church in Trenton; and several individuals with ties to the former Manual Training and Industrial School (MTIS), including John Medley, class of 1954.

"Frederick Douglass told us that it's easier to build strong children than it is to repair broken men. We commend the Attorney General's visionary announcement and leadership, which puts this truth into action for all of New Jersey's young people who deserve investments that build them up," **said Ryan Haygood, President & CEO of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice.** "For too long, New Jersey has made deep investments in incarcerating young people, overwhelmingly Black and Brown youth. Through the work of the Attorney General and our 150 Years is Enough campaign partners, New Jersey has become a national leader by adopting policies to sharply reduce the number of young people in prison and making deep financial and other investments in community-based programming to keep kids in their communities where they can thrive. New Jersey's plan to now close two of our antiquated youth prisons and use those sites

for forward-thinking community facilities – perhaps even a 21st Century version of the historic Bordentown School – is a capstone to all the progress we have made together in the Garden State. We look forward to our continued partnership with the Attorney General to see it come to life.”

“I am reminded of the enduring legacy of two remarkable leaders – Rev. Walter A. Rice and Rev. I. W. L. Rountree. Together, they forged a partnership that would lay the foundation for the Bordentown School. As an AME minister and the current pastor of Mount Zion in Trenton, the very church once shepherded by Rev. Rountree, I am deeply honored to continue the work they began,” **said Rev. Dr. Charles Boyer, Executive Director, Salvation and Social Justice and Pastor of Greater Mt. Zion AME Church in Trenton.** “I am grateful for the work of Attorney General Matt Platkin and the NJ Institute for Social Justice in moving this work forward in closing these facilities and moving toward a more affirmative vision for our children.”

The Youth Justice Working Group: From Secure Care to Restorative Care will include:

- **Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin:** designees **Dan Hafetz and Marihug Pena,** Senior Counsels to Attorney General Platkin
- **Reverend Dr. Charles Boyer,** Executive Director of Salvation and Social Justice and Pastor of Greater Mt. Zion AME Church in Trenton
- **Ryan Haygood,** President and CEO, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
- **Rev. J. Amos Caley,** Pastor, Reformed Church of Highland Park and Abolition Campaign Senior Fellow, Salvation and Social Justice
- **Derick Dailey,** Counsel, Crowell & Moring LLP
- **Bonnie Goldman,** President, Bordentown Historical Society
- **Dr. Mildred Rice Jordan,** Associate Professor emerita, Rider University
- **Dr. Jennifer LeBaron,** Executive Director, Juvenile Justice Commission
- **Alex Shalom,** Partner, Lowenstein
- **Elana Wilf,** Youth Justice Advocate
- **Member, Monroe Township’s New Jersey Training School Citizens Review Board**
- **Youth Member** (ex officio), a member of the JJC State Youth Advisory Board, which is a board comprised of twelve youth currently under JJC care and supervision.

New Jersey is committed to implementing and promoting policies and practices that improve outcomes for young people, their families, and the communities involved with or impacted by the youth justice system. The formation of the working group is the latest in a series of reform efforts implemented under the leadership of Attorney General Platkin.

Under the leadership of Governor Phil Murphy and with the support of the Legislature, Attorney General Platkin has obtained approval to create three new state-of-the-art

facilities in the northern, central, and southern regions of the state. These new facilities will replace the New Jersey Training School (NJTS) and the Female Secure Care and Intake Facility (FSC&IF) with smaller structures designed to promote healing, rehabilitation, and the safe reintegration of youth into their communities. Plans are already underway on the Winslow and Ewing Township sites, with a construction bid process expected to begin this fall for completion as early as 2027. A location of the northern location is nearly finalized with funding already allocated in Governor Murphy's 2025 Fiscal Year Budget.

In 2021, the Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youth and Communities Pilot Program was signed into law and \$8.4 million was allocated to fund Restorative Justice Hubs – community-led, non-residential programs dedicated to providing a continuum of care to youth. Earlier this year, hubs became operational in Camden and Essex Counties, with hubs in Mercer and Passaic opening soon.

Through a range of comprehensive and systemic reforms led by Attorney General Platkin in partnership with the Juvenile Justice Commission, the courts, the county prosecutors, and with community leaders and providers, New Jersey has significantly reduced the population of youth entering the criminal justice system and improved opportunities for youth returning to communities following encounters with the justice system:

- New Jersey has experienced an approximate 85% reduction since 2004 in the number of youths detained in county facilities as the result of a Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (https://www.nj.gov/oag/jjc/pdf/2022_JDAI_Annual_Data_Report.pdf) (JDAI), a nationally recognized reform effort established by the Annie E. Casey Foundation;
- There has also been a reduction of 91% over the same time period in the number of court-ordered commitments of youth to JJC custody, resulting in the virtual elimination of reliance on incarceration with the JJC for minor offenses;
- Of the decrease in the youth population placed in county and state facilities, youth of color make up about 85% of the reduction. And with these reforms, there has been a decrease in youth involved in crime;
- The issuance of a statewide Attorney General Directive (https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/agguide/directives/ag-Directive-2020-12_Juvenile-Justice-Reform.pdf) to law enforcement has aided in the diversion of non-violent youth from the juvenile justice system, and limited the likelihood of unnecessary detention when public safety is not at risk;
- Through collaboration with educational institutions, the JJC has been able to make available 41 academic courses and seven certificate programs, including a Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning (HVAC), and Refrigeration Technician Certification Program, which offer customized training curricula tailored to the unique needs of JJC youth.

New Jersey is proud of the efforts already implemented and the progress made in the area of youth justice reform, but recognizes there is more work to be done. The Attorney General is grateful for the willingness of the Working Group members to serve and offer their vision for a brighter future for our youth.

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