

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

ICYMI: New Jersey Department of Corrections and Pratt Institute Launch Innovative Fashion Design and Workforce Training Program

Posted on - 09/26/2025

Partnership Builds on Pratt's Mission of Expanding Access to Creative Disciplines Through Professional-Level Training at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility

CLINTON, N.J. – The New Jersey Department of Corrections (<https://www.nj.gov/corrections/pages/index.shtml>), (NJDOC), in partnership with [Pratt Institute](https://www.pratt.edu/about/) (<https://www.pratt.edu/about/>), an internationally ranked college preparing students for success in creative and professional fields, today announced the launch of a fashion design and workforce development program at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility (EMCF). The program is one of the first of its kind in the United States, joining similar international efforts in Milan, Italy, and London, England.

"This program represents a milestone in correctional education," **said NJDOC Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq.** "We are excited to leverage Pratt Institute's renowned art and design programs with the Department's existing vocational and technical education programs. This collaboration will prepare participants for release by providing them with both state-of-the-art technical skills and the discipline, professionalism, and confidence needed to succeed."

The Design Studio provides incarcerated women with a structured, professional-level curriculum in fashion design, apparel construction, digital design, and business planning. The program reflects NJDOC's mission to advance rehabilitation and reentry through meaningful education and vocational opportunities, while also demonstrating the Department's commitment to collaboration with leading academic and industry partners.

For Pratt Institute, the initiative extends a longstanding mission of building educational and career pathways that expand access to creative disciplines. For more than 135 years, Pratt has created opportunities for individuals who might not otherwise have access, from early collaborations with public schools to the recent founding of Design Works High School in New York City, and now, through this initiative for incarcerated women. Each effort underscores Pratt's commitment to expanding opportunity and preparing individuals for futures in which creativity and professional skill go hand in hand, empowering them to become changemakers in their communities.

"Pratt Institute is a natural partner here—creativity, design, and innovation are at the heart of what we do, and those values translate powerfully into helping people build new futures," **said Maira Seara, Dean of Pratt Institute's School of Continuing and Professional Studies.** "Together, we're opening doors, fostering dignity, and investing in safer, stronger communities."

Building on this expertise, the Design Studio curriculum was developed by faculty from Pratt's Fashion program—one of the first fashion programs in the United States and an internationally recognized leader in preparing students for the future of the creative industries.

The EMCF Design Studio has been equipped to replicate a professional design environment. Over the course of 10 months, participants will complete 40 weeks of structured instruction led by Pratt faculty, supported by NJDOC staff. At the conclusion of the program, participants will receive a certificate of completion from Pratt Institute's School of Continuing and Professional Studies, bringing the prestige of Pratt's name into their reentry pathways.

Programs like the Design Studio build hard skills and the confidence to use them in real-world environments. Beyond the classroom, participants gain experience in collaboration, accountability, and problem-solving habits that transfer directly into the workplace. Opportunities exist in New Jersey, New York City and beyond in apparel production facilities, sample rooms, design studios and many other related industries. Local manufacturers and fashion houses often seek trained technicians for patternmaking, garment construction, and digital design, opening doors to steady, in-demand jobs while also supporting the regional economy.

The curriculum is comprehensive and students begin with sketching, garment fitting, and mood boards, then progress through draping, patternmaking, and garment construction. Training advances into digital design, where students gain proficiency in Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, and other professional tools. Participants create prototypes, prepare technical packs, and refine designs through fittings. Coursework extends into branding, niche markets, supply chains, and ethical sourcing, before culminating in production readiness.

"The Design Studio represents correctional education and training at its best by equipping women with the skills, confidence, and opportunities they need to succeed both during incarceration and in the community after release," **said Helena Tomé, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Women's Services at the New Jersey Department of Corrections.**

The Design Studio embodies the culmination of four years of work with the NJDOC's DEPTCOR and Division of Women's Services, uniting resources and expertise to make this initiative possible. DEPTCOR has provided vocational training to New Jersey's incarcerated population since 1918 and the Division of Women's Services manages a wide array of gender specific mental health, educational and rehabilitative services for women incarcerated at the NJDOC.

"Upon completion, graduates will have demonstrated mastery of garment construction, digital design, portfolio development, and marketing strategy," **said Brian Gallagher, Deputy Director at DEPTCOR.** "The Design studio is about giving these women the tools to build real and marketable skills."

The capstone project requires each participant to redesign the institutional uniform. The final presentation includes both the prototype garment and the professional documentation required for production.

[Click here for video, b-roll, and photos](https://www.flickr.com/photos/195684488@N06/albums/72177720329251665/) (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/195684488@N06/albums/72177720329251665/>).

About the New Jersey Department of Corrections

The mission of NJDOC is to advance public safety and promote successful reintegration in a dignified, safe, secure, rehabilitative, and gender-informed environment, supported by a professional, trained, and diverse workforce, enhanced by community engagement. For more information, visit: [NJDOC.gov](https://www.njdoc.gov).

About DEPTCOR

DEPTCOR is New Jersey's correctional industry program. An entity within the New Jersey Department of Corrections, DEPTCOR provides high quality products and services manufactured and offered by adults incarcerated in New Jersey's correctional system, to State and local government agencies. DEPTCOR's factories and service industries throughout the state train over 900 incarcerated persons annually. These offenders are voluntarily assigned to meaningful work situations that help them develop useable skills and positive work

