

Reclaiming Lives Through Education

The NJ STEP Program Is Building On New Jersey's Progress In Reducing Recidivism And Governor Christie's Commitment To Helping Non-Violent Offenders Reclaim Their Lives

"We must reach out a hand of compassion and common sense to those who commit non-violent crimes. We must do a better job of reclaiming their lives and putting them back on the road to success and engagement with society. My belief is simple: every human life is precious, and no life is disposable."

– Governor Chris Christie, State Of The State Address, January 14, 2014

Helping Inmates Reclaim Their Lives By Attending College:

Building on New Jersey's long record of innovative approaches to combating recidivism and Governor Christie's firm commitment to helping non-violent offenders reclaim their lives, a consortium of public and private universities across New Jersey are helping prison inmates attend college.

Led by Rutgers University, the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons Consortium (NJ-STEP) is providing access to college for qualified incarcerated students, while assisting in the transition to college life upon their release into the community.

- NJ-STEP is an innovative four-year program launched at the beginning of the 2012-13 academic year, through which prisoners in New Jersey correctional facilities can work towards the Associate and Baccalaureate degrees in Social Sciences while preparing to transition to full-time college enrollment.
- Currently, there are nearly 500 inmates participating in the program, in 6 of New Jersey's 13 State correctional facilities, with the aim of expanding over the next four years to serve 2,000 inmates in 10 facilities.
 - NJ-STEP institutions offer more than 178 classes across the facilities, and applicants for seats in classes exceeded capacity.
 - According to a May 2013 study, students admitted to Rutgers University under the STEP program perform as well or better than their peers, both academically and socially.

Funding for NJ-STEP is provided through a major, multi-year grant to Rutgers University from The Ford Foundation and The Sunshine Lady Foundation, which have committed \$4 million over the next four years. The NJ-STEP Consortium schools work in partnership with the Department of Corrections and State Parole Board.

Governor Chris Christie Is Building On New Jersey's Strong Record Of Combating Recidivism:

In November 2011, taking action to build on the nationally recognized success of New Jersey's prisoner re-entry, rehabilitation and prevention programs, Governor Chris Christie outlined an initiative to help even more offenders get the support they need to successfully re-enter society, break the cycle of criminality and lead productive lives.

New Jersey is widely recognized as a national leader in reducing incidents of recidivism and reducing its prison population:

- The state's 11 percent recidivism decline is among the steepest declines of any state according to the

- Pew Center on the States' State of Recidivism report, "The Revolving Door of America's Prisons."
- Since 1999, New Jersey's prison population has declined more than 29 percent.

Ending the Failed War on Drugs by Putting Treatment First:

Governor Christie has followed through on his commitment to take a smarter and more effective approach in how the State treats drug-addicted offenders by signing into law landmark, bipartisan legislation to put in place a state-wide, mandatory drug court program. The legislation acted on the principles laid out by Governor Christie – that no life is disposable and that it is a commonsense, fiscal, and moral imperative to help individuals dealing with drug addiction reclaim their lives with treatment, rather than warehousing them in prison.

- Following the program's enactment, mandatory drug courts were established in Hudson, Ocean and the region including Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren counties.
- This year, the following regions will be folded in: Atlantic and Cape May, Passaic and Mercer.
- The law calls for a five-year phase in period, during which the capacity of the state's drug courts will be expanded and the effectiveness of the effort will be measured.

In fiscal year 2015, Governor Christie further acts on his commitment by increasing funding by \$4.5 million for drug court expansion and treatment.

This additional funding will permit the Department of Human Services to expand treatment to approximately 1,000 clients in both inpatient and outpatient facilities, providing the capacity needed to continue drug court expansion.

Reclaiming Even More Lives by Integrating Substance Abuse Treatment with Employment Services:

Governor Christie is going further in helping those with drug addiction reclaim their lives in a permanent way, by taking the lead on an innovative initiative to integrate substance abuse treatment with employment services like job training, skills acquisition, and job-search and placement resources. Research shows that integrating employment with substance abuse treatment helps secure participation in the treatment program and leads to lower rates of relapse.

- Leveraging a \$500,000 grant from the Nicholson Foundation, Governor Christie is pressing forward with his commitment to taking a more effective, compassionate, and innovative approach to nonviolent offenders who are drug addicted with an integration of employment services to make treatment even more effective and lasting.
- These grant dollars will allow up to \$500,000 in additional federal resources to be drawn down via the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program, for which many Drug Court participants are eligible. SNAP E&T specifically targets SNAP recipients for job training, skills acquisition, and employment placement.

Altogether, in fiscal year 2015, the Christie Administration and partners will devote \$1 million towards these integrated employment services.

Drug Court Will Help New Jerseyans Turn Their Lives Around:

The rate at which drug court graduates are re-arrested for new offenses is 16% and the reconviction rate is 8%.

- This is compared to re-arrest rates for drug offenders released from prison that stand at 54% with a re-conviction rate of 43%.
- According to that report, an average institutional cost per inmate is approximately \$38,900, whereas the

cost for an active drug court participant is roughly \$11,379.