

## **BUDGET COMMITTEE TESTIMONY COMMISSIONER DEVON BROWN**

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, I am honored to appear before you today for the fourth time as the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections. Heeding the admonitions and instructions of Acting Governor Codey, we are realistically and prudently facing the challenges engendered by a budgetary crisis unlike any before. In fact, the department has systematically reduced custody overtime expenditures from a high of \$83.6 million in fiscal year 1998 to the \$30-\$35 million level projected in fiscal year 2005, or a reduction in the 60%-65% range over the period.

This has been accomplished despite the significant number of departmental staff called to serve their country in recent years. In FY 2005 an average 61 Uniformed Custody personnel at any given time are on military leave requiring their posts to be covered by available staff at an overtime cost of \$5.2 million. In addition, in FY 2005 this Department anticipates spending \$6.7 million in Custody overtime, and an additional \$4.6 million in straight-time officer pay, as a result of an average 134 individuals on Sick Leave Injury (SLI) status. Few states if any allow the one-year's sick leave at full pay benefit that the State of New Jersey provides. Reducing or eliminating SLI would save millions. Workers truly in need of extended care would be accommodated through workers' compensation.

Over the past four years, the Office of Legislative Services has audited various components of the department. Whenever possible, the department has taken corrective action to safeguard fiscal resources in response to audit findings. Department staff worked with the Administrative Office of the Courts to ensure that the \$30 dollar Law Enforcement Officer Training Education Fund (LEOTEF) penalty is assessed by the courts for every adjudicated offense on the Judgment of Conviction. Our Edna Mahan facility reduced the number of meals produced by 25% by maintaining a log of food production, and reduced waste hauling costs by installing an “Insinerator” in the dining halls. The department will continue to utilize audit report findings as a source of cost control initiatives.

Since 1996, the state has been contracting to provide medical and mental health services to inmates. In the ensuing years, the department has refined and strengthened its provider’s agreement for inmate medical care, incorporating a higher accountability on the part of the provider, and we are confident that the current arrangement provides the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Additionally, we believe, as do many of our sister states, that establishing a relationship with the state university provides major benefits to both parties, both financially and qualitatively. Accordingly, the state entered into an agreement with the prestigious University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey to provide mental health services to inmates.

The determination to utilize UMDNJ as a mental health service provider was driven by the desire to resolve the state's long standing *CF v Terhune* settlement agreement and eliminate court monitoring of inmate mental healthcare, to which the department has been subject since FY 1999. Since then, the department has paid a total of \$1.9 million for federal monitors. By providing a staffing level adequate to deliver care that is consistent with the settlement agreement requirements, the department will be able to end monitoring. In FY 2005, the combined cost estimate for these health care services totals \$136 million.

Moreover, we remain judicious in seeking grant funding that will address the needs of the department while also offsetting any further burden on state dollars in this time of limited resources. Through our efforts, the department received seven new federal grants and subgrants thus far in FY 2005. These awards resulted in **just under \$1 million** in new federal revenues to the department. Despite rising costs and increased demands, we remain determined to operate as efficiently as possible while living within our means, to ensure that those committed to the state correctional facilities are confined with the level of custody necessary to protect the public and that they are provided with the supervision, care, training and treatment needed to prepare them for successful reintegration into the community. Unspoken in our mission, but equally important, is the **prevention** of crime, as

success in this endeavor has far-reaching budgetary and public safety implications. I firmly believe we are succeeding admirably in this undertaking, as according to the latest national government data (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics) on inmate population growth, New Jersey is fourth among only 11 states that have shown a decline in its prisoner census.

Moreover, in the interest of protecting the public, we understand that by reducing the rate of recidivism, we reduce the rate of victimization. Thus, we advocate the view that public safety must be broadly defined. And, like charity, safety begins at home. Unsung heroes of the law enforcement family, correction officers face dangers seen and unseen daily, and deserve and receive all the support this administration can provide.

## **CORRECTION OFFICER SAFETY AND TRAINING**

### **1. GANGS IN PRISON**

Much has been written about gangs in prison since the incident at Bayside State Prison on New Year's Day. The Department of Corrections, like all other penal systems, does not choose its clientele but rather must quite literally play the hand that is dealt us, no matter how difficult or challenging that hand might be. Gang members are found in the prisons, as they are alarmingly found in the streets and schools and malls across New Jersey and the nation. It is only intuitive that one

would understand that when gang members are apprehended, convicted, and sentenced to the NJDOC, they would retain their affiliation to their respective groups. It must be clearly understood that in and of itself, being a member of a gang is not a crime; it is when one acts on that affiliation and disrupts the safe and orderly operation of a prison that an offense occurs. I know full well, however, that the New Jersey Department of Corrections is at the forefront nationally with regard to the identification, separation, housing, and prison control of gang members. Considering the fact that there are over 4,500 known gang members who have been committed by the courts to our custody and the exceedingly low instances of disruption caused by these groups while under our control, any objective analysis of our strategies must readily conclude that we are doing something extremely right! I ask you, Mr. Chairman, and esteemed members of the Committee, to inquire of the New Jersey State Police, especially their Street Gangs Unit, all 21 county prosecutors and freeholders, including Cumberland County, and yes, even the police chief in your local municipality, about the gang education and strategies on their control that they have received, and I promise you, investigators from the New Jersey Department of Corrections played an integral part in delivering that training. For more than a decade, gangs have been tracked within our system, by the Intelligence Section of the Special Investigations Division. In the fall of 1994, Institutional Intelligence Committees were

established throughout the NJDOC. **Each** of the 14 facilities implemented its own committee, which was comprised of the SID Institutional Intelligence Officer and a selection of custody staff members as determined by the facility Administrator, with centralized meetings of ALL committees held monthly. The purpose? To gather and most importantly, to **SHARE** information on gang members, especially with line custody staff in each institution. **It thereby is incumbent on those custody staff members to share that monthly intelligence report with line staff.** In addition to the daylong training correctional recruits receive at the Academy, Intelligence Staff travel to each prison to present training on an as-requested basis. Developed by, and for the protection of correction officers, the Security Threat Group Management Unit was devised to isolate problematic gang affiliated inmates or those identified as gang leaders from the general population at Northern State Prison in March 1998. STGMU provides a structured and controlled environment where inmate behavior is closely monitored by a team of departmental staff. The unit employs a three-phase behavior modification program that requires inmates to renounce their Security Threat Group affiliation prior to completion. Immediate results were dramatic—an **astounding** 84% drop in group demonstrations, and a **42% decline in staff assaults**. Clearly, the numbers do not lie—the establishment of the STGMU unit has enhanced officer safety. Furthermore, recent data showing that gang members who have completed our

Security Threat Group Management Unit (STGMU) program recidivate at **less than half the rate** of the national average for prisoners who are released to the community. This finding lends irrefutable proof of the effectiveness of this approach. The fact that Maryland and North Carolina, among others, are modeling their gang units after our STGMU unit indicates that we are not alone in reaching that assessment. **In essence, safer behind bars for our officers, safer on the street for our citizens.** With a centralized database which is updated daily, in-depth academy training, monthly intelligence meetings and institutional training, I am firmly convinced that the New Jersey Department of Corrections has addressed the problem of gangs in our prisons aggressively, proactively, and with a sense of urgency that reflects our commitment to public safety, both in and out of the prison setting. The fact that local, state and even yes—federal agencies—have reached out for our assistance in the identification and control of gangs lends enormous credence to my conviction. We can all take great pride in the national leadership role that the New Jersey Department of Corrections has assumed in this arena.

## **2. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS**

Media attention has been focused on the plague of domestic violence, particularly as it relates to law enforcement personnel, and unfortunately, so widespread is this problem, that national legislation was enacted in 1996 to address this societal

concern that accounts for lost wages, lost families, and in the extreme, lost lives. Regrettably, faced with the same stress and strife that their brothers and sisters in the blue deal with nationally, correction officers in New Jersey are not exempt. I mentioned in my testimony last year that three fatalities occurred with correction officers involved in domestic violence incidents. Since that time, one other has regrettably taken place. These tragedies occurred in the midst of our department witnessing a significant increase in the number of domestic violence investigations over the past years. Needless to say, this situation does not bode well for the individuals and their families, and poses significant managerial and budgetary implications when one realizes the enormous work time lost by those contributing and victimized by these circumstances. During the past three years, we have made a pronounced effort to bring this issue to the forefront among our staff and to other correctional professionals across the country, and I believe we have achieved great success in this arena, as the latest data indicates that domestic violence episodes have been reduced by nearly **one third**. We have partnered with the University of Medicine and Dentistry's Cop-2-Cop program and initiated a peer Counseling Program in our effort to grapple effectively with the domestic violence issue. Additionally, trigger locks are now required for all departmentally issued as well as off-duty weapons, and these firearms must be stored in secure devices. Perhaps the few seconds it takes to retrieve a handgun and disarm the lock may be enough may



be enough time for an incident to be diffused. We are joining the research community to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts and are actively engaging in empirical studies that will help us, and all other law enforcement agencies to understand the dynamics of this phenomenon so that we can enhance prevention and treatment interventions. And while the financial ramifications of domestic violence can be measured, the emotional cost to the families involved can never be calculated. Indeed, I am proud that the New Jersey Department of Corrections is leading the nation in formulating a cogent and nationally respected response to the issue of domestic violence among correctional personnel and other members of the law enforcement community, and our success can be measured by the aforementioned dramatic decrease in the number of domestic violence incidents.

### **3. LAMP PROGRAM**

The Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility in Bordentown had the shameful reputation as a “Gladiator School” due to the many incidences of violence and disruption that occurred on an alarmingly regular basis, thereby jeopardizing the security of the institution and staff. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, we implemented a highly structured inmate management system that emphasizes rewards for good behavior and disincentives for misconduct. LAMP (Level of Assignment Management Program) is built around the division of the

facility into four levels. All new inmates start at the lowest level and with good conduct and program participation can work their way up to the next level, gaining increased privileges—and with them, increased expectations of positive behavior and individual accountability each step of the way. An offender’s level can and is lowered as a result of misconduct. The LAMP “carrot and stick” approach provides offenders with a host of opportunities, while adding an enhanced layer of security for the staff who work there. Only the best-behaved inmates now dwell in the dormitories that for so long were the bane of correction officers’ existence. Though beginning as a pilot program at this facility, evidence of its benefits has spurred serious thought of replicating this program in all of our institutions. In testimony of the success of the LAMP program, inmate infractions at the Wagner facility have thus far been reduced by 67%.

#### **4. TRAILERS/SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS**

In my testimony before the Law and Public Safety Committee in February, I explained the reasons why dormitory-style trailers are not appropriate accommodations for the types of inmates currently in our custody. Good fortune, coupled with good correctional practice, have helped to avert potential tragedies at our facilities in regard to these aging trailers. Hearken back to the hurricanes in 2003, when the ENTIRE population of Southern State Correctional Facility, which

is comprised totally of trailers, had to be evacuated. An electrical fire completely destroyed and rendered unlivable one of those trailers, as well as one on the grounds of East Jersey State Prison and Riverfront State Prison, while heavy snow collapsed the roof of another trailer at Bayside State Prison. When the offender population escalated dramatically some years ago, trailers were used as a stop gap measure to address the housing issue. While recognizing the financial constraints of the budget, the problem of aging and unsafe housing urgently needs to be addressed. We welcome the support in the FY 2006 budget recommendation to begin the process. We would like to replace them with conventional construction that would properly address security and safety, using monies from the Capital Improvements.

## **5. IN-SERVICE TRAINING**

As the largest law enforcement entity in the state, officers of the New Jersey Department of Corrections are on the front lines every day. Not only in our prisons, but beyond as well, working on the road in the Fugitive Unit, or at our airports and reservoirs as members of the Special Operations Group. As we enter the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, there is a dire need to ensure that our officers have all the information and training they can muster to perform their exceedingly important tasks, and most significantly, return home safely every day to their

families. Therefore, despite the penury of the budget, I would like to reiterate my annual request for funds to establish a full 40 hour in service training for our officers and civilians. The world changed forever on September 11, 2001, and the role of personnel from all branches of the criminal justice family has altered and been enhanced accordingly, as we fight terror at home and abroad. It is imperative that our custody personnel have the opportunity to access the same current law enforcement practice that their brothers and sisters in the blue receive annually.

## **CRIME PREVENTION/PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **1. “BE SMART – CHOOSE FREEDOM”**

Earlier I alluded to the unspoken but viable part of the mission of the New Jersey Department of Corrections—crime prevention. I firmly subscribe to the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Accordingly, the “BE SMART, CHOOSE FREEDOM” campaign was born. With the fear of crime prevalent among our citizens coexisting with a political climate of decreased tolerance for those who commit criminal offenses, it seems especially timely to explore the potentially beneficial role of corrections in crime prevention. The New Jersey Department of Corrections has culled literally hundreds of years of correctional experience and packaged these crime prevention precepts into ten 30-60 second public service announcements with but one thought—stemming the tide

of incarcerated youth. By broadcasting the PSAs, schools, television stations across the region and now movie theaters are joining the New Jersey Department of Corrections in forming a crime-prevention strategy intended to reach citizens throughout ours, and neighboring states. Through partnership with the media, and our sister agencies, New Jersey Transit and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, we are resounding the message that jail and prison are not glamorous; they are not a “right of passage” into adulthood nor should they be regarded as “business necessities” or the mere cost of achieving peer approval. Obviously, this message resonates with other correctional and law enforcement entities, as 15 states and numerous municipalities here in New Jersey have asked our assistance in replicating the “BE SMART, CHOOSE FREEDOM program in their respective communities and states.

## **2. PROJECT P.R.I.D.E.**

Additionally, the department originated another program, Project P.R.I.D.E., (Promoting Responsibility in Drug Education) which brings youthful inmates into schools in EVERY county throughout New Jersey, as well as Pennsylvania, discussing the ill-advised choices that they made—choices that led to their incarceration. It should be noted that for calendar year 2004, **398** presentations were made to the children of New Jersey. PRIDE has become an annual event at

many schools, as administrators, teachers, guidance counselors and especially students see the value of this presentation, year after year.

### **3. GANG AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAM**

It is an undeniable fact of life that gangs have permeated every fabric of society. Found in the schools, playgrounds, and malls—and yes, prisons—across the nation, gangs are hijacking the future of America, our children. Funded by a federal grant, the Gang Awareness and Prevention Program brings inmates who have renounced their gang membership into schools and other civic venues to discuss the horrors and violence associated with gang membership, and the often deadly fate that awaits gang bangers. It is a testament to the effectiveness of the Security Threat Group Management Unit that so many gang members have “graduated” from the program and renounced their gang affiliation, thereby creating a safer environment for staff in the prisons. In addition, as was mentioned before, perhaps all of New Jersey’s citizens benefit by our approach to gangs, as the recidivism rate is appreciably lower for those inmates who graduate from the STGMU program. If even one youngster heeds the admonitions of the reformed gang member, our mission to prevent crime is crowned with success.

## INMATE EDUCATION

With more than three decades in the correction field, I have discovered one, irrefutable fact—education is at the core of any rehabilitative effort when dealing with the offender. The mission of the NJ DOC mandates a commitment to public safety and correctional facility security. This mission is fulfilled, in part, by the provision of rehabilitative programming to its incarcerated population. Such programming constitutes a critically important institutional management tool as it reduces the greatest nemesis of correctional environments, inmate idleness. But perhaps more importantly, it serves the broader societal goal of lessening the likelihood of citizen victimization and offender recidivism. Heretofore, there has been a lamentable ignorance of the corollary between inmate programming and public safety. Moreover, all too often, the recidivism phenomenon has been described, but not fully examined and explained. Anecdotal evidence has been typically accepted with minimal attempt at providing empirical data in the form of rigorous, experimental studies. In an effort to provide a more balanced perspective on the recidivism phenomenon, and to remain consistent with its dedication to improving the quality of life for all residents of New Jersey, the NJ DOC has made a major commitment to increasing the formal education of its offenders. Additionally, in keeping with the national insistence on “evidence based” governmental policy development, the NJ DOC has subjected its efforts to rigorous

program evaluation. Education lies at the core of the Department of Corrections' inmate rehabilitative efforts. A host of innovative, nationally applauded programs and strategies have been implemented by the department to fulfill this objective. These resources have been created out of the belief that through increased education, inmates will gain a better understanding of the importance of constructive adherence to societal rules and develop the means necessary to do so. As prisoners are quite literally a "captive audience," educationally enriching material and activities are craftily incorporated within all aspects of their daily routine. Even recreational activities have a prominent educational theme with TV viewing, chess tournaments, board games, such as "Proverbial Wisdom," and system-wide inmate competition in the nationally sponsored "Stock Market Game" with 110 teams participating system wide, interwoven in these involvements as well. In accordance with federal and state requirements, mandatory educational services are provided in all fourteen of the departments primary facilities for inmates under the age of twenty-one who have been identified as being in need of special education intervention. Formal educational instruction is provided on a voluntary basis for the adult inmate population, as New Jersey does not have a statutory requirement for prisoners to pursue further schooling. All state facilities offer an array of prevocational and vocational training programs to those under correctional control. This past year, 88 high school diplomas were awarded to the



school age population, and the year 2004 saw 972 GED tests administered to prisoners, with 562 passing, or a 58% pass rate. In January 2005, two of our facilities, Mid-State Correctional Facility and Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women fully implemented Workforce Learning Link Computer Labs. This project is a collaborative effort of the New Jersey Department of Labor and New Jersey Network Public Television modeled after the One-Stop Centers. Core and supplementary programs provide a wide range of basic skills, Pre-GED, GED, workforce and life skills training. The goal of the program is to provide the offender with the essential workforce skills necessary for a successful re-entry to society. As of February 2005, 4,629 offenders are enrolled in academic and vocational programming system-wide. The decrease from the previous year is a reflection of the declining school age population and an increase in the issuance of high school diplomas. Additionally, 2,618 offenders are enrolled in cognitive behavioral and enrichment course offerings. While these numbers in and of themselves are exceptional, the long term effects must be ascertained, and evaluated for their efficacy. With this in mind, the New Jersey Department of Correction recently conducted an outcome analysis of inmates who participated in the General Educational Development program (GED) and a matched sample of inmates who had not done so. The goal of this project was to answer the often debated and highly controversial question, "Does correctional education have an

impact on rates of recidivism?” In an effort to control many of the methodological difficulties that often plague such research, the NJDOC adopted a rigorous, highly sophisticated empirical design, producing perhaps the most stringently structured research on this subject to date. Eleven predictors of recidivism were identified through literature reviews, and both groups of the 300 included inmates were hand-matched on these variables. This study found that New Jersey inmates who participated and graduated from the GED program during the years 1999 and 2000 demonstrated significantly lower levels of re-offending than inmates who did not participate in the GED program during the same period. The decreased level of re-offending was consistent across re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration rates. This study, conducted by staff of the Office of Policy and Planning, in conjunction with support from the Office of Educational Services and the Office of Information Technology, found that 43% of the inmates who received a GED recidivated, while 55% of the matched comparison group of inmates who did not receive a GED returned to prison during the period under review of 4 to 5 years. It should be noted that the traditional research follow-up is three years, but our examination was extended an additional two years, obviously lending greater credence to our study. **In short—more education, less crime, less taxpayer dollars spent for incarceration, safer communities for us all.**

## INMATE HEALTHCARE

The department produced and disseminated to our state's county correctional systems and to 30 other states the **only training video** in the nation on the nature and treatment of MRSA, a highly contagious skin disorder that plagues jails and prisons nationwide, in a correctional environment.

The department has partnered with the Department of Health and Senior Services in developing and producing a training video on the nature, treatment, and control among criminal offenders.

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT**

Alcohol/drug addiction is a corrections issue. The link between addiction and criminal behavior is well established. It is therefore no surprise that drug driven crime is the source of incarceration of a majority of state inmates under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Corrections. We clearly recognize that addressing addiction is central to fulfilling our public safety and offender rehabilitation mission. As its primary strategy to address those seriously addicted offenders, the department has adopted the research/evidence based continuum of care approach. This model provides the addicted offender with prison based Therapeutic Community treatment, followed by step down participation in

Therapeutic Community treatment, followed by step down participation in community corrections. On an annual basis, approximately 4,000 offenders participate in one of the 1,464 Therapeutic Community Treatment opportunities. In addition, recognizing that New Jersey has designated its treatment programming on American Correctional Association standards for Therapeutic Community Programs, this prestigious body has selected our state to participate in an accreditation pilot project that will afford this department to be among the first in the nation to achieve this status. Not all addicted offenders, however, meet the strict criteria of program participation. The department recognizes that a one-size fits all treatment approach does not accommodate the complexities of the offender population and is implementing and further developing alternative substance use disorder treatment strategies to meet treatment needs system-wide. I would like to share some of these alternative strategies with you today:

- Relapse is a component of recovery and will occur in the community corrections setting given the level of opportunity and access. In 2004, the Office of Community Programs implemented a Relapse Prevention Program for inmates in Residential Community Release Programs. The NJDOC has implemented this program to provide relapse treatment for inmates testing positive for substance use while in Community Programs. This is an intensive six-month treatment program that targets specific triggers that

cause relapse. This program was expanded to include female inmates, the first female participants entered the program in March 2005.

- Recognizing the critical need to provide alternative treatment services to severely alcohol/drug addicted female offenders who are otherwise ineligible for treatment programming offered by the New Jersey Department of Corrections, staff have implemented the *Relapse Education and Prevention Course* developed by the department to address addiction relapse of the offender population. The Relapse Education and Prevention Course is designed for the correctional offender to give them an education regarding relapse trends, thinking patterns, and prevention strategies and techniques. This program was not only recognized by the state through its service awards process, but received national attention as one of the American Correctional Association's Best in the Business.
- In a joint operations/programs initiative through a pilot site, Northern State Prison, the department is beginning to provide alternative education based programming to cover additional previously under-served addicted inmates. The evidence based Living in Balance model will be provided in a unit established to house appropriate treatment need offenders.
- To ensure that drug treatment programming has the best chance to succeed beyond physical participation, the department has re-instituted its case

management strategy to follow offenders through the continuum of care to address issues and problems faced by inmates as they work toward release.

- The department also turns to the state's citizens for assistance in treating addiction, nearly 2,000 AA and NA meetings were held in our institutions last year.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS**

We as a department are determined to utilize the fine technology at our disposal to track offenders, both during their incarceration and after, their programming and the effects on recidivism, all in the name of public safety. It is imperative that New Jersey citizens are given all the information they need to make informed, intelligent decisions. Accordingly, several new programs are in place.

- A Community Notification system has just been unveiled, whereby in the case of a correctional emergency—escape, fire, quarantine, evacuation—citizens can call an 800 number and receive an update. They may also sign up to be automatically contacted at a telephone number they designate to be alerted to such emergencies. In addition, our website will also alert the public of the emergency. The public will also be notified in the same fashion when the emergency is over. It is our belief that this new initiative will do much to

enhance our already laudable measures to protect our communities in times of correctional emergency.

- In August 2004, DOC's Office of Information Technology (OIT) unit implemented a module to automate the process of tracking programs utilized by offenders, which will allow the department to evaluate the efficacy of programs and their effect on the offender recidivism rate.
- The department has developed a series of video vignettes to aid in our recruitment of employees who have a better understanding of the demands and responsibilities of correctional work.
- Our Offender Locator which was unveiled two years ago on our website, has been hailed by law enforcement and victims groups alike as one of the best, most thorough in the nation. Accordingly, we are working with the New Jersey State Police and the Office of the Attorney General to integrate the locator database into municipal patrol cars, so that officers on the street can have immediate access to this critical data. By partnering with the New Jersey State Police, the department will develop and maintain the information in such a way as to ensure that it is compatible with the emerging national criminal justice information environment.
- During FY 2005, DOC's OIT unit implemented a custody recruitment program, which maintains a record of all recruits from the initial contact through pre-

employment physicals, psychological and drug tests, training, graduating and hiring.

- The need for offenders to have a temporary ID card to be used immediately after release emerged early in 2003 as an issue. Subsequently, OIT staff developed a program to permit authorized users to generate the 'released offender' temporary identification card from the report submission screen in iTAG. The cards are subsequently printed on a badge card printer.
- FastID terminals were installed at the Central Reception and Assignment Facility on 1/19/05. The FastID system will be utilized to quickly provide a one-to-one comparison/verification between a live fingerprint (index finger) and the information stored in the New Jersey State Police database. It has become apparent in the days following September 11, 2001 that proper identification must be verified on a moment's notice, and the FastID technology addresses that problem.

### **PRISONER REENTRY INITIATIVES**

The department recognizes that the success of operating an effective continuum of care model in a conservative economy rests in our ability to establish collaborative partnerships with other government and non-government agencies. Achievements made this year have enhanced the department's programs and services designed to



prepare offenders to leave prison equipped with the means to lead productive lives in the community, and fulfill our mission to ensure public safety. This is critically important when one realizes that 14,000 inmates are released from our prisons each year.

- The Office of Community Programs, Division of Programs and Community Services, Department of Corrections, awarded new Performance Based contracts for FY 2005 through FY 2007 to providers of Residential Community Release Programs (RCRP). The intent of this approach is to provide consistent quality services across all provider agencies based on American Correctional Association Performance Based Standards for Adult Residential Community Services. These contracts, the first of their kind in the nation, provide for greater accountability through measurable outcomes. The new contract awards a total of 2,632 beds and includes new services for female inmates. In the new contracts, the number of beds designated to female inmates has increased by 73 beds (40%), from 181 beds to 254 beds. The new contracts included an award for a new 35 bed female Work Release facility in Camden and a 40 bed female Assessment Center in Trenton. In addition, the new performance-based contract provides the NJDOC an improved method of managing and tracking the performance of contracted services.

- The need for offenders to obtain valid identification prior to release is critical to their success outside of the prison setting. As a result, the department developed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Social Security Administration for processing inmate applications for duplicate or corrected social security number cards prior to release from the institutions. The agreement has led to its consideration at the national level for an agreement between the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons who also acknowledges the reality of leveraging public resources and the effects of crime and public safety. Another aspect of our work with the Social Security Administration is the pre-release planning for inmates to determine benefit eligibility and the sharing of medical information via information technology to pre-qualify offenders for supplemental security benefits. The department has drafted agreements for the Social Security Administration to review.
- Under the Offender Workforce Development Specialist Program, three interdepartmental regional workshops were provided throughout the State of New Jersey to enhance the skills of professionals who prepare offenders for employment and/or assist the offender to find and retain employment.
- Following recommendations made by the National Governor's Association Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy, the department has partnered with the State

Parole Board in new and innovative ways to enhance the continuity of care across state agencies. Institutional social workers, together with the State Parole Board institutional parole officers and counselors, have developed a joint comprehensive assessment profile (J-CAP) that integrates service delivery for offenders through a multidiscipline team review and case management process. This process is modeled after nationally accepted empirically based practices for offender reentry. Better communication and cooperation between agencies has had a positive impact toward removing the barriers that have historically prevented the success of our mutually held goal of enhancing public safety. The enhanced case management process begins when offenders first enter our institutions and continues throughout the return of the offender to society. Within the year, our vision of collaboration will be realized, as we will implement the J-CAP as a pilot project at Southern State Correctional Facility and Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women.

- As noted in last year's budget testimony, Essex County Smart Book resource guide for offenders, parolees and social services staff was created in collaboration with the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and Bloomfield College. Five hundred guides were distributed to each institutional social service department and are being evaluated for its effectiveness for aiding offender's in the reintegration process.

- The department has continued to participate in a federally funded collaboration with the State Parole Board and the Juvenile Justice Commission called the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI). We are currently in its third and final funding period. Interventions that targeted the prison population most at-risk of reincarceration received intensive, holistic support from the department, the State Parole Board and the community beginning in prison and continuing throughout Parole supervision. Our achievements have resulted in the implementation of a cost-effective system of rehabilitative services that utilizes proven methodology and accepted practices in the field of correctional social work. In turn, we expect to effect a paradigm change in the philosophy and infrastructure of the department to a “what works” environment which supports offender reentry. The department is piloting a Coordinated Reentry System Initiative (CRSI) that leverages and coordinates existing resources for the integration of services. The purpose of the pilot program is to more effectively transition offenders from prison to society thereby increasing public safety and crime prevention, reducing recidivism and making better use of scarce public resources. This pilot program will involve 130 offenders assigned to medium custody at Southern State Correctional Facility. One housing unit will be converted into a transitional living unit in which offenders receive intense case management and opportunities to demonstrate pro-social

and basic living competencies in an environment that facilitates a step down process from institutional living to the community. We will create a partnership with Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice to research its effectiveness.

- The Responsible Parenting Program represents a multi-agency approach to addressing the parenting issues prevalent within our population. Working with the Departments of Human Services and Labor and Workforce Development as well as other criminal justice players, the initiative looks to minimize the impact of the barriers to reentry that are related to family and child support concerns. The department and its partners in this endeavor firmly believe that a stable family environment contributes to child support compliance as well as a productive, crime free lifestyle. During this year, this valuable program has been enhanced through its placement in the women's in-prison alcohol/drug treatment program. To date, over 500 participating offenders have completed the program.

### **HOMELAND SECURITY/INTERAGENCY COOPERATION**

- Under the direction of the New Jersey State Police a call went to all State of New Jersey employees at the beginning of this year, to respond to a national appeal that volunteers be trained as first responders in times of catastrophic

situations either natural such as floods and violent storms or terroristic attacks.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections was well represented in this effort.

- The department's expertise in the area of explosive and narcotics detection has been recognized through the awarding of \$170,000 in federal Homeland Security funding to support three (3) additional canine units within the department's Special Operations Division. These units have been utilized in numerous multi-jurisdictional detection efforts in and outside of New Jersey.
- At the recent graduation held for five hundred and nine (509) presently CERT trained State of New Jersey employees at New Jersey State Police division headquarters in West Trenton the NJ Department of Corrections was only second to NJ Department of Environmental Protection in having trained so many volunteers to this date. The State of New Jersey was honored by the Federal Department of Homeland Security by being the first State in the United States to have answered the call to have trained such a large amount of its citizens as volunteers.
- To prevent prison population and reduce the cost of incarceration, inter-agency efforts were intensified with the Administrative Office of the Courts Intensive Supervision Program. A record high of 1,293 released offenders was accomplished on January 28, 2005. This was the result of improved

departmental communication and sharing technological and information resources.

- The Department of Correction's Community Labor Assistance Program is responsible for providing inmate labor support to municipalities, governmental agencies and community based non-profit organizations. Presently, there are 85 inmate labor teams that are comprised of a total of 821 offenders. These crews were routinely deployed, five days a week, to twenty New Jersey counties during the past year. Approximately **1.1 million work-hours** were expended, and it is estimated that governments, throughout the state, saved approximately **\$5,150,000 dollars** from the services provided by these details. This figure is calculated by multiplying 1.1 million work hours by the current minimum wage \$5.15 per hour, which is **at least** what non-inmate workers would receive.
- Last year Agri-Industries, which gainfully employs hundreds of inmates throughout the state, produced 3.5 million pounds of beef, pork and poultry, 1.6 million pounds of produce and .3 million gallons of milk to be utilized by the DOC and other state agencies, including Human Services and Military and Veterans' Affairs.

## THE FUTURE

We would all like to believe that those individuals under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections view the period of incarceration as an opportunity to mend their ways through participation in programming activities. This is not always so.

- I come before you today to ask you to work with the department in the development and implementation of legislation that would provide a minimal yet attractive level of time credits to those offenders who participate and complete programs designed to aid them in maintaining a crime free life.
- I ask the members of the Legislature to support Senator Ronald Rice's bill, number S2134, which makes possession or use of a cellular telephone or accessories by a person confined to a state correctional facility a second degree crime. The safety of our institutions, our staff—indeed our communities—should not be jeopardized because an inmate has the ability to orchestrate a crime while behind prison walls through access to a cell phone.
- The establishment of in-service training for custody is imperative to the mission of the department and the safety of our citizens. We are prepared to work closely with the esteemed members of the Legislature to ensure that this department has access to the same training opportunities that every other law



enforcement entity in the state and all progressive correctional systems in the country do.

- The treatment of the mentally ill offender is an increasing national concern. Indeed, Acting Governor Codey has made the treatment of the mentally ill a priority of his administration. Accordingly, the NJDOC will soon release a Request For Proposal to solicit bids for the contracted operation of community based transitional care for up to 250 special needs inmates (125 male and 125 female). This population would include those with mental illness as well as those with co-occurring disorders. The program, funded within the department's existing budgeted bedspace capacity, will entail a highly structured milieu inclusive of assessment and therapeutic intervention provided by UMDNJ staff as well as educational and vocational opportunities, substance abuse treatment, life skills activities and comprehensive case management services offered by the contracted residential community provider agency. This initiative will not require additional funding; instead existing funding will be reallocated.