



**State of New Jersey**

**Department of Corrections**

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**NEW JERSEY CONTINUES TO BE A NATIONAL LEADER  
IN REDUCING CRIME, WHILE ALSO SAFELY LOWERING OFFENDER  
POPULATION**

New Jersey is once again recognized as a national leader in reducing both crime and prison populations, as the Christie Administration continues to advance reform efforts to combat recidivism, enhance law enforcement procedures, and address the disease of drug addiction.

The Garden State has the second highest rate of reducing incarceration in the country, according to an assessment of federal data released two weeks ago by New York University's Brennan Center for Justice. Similar data was released in 2014 by the U.S. Department of Justice's Uniform Crime Reporting Program and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

The Center concluded that since 2000, the population in New Jersey's prisons has dropped 26 percent, while the overall crime rate went down about 30 percent during the same period. Last year, a Washington D.C. research organization noted New Jersey and New York led the nation by reducing their prison populations by 26 percent between 1999 and 2012, while the nationwide state prison population increased by 10 percent.

"At the same time as the state-sentence offender population declined from more than 30,000 at the turn of the century to approximately 21,000 today, the number of inmates returning to custody within three years of their release date has decreased from 48 percent

to 32 percent,” said New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) Commissioner Gary M. Lanigan.

Furthermore, the state-sentenced inmate population in county jails, roughly 1,500 before Governor Christie took office, is now below 200, which allows more offenders to begin the NJDOC’s highly regarded re-entry programming as soon as possible.

“There will always be a need for strong enforcement and a tough prosecutorial stance with respect to certain crimes and certain offenders, but history has demonstrated that incarceration alone is not the answer to the crime problem,” said Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman. “That is why we have worked collaboratively with our law enforcement partners at every level -- as well as the courts, social service providers, community leaders and other stakeholders -- on such efforts as the Trenton Violence Reduction Strategy, our re-entry programs, Fugitive Safe Surrender and other efforts aimed at reducing crime by changing lives.”

Commissioner Lanigan cited the leadership and support of Governor Chris Christie and his Administration in areas such as drug addiction treatment, addressing mental health issues and expanding offender re-entry programs. Under Governor Christie, a five-year phase-in of mandatory Drug Courts for non-violent offenders was instituted, giving those struggling with drug addiction the treatment they need to reclaim their lives.

Drug Courts, which have been expanded to all 21 counties across the state, have diverted thousands of individuals from state prison into drug treatment programs designed to break the cycle of addiction. 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 reconviction rate of 43%.

Governor Christie is a strong proponent of state-funded one-stop centers that connect ex-offenders to a comprehensive array of services. The Commissioner also pointed to legislative initiatives such as mandatory education legislation through which the NJDOC works to ensure that offenders attain at least a 12<sup>th</sup>-grade reading level, and “ban-the-box,” a mandate that assists former offenders in finding employment.

Commissioner Lanigan discussed his department’s close working relationships with the State Parole Board and county jails. As a result, the NJDOC is able to reduce the length of time it takes for a parole-eligible offender to go through the process. Parolee absconders also have decreased 42 percent since Governor Christie took office.

“The improvements enable the NJDOC to operate as efficiently as possible as we fulfill our mission of protecting the public by operating safe, secure and humane facilities,” Commissioner Lanigan said. “By maximizing our efficiency, we are saving money for New Jersey’s taxpayers while supporting those who were incarcerated to re-enter productive and healthy lives in our communities.”

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