

INSIDE CORRECTIONS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



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THE HARVEST

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Cover photo: Commissioner Hicks looks forward to guiding the NJDOC into the new decade.



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INSIDE WORD

with Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq.

Happy New Year and tidings of good health to all. A new year represents a fresh start, a period of tremendous opportunity. Another chance for a positive way forward. A period of development and growth.

Since ushering in 2020, I humbly announce my appointment as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC). As I steer the NJDOC into a new decade, as part of the Department's continuous improvement plan, my vision includes a laser focus on three key areas: safety, reentry and rehabilitation, and efficiency.

Safety remains our top priority. We will explore new technologies and programs that promote the well-being of staff and the incarcerated as well as the security of our facilities.

We believe that reentry and rehabilitation go hand-in-hand with safety. In 2020, many individuals will transition out of our system. Our goal is to ensure they go back into the community equipped to succeed, so we are doubling down on our education and vocational initiatives to help break the cycle of incarceration.

In 2019, a decrease in our prison population made way for the consolidation of the Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility. We'll continue to review our operational needs to determine fiscal efficiencies without compromising public safety.

These are transformational times for the Department. I call upon my colleagues in the NJDOC and across New Jersey's agencies and communities to join us in our efforts in support of the Garden State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcus O. Hicks". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq.



Marcus O. Hicks, Esq., was confirmed as Commissioner of the NJDOC on January 9.

IT'S OFFICIAL

Full Senate Votes to Confirm Hicks

By Matt Schuman

Following a hearing held January 9, the Senate Judiciary Committee cleared Marcus O. Hicks, Esq., as the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC). Shortly thereafter, the full Senate voted to confirm him to head the state's second-largest agency.

Also on January 9, the Senate confirmed Judith M. Persichilli as the Commissioner

of the New Jersey Department of Health.

"I am thrilled to have two outstanding partners in Marcus and Judy who are leading critical Departments within our Administration," Governor Phil Murphy said. "These individuals are highly respected members of their fields and have remarkable records of proven success. I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure a stronger and

fairer New Jersey for all.”

Hicks has more than 15 years of public policy and legal experience. Prior to his appointment as Acting Commissioner in May 2018, he served in many roles throughout the NJDOC since joining the Department in 2007.

Most recently, he was the Chief of Staff, managing human resources, policy analysis, research and evaluation, grants management, custody and civilian staff training, as well as the Department’s fleet of vehicles. Hicks was also Director of Programs and Community Services, where he had oversight of \$64.5 million in the procurement and contracting process of reentry services to approximately 2,800 inmates at 18 Residential Community Release Programs across New Jersey.

Additionally, he directed the Office of County Services, which is responsible for conducting annual inspections of the 22 county correctional facilities and 376 municipal detention facilities located throughout the state and served as Assistant Division Director of the Office of Transitional Services, the office responsible for providing comprehensive reentry services to inmates upon entry to prison until their reintegration back into the community.

Prior to joining the NJDOC, Hicks served as Policy Advisor to former New Jersey Governor Jon S. Corzine as well as Policy Counsel to former New Jersey Governor Richard J. Codey. He also completed a judicial clerkship for the Honorable Joseph Isabella of Essex County.

“My background has equipped me with the kinds of varied experiences necessary to achieving a holistic perspective of NJDOC operations,” said the Commissioner, a graduate of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, who received his Juris Doctor degree from Seton Hall University School of Law in Newark.

“I am humbled by the tremendous impact this Department has on the lives of those in our custody, as well as the safety of our state, and I am fully committed to our mission,” he added.

As Acting Commissioner, Hicks faced a variety of challenges, perhaps most notably a series of safety issues at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women that unfolded prior to his appointment. Early in his tenure, he developed the Safety and Accountability for Edna Task Force, which examined ways to improve conditions and provide a safer facility. This group implemented his idea of gender restricted posts and identified the need for increased camera surveillance. Hicks also oversaw increased education around the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and the reestablishment of a Board of Trustees to serve as the voice of the women at the facility.

Another of Hicks’ priorities has been assisting the offender population with treatment for substance-use disorders. Addictions treatment in the Department consists of screening all offenders entering the NJDOC for common classes of addictive substances, followed by a referral for psychosocial treatment and

medications when appropriate.

“The NJDOC acknowledges that all persons are unique and present their own manifestations of addictions. Therefore, a ‘one size fits all’ approach is not medically supported,” he said.

Consistent with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) guidelines, as of 2018, all FDA-approved medications for Substance Use Disorders are available to all offenders.

Since the inception of the program, more than 2,500 patients have been on Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) while incarcerated.

The Department also offers a range of family and behavioral programs as well as a peer navigator program, which provides offenders who require substance-use disorder services with support on their recovery journey.

Another top priority has been offender reentry.

“It’s my mission to ensure individuals go back into the community equipped

to succeed,” Hicks added. “In addition to MAT and behavioral counseling, we invest in education, including vocational training, to ensure everyone has the tools to thrive.”

Under Hicks, the NJDOC also reinstated informational reentry fairs, bringing government agencies, community providers and employers into correctional facilities to expose them to a pool of job-ready candidates in the offender

population. In all instances, the Commissioner noted, the NJDOC is committed to operating in a fiscally responsible manner. That commitment led to the recent consolidation of Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility. The consolidation, effective January 2, is expected to save \$13 million and will not compromise public safety or

impact jobs.

“It has been my honor to lead this Department,” Hicks said following his confirmation. “Looking ahead, the Department will continue to operate with integrity and explore the use of emerging technologies to maintain the security of our facilities and create operational efficiencies.”



“I am humbled by the tremendous impact this Department has on the lives of those in our custody, as well as the safety of our state, and I am fully committed to our mission.”



Dr. Herbert Kaldany discusses Medication-Assisted Treatment at Mid-State Correctional Facility during a recent meeting with county jail wardens.

RECOVERY

NJDOC Aids in Expansion of MAT to County Jails

By John Cokos

The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) takes measures to help tackle the state's substance-use epidemic immediately upon intake. Offenders are screened for common classes of addictive substances and referred for psychosocial and Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) when appropriate.

During the initial screening, approximately 30 percent of state-sentenced inmates are diagnosed with a substance use disorder (SUD). Since all persons present varying manifestations of addiction, the Department takes a multifaceted approach to treatment

that includes MAT. The NJDOC's MAT program consists of all FDA-approved medications for substance use disorders, along with a peer-mentorship program that provides offenders support during their recovery journey.

To expand MAT services across the state, earlier this year, the NJDOC, in partnership with the Murphy Administration, invested \$8 million for the expansion of MAT programs in county jails. The Department also provides technical assistance in immediate intervention and long-term treatment.

Following the grant announcement, county jail wardens and representatives of the

NJDOC, Department of Human Services and Department of Health gathered at Mid-State Correctional Facility to discuss MAT program implementation in jails.

During the meeting, NJDOC medical and custody staff members demonstrated how to safely and effectively administer Buprenorphine, one of several medications utilized in the correctional MAT program. Dr. Herbert Kaldany, the Department's Statewide Director of Psychiatry, Mental Health and Addictions, then led a follow-up discussion and questions-and-answers session regarding the efficacy of MAT in county jails.

According to a document written by Dr. Kaldany outlining the NJDOC's addictions program, addictions treatment for offenders often starts at the county jails. Prior to justice reform, the majority of people spent an extended period of time in a county jail and then moved on to the state prison system. Since the advent of bail reform, the trend has been to see the great majority of people be released after only a few days. By encouraging immediate access to MAT in county jails, people with addictions can move more successfully into treatment in the community. Should a person enter the state prison system, the treatment can be continued without interruption or initiated if medically warranted.

Prior to the meeting at Mid-State, leaders from the county jail community expressed optimism regarding the initiative.

"Each county jail will now be able to provide this well-needed service as part of

the change in our day-to-day responsibilities," said Eugene Caldwell, warden of the Gloucester County Department of Corrections and president of the New Jersey County Jail Warden's Association. "With this partnership, we can positively change someone's life."

Funding for the initiative will go toward medication, hiring clinical staff trained in addiction, educational programs, trauma-informed addiction training and the development of network partnerships to assist in providing a range of services for individuals post-release.

Encouraging the county jail system to offer more immediate access to addictions treatment for people in custody is a key component for better outcomes when the treatment is coordinated through a statewide plan.



NJDOC medical and custody staff demonstrate how to safely and effectively administer Buprenorphine, one of several medications utilized in the correctional MAT program.



Lieutenant Clay McClain (left) receives a course completion certificate for the National Emergency Management Basic Academy from Mario Sinatra, Executive Officer for the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management.

FIVE QUESTIONS

with Lieutenant Clay McClain of SOG

By Matt Schuman

The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) is tasked with a wide-range of responsibilities well beyond the incarceration and rehabilitation of state-sentenced offenders. So says Lieutenant Clay McClain, whose observation is based on personal experience.

In his two decades with the NJDOC, McClain has performed a plethora of tasks not typically associated with the correctional field. His custody career began at East Jersey State Prison and included stints at New Jersey State Prison and the Correctional Staff Training

Academy before he became part of the Special Operations Group (SOG) in 2008. Since 2013, McClain has served as the Department's Emergency Management Coordinator.

He recently reflected on his journey as a correctional professional with Matt Schuman of the Public Information Office.

Can you discuss the demands of your job, which are significantly different than those of most NJDOC staff members?

SOG is the emergency response arm

of the Department. We've carved out a niche in terms of emergency planning, and not just in our day-to-day operations. For example, where are our vulnerabilities, and what do we need to do in order to close any gaps that might exist? Emergency management requires us to take a close look at our policies and determine how the Department can plan for, respond to and recover from all different kinds of emergencies, both internal and external.

There have been many instances in which the NJDOC's emergency management expertise has been utilized well beyond the realm of Departmental activities. How has that come about?

Our Department is written into the State Emergency Operations Plan, which has enabled us to play key roles in New Jersey's emergency management continuum. We have an ever-present responsibility to be ambassadors for the correctional industry and, more important, the NJDOC, so it's gratifying to see how our counterparts in other agencies and other states have come to realize that this Department has highly trained, knowledgeable and capable individuals. We've reached the point where many of our partners are

so accustomed to seeing the NJDOC represented at different operations that if we're not part of a particular event, they wonder why we're not there. That speaks to the quality of the talent within this Department.

What are some of the highest-profile events in which you've taken part?

When Hurricane Sandy struck (in 2012), we provided a law enforcement presence for the Barrier islands.

Our involvement in the Super Bowl in 2014, which included 183 members of the Department, was huge. We were tasked with supporting the New Jersey Transit Police to help protect the rails for all of the people who were taking mass transit throughout the week. We also were assigned to several key posts within the footprint of the Meadowlands on game day.



Lt. McClain takes part in a multi-agency exercise.

In 2018, we were sent to Georgia for two weeks to manage a logistical staging area during Hurricane Michael.

Earlier this month, I served as the Deputy Operations Section Chief for the Agudath Israel event, which drew more than 90,000 people to

MetLife Stadium. We were responsible for making sure a plan was in place for any emergency that may arise.

Preparations for that event began in February 2019.

And, of course, in 2017, there was Hurricane Maria, which certainly was a milestone in my career.



Lt. McClain (fifth from left) and his SOG colleagues were sent to Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

What are your most vivid recollections of the time you served in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria?

Ultimately, there were five waves (of those from the law enforcement community) sent to Puerto Rico. There were 11 of us from the Department, and we were in the first wave, so when we arrived, conditions were at their absolute worst. We were placed in various areas to keep public order. One of the memories that really stands out is how the people in Puerto Rico were so welcoming and gracious. These were people whose lives had been devastated. They were standing in lines for three, four, five hours, every day, in the heat, waiting for two bags of ice, because they had no power. Yet they were willing to give us food, beverages, snacks – anything they had – while we were providing a law enforcement presence. The manner in which the people embraced us was so humbling. We knew we were going to be going

home to our families in a few weeks, but those people had to continue waiting in line for the most basic necessities that we take for granted. The infrastructure was compromised.

The water system was tainted. There were no traffic lights or anything else that required power. Yet their attitude couldn't have been more upbeat and positive. It was amazing. Absolutely amazing.

What is your advice to an individual who is considering a career with the NJDOC and perhaps following a path similar to yours?

The one thing I tell people is that you have to be willing to become a master of your craft. Know what you need to know, and know it well. If you're waiting to find out what's in it for me, this is not where you need to be. This Department has a lot of different opportunities, so the question is, how ambitious do you want to be?





The 2019 growing season at Bayside yielded 5,850 pounds of produce that Bayside State Prison donated to a local food bank.

THE HARVEST

Bayside Grows Three Tons of Produce for Charity

By John Cokos

Forty million Americans are food insecure, which means they don't know if they will have enough food to feed themselves or their families on any given day. Furthermore, according to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, approximately 900,000 food insecure Americans are New Jersey residents.

In early 2019, Bayside State Prison committed to lowering that number by becoming part of Harvest Now, a not-for-profit organization formed to confront food insecurity across the U.S. Harvest Now donates seeds to prisons across the country, and in return, at least 75 percent of the crops are then donated to local food banks.

The 2019 growing season at Bayside yielded nearly three tons of fresh produce. The harvest consisted of 5,850 pounds of green and yellow zucchinis, eggplants, bell peppers, hot peppers and lettuce, which was donated to a local food bank.

“We had a very productive season,” said Jonathan Gramp, Bayside Administrator. “As we look into the New Year, our goal is to increase our productivity to allow us to expand from one to three local pantries.”

Harvest Now founder and director Brooks Sumberg was pleased by Bayside's success.

“Food insecurity is the biggest problem there is for the poor in this country, so this has become my mission,” Sumberg said. “I give every prison a budget of \$300 to order seeds from the Johnny’s Selected Seeds catalogue as long as at least 75 percent of what is grown is donated to a community food bank.”

The fresh produce was welcomed by local families.

“Approximately 200 families come through our food bank per month,” said Eddie Pennino, coordinator for the food

bank at Cumberland County Community Church that received the donation, “and it’s been a while since we’ve had fresh produce, so the families enjoyed that.”

Inmates at Bayside also benefit.

“Harvest Now has created an added value to the horticulture program,” said Michael Griffith, Bayside Horticulture Program Instructor. It allows inmates to continue to acquire useful skills through hands-on experience while also learning to appreciate the importance of community involvement.”



Special Investigations Division Expands Its Ranks

The New Jersey Department of Corrections’ Special Investigations Division (SID) hosted a swearing-in ceremony for its two newest members January 24, at the Mates Inn, located on the grounds of the Department’s Central Office Headquarters. Megan Granello and Mark Brong were sworn in as NJDOC Special Legal Advisor Melinda Haley administered the Oath of Office. Other speakers at the ceremony included Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq., and SID Chief Investigator Duane Grade.

