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**NJDOC LAUNCHES HEALTH-FOCUSED REENTRY SERVICES AT EDNA MAHAN  
CORRECTIONAL FACILITY FOR WOMEN**

**TRENTON, N.J. – Oct. 27, 2021** As part of its ongoing commitment to providing seamless reintegration services to those nearing release, the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) is partnering with the New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC) to provide Health Navigation services at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women (EMCFW), the first-of-its-kind post-release support service under this administration. Led by the NJRC, the Health Navigator, in partnership with the NJDOC, connects women to community practitioners in the fields of behavioral health, addiction, domestic violence, sexual assault, mental health, obstetrics, and gynecology, with follow-up support to determine additional support needs post-release. The two agencies cemented this partnership through a signing of a Memo of Understanding agreeing to offer these critical services to the women at Edna.

"Women in the state's custody face a myriad of health issues from chronic care conditions, mental health and substance abuse disorder to reproductive healthcare and prenatal needs," said NJDOC **Acting Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq.** "Navigating these services can be daunting, and we want to ensure they do not feel alone and have the full support of the Department in their reintegration process. We are thankful for the partnership of reentry service leaders, the NJRC, in providing these wraparound services to help these women feel supported every step of the way."

"Today is a long day coming," said **James E. McGreevey, Chairman, NJRC.** "I express gratitude to Commissioner Kuhn, Assistant Commissioner Tome, The Women's Project, The Women's Reentry Commission, Legislators, and, most importantly, the women of Edna Mahan who never lost faith that life could get better. New Jersey is doing something right with this agreement. It is a small, but significant, moral step forward."

“It is imperative that we provide incarcerated women with reentry resources and support,” said **New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver**. “To this end, the Health Navigator will link women at Edna Mahan to New Jersey health care providers so they may successfully reenter their communities post-incarceration.”

“Providing vital health care services to those returning to the community is critical as they resume their lives, work, and family relations,” said **First Lady Tammy Murphy**. “By signing this Memorandum of Understanding, the New Jersey Department of Corrections and New Jersey Reentry Corporation are prioritizing the health and well-being of women who are involved with the justice system. Connecting these women directly with practitioners in the community will ensure a comprehensive continuum of care and immeasurable support as they pursue healthy, productive lives.”

In addition to connecting individuals to community practitioners the Health Navigator seeks to bridge gaps in the areas of social, occupational, intellectual, financial, and spiritual support services, incorporating family and significant others wherever possible within these holistic health plans assessed every three months.

The Health Navigator is an enhancement to the NJDOC comprehensive discharge process which begins at intake. The Department's discharge process includes identifying specialized needs and connecting those nearing release through the Department's medical team with post-release prescription medication and community support services, including mental health appointments and a peer navigator. Additionally, the Department's social services team helps connect eligible individuals with application assistance for certain state benefits such as affordable health care and obtaining a state Motor Vehicle Commission identification.

“Women leaving state prison need quality health care to support their successful transition into society,” said **New Jersey Senate President Steve Sweeney**. “The agreement between the Department of Corrections and the Reentry Corporation will ensure that court-involved women leaving Edna Mahan Corrections Center receive critically needed medical care. When we established the Commission on Women’s Reentry Services, medical and behavioral care was a major focus. Today’s agreement works to make those services a reality.”

“Upon release from prison, many women face barriers to securing a Medicaid card and health care services,” said **New Jersey Senator Sandra Cunningham**. “This historic agreement between NJRC and NJDOC will help ensure that women returning from Edna Mahan have access to the medical and behavioral health care services, which are vital to reentry.”

“A survey of more than 1,000 recently released individuals in the process of reentry found that nine in ten women suffered from diagnosed health conditions requiring active treatment and management,” said **New Jersey Senator Nellie Pou**. “Health Navigator services will be critical to helping women at Edna Mahan manage health conditions both during incarceration, and upon reentry.”

“We should always have a system in place that protects the overall well-being of our women in any correctional institution,” said **New Jersey Senator Teresa Ruiz**. “As a state our policies need to shift towards ensuring women in institutions receive adequate physical and mental health services as well as social service programs that keep our families connected and provide pathways back into integration. The women of Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, without

question, suffered from years of abuse and neglect. Today's agreement marks a critical step in the right direction as women are transitioned from this environment to safer facilities.”

“What a wonderful step forward for women leaving Edna Mahan Correctional Institution,” said **New Jersey Senator Loretta Weinberg**. “The NJ Reentry Corp. will link these women with necessary health services upon their exit. A terrific first step to help start a new road in a healthy manner. Thank you for your advocacy as we celebrate your new agreement with the Dept. Of Corrections.”

“Everyone deserves a second chance and the agreement signed today marks a real turning point for the women of Edna Mahan,” said **New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin**. “Together with the advocacy of the New Jersey Reentry Corporation, we are charting a path forward that ensures these women are offered dignity and respect through services that safeguard their health, well-being, and chance at future success.”

“After suffering appalling abuse and unconstitutional conditions at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, these women will finally get the attention they deserve as they look to become productive members of society,” said **New Jersey Assemblywoman Aura Dunn**. “I have championed putting the health and safety of women first, and I’m grateful that this agreement will get them to a better place both mentally and physically. Making health care services more accessible is critical to getting women back on their feet.”

“This agreement between NJDOC and NJRC is a decisive first step toward ensuring that these court-involved women will have access to the health care that they require to return to society,” said **New Jersey Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter**.

“The New Jersey Reentry Corporation continues to be an integral partner of my work and advocacy on criminal Justice reform within our correctional facilities,” said **New Jersey Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez**. As always, I am glad to see the Reentry Corporation on the cutting edge of reentry work with their historic partnership with the Department of Corrections in creating health care linkages for women exiting Edna Mahan. I have no doubt this partnership will yield incredible results for the women involved and will produce better health outcomes, which in turn leads to stronger reentry.”

“The medical profession has provided minimal education to the health care team on the special needs that women who are incarcerated have and how these needs change with reentry to their community,” said **Dr. Gloria Bachmann, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Women’s Health Institute, Commission on Reentry Services for Women**. “As well, there also are sparse templates on what constitutes optimal care to incarcerated women in order to address both their mental and physical health needs. The NJ Commission on Women's Reentry is proactively focused on changing this. We want every incarcerated woman given optimal health services that are delivered by a medical care team who can provide tailored, comprehensive preventive and interventive ones that fit her needs.”

“In order for court-involved women to secure and maintain employment, it is critical that their mental and behavioral health needs are met, said **Linda Baraka, Commission on Reentry Services for Women**. “NJRC’s agreement with NJDOC will help court-involved women manage underlying conditions so they are employment ready upon their release from Edna Mahan.”

“Prisoners are the forgotten people in our society,” said **Ms. Ruthi Byrne, Zinn Graves & Field Inc., Commission on Reentry Services for Women**. “Sad to imagine that even short sentences often turn into life sentences after release because of the lack of services and recognition. This effort goes a long way in terms of reconciling their desperate situation.”

“This agreement will provide critically-needed health care services for women leaving Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women,” said **Dr. Petros Levounis, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Chair of Psychiatry**. “Upon release from prison, the risk of overdose death for the previously incarcerated is upwards of 130 times greater than that of the general population. Connecting women to treatment and Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) services in the community will improve health outcomes, save lives, and enhance successful reentry into the community.”

“The agreement between New Jersey Reentry Corporation and the NJ Department of Corrections for women exiting the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women, has the potential to be life-saving and dramatically enhance successful reentry, said **Dr. Tanya Pagán Raggio-Ashley, Commission on Reentry Services for Women, Health Resources and Services Administration**. “The majority of women at Edna Mahan have physical as well as mental health challenges, requiring continuity of care including medication and counseling. This collaboration can prevent critical gaps in health and mental health care including medications. This linkage can help to prevent homelessness, a very important component to successful reentry. Family reunification with children, partners and other loved ones, is another element of successful reentry, which can benefit greatly from this agreement. Congratulations to all involved in bringing this to fruition!”

“For many women ‘behind the wall,’ there is a dearth of adequate medical and behavioral health care, said **Dr. Chris Pernell, University Hospital, Essex County Correctional Civilian Task Force**. “All too frequently, this deficiency is worsened by the failure to link health care services upon reentry into the community. Today’s agreement between NJRC and NJDOC is a significant step forward toward ensuring that women will have needed health care services, in some cases long overdue, to address their medical, mental health, and addiction needs.”

“This agreement between the New Jersey Reentry Corporation and the New Jersey Department of Corrections is truly a defining moment where comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation can now be offered to women exiting the Edna Mahan correctional facility for Women,” said **Dr. Shuvendu Sen, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, Hackensack Meridian**. “A small step but a giant leap!”

“New Jersey Business and Industry Association (NJBIA) is committed to strengthening our economy and work opportunities,” said **Michele Siekerka, NJBIA**. “For women returning from incarceration having access to quality health care will improve their reentry and confidence in returning to the job market. NJBIA partners with NJRC to ensure that all New Jerseyans will be part of a trained, skilled workforce.”

“As a pastor, health care is a fundamental right for all persons,” said **Reverend Dr. Regena Thomas, American Federation of Teachers, Commission on Reentry Services for Women**. “For women subjected to trauma and abuse, medical care is critical. With this agreement, every woman leaving prison will be connected to quality medical professionals. Amen.”

“Court-involved women often have a complex set of interrelated medical and behavioral health needs,” said **Dr. Su Wang, Saint Barnabas Medical Center**. “Through NJRC and NJDOC’s partnership, women at Edna Mahan will have access to high quality, trauma-informed care.”



NJDOC and NJRC sign agreement to launch Health Navigator program at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women. Photographed top row, left to right: NJDOC Deputy Commissioner Tracey Shimonis-Kaminski; Tasha Hogan NJRC Middlesex County Site Director, DFD Liaison State of New Jersey; Dr. Shuvendu Sen, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, Hackensack Meridian, NJ; NJDOC Assistant Commissioner Women’s Services Helena Tome; NJDOC Director of Communications Liz Velez; NJDOC Assistant Commissioner Diversity and Legal Affairs Melinda Haley. Bottom row left-right: Acting Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq.; Jeannine LaRue, Social Justice Advocate and James E. McGreevey, Chairman, NJRC.

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