



**Senate Budget Testimony Remarks  
April 11, 2019**

**Assembly Budget Testimony Remarks  
May 6, 2019**

Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the work of the New Jersey Department of Corrections and the proposed FY 2020 budget.

Before I begin, I would also like to introduce members of my staff who are here with me today: Acting Chief of Staff Suzanne Lawrence, Deputy Commissioner Bettie Norris, Assistant Commissioner Gary Alpert, Special Legal Advisor Melinda Haley and Director of Financial Management Bob Biluck.

Our mission at the New Jersey Department of Corrections is to protect the public by operating safe, secure and humane correctional facilities. We do this through effective treatment of offenders and by providing services that promote successful reentry into society. Our budget enables us to accomplish these goals.

The NJDOC Fiscal Year 2020 state budget totals \$981.8 million. This represents a \$5.0 million increase from the FY 2019 adjusted appropriation of \$976.8 million.

The Department projects that in FY 2019, overtime hours worked will be approximately 775,241 hours, which is a significant reduction of more than 25 percent from FY 2010 overtime hours of 1,037,000.

Since FY 2017, the inmate population has remained relatively steady, at approximately 20,000, although as recently as 2014, the inmate population was almost 13 percent higher, at nearly 23,000.

The decrease can be attributed to such successful programs as Drug Courts, state-funded one-stop career centers, our close working relationships with other law enforcement entities, and the NJDOC's many reentry programs and educational initiatives.



When I spoke to this Committee last year, I discussed the new procedures we implemented at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women. I'd like to update you on many of the improvements that are now in place.

Some of the practices and initiatives established during Governor Murphy's Administration include:

- The SAFE (Safety and Accountability for Edna) task force was formed to examine ways to improve conditions and provide a safer facility.
- An Early Warning System is designed to identify potential problem areas.
- Building on the National Institute of Corrections supervisory training on gender responsiveness and trauma-informed practices, a modified module was designed and presented to custody and civilian staff. This training also has been provided to members of other units that provide services at EMCF.
- Gender restricted posts have been completed in full-minimum unit housing areas. Additional posts have been identified for the next wave of gender restriction in the maximum compound.
- The EMCF advisory Board of Trustees has been re-established to provide expertise and recommendations on behalf of the women at EMCF. The Board includes a judge, a medical doctor, a researcher and a college professor, among others.
- The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) booklet was designed and distributed during prison-wide face-to-face meetings with all of the offenders at EMCF. This booklet is provided to all EMCF offenders as they enter the facility.
- New informational posters were developed outlining the numerous ways to report abuse. Reporting methods include JPay, the newly established PREA liaison or another staff member, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Special Investigations Division or through a third party (such as a family member). A hotline for survivors of sexual abuse is available, as well.
- Several items are now readily available, free of charge, for specific women's needs: feminine hygiene products, undergarments and pajamas instead of night gowns.

Furthermore, not only have additional cameras been installed to increase security and accountability, but a new, state-of-the-art camera project is in the final stages before installation.

An upcoming training session, presented by the National Institute of Corrections, titled "Women in the Justice System: Developing an Agency-Wide Approach," is planned for this June. NJDOC staff and selected county jail partners will attend.



Under Governor Murphy’s leadership, a multi-faceted commitment to fighting the opioid crisis is underway. I am proud that the NJDOC is contributing to that effort in a variety of ways.

Our philosophy in Corrections is that we have a responsibility to rehabilitate the entire individual, and that includes medical, mental health and substance use disorder needs.

In 2017, Mid-State Correctional Facility became the state’s first licensed, clinically-driven Substance Use Disorder treatment program for male inmates.

Upon entering the NJDOC system, each inmate is clinically assessed for substance use and those identified to have a Substance Use Disorder will undergo a more comprehensive assessment to evaluate the level of treatment needed. If a male inmate qualifies, he can voluntarily join the Substance Use Disorder treatment program at Mid-State Correctional Facility, which has a capacity of nearly 700 beds.

Female inmates who qualify for substance use disorder treatment are offered an equivalent licensed program at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility.

Since the inception of the licensed Substance Use Disorder treatment facilities, more than 300 offenders have received completions from the program.

In addition to the Governor, I wish to recognize the Department of Human Services and Rutgers University for helping to ensure the success of this program, which allows our Department to transform behaviors related to substance use and relapse, helping to prepare offenders to reenter society.

I’d also like to mention that office space is being expanded for clinical staff at Mid-State by converting a tier. By re-purposing this space into offices, the Department realized a cost avoidance of \$2 million. The project will be completed this summer.

Yet another initiative that helps inmates who require substance use disorder services as they prepare to embark on the potentially overwhelming discharge planning and reentry process is the



Peer Navigator Program, a collaboration between the NJDOC, the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Rutgers University Behavioral Healthcare (UBHC).

Since the establishment of the program in 2018, peer navigators can begin meeting with an inmate six months prior to release and continue to provide assistance up to a year after the release date. Peer navigators, all of whom must be in recovery and/or must be a former inmate, are trained to provide their clients with services available in the community. Due to similar backgrounds, they are able to relate to their clientele, and they often serve as an offender's primary system of support.

Positions exist for as many as 30 peer navigators to assist up to 600 offenders – 200 who receive Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and another 400 who are not on MAT but who require substance use disorder services.

The NJDOC is extremely pleased with the success of our MAT program. We believe that MAT, in conjunction with behavior therapy, is a beneficial resource that ultimately will help to lead offenders to successful reentry back into the community.

The NJDOC is continuing to provide grants to county correctional facilities to establish MAT programs or enhance existing MAT services. To date, approximately 400 state-sentenced inmates and 200 county jail inmates have received MAT services.

All NJDOC custody staff now carry Naloxone (Narcan) in correctional facilities. Members of our custody staff have used their Narcan in life-saving efforts many times in a facility and while off-duty in the community.

Another avenue through which the Department's commitment to reentry services and initiatives is being addressed is the Vocational Planning Board, which has worked tirelessly to develop ways to prepare offenders for the reentry process and link them with available services and employment.

The NJDOC has organized reentry fairs to bring government agencies, community providers and employers into the correctional facilities to expose them to the pool of job-ready candidates and



create on-site employer interview opportunities for inmates within the release process. The most recent fair was held last October at South Woods State Prison.

The Department also was represented at a conference presented by the state's labor unions to facilitate working relationships with our community partners. The gathering explored ways to establish a connection with the education services we currently supply and to expand and enhance that educational/vocational training to marry directly with apprenticeship programs in the community.

Additionally, I participated in two presentations, for the New Jersey Casino Control Commission and for the Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce, outlining the vocational preparation that offenders receive in our facilities. Business owners as well as human resource representatives from all the casinos in Atlantic City were in attendance.

The NJDOC also offers a wide range of programs through our Office of Transitional Services to provide offenders with tools to successfully reenter the community, such as STARS (Successful Transition and Reentry Series), Thinking for a Change, Cage Your Rage, and Successful Employment Through Lawful Living and Conflict Management. The Department prepares inmates for reentry by encouraging parent-child relationships during and after incarceration through programs such as Helping Offenders Parent Effectively, and Family Reunification and Transition.

We continue to prepare offenders for reentry through an array of educational initiatives. In 2018, there were 275 High School Equivalency (HSE) diplomas issued to state-sentenced offenders. The passing rate among inmates who took the rigorous HSE exam was an impressive 78 percent. In addition, 69 high school diplomas were awarded in 2018.

There has also been a continued resurgence of vocational programming. During FY 2018, approximately 8,000 certificates of completion were issued for Career Technical Education programs.

In addition to these programs, in collaboration with Rutgers University, Raritan Valley Community College and Princeton University, this consortium offers post-secondary courses to our population. In Fiscal Year 2018, the Department averaged 502 inmates who were enrolled in college credit-bearing courses.



I am well aware that the success of the various programs and initiatives I've discussed would not be possible without our Department's single most valuable asset: our outstanding staff. It is my priority to provide the tools and resources they need to carry out their responsibilities as effectively as possible.

Our employees have access to a wide array of training opportunities – both inside and outside the Department – in order to enable them to navigate the ever-evolving field of Corrections.

We also have introduced an Employee Wellness Program, through which our dedicated staff will have access to the resources they need to address the often challenging aspects of their jobs. This program promotes whole-person wellness – including physical, mental and spiritual health – and is available to both custody and civilian staff throughout the NJDOC.

As a Department, we will continue to strive to maintain the highest standards of professionalism as we meet the ongoing challenges of modern correctional management.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's budget. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.