

2022

ANNUAL REPORT



Dr. Gloria Bachmann, Medical Director,
Francine LeFrak, LeFrak Wellness Center
Psychiatric Nurse Navigator Constance Kusi,
NJRC Ambassadors and women participants

NEW JERSEY REENTRY CORPORATION

591 SUMMIT AVE. 6TH FLOOR

JERSEY CITY, NJ 07306

PHONE: 551.256.9717

FAX: 201.604.7830

WWW.NJREENTRY.ORG

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Dear Fellow NJRC Advocates, Ambassadors, and Partners,

In 2022, New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC) built upon the successes achieved during the difficult time of COVID. Governor Murphy boldly provided for the systematic release of low-risk offenders to better able to navigate the COVID healthcare crisis. NJRC worked with community partners to ensure that those coming home from prison were linked to critically-needed services, MVC identification, federal and state benefits, healthcare, structured sober housing, and training and employment.

NJRC expanded dramatically during these past two years. From our fledgling beginnings in Jersey City with approximately 700 clients to 17,593 program participants at ten sites, NJRC has continued to adapt, grow, and enshrine best practices.

We have made great progress in the treatment and case management of our veterans; candidly, these persons who served our nation are among our most challenging cases.

And fentanyl has become a scourge which reaches every marginalized population. Fentanyl is in every illegal drug, including those illegal drugs appearing to be pharmaceutically produced. From our direct experience with our clients, those persons suffering from addiction presumably from heroin were tested to reveal that there was no heroin but only fentanyl.

NJRC maintains its commitment to the Murphy Administration and the State of New Jersey that NJRC will provide access to treatment within 24 hours for anyone suffering from addiction. Be it detoxification, residential treatment, intensive outpatient treatment, and the induction of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), through our labyrinth of agreements with hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), Certified Clinical Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHCs), and treatment providers, NJRC moves rapidly and effectively in providing treatment.

Lastly, on a personal level, Governor Florio's passing impacted our spirit but not our mission. My affection and respect for Governor Florio dates back to my first campaign as Assemblyman. Then Congressman Florio encouraged me to join with him at a press conference in Woodbridge at the Parkway Authority. The following day in the Star Ledger, there was a photograph of Governor Florio and me with the caption "Congressman Florio and Unidentified Man."

Suffice to say, our relationship grew and deepened over the years, and our friendship was a profound source of joy and strength.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James E. Florio".



New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC)

Program Data



NJRC is committed to providing critically needed services to court-involved individuals. Case management and legal services link clients to addiction treatment, structured sober housing, job training and employment, mental health and medical care; thereby, assisting clients to achieve healthy self-sufficiency, reducing recidivism, and fostering safer communities.

10 Locations

- Bergen County • Essex County
- Hudson County • Middlesex County
- Monmouth County • Ocean County
- Passaic County • Union County

17,593 NJRC Program Participants
8,932 NJRC Jobs Secured *
3,046 Total NJ Overdose Deaths
581 Veterans Served

Sources: Salesforce, CDC; NJCares 2020

* Individuals may have more than single employer.

NJRC Stats - Salesforce



19.7%
Rearrest



10%
Reincarceration



5,935
Participants Enrolled During PHE



3,721
The Women's Project Enrollment



12,386
Medicaid Enrollment



10,492
Addiction Treatment Program/Medication Assisted Treatment



7,899
Medical Treatment



5,306
Psychiatric Treatment Facilities Behavioral/Mental Health



2,928
MVC Identification Drivers Licenses



2,962
Birth Certificates Obtained



17
Latin American Nations Documents



73
Pro Bono Attorneys



2,680
Emergency Kits Delivered in Prison



1,766
Apprenticeship Training



54.04%
Employment (adjusted seasonally)



3,476
Medication Assisted Treatment



INTRODUCTION

Given the current state of prisons today and the nature of the criminal justice system in general, a crucial and highly necessary component of ensuring that those who are incarcerated will be able to successfully reenter society upon release are reentry programs, such as the New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC). Without such programs, formerly incarcerated individuals would be at a severe disadvantage in overcoming barriers that make it extraordinarily difficult and in effect prevent those exiting prisons from truly having a second chance. The goal of the criminal justice system should not merely be to incarcerate those individuals who have committed crimes that warrant such incarceration but, more significantly, to ensure that, when they are released, re-entering individuals have all the necessary resources and services so that they do not find themselves back in prison in the weeks, months, and years following their release. Indeed, without the work that these organizations accomplish, namely the needed assistance to surmount the great difficulties that lie ahead of them, many formerly incarcerated individuals would otherwise opt or fall into the easiest option, that is, to return to their former lives, which only increases the likelihood of recidivism.



Operations



The New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC) is centered on the mission to provide crucial resources and services for those involved in the criminal justice system, particularly the formerly incarcerated population, and help them overcome all barriers in order to attain gainful employment and successfully reenter society. This mission is ultimately founded on the premise that every person deserves a second chance and an opportunity to move forward and create meaningful change for themselves. With these focuses, NJRC also aims to remove the collateral consequences that individuals returning

from incarceration face, reduce the rate of recidivism, and create safer communities in New Jersey.

NJRC began its development in 2014 with the successful implementation of a pilot reentry model in Jersey City, Hudson County. With the support of Governor Christie and his administration, NJRC was incorporated in 2015 around the shared goal of providing critical resources to released individuals. Ever since its inception, NJRC has received extensive support and funding from New Jersey, nonprofit organizations, and generous donors to sustain its operations and fulfill its goals. Through the continued support of Governor Murphy, Senate President Scutari, and Speaker Coughlin, individuals have increasingly more opportunities and resources to achieve successful reentry through NJRC. NJRC aims to assist formerly incarcerated people at all stages in their reentry into society: addiction treatment, securing housing, training and employment, healthcare access, acquiring identification, and legal services. Over the past seven years, NJRC has continually expanded in the hope of providing opportunities to all of those who are in need.





The Mission

With organizations like NJRC, those exiting prisons are truly given a second chance, where the odds are not stacked against them. In this way, such reentry programs are a highly necessary component of a formerly incarcerated individual's journey to seeking all of which they are in need, such as addiction treatment, healthcare, legal services, social services, and of course the ultimate goal of gainful employment. And yet we must also be clear: the work that NJRC and organizations like it provide to those exiting prisons do in fact work. Giving such individuals the necessary resources and indeed the dignity stemming from the belief that everyone deserves a second chance does in fact reduce recidivism rates and allow them to become true members of society.

Undeniably, there exists a crucial and extremely important relationship between the time individuals spend while serving their sentences in prison and the days, weeks, months, and years following their release. Both periods must be used to ensure that each individual can successfully reenter society and avoid recidivism. It is an unfortunately common occurrence today that a great number of formerly incarcerated individuals quickly find themselves back in prison in a relatively short amount of time.

NJRC has "The Women's Project," which implements the policy recommendations of the Commission on Reentry Services for Women. This critical pathway seeks to improve the conditions for women in prison and upon reentry and, more specifically, answer the need for integrated women's healthcare and provide a comprehensive survey of physical and mental health treatment services in each of the eight New Jersey Reentry Corporation county sites. "The Women's Project Health Resource Guide" provides a comprehensive list of medical, addiction treatment, and mental health services near each of NJRC's site locations.¹ The "Circle of Care" initiative, a twelve-week support group, connects program participants with medical professions, who provide health services in primary care, specialty care, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health (including trauma, PTSD, anxiety). This component of NJRC that specifically focuses on women demonstrates its mission to provide services that reflect the specific needs that are created by the criminal justice system in New Jersey.



Women's Health

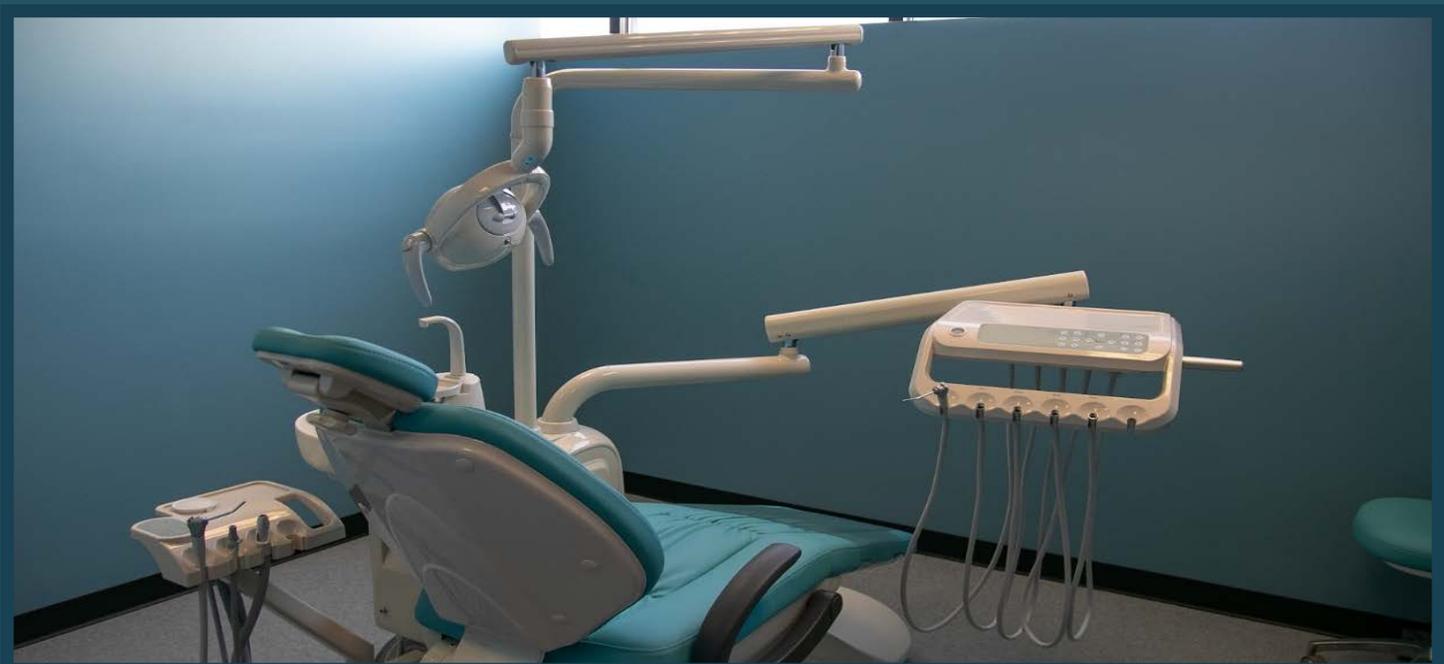
In prisons, women in particular have long suffered, because such carceral institutions have been designed by men and intended for men. According to the Sentencing Project, the population of incarcerated women has increased by over 700 percent since 1980, and while there are certainly more men than women in prison, the rate of incarceration for women compared to men has been twice as high during this time period.² Incarcerated women are often victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse and assault, and addiction. Unfortunately, New Jersey's former only all-female state prison, the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women, was no exception. Since many of the women housed at Edna Mahan have experienced domestic violence and other forms of trauma before their time in incarceration, their experiences in the criminal justice system have only compounded the negative effects on their mental health. Thus, it is imperative that women, whose needs differ significantly from that of men, are given the proper care, both in terms of physical (e.g., prenatal care) and mental health, that they need both during their time in prison and after their release. When women seek treatment for mental health concerns, including trauma, depression, anxiety, they are not provided with the necessary resources to successfully heal and reenter society. Such mental health treatment has either been a source of maltreatment and malfeasance or simply ignored altogether. These conditions enact many barriers to women's recovery and rehabilitation.





In January 2022, with the largesse of Francine LeFrak, the New Jersey Reentry Corporation opened the Francine A. LeFrak Wellness Center at the Governor's Reentry Training and Employment Center. The Wellness Center provides medical, behavioral, and dental diagnostic screenings, referrals, as well as, nutrition and healthy lifestyle support. The clinic is solely dedicated to our NJRC court-involved participants. Through an innovative partnership with RWJBarnabas, Clara Mass Medical Center,

NJRC provides on-site medical and behavioral health care screenings for NJRC program participants. The Francine LeFrak Wellness Center works diligently to link women with premier medical and healthcare services. The Center ensures that court-involved women and men are having their healthcare needs addressed in a coordinated framework while having access to the best medicine.



Healthcare

NJRC has affected significant positive change throughout New Jersey, fostering safer communities and allowing individuals to exit the criminal justice system and establish new lives for themselves. Unfortunately, in addition to the direct obstacles that face all those who exit prison, many justice-involved individuals have histories of drug use and mental health problems, both of which are often exacerbated by their experiences within the criminal justice system and further complicate NJRC's efforts to provide second chances. Given that the health of justice-involved individuals is imperative for successful reentry, NJRC ensures that all program participants have access to healthcare and provides services for addiction and mental health treatment.

According to some estimates, only 15 to 25 percent of released individuals visit a physician outside the emergency department in the first year after their release, even though around 80 percent of released individuals have chronic medical, mental, or substance abuse problems.³ After 90 days of release, released inmates are 1.8 times more likely to be hospitalized, compared to the control group.⁴ Moreover, the reentry population uses the emergency department more often than the general population.

Ultimately, NJRC's objective is to provide effective integrated medical and behavioral healthcare for both men and women leaving incarceration and reentering society. Health coverage is thus one of the most important aspects of facilitating the transition from prison to the community. Yet, around 80 percent of former inmates do not have health insurance when returning to society.⁵ Healthcare coverage has also been shown to reduce recidivism and other negative outcomes for justice-involved individuals. Given the unique health needs for this population and how the criminal justice system disproportionately affects low-income and minority communities, it is crucial that former inmates have access to quality healthcare, so that their various needs and they can return to their communities safely and healthily. Since reentering individuals often do not know how to obtain healthcare coverage or navigate the complexities of the healthcare system itself, their needs are often unmet and their health issues remain untreated. Furthermore, even when they are able to successfully receive care, community healthcare systems are still often not sufficient to meet their



complicated needs, particularly in regards to behavioral health, integrated care coordination, and specialty medical care.⁶

In recognition of these issues that many program participants face and the certain need for a rigorous support system, NJRC navigators have worked with them to ensure that they receive the necessary treatments for their particular health problems and that they attain health insurance for any future needs. In 2022, 7,899 program participants have received medical treatment. Furthermore, navigators assist reentry individuals with either Medicaid, which is provided through New Jersey FamilyCare (NJFC) and private insurance companies, or the Affordable Care Act, which is intended for low-income employed individuals. A majority of NJRC program participants receive healthcare through Medicaid. Once enrolled through NJFC, enrollees are provided with coverage for doctor visits, regular checkups, eyeglasses, hospitalization, lab tests, prescriptions, mental health, dental, and the all too important choice of choosing their own doctor. In 2022, NJRC has enrolled 12,386 individuals enrolled in Medicaid.

Behavioral Health



As has been mentioned, the criminal justice system, despite recent discourse on the subject, continues to impose punishment and correction upon those it encounters rather than rehabilitation and a focus towards the future. The punitive nature of prisons have repeatedly shown to be ineffective at reducing crime, the inherent goal of any criminal justice system. As evidenced by the aforementioned high recidivism rates in the United States and New Jersey in particular, the current penal system exacerbates its goals and the difficulties that the incarcerated population has experienced and precipitates mental health problems, including trauma, abuse, and neglect. The phenomena of overcrowding, violence, lack of privacy, solitary confinement, isolation from society, and increased

insecurity, all of which are all inherent to the current prison system, all worsen or cause mental health issues that often take years of recovery and therapy for healing to take place. According to the Prison Policy Institute, 37% of state and federal prisoners have been diagnosed with some mental illness.⁷ Of course, given the problems inherent in the prison healthcare system, many mental health problems remain undiagnosed and untreated. Moreover, 1 in 4 people experience “serious psychological distress” in jail.⁸ In New Jersey, these problems are certainly present, and the criminal justice system needs extensive improvement in order to adequately address the mental health issues that many prisoners experience.





The mental health problems experienced in prison are certainly compounded when incarcerated individuals are released from prison. Faced with difficulties such as housing insecurity, lack of access to food, unemployment, and legal matters, individuals returning to society have numerous barriers, the same barriers that NJRC seeks to dismantle, that serve as enormous sources of mental health problems and stress. The relationship between the formerly incarcerated population and mental health problems are made even more difficult to address through the inherent impediments to navigating the healthcare system that is accessible to former prisoners. Formerly incarcerated individuals even encounter enormous obstacles in merely accessing their previous medical records. Since justice-involved individuals are often denied access to mental health treatment, their struggles are untreated and thus continue to worsen.

Thus, when formerly incarcerated individuals exit prison and seek the necessary services to move forward from what can often be years of trauma and abuse in the carceral state, NJRC works hand in hand to assist men and women to find the necessary healthcare. Indeed, in its mission to secure a second chance for its program participants, NJRC recognizes that mental health is equally as important as physical health. In this regard, NJRC has numerous programs for anyone seeking mental health treatment. One of

the most integral components of NJRC's ability to assist justice-involved individuals is its Community Resource Center (CRC) in Kearny, Hudson County. Unique to other NJRC sites, the Community Resource Center specifically works with individuals who are currently on parole. In addition to assisting with employment, the CRC also provides referrals to outpatient substance abuse treatment, mental health counselling (including in-house outpatient), and sex offender counseling.

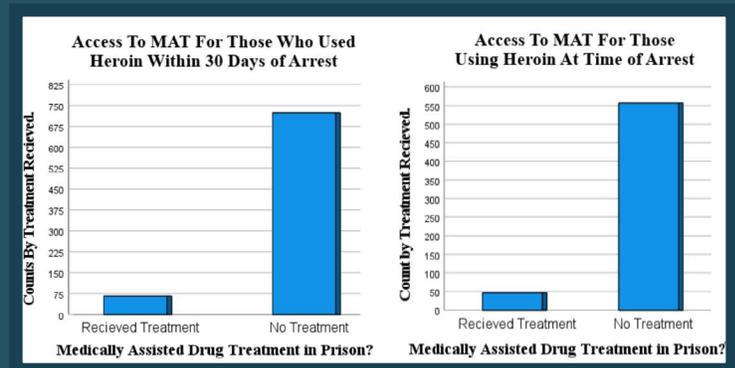
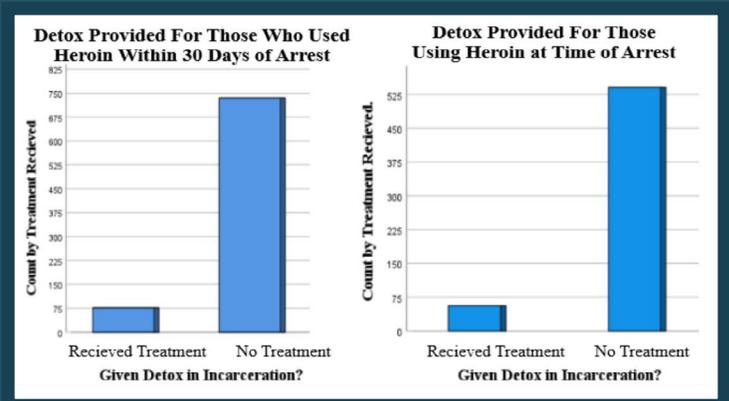
It is important to note that the mental health problems are often co-occurring with other health problems, such as addiction. In such cases, NJRC seeks an integrated method of care, where a person's addiction, mental health, and physical health needs concurrently and in an efficient manner. Ultimately, NJRC wants justice-involved individuals to have the same access to and quality of healthcare that those who have never interacted with the criminal justice system have. In 2022, 5,306 program participants were connected to psychiatric treatment, underscoring the high rates of mental health problems among the formerly incarcerated population.



Addiction

There are numerous intersections between the prison population and drug use. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, approximately 65 percent of prisoners have an active substance use disorder (SUD) (i.e., an addiction to a certain drug).⁹ An additional 20 percent of prisoners did not meet the criteria for a SUD but were nonetheless under the influence of drugs when they committed their crime. In New Jersey, more specifically, these statistics are equally more worrisome. According to the New Jersey Department of Health, “on average, between 70-80 percent of those who are incarcerated have a substance use disorder, and in New Jersey, 80 percent of inmates with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) were under the influence when they committed their crime; 75 percent of inmates with opioid-use disorder relapse within three months of release.”¹⁰ Evidently, a vast majority of the prison population have used or continue to use drugs. These statistics provide clear evidence that individuals with SUD have the highest rates of initial contact with the carceral state as well as the highest rates of recidivism.

Yet, unfortunately, treatment for SUDs in prison remains startlingly low, and even then, such treatment is usually inadequate. For example, for those with an opioid use disorder, only 5 percent receive medication treatment while in prison, and less than 10 percent will seek treatment when released.^{11,12} In 2016, the U.S. The Bureau of Justice Statistics did a study of approximately 1,500,000 prisoners across every state and in federal penitentiaries. For prisoners with histories of drug use, those who admitted to recent heroin use, for example, access to the most effective treatments, detoxification programs and MAT, proved hard to come by:



(Source: United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Survey of Prison Inmates, United States, 2016, ICPSR 37692”. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. Ann Arbor.)

Without a robust support system in place, when prisoners are released, many will return to drug use and for those with opioid use disorder, they will often return to levels of use commensurate with their past use. Thus, since their toleration has been lowered considerably during their time in prison, they are more likely to overdose and die. According to one research study, opioids accounted for 14.8 percent of all former prisoner deaths from 1999 to 2009.¹³



Compared to the general population, a re-entering individual is more likely to have a history of mental illness or substance abuse, and tends to be less educated and less likely to find gainful employment. Furthermore, their time in prison is also often a source of immense trauma and abuse. These factors, in addition to the obstacles inherent in the criminal justice system (e.g., obtaining proper identification from the Department of Motor Vehicles or complying with the strict terms of one's release and parole), create a cycle where formerly

incarcerated people continue to be in contact with the court system. In this way, the criminal justice system places individuals, upon exiting prison, in a problematic and burdensome situation where they must successfully navigate the barriers they face; otherwise, they risk rearrest and reincarceration. Given these extraordinary difficulties, NJRC aims to provide wrap-around services where individuals are assisted at every step of their reentry back into society.





NJRC understands the complexity of the relationship between incarceration, SUD, corresponding treatment, as well as the effects of addiction on recidivism. As part of this goal, NJ Reentry partners with New Jersey’s designated Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHCs), which are certified by SAMHSA as best practice providers. For example, NJRC is partnered with Ocean Mental Health Services, which operates as one of New Jersey’s designated CCBHCs.

NJRC connects many program participants with Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) programs in order for them to manage their addictions, particularly opioid use disorder, and thus focus on finding employment and successful reentry into society. According to

the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), MAT “is the use of medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a “whole-patient” approach to the treatment of substance use disorders.”¹⁴ Patients who receive MAT have better treatment outcomes and are less likely to return to drugs. Those who have an opioid use disorder, for example, are 50 percent less likely to die when treated with methadone or buprenorphine.¹⁵ Other estimates state that MAT in general saves 1 out of every 2 lives.¹⁶ In this way, NJRC aims to provide formerly incarcerated individuals with the necessary resources so that they can avoid relapse and further affliction from their addiction. In 2022, 3,476 program participants received MAT treatment.





A much larger share of NJRC program participants receive clinical addiction treatment, which employs a wider range of treatment options for addiction. In 2022, 10,492 program participants received addiction treatment. This statistic demonstrates the common need of many justice-involved individuals in NJRC to receive adequate treatment for their addictions,

so that they can move forward with their lives. NJRC recognizes that in order to ensure successful reentry and curb the rate of recidivism, justice-involved people who suffer from addiction must take the necessary steps, which NJRC aims to provide, in order to recover and live more fully, creating a safer and healthier New Jersey in the process.

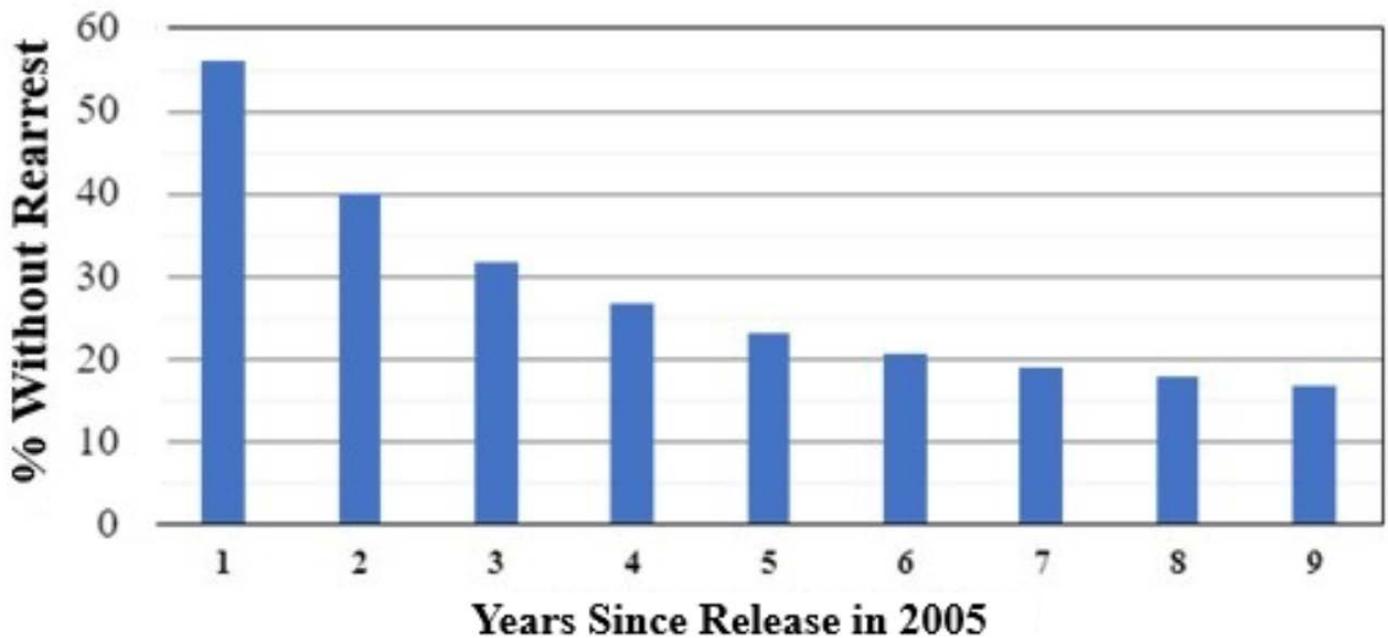


Recidivism

With the United States as the largest incarcerator of its people in the world, those prisoners who are released in any given year present an important quandary that requires careful consideration and redress. In the nine years following their release, five in six state prisoners (83%) in the United States were

re-arrested at least once.¹⁷ The extremely high rate of rearrest conflicts dramatically with the goals of the criminal justice system and exposes the undue effects it has on the formerly incarcerated. The chart, below, illustrates the recidivism rate outlined in the Bureau of Justice Statistics study cited, above:

% Of Prisoners in BJS Study Who Were Released in 2005 And Remained Without Any Rearrests in Any Year Until the End of 2014.



(Source: "2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-Up Period (2005-2014)," Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2018, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/2018-update-prisoner-recidivism-9-year-follow-up-period-2005-2014>.)



In New Jersey, the recidivism rates are no different. According to the Department of Corrections 2015 Release Cohort Outcome Report, 9,017 individuals were released from correctional facilities, and within three years, 51.4 percent were rearrested, 38.4 percent were reconvicted, and 30.4 percent were reincarcerated.¹⁸ Given that such a large number of formerly incarcerated individuals are remaining in contact with the criminal justice system, the recidivism rate in New Jersey presents an extremely high cost to society. Withstanding the costs of arrests and court proceedings, which themselves are quite costly, and given an average cost per annum per capita of \$69,040, the state of New Jersey spends approximately \$189,250,238 per year to keep over 2,700 formerly incarcerated individuals within prison walls.¹⁹ Considering that this statistic is not only for one year but also only for individuals released from 2015 alone, the actual value that the state spends to retain former inmates within correctional facilities is likely many fold.



Yet, perhaps even more troubling, of these 30.4 percent of individuals that were reincarcerated, approximately 58.6 percent of these reincarcerations were due to technical parole violations.²⁰ According to the aforementioned report by the Department of Corrections, the percentage of technical parole violations as the type of reincarceration has increased dramatically from 35.6 percent in 2010, while reincarcerations due to new offenses have actually decreased, from 40.9 percent in 2010 to 30.6

percent in 2015.²¹ These technical parole violations can be largely attributed to the inherent barriers that the formerly incarcerated immediately face after leaving prison. This trend in New Jersey's criminal justice system is inherently punitive, due to the enormous consequences that result from minor infractions, some of which the general population commit often (such as simply being late to a meeting).

NJRC proves extremely effective in its goals, given the support system and numerous services it provides, particularly compared to the staggering rate of recidivism for formerly incarcerated people. The NJRC cohort has a recidivism rate of less than 10 percent and a rearrest rate of 19.7 percent.²² Compared to the general formerly incarcerated population, NJRC's program participants recidivate significantly less, at a rate of one-third. NJRC's low recidivism rate, which alone demonstrates its efficacy, can be attributed to how NJRC provides wraparound services that target a number of areas in which the prison population is lacking to the general public: education, employment, healthcare access, addiction treatment, legal services, and overcoming the many barriers that the formerly incarcerated population must face in order to successfully exit the supervision of the criminal justice system.



Education & Employment



Employment is perhaps the most critical component of reducing recidivism and allowing former offenders to provide a living for both themselves and their families. NJRC has established numerous partnerships with employers and individuals in local communities throughout New Jersey in order to quickly and efficiently find employment for its program participants. Furthermore, NJRC recognizes the current economic landscape and employer's increased desire for education beyond high school and certification in particular fields. Unfortunately, the formerly incarcerated population often do not meet these standards. To that end, NJRC provides former inmates with a wide range of training programs, so that they can advance their qualifications and usefulness to the economy.

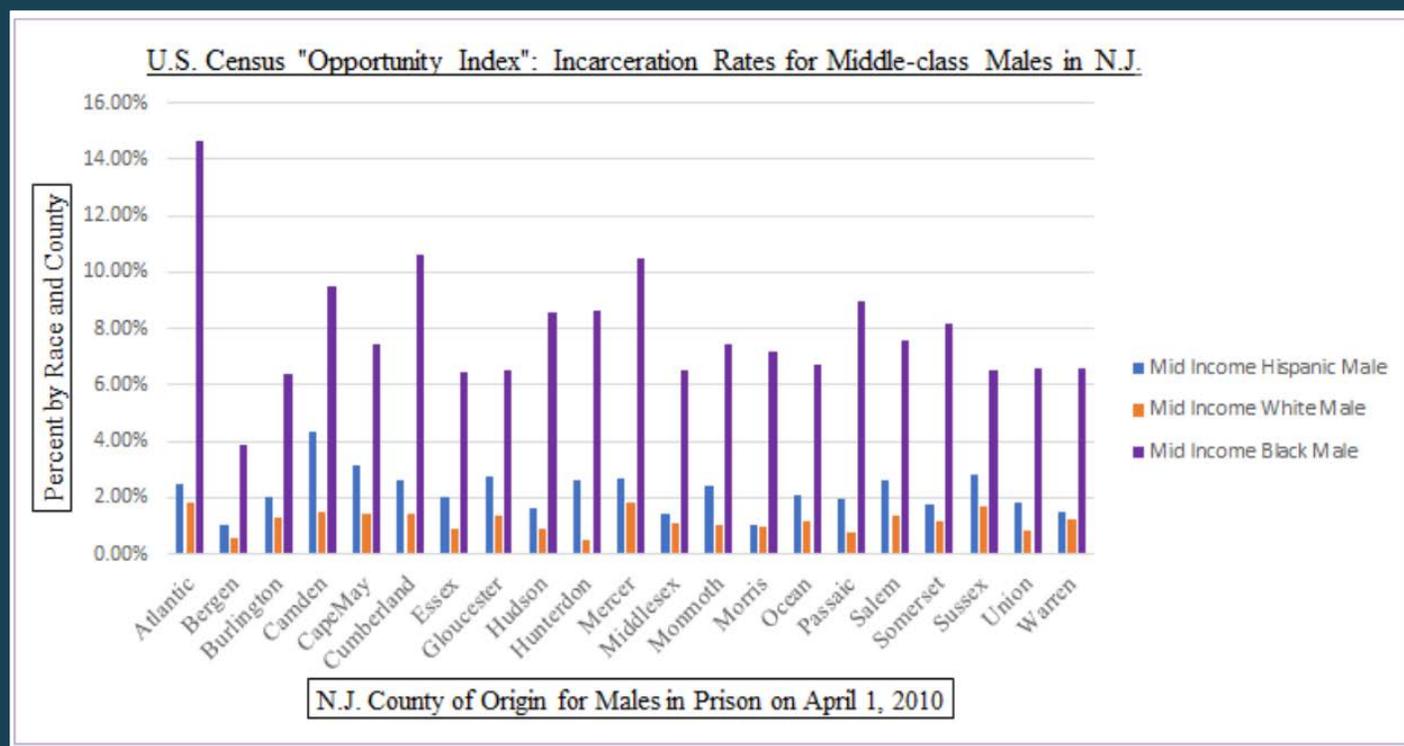
In June 2021, NJRC opened the Governor's Reentry Training and Employment Center in Kearny, New Jersey, where post-release individuals can receive certifications in a wide range of fields, such as mechanics, general construction, and even the healthcare industry. With a robust system for apprenticeship and training opportunities, NJRC assists program participants in all aspects of their employment search, from preparing for interviews to connecting with employers and local business partners. In addition to its focus on training and

employment, NJRC also emphasizes the importance of retaining employment once such an opportunity is secured. This new addition to the vast array of resources available to NJRC program participants will allow them to receive necessary skill training and apprenticeship programs in order to establish meaningful and productive careers for themselves.

When prisoners exit prison and attempt to find employment, they are at a severe disadvantage. Applicants with criminal records are 50 percent less likely to be requested for an interview or to receive an offer of employment.²³ Moreover, Black applicants with criminal records face even more difficulty in attaining employment. New Jersey has the highest rate of racial disparity compared to any other state.²⁴ 61% of all prisoners are Black.²⁵ Table A below illustrates the racial disparity in incarceration in New Jersey (see page 25 for Table A).



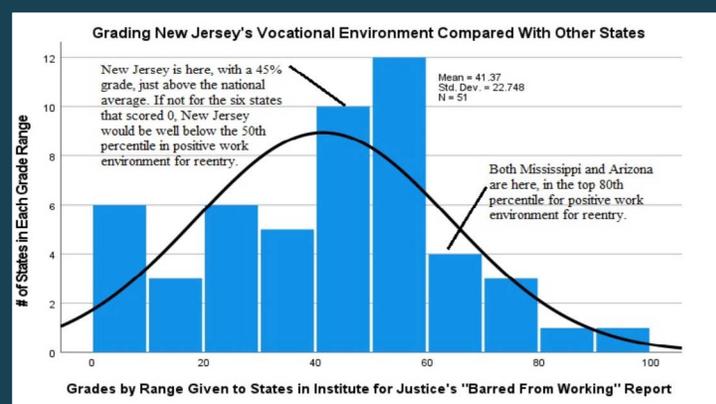
Table A



(Source: "Opportunity Atlas," U.S. Census Bureau. July 7th, 2021. www.opportunityatlas.org)

Even when formerly incarcerated people are able to secure employment, they nonetheless receive 10 to 40 percent less in wages than the counterpart workers who have no such incarceration history.²⁶ Furthermore, one's education level affects the type of employment that they may receive. In this regard, the prison population is deficient. The formerly incarcerated are twice as likely to have no high school diploma or GED and eight times less likely to complete college. More than half of former prisoners only have a GED or high school diploma.²⁷ In New Jersey, 37.2 percent of former inmates have not completed high school and 92.3 percent have no college education.²⁸

Of course, it is important to note that all of the factors are causally related: if someone has not received sufficient education, they are more likely to encounter significant difficulty in attaining employment and thus likely to find themselves involved with the criminal justice system. In 2020, a study by the Institute for Justice gauged the employment opportunities in each state for the formerly incarcerated. The results illustrate how far New Jersey has to go in providing good employment opportunities for the formerly incarcerated:



(Source: "Barred From Working," Institute for Justice. June 2020. ij.org/report/barred-from-working)

In the ultimate goal of securing employment for its program participants, NJRC provides numerous resources for education and training, a key step that allows former inmates to attain quality employment. NJRC recognizes the inherent relationship that lies between education level and employment opportunities. To that end, NJRC has connected 1,766 participants with employment training to not only secure quality employment but also to establish a career for themselves.

The Governor's Reentry Training & Employment Center, where participants can receive training in various industries, including solar technology, construction, CISCO networking, electrical work, healthcare maintenance, peer recovery, forklift, and HVAC. Through the efforts of NJRC, who works with various private business partners as well as the New Jersey Department of Labor, participants can receive accredited training and access better employment opportunities than they otherwise would have. Employment Specialists work with NJRC program participants to develop their employment skills (such as resume building, interview preparation, criminal record workshops) and find suitable job opportunities.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employment rate for NJRC program participants was 64.7 percent; however, the employment rate decreased to 48.9 percent due to economic effects of the pandemic.²⁹ With the COVID-19 pandemic receding and the economic recovery, NJRC has seen an employment rate of 54.04 percent for its program participants. Through the efforts of NJRC staff, many program participants not only secure gainful employment but also exceedingly good pay, which itself is important in curbing the return to criminal activity and thus recidivism rates.



Social Services

The formerly incarcerated face numerous barriers that impede NJRC program participants from successfully reintegrating into society. For justice-involved individuals, the legal barriers increase the likelihood of recidivism and make it extremely difficult for them to exit the cyclic nature of the criminal justice system. These difficulties reflect the inherently punitive nature of the criminal justice system and its apparent abandonment of focusing on rehabilitation and effective transition back into society upon release. Unfortunately, the NJRC cohort is not immune to these effects of the criminal justice system and carceral state.



Many of these obstacles are financial in nature: given the difficulty that formerly incarcerated individuals encounter in trying to obtain employment, they are likely to incur various debts, on top of any outstanding court costs, fines, or fees. For incarcerated parents, for example, they leave prison with an average of nearly \$20,000 in child support debt.³⁰ Since federal law permits states to procure up to 65 percent of wages to pay outstanding debts, justice-involved individuals find themselves facing seemingly insurmountable difficulties in paying off their debts and experience less incentive to find and retain employment. Given the barriers that debt creates for program participants, NJRC Legal Services Department has successfully worked with New Jersey Municipal Courts to dismiss \$22,381.22 from November 2020 to February 2021.³¹

One of the most significant obstacles that reentering individuals face is simply obtaining proper identification. Many former prisoners are only provided with a NJDOC identification card, the use of which proves quite insufficient, and thus must obtain a driver's license (or other qualifying identification) as one of the primary steps that must be fulfilled in order to obtain employment. Since acquiring such identification is often cumbersome and takes a significant amount of time, formerly incarcerated people are highly prone to violating the terms of their release (e.g., parole) for any number of reasons, such as obtaining housing, employment, and convenient transportation, all of which require proper identification. In 2022, NJRC has acquired 2,928 Motor Vehicle Commission identifications and 2,962 birth certificates.



When reentering society, many of the formerly incarcerated population struggle to successfully reintegrate, as evidenced by the high recidivism rates in New Jersey and the United States at large. NJRC aims to assist its program participants by securing state and federal benefits, for which many individuals typically qualify due, in part, to their income levels often falling below the poverty line. These benefits are often difficult for former inmates to access, given the inherent bureaucratic difficulties in applying for them. Through NJRC assistance, justice-involved

individuals can access various programs from the state and the federal government, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), General Assistance (GA), Emergency Assistance (EA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). These human services programs play a key role in successful transition from prison to the community. In 2022, 8,154 persons received SNAP benefits, and 3,607 persons received General Assistance.



Veterans



In the United States, veterans are more often involved with the criminal justice system than non-veterans. According to the Council on Criminal Justice, approximately one-third of veterans have been arrested at least once, compared to less than one-fifth of the general population.³² According to the most recent data, from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there were approximately 107,400 veterans in state and federal prison in 2016.³³ In addition, veterans have a higher rate of substance use disorder than the general population, especially when involved with the criminal justice system. More than one in ten veterans have been diagnosed with a substance use disorder.³⁴ For those involved with the criminal justice system, over half of such veterans have mental health or substance abuse disorders.³⁵ Indeed, there is a well-studied relationship between criminal justice involvement, addiction, and mental health that burden veterans more than the general population.

There are over 350,000 veterans in New Jersey.³⁶ Veterans make up over 3.7% of New Jersey's population.³⁷ Given the significant portion of veterans in NJ, it is essential that tailored services are provided to prevent substance abuse and convictions among the veteran population.

Individuals earn legal veteran status by completing at least two consecutive years of active-duty military service; when they are discharged or separate from service, this discharge or separation must not occur under dishonorable conditions. VA regulations are not mandated by federal law, but the current system follows them. Under current VA regulations, individuals who receive an other-than-honorable (OTH) discharge are not eligible to receive VA medical care, including mental health care.

OTH veterans are typically eligible to upgrade their discharge statuses through the Department of Defense or can appeal their Character of Discharge determination at the VA. Additionally, in cases of mental health emergencies, the VA may admit an OTH veteran for 90 days to a VA Hospital and then conduct an eligibility inquiry to determine whether the OTH veteran can receive long-term care.³⁸ In 2018, the VA reported that 1,818 OTH veterans received mental health treatment.³⁹ Contrarily, the Government Accountability Office reported that 18 veterans died by suicide each day in 2018.⁴⁰ Alarming, bad paper veterans are two times more likely to commit suicide and three times more likely to have suicidal ideations.⁴¹ Further, veterans with bad paper are at an increased risk of untreated mental health conditions, suicide, involvement with the criminal justice system, and homelessness.⁴² Veteran homelessness is a major issue in the United States. According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, on any given night, approximately 37,878 veterans are homeless. This means that 1.4 million veterans are homeless at some point during a year. Veterans account for 11% of the adult homeless population and are twice as likely to become homeless than non-veterans.

In a 2016 report by the Congressionally appointed Commission on Care, it was noted that many former service members who received an OTH

discharge as a result of a regulatory bar (which could be the result of behavioral misconduct related to a service-connected mental health condition) are legally veterans, but are routinely denied health care unless they request, receive, and prevail in eligibility adjudication with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) that their discharge was not dishonorable. Pre-entry and re-entry services, therefore, are necessary to support other-than-honorably discharged veterans in this complicated process.

The New Jersey Reentry Corporation, through the Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative,⁴³ seeks to respond to the gap of services for veterans, particularly with those with an OTH discharge status. This program is designed and executed to assist those veterans to secure medical and behavioral treatment for health ailments, mental health problems, and addiction. NJRC seeks to decrease the participation of veterans with the court system and provide them with the necessary support mechanisms through affiliated veterans organizations, hospitals and healthcare providers, and advocacy groups to offer the treatment and tools necessary for grappling with challenges ranging from anxiety, depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Working with federal and community stakeholders, NJRC is supporting veterans by advocating for quality supportive health, mental health, and legal services alongside employment and housing assistance provided by VA or community partners.





Those court-involved veterans have extensive medical and behavioral (mental health and substance use disorder) treatment needs. According to the Health and Justice Journal, “Among veterans age 55 and older who were exiting prison, 50% had hypertension, 20% had diabetes, and 16% had hepatitis,” (Williams et. al., 2010). “The mortality rate among veterans exiting prison is approximately similar to those of nonveterans exiting prison, namely 12 times higher from that of the general population, with

The Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative of NJRC works to provide critically-needed services to those veterans, regardless of discharge status, who are being released from state prison, county jail, or addiction treatment centers. In partnership with the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP), an independent, non-profit that provides free legal representation to veterans seeking a discharge upgrade, NJRC helps veterans with upgrading their OTH discharges so they may get the immediate care and benefits they need from the VA.



overdose as the leading cause of death,” (Wortzel, Blatchford, Connor, Adler, and Binswanger, 2012). In addition to the healthcare needs, court-involved veterans face a wide range of biopsychosocial challenges, for which NJRC is uniquely positioned to address. While 30% of veterans imprisoned have a history of homelessness, a significant percentage confront legal restrictions in employment, criminal background checks, as well as competing medical and behavioral health conditions.

NJRC has impacted 17 percent of the 8,000+ veterans in New Jersey who have received a less than honorable discharge. In 2022, NJRC served 581 veterans, hoping to serve 1,360 veterans in the next year.



To date, NJRC has 17,593 individuals actively receiving its services, the number of which alone demonstrates the tremendous impact that NJRC has made.⁴⁴ In the future, NJRC hopes to eliminate all barriers for individuals seeking employment after incarceration and create an environment where previously incarcerated individuals are no more likely to be arrested than an individual who has never been incarcerated. If an individual who has been previously incarcerated wants to take the steps towards a more healthy and meaningful way of life, NJRC will aid them in doing so by providing them with the opportunities to make positive contributions to society.

NJRC has shown the importance and value of providing second chances. When resources and opportunities are provided, people genuinely wish to succeed and want to provide a better life for both themselves and their loved ones. There are many barriers that currently exist that make it incredibly difficult for the formerly incarcerated to not only avoid returning to prison, thus continuing the cycle of

incarceration, but also to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy. With each obstacle, NJRC provides the necessary services that allow the formerly incarcerated to overcome them. From a vast array of methods to gauge its efficacy, NJRC demonstrably and successfully assists its clients reentry into society.











NJRC Business Partners

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Action Staffing
Active Staffing
Accu Staffing Services
Air Group
Ajulia
APN
Arrow Staffing
Bob's Furniture
Broad Waverly
Brooklyn Grange Brooklyn
Navy Yard
Carls Fencing
CE Logistics
Crystal Springs Resort
Courier Systems
CSL Plasma
D&J Moving and Installation
Dollar Tree
Driscoll Foods
Empowered U
Encardia Staffing
Georgia Pacific Company
Eastern Millwork, Inc.
Express Employment Professionals
Express Pros.
GetPortioned

Sansone Auto

Green Field Construction Group
Greenway Products & Services
Gourmet Kitchen
Fabuwood Cabinetry
FedEx
Fleet Wash
Franklin Social
Forem Facility Management, LLC
Gourmet Kitchen
Home Depot
Hudson Community Enterprises
Hugo Neu Corp
I-HOP
Joc Electric Inc.
Kat's Botanicals
LF Graphics LLC
LineStar Tubing Co.
Make USA
Marketing Plus
Massis Staffing
Mavis Tire
Mecca & Son Trucking Co.
Mirrotek International
Morrissey's Moving Company
My Unique
My Unique Thrift LLC

UPS

National Auto
National Labor Strategies
Party Rental
Pasta Volo
People Ready
Preferred Freezer
Performance Food Service
Randstad
Raritan Pharmacy
Rehab Investments Property Group
Restaurant Depot
Reset Woodbridge
Revolution Foods
Robert Half Staffing
Seton Hall University
Staffing Alternatives
Staff Management
Swift Medical Servicers
System One
Target Temporaries
The Royal Group
Tipico Cheese Products
USS Corporation
VitoZone
Wenner Bakery
Woodhaven Lumber & Millwork

Wakefern/Shoprite

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591 Summit Ave 6th Floor, Jersey City, NJ 07306
P: 551.256.9717 • F: 201.604.7830

Designed by Nickoy Ellis

  @NJ_REENTRY  /NJREENTRY