



## JJC Youth

The Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) serves approximately 2000 young people each year in its secure, residential and day programs, and more than 1100 parolees. In addition, the JJC reaches more than 10,000 youths through prevention programs each year.

JJC residents range in age from 12 to 23. The typical resident is 17 years old at the time of admission. More than 75 percent call New Jersey's seven largest urban counties home. More than 90 percent of JJC residents are male.

Many juveniles entering the JJC have multiple personal and family problems that serve as risk factors for continued offending. Nearly 67 percent of juveniles committed to the JJC are diagnosed with at least one mental health problem including substance abuse/dependency. Seventy percent of committed youth have a need for some level of substance abuse intervention. The JJC operates several facilities specifically designed for the growing number of delinquent juveniles who also have special needs, such as serious substance abuse or mental health issues, and for those who have committed sex offenses.

## Local Programs and Services

The JJC believes that keeping young people in their communities, whenever possible, results in the best life outcomes. The JJC's Office of Local Programs and Services works with its partners, the 21 County Youth Services Commissions and the Governor's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee to support prevention programs, detention and community-based disposition alternatives. The Office of Local Programs and Services uses federal, State, and grant funding sources to assist counties and cities to develop unique and effective programs for youth at risk of delinquency who are court-involved. Once a juvenile is involved in the court system, this office also assists in the placement of youth placed on probation or committed to JJC residential programs.

The Office of Local Programs and Services also works with counties to examine critical statewide issues such as suicide prevention and overcrowding at the State's 17 county-operated detention centers, compliance with State and federal mandates, and disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system.

## Education

Education is the foundation upon which the JJC prepares youth to return to their communities. The JJC operates similarly to a school district, employing its own teachers who oversee the instruction at all of its facilities throughout the State, local community-based programs and at county-operated detention centers.

The JJC strives to meet each student's individual needs. For some, that means teaching remedial reading or math skills, while for others it means preparing for

the SATs or participating in college level courses. Each juvenile is tested and placed in the appropriate classes depending on his or her skill level. The individual attention given students enables many to progress several grade levels before they return home. Often, through careful coordination with students' sending districts, these young people catch up to their peers and look forward to returning to their local schools at the appropriate grade level. Others receive their diplomas from their home high schools while with the JJC, and are encouraged to pursue higher education or vocational training.

The JJC's Office of Education offers a vast array of educational options to JJC students. Many are non-traditional in nature and satisfy the demands of New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards and Alternative Education requirements. Project-based lessons, entrepreneurial ventures, vocational initiatives, and community-based activities are examples of the educational experiences available to JJC students.

In addition to the State-mandated core curriculum, the JJC has designed special programs for its residents including a Dignity and Respect Curriculum and a Gang Awareness Initiative. JJC residents also learn techniques to manage their anger, communicate with their peers and parents, and gain employment. Residents can obtain a variety of skills and gain hands-on experience that can be utilized in the work place through the JJC's culinary arts program, auto shop, optical lab and carpentry programs, among other innovative courses of instruction.

## Resident Care

Juvenile residents cannot be treated like adult inmates. From the differing health care needs of adolescents to the psychological counseling sometimes necessary to overcome teenage issues, the focus of JJC programs is to help youth mature physically and mentally. JJC staff receive specialized instruction at the JJC training academy located in Sea Girt. The state-of-the-art curriculum prepares juvenile correction officers and non-secure staff to help meet the special needs of today's youth.

The JJC operates 4 secure facilities that include a reception center and a secure facility for female juveniles. In addition, there are 14 residential community homes and six day programs that accept juveniles who are committed by the courts or who are serving terms of probation. Placement in these facilities is determined by examining a juvenile's individual needs, risk factors and delinquency history. As a juvenile demonstrates increased preparedness to return home, his or her placement may become less restrictive.

The JJC has implemented programs that allow juveniles to give back to society through community service. Residents routinely participate in community clean-ups, landscaping projects, maintenance work and engage in other activities that benefit non-profit agencies or government entities. These programs are designed to teach students that they have a responsibility to a larger community.

## Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services

Many young people reach the doors of the JJC from economically depressed communities. Most come from troubled or dysfunctional family situations where there is an absence of positive role models and mentors. These factors place them at high risk to be involved in crime when they return home. The JJC is taking many innovative steps to reduce this risk.

All juveniles in JJC care will eventually return to their communities at the end of their court-imposed sentences. Upon commitment to the JJC, individual plans for parole are initiated, and the plans continue to evolve until parole commences. The JJC is well aware that its residents require additional support, structure and guidance when released from commitment. The JJC's Office of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services works with local communities and volunteers to help provide a safety net.

Visits by juvenile parole officers take place in a juvenile's home, at school, and at job sites during the late afternoon and evening, as well on the weekends. This allows officers to view a parolee in his or her home environment, and accurately identify any areas that need additional attention.

The Office of Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services is dedicated to its core values of Community, Accountability, Respect, and Enforcement (CARE).

## Gang Awareness and Prevention

As the number of gangs and gang-involved youth increases in neighborhoods statewide, the JJC is responding. The JJC's comprehensive Juvenile Gang Prevention and Intervention Project addresses street gangs at all levels by treating gang involvement as an addiction.

The JJC has designed a cutting-edge curriculum, entitled Phoenix, that is delivered to students in secure detention, JJC community programs, and local community programs. It is tailored to meet the varying needs of youth in different settings. For instance, it includes a component that allows instruction to continue after a juvenile returns home and is serving the conditions of his or her parole plan. This step-by-step, cognitively-based program encourages juveniles to change the way they think, and offers them a chance to start a new chapter of their lives, free from gangs, just like the mythical Phoenix that rises from the ashes.

A critical component of this project involves outreach and education. The JJC's gang program provides interested community members, organizations, school districts, and court systems with information critical to gang prevention, as well as instruction on intervention strategies. Experienced JJC staff are also available to conduct workshops. One-day training sessions can be adapted to meet an audience's specific needs. It can also be expanded to provide more in-depth training.

The fight against gangs will be won in local neighborhoods, in schools, and in the minds of our youth. The JJC is committed to giving our communities and their youth the tools they need to succeed. Together, we can make sure that young people understand that gang life is not the road to success, but rather the path to destruction.





# What is the Juvenile Justice Commission?

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission is the State agency responsible for providing juvenile rehabilitation and parole services. Established in 1995, the JJC serves to coordinate services and policies affecting delinquent youth throughout the State. From prevention to parole, the JJC is a partner in the entire juvenile justice system, working with communities to help redirect the lives of young people.

The JJC has a challenging goal - to help young people turn their lives around and stay on the right track. Not only does the JJC care for juveniles placed in its custody by the New Jersey Family Court System, but it works with communities to identify and address specific issues that face at-risk youth. The JJC awards millions of dollars each year to communities to implement their own programs to help youth grow into successful adults.

The Juvenile Justice Commission strives to:

- Maintain a safe and respectful environment for youth under its supervision as well as for its staff;
- Effectively deliver educational and other rehabilitative services specific to each youth in order to help them be law-abiding and successful in their communities;
- Engage family members and community resources to support and sustain each juvenile's achievements upon release from custody.

## The Mission

The Juvenile Justice Commission fosters public safety and strives to reduce delinquency by:

- Holding youth accountable for their law-breaking;
- Providing opportunities to achieve positive change and rehabilitation of youth under its supervision;
- Promoting opportunities for positive growth and development of youth in their communities.

## The Road to Home

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission is committed to protecting public safety while implementing innovative programs that teach youth skills that can be applied throughout life as law-abiding and productive members of their communities. Every effort is made to prepare the youth who attend one of the JJC's programs to return home. A different "Road to Home" is mapped out for each resident providing him or her with the tools and assistance necessary to help each succeed.

The JJC strives to be an active member of communities throughout the State, a partner to juvenile justice professionals, and a resource to the citizens of New Jersey. Through collaborative efforts between JJC and communities throughout the State, and through the realization of each juvenile's potential, young lives can be forever changed.

## For More Information

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# State of New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission

## Realizing Potential Changing Futures



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