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Lt. Steven Jonaitis at CRT headquarters with a JPAY kiosk and tablet. Photo courtesy Custody Review Team

## Custody Review Team is a growing team with a growing responsibility

By Amy Z. Quinn

On the second floor of a building on the Jones Farm campus, a team is growing as the NJDOC continues to grow and expand opportunities for family connection – and so is its responsibility.

As the incarcerated population’s reliance on electronic communication has increased, so has the need for officers to monitor the incoming and outgoing messages, emails and videos. And with the expansion of video visitation to all facilities, the team has the added responsibility for monitoring visits in real time and ending them off if they become inappropriate.

Lt. Steven Jonaitis leads the 11-member Custody Review Team (CRT), which a few years ago only numbered two,

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under the direction of Major James M. Forbes and Director Oliver Keller.

Much of the communication takes place through the JPAY kiosks, which piloted at South Woods State Prison in 2015 and number more than 400 across every facility, Jonaitis said.

Every 30 days, 400,000 electronic items will pass through the JPAY system, including emails, video messages and pictures, into and out of the tablets that 85% of the incarcerated population now have.

“What our team reviews is all the attachments before any of those are released for delivery to the incarcerated person or the person they’re corresponding with,” he said.

Officers are on the lookout for anything involving nudity or pornography, violence,

gang-related content, or mental health concerns, and refer items to Special Investigation Division or the Health Services Unit.

Each month, about 4,000 items are rejected for various reasons.

During video visits, the officers watch in real time, monitoring between 70 and 100 visits each day. Video “visitors” are vetted much like in-person visitors are, he said. And anything people try to get away with in person, they’ll try during a video visit.

“Our goal really is to keep up with technology and ensure that the incarcerated persons are able to have their communication with the outside world and to keep in contact with their loved ones,” Jonaitis said.

This was especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person visits were restricted.

As NJDOC moves toward all-electronic mail delivery, avoiding paper as much as possible, the CRT’s job will only grow.

Another major area the Custody Review Team handles are grievances filed through JPAY by incarcerated persons – more than 2.9 million statewide since 2015, Jonaitis said.

Team members have come from facilities all around the state, with varied backgrounds.

They include: **Officers Jayme Tartaglia, Johanna Ortiz, Sean Celia, Shawn Cyrus, David Pullen, David Estrada, Celina Koch, Larry Himm, Timothy McLaren, Jeomar Alicea and Gokhan Aydin.**

# REMINDER:

## Media Policy

A reminder to all NJDOC personnel that under policy ADM.003.001, all media requests for interviews (on the record, or for background) must go through the PIO office.

Questions or concerns?

Email

[Amy.Z.Quinn@doc.nj.gov](mailto:Amy.Z.Quinn@doc.nj.gov)

## ***PIO Wants to Know***

Is your facility having an event you'd like to share? Email [PubInfo@doc.nj.gov](mailto:PubInfo@doc.nj.gov)



# First Black Leadership Conference brings DOC generations together

As part of NJDOC's Black History Month celebration, participants gathered at the inaugural Black Leadership Summit in order to network and recognize supervisors of color in the department.

Black leaders in the department shared stories of their first years in the NJDOC, their motivations and challenges, advice for leadership and expressed the importance of diversity in the organization.

Congratulations to members of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, Chief Sessomes and Assistant Commissioner Haley, for this important event.

Held at Thomas Edison State University, the inaugural Black Leadership Summit was an important part of NJDOC's Black History Month observances.



Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn kicked off the summit with words of support.

Photos by Chris Carden / NJDOC





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# Black Leadership Summit

*NJDOC generations  
come together to celebrate  
Black excellence*

"It was an amazing event that I was truly excited to be a part of. Not only was the immediate feedback positive, the exit survey further confirmed this," said Acting Deputy Commissioner Willie Bonds.

"For me personally, the most memorable moment was a conversation I had with two of the attendees at the conclusion of the event. They both expressed that for the first time in a long time they truly felt encouraged and excited about not only their career prospects, but also the direction of the department. That interaction alone made the event worthwhile."

Did you attend the Black Leadership Summit?  
Share your thoughts with [PubInfo@doc.nj.gov](mailto:PubInfo@doc.nj.gov) .





# Promotions

- Scott Bergner - Plumber and Steamfitter
- Thomas Bevins - Mechanical Equipment Specialist
- Richard Bond - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Vincent Canonica - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Anthony Carswell - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Nichole Crews - Senior Clerk Typist
- Ronald Dagostino - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Jontoria Flowers - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Michael Gain - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Timothy Gonzalez - Division Director
- Victoria Herring - Executive Assistant 3
- Michele Kapurelos - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Daina Kiley - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Bonnie Lutz - Administrative Assistant 1
- Jaritza Maldonado - Personnel Trainee
- Christopher McTommony - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Marie Mills-Rogers - Manager 2 Human Resources
- Paul Orlov - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Nicholas Polidora - Technical Assistant 1, Purchasing
- Scott Poolake - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Taina Rivera - Classification Officer 3
- Pablo Rivera - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Sophia Robinson - Classification Officer 3
- Susan Scarborough - Supervising Institutional Trade Instructor
- John Shaw - Correctional Police Sergeant
- Matthew Smith - Correctional Police Sergeant





# A NEW COMMITTEE, FOCUSED ON YOU: YOUR VOICE COUNTS

By Anthony Gangi

Do you feel valued at work? Do you feel appreciated? Do you feel your work is meaningful? Purposeful? Most importantly, do you feel that your voice counts in this great career you have chosen?

Your voice counts – but counts for what, you may ask. The answer is innovation, change, significance and overall, the internal growth that represents a shared and invested partnership between what is best for NJDOC and what is best for its people.

In an effort to bring the voices of all within the DOC to the forefront, we’ve convened a new committee centered on the core belief that staff have the right to feel fulfilled and affirmed in the work they do. CEMI – pronounced “see me” – is the Committee of Employee Morale and Innovation, with a mandate to create ways to elevate your voices and bring your suggestions for how to improve the staff experience to the attention of all.

CEMI is a committee of individuals who are dedicated and passionate about listening to your voice, the voice of staff. We are dedicated to understanding your needs and expectations in our shared effort to grow from the bottom up. 2023 is our chance to go beyond just words. 2023 is our chance to make YOUR VOICE COUNTS an actionable initiative.

CEMI will begin a "Listening Tour" as we visit each facility, each unit, in our needed effort to connect, build trust through transparency and share ideas with our staff. The "Listening Tour" will be the first step on our journey towards our shared growth and development.

As a department, it is time for us to ask ourselves if we are the kind of agency which aspires to make the changes needed to grow and develop as a team. As individuals, we need to ask ourselves if we want just a passive job with no meaning and purpose, or do we want an intentional career that allows us to seek both personal and professional growth and development in a way that helps the agency and yourself define shared values and purpose – and then live up to them.

At this point, the choice is yours. Soon, CEMI will be present at your facility. We will be there to listen to your voice. We will be waiting for you, the staff, the frontline, to build the courage to step in front of the crowd and speak your concerns and ideas into something actionable. This is your opportunity to be seen, to be heard, and, most importantly, to feel valued.

Therefore, take the intentional step forward and invest in your career towards the change that will help us, as an agency, stand above the rest. The invitation has been made by CEMI, now GO RSVP. Not only does **Your Voice Count**, it is needed. Look for members of the CEMI Committee in your facility soon, and make your voice heard.

