

# INSIDE CORRECTIONS

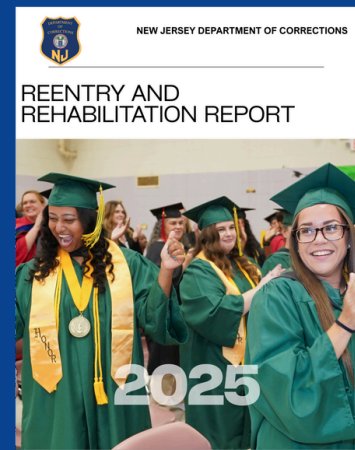


## NEW NJDOC REPORT FINDS RECIDIVISM AT HISTORIC LOWS

The latest Recidivism Outcome Report shows that New Jersey has reached a historic milestone, with reincarcerations for new convictions **dropping to a record low of 6%**. This 50% decline since 2013 demonstrates that prioritizing rehabilitation directly strengthens public safety. Governor Mikie Sherrill noted that these results reflect the tangible impact of providing individuals with the tools they need to find housing, secure jobs, and successfully get back on their feet.

These achievements are a direct result of the hard work happening in our facilities every day. From an 86% pass rate for High School Equivalency candidates to the 55% employment rate for vocational graduates, our programs are creating a clear path for professional advancement. Commissioner Kuhn credits this success to a robust mix of education and reentry resources, ensuring that accountability and support go hand-in-hand to foster long-term growth and community stability. *The full report is available on the [NJDOC website](#).*

## Reentry Preparation Yields Positive Outcomes



A core component to reducing recidivism and supporting public safety is preparing individuals to leave custody with the resources needed to succeed. Ensuring people have access to housing, healthcare, education and training, and treatment programs during the transition helps them reintegrate better into their communities. *[Read the 2025 Reentry and Rehabilitation Report here.](#)*

# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATIONS

Last month, the NJDOC proudly honored the the indelible contributions of women across the Department in honor of Women's History Month. This year's signature event was an "afternoon tea" themed symposium, *Pouring into Tomorrow*, held at Jones Farm and featuring opening remarks from Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq.

Additionally, the Wellness Team at Garden State Correctional Facility (GCSF) partnered with Food Services to provide a special brunch to honor the staff. By acknowledging the work of these teams within NJDOC, we are ensuring that all staff—regardless of gender or background—feel valued and included.



Commissioner Kuhn provides opening remarks at *Pouring into Tomorrow* event.



## Pouring Into Tomorrow

The signature Women's History Month event also included workshops that focused on breaking career barriers, mentorship, women's health, and self-care as resistance and renewal.



## WHM Brunch at GCSF

The Wellness Team at GCSF along with Food Services provided a brunch to recognize Women's History Month and the contributions of staff.

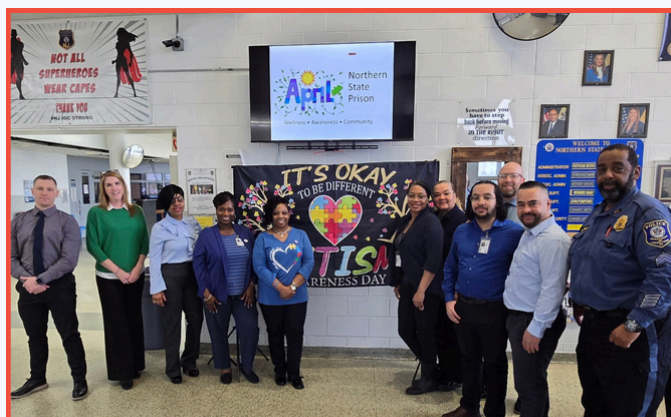
# AWARENESS STARTS WITH UNDERSTANDING

As we recognize Autism Awareness Month, we're reminded that understanding and awareness shape how we communicate, support one another, and do our jobs safely and effectively. Mario Viera, Executive Assistant 3, Northern State Prison (NSP), shares insights on why this matters across our facilities and in our daily work.

## What does autism awareness mean to you personally and professionally?

Autism awareness, to me, means recognizing that individuals on the autism spectrum experience the world differently, not less, just differently. Personally, it means practicing patience, empathy, and understanding. Professionally, it means creating an environment that is respectful, inclusive, and responsive to different communication styles and needs.

Understanding that not everyone processes instructions, stress, or social interaction the same way. It reminds me to lead with patience and respect. Especially in a correctional setting, it means recognizing behaviors may be related to how someone processes their environment, not defiance, and responding in a way that maintains both safety and dignity.



Mario Viera (second from right) and fellow staff at NSP gather for Autism Awareness Month activities.

## A FEW AUTISM FACTS & STATS

- Autism now affects 1 in 31 children
- About 40% of children with autism do not speak
- The rate of autism has steadily grown over the last three decades
- Autism greatly varies from person to person (no two people with autism are alike)
- Children with autism do progress – early intervention is key

*National Autism Association, all rights reserved.*

## How has your experience with autism shaped your perspective at work?

My experience with autism has helped me become more mindful of how I communicate and interact with others. It's made me more patient and aware that behaviors often have underlying reasons. I've learned the importance of clear communication, consistency, and not making assumptions about someone's abilities or intentions.

## What is one thing you wish more people understood about autism?

I wish more people understood that autism is a spectrum, and no two individuals are the same. What may be a challenge for one person could be a strength for another. It's important not to stereotype but to take the time to understand each person as an individual. Behaviors are often a form of communication. What may look like noncompliance, withdrawal, or agitation could actually be someone feeling overwhelmed or not understanding what's being asked. Recognizing that can change how we respond and lead to better outcomes.

## AUTISM AWARENESS CONTINUED

### How can our workplace better support or include individuals on the autism spectrum?

In a correctional facility, support can start with training staff to recognize signs of autism and understand appropriate responses. Simple things like giving clear, step-by-step instructions, allowing a moment for processing, and reducing unnecessary sensory stress when possible, can improve compliance and safety. Consistency among staff is also a key element.

### Are there any small changes coworkers can take that make a meaningful difference?

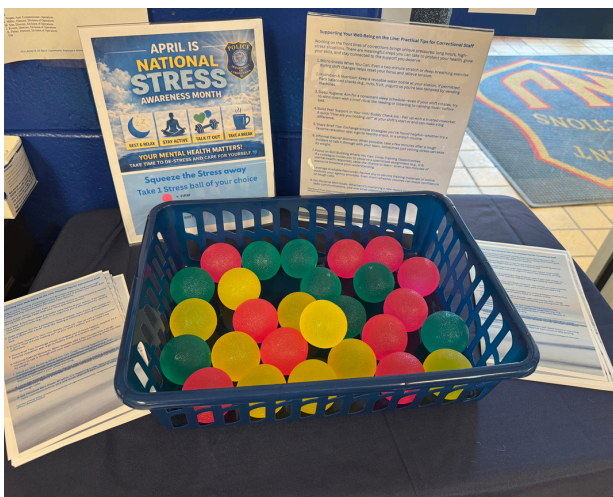
Yes, simple actions like being clear and direct in communication instead of sarcasm or an implied meaning. Being patient, avoiding sensory overload (like excessive noise when possible), and showing respect for personal space can go a long way.

Most importantly, small adjustments when listening and being open-minded can make a meaningful impact. Give individuals a moment to process instructions before repeating or escalating. Stay calm and consistent in tone. Avoid unnecessary shouting or sudden changes when possible. Treat individuals with respect, even during enforcement.

*Specials thanks to the Wellness Teams at Northern State Prison and Mid-State Correctional Facilities for their Autism Awareness Month activities.*

*“I wish more people understood that autism is a spectrum, and no two individuals are the same. What may be a challenge for one person could be a strength for another.”*

*--Mario Viera, Executive Assistant 3, Northern State Prison (NSP)*



## APRIL IS NATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

In high-pressure environments like corrections, managing stress isn't just about wellness—it's also about safety. Last month, Mid-State Correctional Facility took time out to provide informative pamphlets and stress balls to help raise awareness about stress, and encourage staff to take small actions that can help reduce stressors such as including micro-breaks in daily routines, checking on coworkers, and getting proper rest, hydration and nutrition.

# END OF AN ERA

After more than 25 years of exemplary service to the Department, Jeffrey Crothers, Administrator of New Jersey State Prison, is retiring from NJDOC.

Mr. Crothers has worked with distinction at various ranks and in administrative roles across multiple facilities. His unwavering dedication and commitment have significantly improved the working conditions for the staff as well as created a safer and more supportive environment for the incarcerated population at NJSP. We wish him well on his retirement.



# SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS:

Last month, Adult Diagnostic & Treatment Center (ADTC) recognized employees who had perfect attendance in 2025. Thank you to these dedicated NJDOC staff members for their commitment. Congratulations on your achievement!



SCPO Troy Mathews #4171



Elizabeth Cokley, Technical Assistant 3



CPS. Jason Passero #1624



SCPO Rashawn Verdejo #4614.

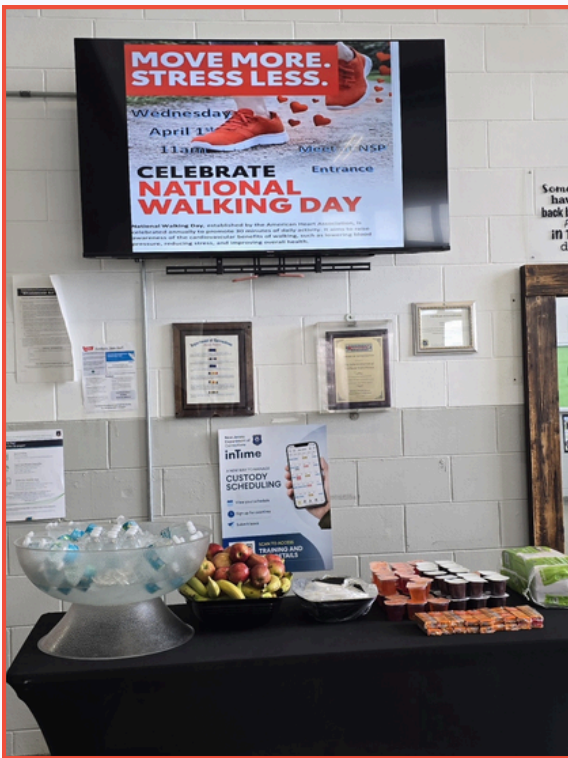


SCPO Jamil McCalla #3957

# NATIONAL WALKING DAY

NJDOC staff at Northern State Prison, Mid-State Correctional Facility, and East Jersey State Prison are taking steps to help improve their cardiovascular health—literally! Staff at the facilities participated in National Walking Day on April 1 by walking at least 30 minutes around their campuses.

National Walking Day was established by the American Heart Association (AHA) and is recognized on the first Wednesday of April each year.



Did you know that just 30 minutes of daily activity can provide significant health benefits? Regular brisk walks can lower blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, strengthen bones and muscles, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases like diabetes and certain cancers. AHA recommends at least 150 minutes per week of moderately brisk walking or other aerobic activity. Regular physical exercise in general is a great way to keep your body healthy and reduce stress.

*Thanks to the Wellness Committees at these facilities for organizing the walks!*

# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Enjoying the new look of *Inside Corrections*? Please share your feedback. Your input helps us keep the Department connected. Have a story idea? Reach out to the editorial team at [kere.thomas@doc.nj.gov](mailto:kere.thomas@doc.nj.gov) with your suggestions. We'd love to hear from you!

# NJDOC PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to the following NJDOC staff on their well-deserved promotions this past quarter! We are thrilled to celebrate the hard work and dedication it takes to reach new professional heights. Please join in celebrating these milestones and wishing everyone continued success in their new roles.

## January 2026

Tara Bradshaw	Senior Clerk Typist
Lisa Codis	Technical Assistant 3
Makeda Cogman	Personnel Assistant 3
Kisha Finger	Technical Assistant 3
John Foster	Software Development Specialist 2
Tonja Green	Manager 2, Human Resources
Steven Hiles	Crew Supervisor Building Maintenance Programs
Jeffrey Hill	Storekeeper 2
Ruth Parsons	Technical Assistant 2
Kristhel Rincon	Program Support Specialist 2, Assistance Programs
Marvin Velez	Personnel Assistant 3
Zachary Watkins	Senior Clerk Typist

## February 2026

Derrick Bodtmann	Associate Administrator, Prison Complex
Tiera Bookman	Technical Assistant
Nicole Capano	Purchasing Assistant
Israel Castro	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Zachary Cobb	Correctional Police Sergeant
George Deberry	Supervisor of Chaplaincy Services
Martin Duffy	Correctional Police Sergeant
Jerry Harris	Manager 1, Information Processing
Brandon Harrison	Personnel Assistant 1
Justin Hatfield	Correctional Police Sergeant
Marquis Hill	Correctional Police Sergeant
Melissa Kane	Technical Assistant 1
Colleen Maravelias	Administrative Analyst 4, Accounting
Angel Nichols	Classification Officer 2, DOC

## SPECIAL INSERT

## NJDOC PROMOTIONS

## February 2026 cont'd.

Lawrence Pignatelli	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Gary Ponder	Technical Assistant 3
Theresa Smith	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Kyle Sylvester	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Theresa Tanzi	Technical Assistant Classification, DOC
Justyna Zgorski	Correctional Police Sergeant

## March 2026

Michelle Brenner	Correctional Police Major
Phyllis Carrier	Technical Assistant 3
Ryan Cassler	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Ieshia Davis	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Frank Domingues	Program Support Specialist 2, Assistance Programs
Frida E. Flores-Osorio	Senior Clerk Typist
Usama Henien	Supervisor Regional Food Service Operations
Dwayne Johnson	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Jeneen Jones	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Edward Kerney III	Communications Operator, DOC
Nadine Littles	Institutional Trade Instructor 2, Warehousing
Gerald Matias	Assistant Engineer in Charge Maintenance
Kevin McGowan	Director of Operations
Patrick Miller	Assistant Commissioner, Custody & Security Operations
Daniel Mooney	Correctional Police Sergeant
Kevin Reynolds	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Wilfredo Rivera Jr.	Storekeeper 2
Marilyn Serrano	Manager 2, Human Resources
Angylina Vilares	Communications Operator, DOC
Ruben Wamba	Correctional Police Lieutenant
Michael Witwer	Education Program Assistant 1
Deborah Zieniuk	Communications Operator, DOC
Zachary Zieniuk	Correctional Police Sergeant