



New Jersey Department of Corrections

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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS TO PARTNER WITH GIVE SOMETHING BACK TO PROVIDE ACADEMIC SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PERSONS

New Partnership Aims to Address Cycle of Incarceration by Providing Long-Term Coaching to Justice-Impacted Youth

BRIDGETON, NJ – The [New Jersey Department of Corrections](#) (NJDOC) and [Give Something Back](#) (Give Back) are joining forces to support youth affected by incarceration by creating a pathway to stability, education and long-term success. The NJDOC and Give Back, a non-profit organization, have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to deliver long-term coaching and academic support to youth affected by parental incarceration and other significant childhood adversity. The partnership is grounded in a shared belief that investing in young people early on helps break the cycles of incarceration and trauma and promotes long-term economic stability and strengthens communities.

"Education is a powerful, transformative tool," said NJDOC Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq. "When we open doors to learning, we open doors to stability, opportunity and a future free from the cycles that have held too many children and families back. Partnering with Give Back allows us to stand beside these students with the resources and support they need to not just imagine a better future, but to achieve it."

Under the agreement, Give Back will provide long-term coaching and supportive services to youth with high Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), including the children of incarcerated women at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility. Each young person builds a personal success plan and receives consistent one-on-one support throughout their journey. Services include academic guidance, college and career coaching, trauma-informed mentoring, and access to basic needs like food and transportation.

"This partnership has been a dream long in the making. When I first met Bob Carr, the founder of Give Back, more than ten years ago, our very first conversation was about Edna Mahan. He had just sold Heartland Systems and wanted to dedicate his resources to changing outcomes for children of incarcerated mothers, who face more obstacles than most. He couldn't imagine a more compelling purpose, and he has stayed true to that vision ever since – investing more than \$100M to college

readiness, access and completion for the most vulnerable students,” said Melissa Helmbrecht, Chief Executive Officer of Give Back. “Today represents a full-circle moment and the formalization of that purpose. We are honored and excited to work alongside these inspiring students and deeply grateful for this transformative partnership.”

The program’s continued success is strongly tied to its coaches. Each coach is committed to providing meaningful support to students beginning in middle school, and will remain engaged with these students through high school, post-secondary education, and into early career development. They work closely with students to build personalized academic plans, provide tutorial and guidance and support – encouraging students to explore their interests, set goals and gain the skills they need to pursue meaningful employment.

By staying involved well into a student’s early adult years, Give Back ensures that education and career development are realistic, supported and achievable. In this vein, the program also assists students with navigating the financial aid process and keeps them on track with their academic pursuits through regular mentoring, check-ins and wrap-around support.

To date, Give Back has supported more than 2,000 young people across the country, many of whom come from communities where college completion rates are well below the national average. More than 80 percent of those served have either earned a post-secondary degree or are actively on track to do so.

Both NJDOC and Give Back share a commitment to transparency and continuous improvement which are values that guide this partnership and ensure it remains focused on real outcomes.

Driven by data, Give Back has tracked its impact by capturing important data points since its founding in 2018 – everything from student transcripts and coaching interactions to bi-monthly student feedback surveys. This robust data system has collected over 1.2 million data points to date, which serve to help coaches identify academic risks early, adapt services in real-time and ensure youth stay on track. The organization’s data-driven approach informs continuous improvement and ensures that each student receives personalized, responsive support.

By combining NJDOC’s commitment to reducing recidivism and improving public safety with Give Back’s outcomes-oriented approach, this partnership aims to expand access to education, mentoring and post-secondary opportunities for youth across New Jersey. Together, the organizations are working to break cycles of incarceration, open pathways to economic stability, and ensure that every young person served has the tools and support to succeed.

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About New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC)

The mission of NJDOC is to advance public safety and promote successful reintegration in a dignified, safe, secure, rehabilitative, and gender-informed environment, supported by a professional, trained, and diverse workforce, enhanced by community engagement. For more information, visit: [NJDOC.gov](https://www.njdoc.gov).

Give Something Back (Give Back)

Give Back is a national nonprofit dedicated to helping youth overcome barriers to education and economic stability. Through long-term coaching, mentoring, and wraparound support, Give Back equips students beginning in middle school with the tools they need to succeed in high school, pursue higher education, and build meaningful careers. Guided by data and driven by compassion, Give Back partners with schools, families, and communities to break cycles of poverty and incarceration and ensure every student can realize their full potential. For more information, visit giveback.ngo.