



New Jersey Office of the Attorney General
Year in Review 2023

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Attorney General Platkin announces the
supersession of the Paterson Police Department.

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Year in Review 2023

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Who We Are

The New Jersey Attorney General oversees the Department of Law and Public Safety (LPS or the Department), which has more than 8,000 employees across 20 divisions, offices, and commissions. In this role, the Attorney General serves as the State's chief law enforcement officer and lawyer.

For a complete description of the divisions, offices, and commissions within LPS, see pages 58 to 77.

The Conviction Review Unit secured a court ruling leading to the release of an innocent man who was serving a 30-year prison sentence for a crime he did not commit.





Introduction from Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin

Each day, the more than 8,000 employees of the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety do the hard work of enforcing our laws and keeping our communities safe. And each day, in my role as New Jersey's 62nd Attorney General, I am in awe of their professionalism and dedication as they serve the people of our great state. At every opportunity, our team pursues innovative solutions to the most pressing issues of the day and the result is tangible progress as we work towards improving the lives of our residents here and now, while ensuring that the next generation inherits a state where anything is possible.

In 2023, we made New Jersey a safer place to live. The fewest people were shot in New Jersey since the data has been kept in 2009: under 1,000 (less than 0.011%) people in a State of more than 9 million. We took remarkable strides in our continuing efforts to improve public safety and transform policing, while ensuring those in need of mental health services received adequate support. The ARRIVE Together program, an alternative to traditional police responses during mental health emergencies, has expanded and is now operational in all 21 counties. We are saving lives, improving outcomes, and expanding the resources available to law enforcement. The Statewide Affirmative Firearms Enforcement (SAFE) Office, which is authorized to enforce the public nuisance law signed by Governor Phil Murphy, is pursuing those bad actors who flout our gun laws and in turn endanger the lives of our residents. My office is working on behalf of some of our most vulnerable residents as we stand up for LGBTQ+ youth and their rights. Reproductive rights are also under attack across the country, but in New Jersey Governor Murphy and the Legislature have given our office the tools necessary to protect the right to choose. Our Division on Civil Rights (DCR) is also taking steps to curb the rising tide of hate, antisemitism, and white supremacy that threatens our state and our nation. DCR is focused on pursuing those who commit hate or bias crimes, while giving our communities, particularly at schools and college campuses, the resources they need to confront and stop hate head on.

Our Year in Review serves to catalog the work of the people of the Department of Law and Public Safety; and demonstrates our firm commitment to do our part to keep our cities and towns, our urban centers and rural hamlets, safe each and every day.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "M. J. Platkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Matthew J. Platkin
New Jersey Attorney General



Combatting Violent Crime and Gun Violence

New Jersey is at the forefront of the national fight to end gun violence. Our holistic approach uses criminal, civil, and regulatory tools to reduce the number of people killed and shot, all with the goal of making our communities safer and preventing families from losing loved ones. We focus on pursuing criminals who violate our gun laws, keeping guns out of the hands of those seeking to harm others, and breaking cycles of violence.

Left: Attorney General Platkin meets with gun violence advocates.

Below: A press conference to announce legal action against a Pennsylvania gun show company and a New Jersey gun dealer under New Jersey's Public Nuisance law.



Stopping Criminals and the Firearms They Use

Shooting victims reach record low thanks to holistic approach to public safety.

For the first time since 2009, the year New Jersey began tracking the number of shooting victims, the number of people shot in New Jersey fell below 1,000 people. In 2023, 924 individuals were shot in New Jersey, down 13% from the previous year, which was itself a 25 percent reduction over 2021. Of the 924, 191 people were killed as the result of gun violence, a decrease in shooting murders of 8% from 2022. In early 2023, the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) used data and technology to identify opportunities to support local, state, and federal partners in reducing the number of shooting victims. This historic achievement was made possible through law enforcement partnerships like the Attorney General's Gun Violence Reduction Task Force, which focuses law enforcement resources on drivers of violence, investment in violence intervention and prevention resources, and enforcement of the State's tough gun safety laws. The number of shooting victims decreased across the State and in many of New Jersey's largest cities, including Trenton, Newark, Atlantic City, and Paterson. In Paterson, where the Attorney General's Office took control of the Police Department in March 2023, the City recorded a 39 percent drop in murders and a 25 percent decrease in shooting victims compared to 2022.

Dismantling firearm pipelines and violent gangs. In one of the largest weapons seizures in recent New Jersey history, the Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) and the NJSP Weapons Trafficking North Unit, working with our partners in New York and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, seized 100 guns and 200 large capacity ammunition magazines that were stolen in transit between a Vermont firearms importer and a Louisiana weapons wholesaler. In another case, 19 people were charged as part of an operation to dismantle a Perth Amboy street gang responsible for trafficking drugs and firearms and committing a series of violent crimes.

Promoting Public Safety Through Firearms Enforcement and Regulation

Defending legal tools to hold gun industry members accountable. The SAFE office, through the work of the Office of the Solicitor General, turned back a lawsuit brought by the National Shooting Sports Foundation to void P.L. 2022, c. 56, the firearms public nuisance legislation signed by Governor Murphy on July 5, 2022 that SAFE is tasked with implementing. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit unanimously dismissed the suit in August allowing SAFE to continue to pursue its critical mission to hold bad actors in the gun industry accountable for their actions and keep New Jerseyans safe from gun violence.

Enforcing New Jersey's public nuisance law against gun industry members. In 2023, SAFE filed its first two lawsuits under New Jersey's firearms public nuisance law and common law authority. The first lawsuit seeks to hold FSS Armory, a New Jersey-licensed gun dealer, accountable for improperly securing gun products and broadcasting its reckless storage practices, which led to a burglary that put those guns in the hands of traffickers and other unauthorized gun users. The second lawsuit asserts claims against Patriot Enterprises Worldwide LLC, a gun show company known more commonly as Eagle Shows, and ghost gun products vendor JSD Supply, which together have marketed gun products to New Jersey residents that can be assembled into fully functional, untraceable ghost guns.

Investing in Technology and Data Collection

Establishing microstamping standards for firearms available for commercial sale. The Attorney General’s Office has formally issued the standards and qualifying criteria that will be used to determine whether a particular microstamping-enabled commercial firearm model should be included in the State’s microstamping roster. A microstamping-enabled firearm has unique markings imprinted on its firing pin, which are stamped onto bullet cartridge casings each time the firearm is fired. Those unique imprints are linked to the firearm’s make, model, and serial number, allowing law enforcement to match spent cartridge casings found at a crime scene to the specific firearm from which they were discharged. Under the newly-established standards, a firearm qualifies for inclusion on the microstamping roster, among other criteria, it regularly imparts an identifying marker on expended cartridge cases, performs without physically deforming or deteriorating when firing rounds, fires rounds with no less reliability than other commercial firearms sold in New Jersey, and otherwise complies with all applicable State and federal laws. The issuance of the microstamping standards brings New Jersey one step closer to making microstamping technology available, to commercial firearm purchasers in New Jersey.

Monitoring increased firearm carry applications and improving violent crime investigations. In the summer of 2023, Attorney General Platkin issued two firearms-related directives. The first mandates the collection of anonymous information on processed permit-to-carry-handgun applications to guide policymaking and resource allocation, and allows for the information to be made available to the public. The second amended a 2008 Attorney General directive to expedite the submission of ballistics evidence gathered at crime scenes to forensic labs to increase the likelihood of solving gun crimes.

Attorney General Platkin joins President Biden at the Safer Communities Summit to celebrate the anniversary of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.



Keeping guns out of the wrong hands. In July 2023, the Personalized Handgun Authorization Commission established performance standards and qualifying criteria for joining the state’s personalized, “smart” handguns roster. The new standards and qualifying criteria represent a milestone in New Jersey’s first-in-the-nation efforts to improve public safety by encouraging the development and rollout of safer firearms and by preventing unauthorized users from being able to discharge a gun.

Supporting and Protecting Crime Victims

Ensuring transparency and justice for sexual assault survivors. New Jersey received \$2 million in competitive federal funding to establish an advanced tracking system for the state’s Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) Kits, which are used to preserve physical evidence collected from medical forensic examinations conducted by qualified nurses after an individual has experienced an act of sexual violence. The grant helps to provide financial resources to ensure sexual assault survivors have the means to track the status of their SAFE Kit and related criminal proceedings. The funding will also ensure SAFE Kits are being stored and processed in a timely and transparent manner.

Making crime victim compensation applications more accessible and user-friendly. The Division of Violence Intervention and Victim Assistance (VIVA) launched a new online case processing system that will increase and improve access to the critical support the Victims of Crime Compensation Office (VCCO) provides victims of crime. The updates to the existing case processing system create a more user-friendly experience for applicants filing from both desktop and mobile devices. Users can now file applications in 133 different languages and sign the applications electronically.

A roundtable discussion with Moms Demand Action to end gun violence.



Strengthening New Jersey's response to domestic violence crimes. In 2023, Attorney General Platkin issued a Law Enforcement Directive establishing the framework for a response team — known as the “Breathing/Blood Flow Restriction Event: Advocacy, Treatment, Help, and Empowerment” (BREATHE) Team — responsible for responding to crimes of nonfatal strangulation and smothering. The directive requires County Prosecutors to develop and implement procedures to refer victims of nonfatal strangulation and/or smothering for a forensic medical examination. An additional law enforcement directive requires longer retention of evidence, including DNA evidence, from sexual assault medical examinations not processed by a lab at the survivor’s request, and extends the current required retention period from five years to 20 years. The directive also establishes statewide procedures and guidelines for tracking, storing, and determining how and when such evidence is submitted for testing, and it limits the circumstances when law enforcement can decline to present evidence for testing in cases where a survivor has consented to it.

Attorneys General Platkin, Kathy Jennings, and Michelle Henry convene to discuss law enforcement collaboration across state lines.





Advancing Innovative Policing Policies

New Jersey is a national leader in advancing and embracing innovative policing policies. The Alternative Responses to Reduce Instances of Violence and Escalation (ARRIVE) Together program is a prime example of the transformational work being done in New Jersey as communities of all sizes connect residents with the mental health support they need and limit their contacts with the criminal justice system.

Left: A community listening session in Newark.

Below: Attorney General Platkin visits Montclair for "National Night Out."



Expanding ARRIVE Together. At the start of 2023, ARRIVE was operational in three counties-Atlantic, Cumberland, and Union. By the end of the year, all 21 counties included ARRIVE programming. To get there, law enforcement, mental health partners, and community stakeholders worked together to develop new response models to serve the behavioral and mental health needs of New Jerseyans across the state. In February, municipalities in seven additional counties announced their intention to launch ARRIVE pilots throughout the spring and summer. Following input from community stakeholders, the first ARRIVE follow-up models were also put into place. This model joined the existing ARRIVE co-response and telehealth models. Newark, the state’s largest city, joined ARRIVE in August and established partnership with Newark’s Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery (OVPTR) that will allow residents be referred to OVPTR for ongoing follow-up mental health and social supports. Union County also became the first county to expand the ARRIVE Together program to all of its municipalities in partnership with all 25 of its law enforcement agencies, including the first implementation of ARRIVE Together on a college campus at Kean University.

Highlighting ARRIVE on a national stage. In May 2023, Attorney General Platkin joined the Brookings Institution to discuss a Brookings study on the ARRIVE Together program, which concluded that the program led to fewer uses of force, arrests, and racial disparities in policing outcomes and more people receiving mental health treatment. The report found ARRIVE Together is “a highly effective program” that reduces arrests and uses of force, reduces disparate race-based outcomes to police encounters, links people experiencing a mental health crisis or in need of mental health resources with the services they need and reduces the workload on law enforcement.”

A tour of the Ike Williams Boxing Academy.



Celebrating two years of ARRIVE Together. In early December 2023, Attorney General Platkin welcomed Governor Murphy, law enforcement officials, mental health leaders, and community stakeholders from all 21 counties to the Trenton War Memorial to mark the two-year anniversary of the ARRIVE Together program and the expansion of ARRIVE to all 21 New Jersey counties. The anniversary event included stories from ARRIVE team members about ARRIVE responses and how they had impacted their communities and the professional experiences of the ARRIVE partners. Governor Murphy and the Legislature supported ARRIVE from its inception and included \$10 million for the program's expansion in the fiscal year 2024 state budget.

Experts from the law enforcement and mental health fields come together to celebrate the accomplishments of ARRIVE Together.





Eradicating Hate, Bias, and Discrimination

Discrimination and hate have no place in New Jersey, and that is why Attorney General Platkin is committed to holding those who violate our strong civil rights law accountable. Through enforcement, outreach, and prevention efforts, our office is taking numerous steps to combat hate, bias, and discrimination.

Left: Attorney General Platkin highlights the importance of combating bias at an YWCA event.

Below. A community walk in support of LGBTQ+ rights in New Jersey.



Promoting Equitable Access to Housing

Tackling housing discrimination. Attorney General Platkin is focused on supporting New Jerseyans, whether they rent or own, and ensuring they are treated fairly in the housing market. In April, DCR announced that DCR and Zillow Group, Inc., an online real estate and rental marketplace company, agreed to prevent New Jersey housing providers from discriminating against prospective tenants seeking to pay rent with federal, state or local rental assistance, and to address discrimination against prospective tenants with criminal histories. The agreement, announced during National Fair Housing Month, includes important measures to combat violations of New Jersey's Fair Chance in Housing Act (FCHA).

Pursuing violations of New Jersey's housing laws. In 2023, Attorney General Platkin and DCR issued nearly 90 Notices of Violation to housing providers across the State for allegedly violating FCHA. The Notices of Violation allege that the housing providers violated FCHA by asking unlawful criminal history-related questions on housing applications or by posting advertisements or maintaining policies prohibiting housing applicants with criminal history from applying for a unit.

Ensuring fairness for renters. In 2023, Attorney General Platkin and DCR issued findings of probable cause in several cases, all of which involved alleged violations of the prohibition against housing discrimination based on the source of lawful income. The allegations in all the cases involved individuals seeking rental housing who were denied the opportunity to rent because they were receiving rental assistance. According to New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination (LAD), landlords cannot refuse to rent to potential tenants or discourage them from renting because they receive government rental assistance.

Protecting Individuals from Discrimination

Exposing white supremacy. Attorney General Platkin and DCR released a groundbreaking report, "Exposing White Supremacy in New Jersey," which analyzed the rise in white supremacist recruitment and violence and the painful and profound impact that white supremacy has on targeted communities, especially on young people. The report called on members of the community to oppose and confront white supremacy, and provided best practices for the community to combat white supremacy and prevent white supremacist radicalization. The report built on the findings of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness's most recent terrorism threat assessment, which rated the threat presented by white supremacist violent extremists as "high" for the third year in a row.

Protecting religious freedom. DCR also reached a landmark settlement with Jackson Township which resolved DCR's allegations that the Township discriminated against Orthodox Jewish residents. The settlement provides for broad equitable relief prohibiting the Township from discriminating against Orthodox Jews, and requires the Township to adopt new policies and procedures to protect religious freedom. DCR's complaint against the Township, which was filed in 2021, alleged that it adopted discriminatory zoning and land use ordinances and enforcement practices that targeted the Township's growing Orthodox Jewish population. The \$575,000 settlement includes \$275,000 in penalties, a \$150,000 restitution fund for individuals harmed by the Township's actions, and an additional \$150,000 in suspended penalties that will be assessed if the Township violates the consent order.

Fighting discrimination based on perceived national origin. In August, Attorney General Platkin announced the filing of a DCR complaint alleging that the City of Millville violated LAD by discriminating against Hispanic or Latinx/e litigants based on their actual or perceived national origin. The complaint alleges that, between June and December 2022, the Millville Municipal Court required litigants who were or were perceived to be Spanish-speaking to appear at in-person court proceedings instead of permitting them to appear virtually for court sessions. This practice denied those litigants equal access to virtual court proceedings in the City of Millville.

Championing marriage equality for New Jersey residents. Twenty-eight municipalities across the state received Notices of Violation for allegedly violating LAD by publishing marriage license application forms on their websites that exclude certain LGBTQ+ individuals seeking to obtain marriage licenses. The various municipalities posted marriage license application forms on their websites that did not permit nonbinary people to apply for marriage licenses unless they mis-gendered themselves, under oath, as either “m” (male) or “f” (female). That practice is inconsistent with the marriage license application currently published by the New Jersey Department of Health, which has included a third gender option for nonbinary applicants and other people with undesigned or unspecified gender identities since 2019.

Press conference announcing the arrest of a man who attempted to firebomb Temple Ner Tamid in Bloomfield.



Promoting racial justice across the Department. The Racial Justice Initiative, launched in 2021 continued to expand its scope, with the Attorney General’s Racial Justice Speaker Series, which is open to all LPS employees and various community stakeholders. The inaugural event featured Minnijean Brown Trickey, one of the “Little Rock Nine,” who integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957. She shared her story and her work as an advocate for racial, gender, social, and environmental justice. The second event featured Professor D. Wendy Greene from Drexel University, who discussed how the movement to combat hair discrimination is a crucial part of the global effort to achieve racial justice for people of color. The speaker series is part of the Department’s ongoing efforts to promote racial justice across all agencies, divisions, and offices.

Addressing gender-based discrimination. A settlement with Pine Valley Golf Club (Club), located in Camden County, resolved a DCR complaint that alleged the historically male-dominated Club engaged in a pattern of unlawful gender-based discrimination. Under the settlement, the Club agreed to end discriminatory employment practices, end discriminatory housing practices, and educate its employees about the requirements of the LAD. During the course of DCR’s investigation, the Club also lifted its policy restricting Club membership to men only and admitted its first women members. The complaint further alleged that the Club had adopted employment policies that discriminated on the basis of gender and used discriminatory restrictive covenants that prevented women from owning houses on the Club’s land unless they co-owned a house with a man.

A fireside chat with civil rights pioneer Minnijean Brown-Trickey of the “Little Rock Nina”.



Pursuing discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. In June, Attorney General Platkin and DCR issued Findings of Probable Cause in three cases alleging discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression in violation of LAD. The Findings of Probable Cause include two cases alleging employment discrimination – one on the basis of sexual orientation, and the other on the basis of gender identity or expression. A third case involves alleged gender identity or expression discrimination. In one case, a teacher at a school in Monmouth County was told they could not talk with students about their gender identity.

Confronting Bias Among Young People

Keeping New Jersey schools free from discrimination. Attorney General Platkin and the Department of Education (DOE) issued a joint statement encouraging all New Jersey schools, school boards, and administrators to continue to develop and implement initiatives to counter bias; to continue to display inclusive markers, flags, and symbols in and around their buildings; to continue to ensure students have access to books representing a diversity of experiences and identities; and to continue to implement and comply with the state’s anti-bias curricula requirements regarding race, gender, LGBTQ+, disability, and diversity. In addition, Attorney General Platkin and DOE also released an “Addressing Bias in K-12 Schools” guide as part of their ongoing partnership. The guide provides schools in New Jersey with a comprehensive plan to tackle bias in schools and also offers additional resources that schools and members of the school community can use to effectively respond to bias incidents.

Attorney General Platkin meets with law enforcement leaders at the Ramadan law enforcement briefing.



Tackling bias on campus. Efforts to reach our state’s youngest residents also included the issuance of a new resource guide, titled “Addressing Bias on Campus,” which was a joint project by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and DCR. The resource guide comes from recommendations of the New Jersey Youth Bias Task Force, and includes bias response materials applicable to the whole campus community, including faculty, staff, and students. The “Addressing Bias on Campus” resource guide provides New Jersey campus stakeholders with the tools to prevent and respond to bias incidents effectively. The guide also highlights key state resources and actions dedicated to achieving the goal of safer campuses. Additionally, early in 2023, Attorney General Platkin launched an outreach and awareness campaign on college and university campuses to discuss bias and hate and the resources available to campus communities to combat bias. Events were held at Rowan University and Rutgers University-New Brunswick with hundreds of faculty, staff and students attending the sessions.

Addressing bias in the wake of global events. In the wake of the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, Attorney General Platkin issued a statement about the marked increase in bias incidents targeting Jewish and Muslim community members in K-12 schools and on college and university campuses. Attorney General Platkin’s message was clear: it is critical that our educational institutions respond immediately—and in a manner consistent with their legal obligations—when bias incidents occur. LAD protects all students, including Jewish, Israeli, Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian students, from discrimination or harassment based on actual or perceived race, national origin, religion, or other protected characteristics. Where peer-to-peer, bias-based harassment is sufficiently severe or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or hostile school environment, the school must take immediate action to address the harassment.

A Pride Month flag raising in Montclair.



Combating LGBTQ+ discrimination in schools. Attorney General Platkin and DCR successfully secured injunctions against discriminatory policies in various New Jersey school districts, namely Hanover Township, Middletown Township, Marlboro Township, and Manalapan-Englishtown. These policies mandate that school staff disclose the gender identity and sexual orientation of LGBTQ+ students to their parents, a practice deemed a violation of LAD. The Attorney General's Office is committed to protecting the rights of all New Jerseyans including our youngest residents.

A meeting with the leaders of Rutgers Chabad.





Fighting Corruption

Faith in government officials, government institutions, and our elections is critical to our democratic society. Dedicated investigators and attorneys in the Attorney General's Office of Public Integrity and Accountability (OPIA) root out wrongdoing by public officials and those who would interfere with fair elections.

Left: A press conference to announce the indictment of the Manville Police Chief for alleged misconduct and sexual assault.

Below: The Conviction Review Unit debriefs after announcing the exoneration of Dion Miller.



Holding Public Officials Accountable

Clark Mayor charged with official misconduct and submitting fraudulent paperwork. The Mayor of Clark Township was charged with official misconduct and submitting false and fraudulent paperwork to nearly two dozen municipalities, in order to facilitate his landscaping company's improper removal of hundreds of underground storage tanks. The charges followed an investigation by OPIA that determined the Mayor, while acting in his official capacity, allegedly operated a tank-removal business out of his Township office utilizing municipal resources, by storing and maintaining the records for the business at the Mayor's office, using Township devices including computers and fax machines, and directing Township employees to perform duties while working for the Township, solely for the purpose of running his private business.

Clark Police Department officials recommended for termination following investigation. In November, Attorney General Platkin released a 43-page report recommending that two Clark Police Department (CPD) officials be fired, including the chief, following an investigation into allegations of misconduct by leaders of Clark Township's municipal government and the Police Department. The investigation delivered on a promise made by the Union County Prosecutor's Office (UCPO) and the Attorney General's Office when they first exercised supersession and took control of the Clark Police Department in July 2020. The series of events leading to the supersession began in May 2020, when UCPO received an anonymous letter alleging that a CPD officer was being paid for a no-show job and that the police chief was covering it up.

Wildwood officials indicted for unlawful participation in state health benefits program fraud. In July, a state grand jury again indicted Wildwood's mayor, a former mayor, and a city commissioner in connection with their allegedly fraudulent participation in the State Health Benefits Program, reinstating charges that had been dismissed without prejudice in June. The 12-count indictment included charges of official misconduct, theft by unlawful taking, tampering with public records and falsifying or tampering with records.

Manville Police Department Chief indicted for official misconduct and sexual assault. In June, a state grand jury voted to file criminal charges against the suspended Manville police chief, who allegedly engaged in sexually inappropriate, criminal acts targeting multiple women against their will for years. The defendant was charged with two counts of sexual assault, four counts of official misconduct, one count of a pattern of official misconduct, and one count of criminal sexual contact. The indictment includes a new count covering suspected misconduct by the defendant following his suspension, after the investigation found that the defendant deliberately held onto a Manville police badge he was required to turn in after he was suspended from the force. The investigation revealed the suspended chief displayed the badge he wrongfully retained when he was pulled over by a local police officer on January 30, 2023, misrepresenting himself as an active-duty member of the police department.

Former family services worker charged with criminal sexual contact. A former case worker for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) pleaded guilty after he made unwanted sexual advances toward women and tried intimidating women under investigation or supervision of DCF into engaging in unwanted sexual conduct with him. The defendant pleaded guilty to second-degree pattern of official misconduct.

Prosecutor's Office Lieutenant charged with tampering with drug evidence and money laundering. A Bergen County Prosecutor's Office lieutenant was charged with official misconduct, tampering with evidence, and drug and financial crime offenses after an OPIA investigation revealed he checked drug evidence out of an evidence vault without authorized purpose and returned the packages in conditions substantially different from when they were signed out. The investigation also found the lieutenant had two razor blades with cocaine residue in his office and had made cash deposits in a manner designed to avoid bank-reporting requirements.

A press conference to announce the indictment of Clark Township Mayor and issue a report on misconduct by government and law enforcement leaders.



Safeguarding the Integrity of Elections

Each year, Attorney General Platkin and the Department take steps to ensure fair and smooth-running elections in New Jersey to protect the right to vote, and to assist voters, election officials, and law enforcement in resolving voting-related legal matters. The Office of the Attorney General and DCR continued their Voter Protection Initiative during the 2023 primary and general elections. The Initiative focuses on identifying and addressing any voting rights or civil rights violations, including under the New Jersey Civil Rights Act and LAD, that may arise during early voting and on Election Day. As in prior elections, the Attorney General's Voter Protection Initiative worked with community stakeholders and partners to identify and address voting access issues.

Paterson voter charged with fraud and records tampering. A Paterson voter was charged after the alleged falsification of a vote-by-mail ballot, subsequent attempts to mislead investigators about that crime, and attempts to mislead investigators about how certain mail-in ballots were cast in the May 2020 Paterson municipal election. The voter was charged with tampering with public records, fraud in casting a mail-in vote, and other offenses, including providing false information to a detective with OPIA.

Charges against a former mayoral candidate after fraudulent voter registrations are brought to the U.S. Post Office in Elizabeth. A former candidate for mayor of the City of Plainfield was criminally charged for allegedly directing a group of associates to complete hundreds of false voter registration applications and then mailing them to Union County election officials. He was charged with election fraud and other crimes after allegedly bringing a trash bag stuffed with nearly 1,000 bogus voter registration applications to the post office to mail them to the Union County Commissioner of Registration. It is alleged that he directed associates and campaign volunteers who gathered at his home to complete blank voter registration applications based off one or more forms with voter information on them, which he provided to the group. The investigation revealed that the defendant subsequently arrived at the U.S. Post Office on North Broad Street in Elizabeth on May 18, 2021, carrying a large white garbage bag containing 954 voter registration applications, purportedly from Plainfield voters. But the investigation found many of the applications had the same handwriting on them. The candidate's political campaign was ultimately unsuccessful.

Paterson City Council President charged with conspiracy and alleged witness tampering. Attorney General Platkin announced that the Paterson City Council President was brought up on charges in connection with an election-fraud case, after investigators determined the defendant personally collected ballots and oversaw the fraudulent mailing of ballots, while members of his campaign stole ballots from residential mailboxes and discarded several that did not cast a vote for their candidate. It is also alleged that defendants tampered with witnesses to avoid prosecution. The defendant who was first indicted on election fraud charges in 2021, is facing additional charges along with several alleged co-conspirators. The charges are the result of an investigation by OPIA.

Investigation of 2022 General Election in Monmouth County. Attorney General Platkin and DCR retained former Attorney General and federal prosecutor Peter C. Harvey to investigate the administration of the November 2022 General Election in Monmouth County, and to provide recommendations to improve the State’s elections procedures for future elections. The investigation followed news reports alleging incidents of voting machine irregularities in the 2022 general election in Monmouth County. Based on the investigation, the firm proposed recommendations for reform for future elections in the state.

Campaign manager charged in connection with false voter certifications. The campaign manager for a would-be candidate in the 2021 gubernatorial race was charged with election fraud after allegedly filing nearly 2,000 bogus petitions in an attempt to get a candidate on the ballot for the Democratic primary. The investigation found the campaign manager emailed the Secretary of State’s Division of Elections roughly 1,948 fraudulent voter certifications in support of a petition for Governor of the State of New Jersey and in an attempt to nominate a candidate for the primary.

State, local, and federal law enforcement partners convene to share law enforcement strategies for combating crime.





Rebuilding Trust and Improving Safety in Paterson

Recognizing a crisis of confidence in the city's law enforcement, Attorney General Platkin announced on March 27, 2023, that the Office of the Attorney General was superseding the Paterson Police Department (PPD) and assuming control of all police functions, including internal affairs investigations. "The primary duty of my office is protecting the people of New Jersey, that includes the safety of the people of the City of Paterson as well as the safety of the officers sworn to protect them," Attorney General Platkin said as he announced his decision outside of the PPD headquarters. Attorney General Platkin stressed that his Office was committed to the safety and success of the Paterson community and to building a safer and more just city of Paterson.

Left: Dave is the Paterson Police Department's canine community ambassador.

Below: Coffee with a Cop hosted by PPD.



Isa Abbassi, a 26-year veteran of the City of New York Police Department (NYPD), was named Officer in Charge of PPD, and under his leadership, the department has begun a critical transformation to rebuild trust between the department and the people it serves. Since the Attorney General's Office took control, Paterson has seen significantly improved public safety results.

Making the community safer. Paterson experienced double-digit percentage declines in all violent crime reporting data categories in 2023. Murders were down 39% and the number of shooting victims were down 25% compared to 2022. The number of shootings was the lowest in more than a decade in the City of Paterson. Aggravated assaults, sexual violence, and robberies also showed significant declines.

Listening to the Paterson community. On May 4, 2023, Attorney General Platkin held a community listening session in the City of Paterson to discuss ways in which law enforcement, service providers, and community members could work together to improve the delivery of public safety services to individuals who have mental illness, those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and residents in a behavioral health crisis. Soon after taking command, Officer in Charge Abbassi held a series of six listening sessions around Paterson to allow residents to share their concerns, experiences, and suggestions as the department worked to restore crucial connections with residents in every neighborhood. The sessions were well-attended, and the input gathered was incorporated in the department's short-term and long-term goals. Listening sessions are also held periodically in the city as well as smaller roundtable discussions with officers.

Attorney General Platkin visits Paterson for "National Night Out."



Sharing community contacts. In December 2023, the PPD announced that they would begin carrying contact cards to hand out as they interact with community members throughout the city. The front of the contact card features the officer's rank, full name, and badge number. The back features a QR code that when scanned takes the user to a Police Encounter Q and A page with commonly asked questions about police interactions. The page will also provide information on how to submit a complaint or a compliment regarding their interaction with a PPD officer.

Launching a successful summer crime and quality of life strategy. PPD's Summer Crime and Quality of Life Strategy, in place between Memorial Day and Labor Day, led to a 41% decline in shooting incidents compared to the same period in 2022. Paterson also saw the lowest number of shooting victims for that time period in the last five years. The strategy increased police presence and communication with the community to increase overall safety in the city. Paterson also saw declines in other major violent crime categories in the period with robbery down over 39% and aggravated assault down 10%.

The launch of Paterson Police Department's Strategic Plan.



Revitalizing Paterson neighborhoods through the Broadway Initiative.

The PPD's Neighborhood Revitalization Concept, starting with the Broadway Initiative, has led to an increased police presence in the area resulting in a decrease in crime and an improvement in the quality of life for residents. PPD has partnered with state and city agencies to provide substance abuse referrals, homeless outreach, and infrastructure improvements. The concept has spread to other parts of the city, including Downtown and South Paterson. Overall, the initiative has led to an increase in quality of life and decrease in crime in the area.

Establishing a Strategic Plan. In September 2023, Attorney General Platkin and Officer in Charge Abbassi released a comprehensive Strategic Plan to move the agency forward into the next generation of policing. The plan was developed with feedback from the community, police department members, and community leaders. Guided by four main values, the plan aims to rebuild public trust, renew community policing, embrace innovation, and improve recruitment, training and employee well-being. The plan includes 55 initiatives and has a projected final report in the summer of 2025, with routine progress reports to keep the community informed.

Governor Murphy and Attorney General Platkin hold a law enforcement briefing at the Paterson Police Department.



Announcing ARRIVE Together in Paterson. In December 2023, Paterson became the first municipality in Passaic County to participate in ARRIVE Together. The program operates under several different models and is tailored to each community's unique needs and resources. After input from law enforcement officials, mental health providers, and community leaders, Paterson's pilot model is three-fold. First, PPD officers will refer individuals in need of mental health support to CBH Care. Second, New Jersey Transit Police and CBH Care will provide mental health resources at the Paterson Bus Terminal. Last, CBH Care will collaborate with emergency dispatchers in Paterson to develop a mental health alternative response program for appropriate calls coming through the 911 system.

ARRIVE team members from across the state convene to share best practices and resources.





Ensuring Access to Reproductive Rights

New Jersey is committed to ensuring that our residents, and those who travel here from other states, have access to the reproductive health care and abortion care they need. Attorney General Platkin, with the support of Governor Phil Murphy and his administration, will use all available resources to protect the rights of women and their ability to make their own healthcare decisions.

Eliminating barriers to reproductive health services. In October, Attorney General Platkin joined Governor Phil Murphy to publicly reaffirm New Jersey's commitment to protecting the most basic of rights – the right to decide when or if you have a child. Together, they highlighted a number of rule proposals from the State Board of Medical Examiners (BME) and Board of Pharmacy (BOP) that will make it easier for both New Jersey residents and visitors to access reproductive health services and resources in 2024. Those changes include enabling pharmacists to provide self-administered hormonal contraceptives to patients without a prescription and establishing the regulatory framework for Certified Nurse Midwives and Certified Midwives to perform first trimester abortions safely and effectively, which will help expand the pool of providers able to offer these services.

Protecting contraceptive coverage. Attorney General Platkin co-led a coalition of 22 states in urging the federal government to eliminate dangerous rules from the previous administration that allowed employers to interfere in the reproductive health decisions of their employees. These rules took away contraceptive coverage from women who should have been entitled to cost-free coverage under the Affordable Care Act. New Jersey and the coalition welcomed the Biden Administration's proposal to rescind parts of the Trump-era rules and restore access to cost-free contraceptive coverage for all Americans.

Standing up for women's rights and reproductive rights. In the aftermath of Dobbs, attacks on women's reproductive rights shifted. This year, barriers were imposed on access to contraceptives and mifepristone, a drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2000 for use in a medical abortion during pregnancy and to manage early miscarriage. These efforts, while taking place far from New Jersey, have a nationwide impact. And at every step of the way, the Attorney General Platkin has strongly reaffirmed New Jersey's unyielding commitment to protecting access to both.

*A meeting with New York
University law students discussing
efforts to protect reproductive rights.*



History of the AFE

- History of the AFE
- Strategy and Investigative Method
- Public Outreach
- Data Source Coverage

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Tackling Auto Theft

The Office of the Attorney General has taken a comprehensive approach to combatting the rise in auto theft, including enforcement efforts in cooperation with our law enforcement partners across New Jersey, improving technology, and promoting public awareness.

Targeting Auto Theft Offenders

Strengthening criminal penalties for auto theft offenders. The Attorney General's Office worked with Governor Murphy and the Legislature to see legislation enacted in July 2023 that strengthened the criminal penalties for auto theft offenders, particularly for persistent, repeat offenders and large-scale automobile trafficking networks. Since then, the Department worked with our law enforcement partners to raise awareness of the new statutes and to utilize them in investigations and prosecutions state-wide. This intelligence-based approach built upon 2022's investment in Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs) and expanded law enforcement cooperation through the Auto Theft Task Force (ATTF). As a result, thefts of non-Hyundai and Kia vehicles, which contain a known security vulnerability exploited by thieves, were down 10% in 2023 compared to 2022. Reducing auto thefts remains a focus of our efforts in 2024. Our initiatives include our "Lock it or Lose It" public awareness media campaign to empower vehicle owners, especially Kia and Hyundai owners, to take proactive measures to secure their vehicles from security vulnerabilities leading to thefts

Shutting down "chop shop" operations. In June, Attorney General Platkin, NJSP, and the Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) announced charges against 14 individuals in the takedown of alleged "chop shop" operations linked to the theft of more than 35 vehicles throughout the state. The charges were the result of a five-month investigation conducted by NJSP, with assistance from DCJ, Passaic County Sheriff's Office, PPD, and other federal, county, and local law enforcement agencies. The defendants were charged in connection with four "chop shops" that allegedly functioned as towing and mechanic businesses by day but, during off hours, were used to alter and disassemble stolen vehicles for resale or to be sold as parts. Six stolen motor vehicles, numerous components from stolen vehicles, key fobs, stolen license plates, and electronic devices linked to the alleged chop shop operations were recovered. Also recovered were an assault rifle, heroin, marijuana, a kilo press, which is commonly used to process controlled dangerous substances, and United States currency believed to be the proceeds from criminal activity.

A meeting of law enforcement leaders and representatives from around the state to share public safety strategies.

Prosecuting individuals through the Auto Theft Task Force. In April, Attorney General Platkin, the Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor (OIFP), and the NJSP announced a three-year prison term for a man convicted of illegally possessing a weapon in connection with an auto theft investigation conducted by ATTF. The initial arrest stemmed from an ATTF investigation. At the time of his arrest, the defendant was in a stolen 2019 Lamborghini Urus, valued at \$265,500, and had an unregistered loaded handgun.

Investing in technology to combat auto theft and violent crime. Attorney General Platkin announced that 34 law enforcement agencies in all 21 counties and the NJSP received grant funding to acquire or expand technology to combat auto theft thanks to \$10 million in funding made available by the Murphy Administration. At least one local law enforcement agency in each county across New Jersey received grants ranging from \$23,400 to \$595,000 to acquire and expand existing ALPR technology systems that utilize high-speed, automated camera networks to capture and store computer-readable images of license plates in a centralized database accessible to law enforcement. The grants are the latest investments for combatting auto theft in New Jersey and reducing the violent crime it supports.

Members of the New Jersey ATTF receive an award for excellence in law enforcement.



Educating the Public

Promoting awareness of Kia and Hyundai vulnerabilities. In September, Attorney General Platkin released a video explaining a national social media trend that led to significant increases in thefts of certain Hyundai and Kia-brand vehicles because of a security vulnerability in various models made between 2011 and 2022. Security vulnerabilities in Hyundais and Kias mean they are disproportionately the target of vehicle thefts in New Jersey, and those stolen vehicles are often used to commit violent crimes. The video offered tips on preventing thefts and contacting the manufacturer about the security vulnerabilities.

Continuing the “Lock It or Lose It” public awareness campaign. This successful statewide awareness campaign, which aimed at discouraging New Jerseyans from leaving their cars unlocked with the key fob inside was re-launched in 2022 and continued in 2023. The campaign originated in October 2020, when New Jersey first began to see a rise in thefts of high-end vehicles with key fobs left inside and started tracking the nexus between stolen vehicles and violent crime. The program’s simple messaging resonates with drivers and has helped reduce auto thefts.

Governor Murphy signs legislation to equip law enforcement with new tools to curb auto theft.





Protecting Children Online

One of our greatest responsibilities as a society is protecting our children and providing them with a safe, secure environment. Online predators take advantage of our youngest residents, exploiting their innocence. The Department relentlessly pursues criminal and civil cases against predators and those who make online technology available without regard to the well being of our children.

Holding social media companies accountable. In October 2023, Attorney General Platkin, joined by 41 states, filed lawsuits against Meta in federal and state courts, accusing the social media giant of deliberately addicting children and teens to Instagram and Facebook through harmful features. The suit alleges Meta misled the public about the safety of these features for young users. Additionally, New Jersey and 32 states filed a federal complaint, citing violations of the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act and state consumer protection laws, including the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act. The lawsuit aims to hold Meta accountable for prioritizing profits over the well-being of young people and contributing to a “youth mental health crisis.” The federal complaint alleges that Meta knew the harm caused by addictive features like infinite scroll and alerts, yet the company concealed these effects, which exacerbated the addiction of young users and adversely impact their physical and mental health. The lawsuit follows three years of investigations by multiple states and seeks accountability for Meta’s deceptive practices.

Preventing child identify theft. In recognition of National Child Identity Theft Awareness Day, the Office of the Attorney General and the Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA) urged parents to take preventative measures to protect their children’s sensitive personal information from being stolen or fraudulently used. Identity theft is a growing problem with an estimated 915,000 children who were the victim of identity theft between July 2021 and July 2022 and 1.7 million children who were affected by data breaches that exposed – and potentially compromised – their personal information.

A meeting with school administrators to discuss issues impacting our youth.



Securing Environmental Justice

All New Jerseyans deserve to live in clean, safe environments and polluters have been put on notice that they will be held accountable if they fail to properly dispose of materials harmful to our environment.

Mitigating PFAS contamination. Attorney General Platkin and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reached a \$393 million proposed settlement with Solvay Specialty Polymers USA, LLC (Solvay) that would ensure the remediation of contamination, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and compensate the public for natural resource damages (NRDs) in the vicinity of Solvay’s facility in West Deptford, Gloucester County. PFAS substances – also called “forever chemicals” – are

Left: The state sued polluters whose toxic legacies continued to threaten public health, safety, and the environment, including a site in Milltown.

Below: Attorney General Platkin and Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn LaTourette take action against Solvay for PFAS contamination.



manufactured substances desired for their ability to repel water and oil and contain fuel fires, and were commonly used to make products like Teflon® and Scotchgard®. Highly resistant to environmental degradation and known to accumulate in the human body, PFAS are associated with serious adverse health effects such as decreased vaccine response. The settlement is the first of its kind to address PFAS contamination in New Jersey.

Targeting environmental polluters in overburdened communities. Begun under the Murphy Administration in 2018, this initiative seeks to remedy past inequities in environmental law enforcement affecting communities of color, low-income communities, low-English-proficiency communities, and those subject to cumulative environmental stressors. Attorney General Platkin and DEP worked together to file lawsuits that focus on requiring responsible parties to clean up contamination in these communities and recovering costs DEP incurred in addressing that contamination. In April 2023, eight environmental lawsuits were filed targeting polluters across the State whose toxic legacies continued to threaten public health, safety, and the environment. In September 2023, a number of cases were settled including a court ruling which held two dozen defendants accountable for an egregious statewide illegal waste dumping scheme centered in Newark and required the remediation of an unauthorized solid waste landfill Pennsauken Creek; the shutdown of unsafe wells and the drilling of new wells to provide safe drinking water for migrant workers and their families housed on the Blueberry Bill Farms in Hammonton; and the remediation of harmful soil and groundwater contamination emanating from underground gas storage tanks at Monk's Amoco in Camden. Enforcement actions seeking to hold polluters accountable in overburdened New Jersey communities were also pursued related to PCE and TCE contamination in Newark and Haledon and related to groundwater contamination from a gasoline station in Metuchen.

The State settled a case involving the shutdown of unsafe wells and the drilling of new wells to provide safe drinking water for migrant workers and their families housed on Blueberry Bill Farms in Hammonton.



Preserving New Jersey's natural resources. In 2023, DCA along with DEP filed a lawsuit against Dow Chemical Company (Dow), Ferro Corporation (Ferro), and Vulcan Materials Company (Vulcan) for contaminating New Jersey's environment with 1,4-dioxane. The lawsuit seeks to hold these companies accountable for knowingly and willfully manufacturing, promoting, and/or selling products containing 1,4-dioxane, which is highly toxic and persistent, and caused harm to the State's natural resources. The suit alleges both environmental and consumer fraud claims and seek NRDs, punitive damages, and other damages and penalties.

Using criminal enforcement to secure justice. A Long Island man was indicted in connection with a deadly May 2022 fire at a Waste Management facility in Elizabeth, which resulted in the death of a facility employee. The owner of a trucking and warehouse business was charged with first-degree aggravated manslaughter as well as numerous environmental hazardous waste charges. According to the indictment, on or about May 10, 2022, the owner unlawfully disposed of over 9,000 pounds of extremely flammable dry shampoo aerosol cans into a dumpster in Linden. The dumpster was subsequently transported to the Waste Management facility on Julia Street in Elizabeth. Within minutes of the aerosol cans being dumped out of the dumpster at the facility, a multiple-alarm fire broke out and resulted in the death of facility worker.

The State sued polluters and ordered them to clean up 31 acres of waterfront land that had been used as an illegal solid waste landfill.





Standing Up for New Jerseyans

New Jerseyans should be able to trust that when they purchase goods and services they are being treated fairly and receiving those that they have been promised. Attorney General Platkin, DCA, and agencies across the Department are committed to helping New Jersey consumers and ensuring that unscrupulous businesses and scammers are held accountable.

Resolving the Waterfront litigation. A unanimous, 9-0 victory at the United States Supreme Court affirmed New Jersey’s authority to withdraw from the Waterfront Commission Compact of 1953, which paved the way for the State’s takeover of New Jersey operations at the port in July 2023.

Upholding workers’ rights. Together with the Department of Labor, in December Attorney General Platkin filed the first lawsuit under a 2021 law that permits the State to bring an action against employers who have misclassified workers as independent contractors when they are, in fact, employees. Our complaint against shipping and logistics companies STG Logistics, Inc., and STG Drayage, LLC, seeks to halt the companies’ alleged practice of misclassifying drivers as independent contractors, and to recover up to millions of dollars in back wages, penalties and fines, and back wages for more than 300 truck drivers. It also seeks damages for the companies’ alleged improper deductions from drivers’ pay. These practices not only resulted in the companies at times paying truck drivers less than New Jersey’s effective minimum wage; the deductions sometimes exceeded a driver’s entire gross pay, and resulted in a negative net pay during some pay periods.

Protecting investors and the public from fraud.

Protecting cosmetology students from fraud. Attorney General Platkin and DCA reached a settlement with a now-defunct New Jersey cosmetology school, Capri Institute of Hair Design (Capri), and its related entities. They will pay nearly \$640,000 – a majority of which will be used for consumer restitution – to resolve the State’s lawsuit alleging they defrauded students and engaged in substandard business practices that financially harmed students. In a separate settlement with the State Board of Cosmetology and Hairstyling, the school also agreed to surrender its licenses to operate in New Jersey. Capri abruptly shut down operations in December 2021 with less than 48 hours prior notice to its roughly 250 enrolled students. The investigation found that in the weeks following the shutdown, the school allegedly refused to respond to students’ questions about the closure and allegedly refused to provide students with their official transcripts or tuition refunds, making it virtually impossible for them to transfer to another cosmetology school.

Standing up for homeowners. Attorney General Platkin and DCA reached a \$442,000 settlement with a South Jersey home improvement contractor who agreed to dissolve his business and pay \$257,000 in consumer restitution. The settlement resolves the State’s

Attorney General Platkin joins investigators from DCA for “Operation Safe Summer” in Seaside Heights.

lawsuit filed last fall alleging that South Jersey Home Contracting, LLC and its owner engaged in unlawful business practices, including against senior citizens, in violation of the Consumer Fraud Act, the Contractor Registration Act, and the Regulations Governing Home Improvement Practices.

Holding companies accountable for privacy violations.

Protecting personal information. New Jersey entered into an overall \$6.5 million multistate settlement with Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, LLC (Morgan Stanley) that resolves the states' investigation into two data security incidents that compromised the personal information of more than 3.37 million individuals nationwide, including 755,592 New Jersey residents. Allegedly precipitated by Morgan Stanley's hiring of outside vendors that improperly decommissioned thousands of electronic devices in 2016 and 2019, the data security incidents resulted in unauthorized third parties having the ability to access devices containing customers' personal information – including names, addresses, phone numbers, account names, and numbers for Morgan Stanley accounts. The third parties also had access to customers' linked bank accounts, Social Security numbers, birthdates, asset values, holdings data, and securities transaction information. Under an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance filed with DCA, New Jersey is to receive approximately \$1.27 million of the overall Morgan Stanley settlement payout.

Holding companies accountable for data security deficiencies. Attorney General Platkin, along with 49 other Attorneys General, reached a settlement with software company Blackbaud for its deficient data security practices and inadequate response to a 2020 ransomware event that exposed the personal information of millions of consumers across the United States. Under the settlement, Blackbaud has agreed to overhaul its data security and breach notification practices and make a \$49.5 million payment to states. Of that amount, New Jersey will receive \$1,083,802. In a joint agreement with several other states, an overall \$2.5-million settlement with EyeMed Vision Care (EyeMed) resolved an investigation into a data breach that compromised the personal and medical information of approximately 2.1 million people, including more than 52,000 from New Jersey. The multistate investigation found deficiencies in EyeMed's data security program that contributed to the breach in violation of state consumer protection and personal information protection laws and the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Continued Efforts to Protect Consumers

Cracking down on pricing violations. Dollar General Corp., a national discount retail chain with 186 stores in New Jersey, has agreed to pay \$1.2 million to resolve allegations by the Division's Office of Weights and Measures (OWM) that the chain repeatedly engaged in merchandise pricing violations at several retail stores across the state. The settlement, which includes a \$1.18 million civil penalty, is the largest ever obtained by OWM. According to the State's allegations, the Tennessee-based retailer violated New Jersey's Consumer Fraud Act and Weights and Measures Act by selling a variety of merchandise that scanned at the cash register for higher prices than were posted where the merchandise was displayed for sale. OWM pricing inspections of 58 New Jersey stores in November 2022 and February 2023 found more than 2,000 instances in which the price charged at the register for a particular product was higher than the posted price, in some cases as much as \$5.95 higher.

Going after unlicensed practitioners. Continuing the State's efforts to halt the unlicensed practice of medicine in spa-like settings, Attorney General Platkin and DCA announced that a licensed cosmetologist and skincare specialist in Union County must pay \$22,500 in civil penalties for allegedly performing invasive aesthetic treatments that only licensed medical professionals are authorized to perform in New Jersey.

Addressing Problem Gambling

Developing new tools to assist gamblers. The Division of Gaming Enforcement (DGE) expanded its reach for individuals needing assistance with problem gambling. DGE established a dedicated hotline for inquiries about the self-exclusion process and added a virtual option to self-exclude from gaming activities. Gamblers seeking to exclude themselves from wagering in New Jersey can now contact DGE via a new, dedicated, toll-free phone number, 1-833-788-4DGE, to learn about and initiate the self-exclusion process. They can utilize that helpline to set up an in-person appointment with specially trained DGE staff or to take advantage of a new service, a video conference with DGE responsible gaming personnel.

Helping at-risk gaming patrons. In 2023, DGE launched a new, groundbreaking Responsible Gaming Initiative to identify and help problem gamblers by utilizing information already collected by online gaming operators about their patrons' playing habits. As part of the Initiative, DGE works with online gambling operators to use technology to identify at-risk patrons and intervene. Operators of gambling platforms are now be required to analyze electronically maintained player data to determine whether a patron is showing signs of problem gambling behavior.

Releasing a report on the prevalence of gambling in New Jersey. A report, funded by DGE and prepared by a team of researchers at the Rutgers University School of Social Work, Center for Gambling Studies, looked at the prevalence of gambling in the Garden State. The report, titled "The Prevalence of Online and Land-Based Gambling in New Jersey," was published in 2023 and is a follow-up study to one issued in 2017. The report's release coincided with Responsible Gaming Education Month, which focused on supporting research efforts that can help inform policies, procedures, and best practices for minimizing problem gambling risks.

Investigators from DCA inspect boardwalk stores and amusement game operators.





Battling the Opioid Epidemic

Substance abuse devastates families and communities. Attorney General Platkin is focused on ridding our cities and towns of dangerous drugs. Strong partnerships between local, county, state and federal law enforcement agencies are crucial in this battle and the State is committed to providing law enforcement with the necessary resources to save lives.

Expanding Operation RISE. The Office of the Attorney General, through NJ CARES—the Office of the New Jersey Coordinator of Addiction Responses and Enforcement Strategies—is focused on battling the opioid crisis by investing in resources and providing support to people battling with addiction and substance abuse disorders. NJSP, through the NJ CARES initiative Operation Helping Hand (OHH), has expanded Operation RISE (Recovery, Initiative, Support, and Engagement), a program in which

Left: Attorney General Platkin speaks with high school students to discuss the risks associated with sports injuries and opioid use.

Below: Attorney General Platkin connects with families who have faced the fentanyl crisis at the DEA Family Summit.



law enforcement officers proactively connect individuals suffering from substance use disorder with treatment and/or recovery support services. Operation RISE is the newest expansion of the Department's OHH program, and, in early 2023, Operation RISE began collaborating with existing OHH outreach efforts to ensure the efficient deployment of resources to areas that are most in need of assistance and intervention.

Initiating innovative programing. 2023 brought a joint effort between NJ CARES and DCA to provide dozens of New Jersey hospice and long-term care facilities with drug disposal bags, a safe and easy way to dispose of leftover medications, preventing opioids from being diverted or misused after they are no longer needed for a patient. Other drug prevention efforts include an additional \$5 million in federal funds for the NJSP Methamphetamine Eradication and Opioid Enforcement Task Forces to support training and equipment to disrupt the production and distribution of illicit drugs across New Jersey. Additionally, federal funds are allowing law enforcement to locate or investigate illicit activities through statewide collaboration relating to the distribution of heroin, fentanyl, carfentanil, and to the unlawful distribution of prescription opioids.

Holding the pharmaceutical industry accountable. In 2023, all 21 counties and 241 municipalities in New Jersey eligible for direct distributions joined the State in signing onto nationwide settlement agreements with pharmacy chains CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart, and drug makers Teva Pharmaceuticals and Allergan, to resolve claims involving their alleged roles in fomenting the country's opioid crisis. As a result, New Jersey and its eligible counties and municipalities will receive the maximum amount available to the State under the settlements: about \$508.1 million. The settlements were the latest in a number of multistate accords resolving nationwide claims against drug makers and pharmacies for their alleged roles in the opioid addiction epidemic.

First Assistant Attorney General Ruotolo joins Newark community leaders to recognize Overdose Awareness Day on August 31st.



Prosecuting those who fuel the crisis. Five people were charged by OIFP in an 80-count indictment for their alleged participation in a statewide prescription drug theft scheme spanning 11 counties. The OIFP Medicaid Fraud Control Unit partnered with federal, state, and local authorities to pursue individuals who stole prescription blanks, and forged physicians' signatures.

Dismantling heroin mills. NJSP, DCJ, and PPD made several arrests of individuals in a series of investigations targeting crime in Paterson. Those investigations resulted in the seizure of 10 illegal guns and 17 large capacity ammunition magazines, along with the takedown of a drug manufacturing facility operating in Paterson, where multiple kilos of cocaine, heroin, and crystal methamphetamine were seized. In another case, about three and a half pounds of suspected fentanyl powder and over 1,000 suspected fentanyl pills with an estimated combined street value of nearly \$1 million were among the narcotics seized when a search warrant was executed in Paterson. In a separate team effort, the NJSP and the Pennsylvania State Police worked together to track down an Atlantic County man charged with selling fentanyl-laced imitation Percocet pills that killed two teens in Pennsylvania in August 2022. The suspect is charged with two counts of strict liability for a drug-induced death in the deaths of a 17-year-old Sea Isle City teen and a 14-year-old Landenberg, Pennsylvania teen, who died of drug overdoses on August 17, 2022.

Newark community members come together to remember those we've lost to substance use disorder.





The Pride and Juneteenth flags fly over the Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton.

Overseeing LPS Divisions and Offices

In addition to the initiatives described separately in this report, Attorney General Platkin oversaw the management of the various divisions, offices, and commissions that make up the Department. Throughout 2023, these divisions served the people of New Jersey in numerous ways, benefiting from the extraordinary work of the more than 8,000 career public servants who make up the Department.



Division of Administration



Erin Zippel, *Chief Administrative Officer*

The Division of Administration (Administration) is responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the Department. Administration oversees the Department's operational and administrative units, including those involving budgeting, fiscal management, grant-making, human resources, information technology, and facilities. In addition, Administration houses a general counsel's office and an office for departmental ethics and compliance. Administration's employees work closely with the Department's other divisions to ensure that each has the resources and administrative support needed to carry out their missions.

2023 Highlights

- The Office of Grants Management managed millions of federal dollars in 2023, including securing over \$29 million in federal competitive dollars, over \$75 million in federal formula grants, and administering over 700 sub-awards totaling in excess of \$134 million.
- The Office of Constituent Services (OCS) responded to over 6,000 inquires which included connecting constituents to needed services and resources. OCS also collaborated with LPS Information Technology Services (ITS) to develop a new tracking system to efficiently organize, manage and respond to inquiries.
- The Talent Acquisition Group (TAG) within the Office of Human Resource Management participated in more than 55 career events across the State, fostering connections with potential candidates for employment from a broad and diverse range of institutions, from colleges and universities to State department-sponsored events. Furthermore, in collaboration with DCJ, TAG also organized two specialized legal and law enforcement career events, seamlessly leveraging virtual and in-person formats, and attracting nearly 200 highly qualified candidates.
- The Office of Financial Management (Fiscal) processed approximately 2400 procurements, an increase of about 400 additional actions from last year.

Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control



James Graziano, *Director*

The Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) regulates the manufacture, distribution, sale, and transportation of all alcoholic beverages in New Jersey. ABC's statutory mission is to regulate and control the alcoholic beverage industry in order to foster moderation and responsibility in the consumption of alcoholic beverages, to protect the residents of New Jersey by assuring lawful, proper, and fair-trade practices, to maintain the stability of the industry, and to protect the collection of state taxes imposed on alcoholic beverages.

2023 Highlights

- Under ABC Special Ruling (SR 2022-15) ABC created a Third-Party Delivery Permit which authorizes the permittees to deliver alcoholic beverages to consumers' residences on behalf of retail consumption licensees and retail distribution licensees. This Special Ruling sets forth the qualification for safe and responsible delivery, privileges and requirements for obtaining a permit. ABC issued the first two permits of this type to Door Dash Inc. and Maplebear Delivery LLC (Instacart) in November 2023.
- ABC has continued to develop relationships with stakeholders to promote public safety. In 2023, ABC Investigations Bureau partnered with municipal police departments and other law enforcement agencies to conduct joint investigations and compliance inspections to address complaints of unsafe practices in licensed establishments. These joint operations involved licensees implicated in narcotics, illegal weapons or human trafficking.
- In a case brought by an unlicensed, out of state wine retailer, the U.S. District Court found in favor of ABC, holding that the New Jersey system requiring a retailer to have a physical presence in the state is a valid exercise of the State's authority under the 21st Amendment and serves a legitimate non-protectionist purpose of protecting public health and safety. The court found that New Jersey's system of alcohol regulation protects public health and safety and that the predominant effect of the challenged law is not protectionism. At the close of 2023, the case was pending appeal in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.



NJ DIVISION ON
CIVIL RIGHTS

Division on Civil Rights

Sundeep Iyer, *Director*

DCR is responsible for enforcing LAD, which makes it illegal to discriminate in employment, contracting, housing, and places of public accommodation. It also enforces the Family Leave Act (FLA), which requires covered employers to grant time off from work to employees to care for or bond with a child within one year of the child’s birth or adoption, to care for a family member or the equivalent of a family member with a serious health condition, and for certain other reasons. DCR also enforces the FCHA, which limits housing providers’ ability to consider a person’s criminal history in deciding whether to extend an offer of housing or whether to rent a home after extending an offer. DCR also provides training to the general public, government agencies, volunteer organizations, and the business community to promote awareness of the laws DCR enforces, to decrease prejudice and bias, and to educate members of the public about available resources if they believe their rights have been violated.

2023 Highlights

- DCR announced nearly 90 enforcement actions it has taken against housing providers for allegedly violating New Jersey’s FCHA, which prohibits discrimination based on prior criminal history in housing. DCR also announced 18 findings of probable cause in enforcement matters involving discrimination against recipients of government rental assistance.
- DCR received more discrimination complaints from members of the public in 2023 than in any prior year on record—but it also resolved more discrimination complaints than any prior year on record. DCR completed over 70% more civil rights investigations in 2023 compared to 2022: DCR specifically closed 1,100 discrimination cases in 2023, compared to 724 in 2022. DCR also substantially increased the number of cases in which it issued a finding of discrimination, issuing 74 findings of probable cause in 2023 compared to 42 in 2022. DCR secured over \$1.8 million in 2023 for New Jerseyans who alleged that they faced discrimination, a 30 percent increase in recoveries for members of the public compared to 2022.
- DCR’s Community Relations Unit actively participated in 170 events in 2023, reaching over 21,000 New Jerseyans. It also engaged in crisis response and community mediation efforts during protests or in the aftermath of possible bias incidents on 17 occasions. DCR’s Education and Training Unit, meanwhile, held 159 trainings on 13 different anti-bias topics in 2023, reaching 6,600 stakeholders.



Division of Consumer Affairs

Cari Fais, *Acting Director*

DCA is responsible for licensing and registering a variety of professionals and businesses throughout the State, enforcing laws designed to ensure fairness and integrity in New Jersey's commercial and investment marketplaces, and assisting consumers with concerns about particular professionals, businesses, or service providers. DCA's core mission is to protect the public from fraud and misconduct in the sale of goods and services, through education, advocacy, regulation, and enforcement. DCA consists of the Office of Consumer Protection, Bureau of Securities, the Professional Boards Section, OWM and the Legalized Games of Chance Control Commission.

2023 Highlights

- In 2023, DCA continued to take action to safeguard the right to reproductive choice in New Jersey. In April, DCA's relevant professional licensing boards issued statements to reassure licensees and patients in New Jersey regarding access to abortion pill mifepristone. In September, BME proposed rules aimed at expanding the pool of New Jersey healthcare providers available to perform early aspiration abortions. In December, BME and BOP jointly proposed a rule to implement P.L. 2023, c. 2, which authorizes pharmacists to furnish self-administered hormonal contraceptives pursuant to standardized procedures and protocols. In addition, throughout 2023, DCA continued to administer a \$5 million noncompetitive grant to Rutgers University for the New Jersey Reproductive Training and Education Initiative to support abortion and reproductive healthcare training and education.
- In November, DCA resolved its investigation into Dollar General Corp. concerning allegations that the store violated both the Consumer Fraud Act and the Weights and Measures Act by selling merchandise that scanned at the cash register for higher prices than were posted where the merchandise was displayed for sale. The \$1.2 million settlement stems from inspections by OWM of almost 60 New Jersey stores between November 2022 and February 2023 where Dollar General was found to have repeatedly (over 2000 instances) overcharged customers. The \$1.18 million civil penalty in the settlement is the largest ever obtained by the OWM.
- DCA continues to vigorously investigate and litigate complex financial fraud matters and to hold companies, large and small, accountable for wrongdoing. In January, DCA reached a settlement with Yellowstone Capital LLC, its parent company Fundry LLC, and six other associated companies to resolve the State's allegations that the companies targeted small businesses with unconscionable, misleading, and abusive lending, servicing, and collection tactics that caused financial harm through their merchant cash advance ("MCA") business. As part of the settlement, all New Jersey customers who entered into MCA agreements had their outstanding balances forgiven, worth an estimated \$21.75 million. Defendants also paid \$5.625 million in restitution, civil penalties, attorneys' fees, and costs.



Division of Criminal Justice

J. Stephen Ferketic, *Director*

Weldon Powell, *Chief of Detectives*

DCJ is responsible for investigating and prosecuting violations of New Jersey criminal laws. DCJ investigates criminal activity across the State, focusing on high-impact cases that require significant or highly specialized investigative resources. In addition, DCJ assists the Attorney General in his role as the State's chief law enforcement officer which, pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act of 1970, gives the Attorney General broad supervisory authority over New Jersey's 21 County Prosecutor's Offices and the State's 38,000 law enforcement officers. DCJ also provides statewide training for prosecutors and law enforcement officers.

2023 Highlights

- In 2023, ATTF employed an intelligence-driven strategy to combat auto theft. This resulted in the investigation and prosecution of some of the most prolific auto-theft crews across the State, resulting in more arrests, stronger detention arguments, and firm prosecutions at the State and County level. The Attorney General's Office worked with partners in all levels of government, including the Governor and the Legislature to pass new legislation that strengthened penalties for auto-theft offenders and auto-trafficking networks. ATTF has been raising awareness of these new statutes and using them in investigations and prosecutions statewide. As a result, thefts of high-end motor vehicles are down over 20% this year.
- The Attorney General issued Law Enforcement Directive 2023-1 which extended the retention period for unreported SAFE Kits to 20 years, brings New Jersey in line with federal standards and preserves survivors' rights to move forward with the criminal-justice system if and when they are ready. A \$2 million Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Grant was awarded to fund the creation of a SAFE Kit data-collection portal that will give survivors the ability to track the progress of their Kit through the criminal-justice process, putting New Jersey in line with federal standards and providing a more victim-centered law enforcement response to sexual violence.
- DCJ continued its partnership in the Attorney General's Gun Violence Reduction Task Force, a daily meeting that brings together the resources and intelligence of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in New Jersey to focus on the small number of people responsible for a disproportionate share of gun violence in New Jersey.

Division of Gaming Enforcement



David Rebuck, *Director*

DGE is a law enforcement agency and the investigative arm responsible for enforcing New Jersey's Casino Control Act and Sports Wagering Act. DGE's workforce consists of attorneys, investigators, and accountants, and it is further supported by NJSP Troopers and DCJ prosecutors. DGE investigates, issues reports, and, when necessary, challenges the qualifications of individual and corporate applicants for casino and casino-related licenses; reviews and audits casino hotel operations; investigates and prosecutes all casino-related crimes; and tests all casino slot machines, casino floor systems, and Internet gaming platform systems prior to use.

2023 Highlights

- In 2023, total gaming revenue, which consists of revenue from brick-and-mortar casinos, Internet casino gaming, and sports wagering, was \$5.78 billion. That figure represents a 10.9% increase over 2022. Internet gaming operators posted \$1.92 billion in total Internet gaming revenue, which is a record performance and a 15.7% increase from the prior year. Sports wagering operators posted \$1.01 billion in gross revenue, which is 31.9% higher than the prior year. DGE currently has 37 authorized Internet casino gaming sites and 21 authorized Internet sports wagering sites.
- Effective January 1, 2023, DGE implemented Responsible Gaming Initiative. This initiative utilizes technology to aid in identifying potential problem gamblers by analyzing automated triggers regarding account activity and play behavior during a patron's gaming session. As a result of the Responsible Gaming Initiative, operators are required to initiate various levels of contact with the patrons depending on the nature of the activity. Such technology-based approach to responsible gaming was the first of its kind in the nation.
- DGE also implemented advertising best practices which include various requirements such as prominently and clearly displaying the 1-800-GAMBLER hotline in all advertisements as well as eliminating promises of "risk-free" bets if the terms and conditions are misleading in any way. Other best practices include clarifying wagering requirements for promotions and limiting advertising in locations where it would be likely to entice underage individuals to play.



Division of Highway Traffic Safety

Michael Rizol, *Director*

The Division of Highway Traffic Safety (HTS) works to prevent motor vehicle-related crashes and the resulting property damage, injuries, and fatalities on New Jersey's roadways. HTS is responsible for administering the State and Community Highway Safety Program, which annually distributes approximately \$30 million in federal funding to develop and implement a statewide highway safety plan. The Director of HTS also serves as the Governor's representative to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Federal Highway Administration.

2023 Highlights

- Traffic crash fatalities in 2023 have demonstrated a positive trend, experiencing a noteworthy 9.4% decrease compared to the same period in 2022. Preliminary data highlights a reduction in fatalities among drivers, passengers, and pedestrians involved in motor vehicle crashes this year. Following the upward trajectory in traffic fatalities observed in 2021 and 2022, the decline in 2023 is an encouraging indicator. This positive shift aligns with the ongoing efforts of HTS, which continues to actively promote statewide traffic safety programs.
- HTS implemented a three-year highway safety plan for FY 2024-2026 with an emphasis on meaningful community engagement and feedback in its development and implementation. By involving the public HTS aims to foster a sense of partnership and to ensure that diverse perspectives, concerns, and experiences are considered when designing and implementing traffic safety initiatives. By actively engaging the community, HTS was able to gather valuable insights, identify specific local challenges, and tailor funded countermeasures to address the unique needs of different neighborhoods. Moreover, this approach promotes transparency and builds trust between residents and traffic safety partners, which enhances the effectiveness of awareness campaigns, educational programs, and enforcement efforts.
- To maximize the reach and impact of HTS' messaging about the dangers associated with impaired and distracted driving, HTS launched two major public information campaigns and a year-round traffic and weather report safety messaging program. The first campaign focused on the deadly consequences of impaired driving, generating more than 130 million impressions and 33,000-page views to the HTS website. The second, "Memorial" themed campaign was carried out to address New Jersey's distracted driving problem. Finally, an ongoing program was launched that offers the public traffic safety messaging through digital ads and sponsorship announcements on New Jersey television and radio stations.
- HTS partnered with the AAA Clubs of New Jersey, New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission, and the New Jersey Cannabis Trade Association to launch a campaign to educate motorists on the dangers of driving under the influence of cannabis. Educational fliers, in both English and Spanish, were distributed to cannabis dispensaries throughout the state and are being provided to consumers at each point of sale.

Division of Law



Michael T.G. Long, *Director*

The Division of Law (DOL) serves as primary legal counsel for New Jersey state government. Generally speaking, this work takes three forms: providing legal advice to the State's departments and agencies, defending the State in civil litigation, and bringing civil lawsuits against individuals, corporations, and other entities that violate the law and harm New Jersey and its residents. Staffed by over 500 attorneys, DOL's responsibilities cover a broad swath of legal issues, including those involving banking, child protection, corrections, education, the environment, finance, health, insurance, taxation, and transportation matters.

2023 Highlights

- New Jersey entered nationwide multistate settlements totaling \$20.1 billion with pharmacy chains CVS, Walgreens and Walmart, and drug makers Teva Pharmaceuticals and Allergan to resolve claims involving their alleged roles in fomenting the country's opioid crisis. New Jersey (including its eligible county and municipal governments) stands to receive approximately \$508.1 million from all five settlement agreements. Among other things, these settlements will provide funding to support programs that address the opioid epidemic in New Jersey and across the country, and will require significant changes in the pharmaceutical industry aimed at preventing similar crises in the future.
- The Environmental Enforcement and Environmental Justice Section (EEEJ) continued its aggressive efforts to require polluters to pay NRD on behalf of the Department of Environmental Protection. EEEJ obtained the largest single-site NRD recovery for New Jersey to date when it settled with Solvay. The settlement resolves DEP's legal claims against Solvay for widespread environmental contamination by emerging toxic chemicals of concern, including PFAS and other hazardous substances discharged at Solvay's West Deptford manufacturing plant. The settlement requires Solvay to remediate the site and make financial commitments totaling \$392.7 million, including payment of \$75 million in NRDs. Solvay is also required to further investigate and address certain PFAS.
- The Transportation, Construction and Condemnation (TCC) Section was instrumental in assisting the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) with its \$3 billion capital program, which includes road and bridge construction projects; the acquisition of real estate parcels needed for the projects; multimodal investments; pavement rehabilitation, reconstruction and resurfacing; and local aid for municipalities and counties. The TCC Section provided a range of services for NJDOT, such as counseling regarding condemnation, agreements, procurement and claims, and representing NJDOT in litigation.



New Jersey State Police

Colonel Patrick Callahan, Superintendent

NJSP is the largest law enforcement agency in New Jersey, with over 3,000 enlisted and over 1,100 civilian members. NJSP has general law enforcement jurisdiction throughout the State, and it provides statewide enforcement of the criminal, motor vehicle, marine, and alcohol beverage control laws and, on a contract basis, general police services on the New Jersey Turnpike, the Garden State Parkway, the Atlantic City Expressway, and 89 municipalities across the State. In addition, NJSP's Office of Emergency Management is the lead state agency responsible for the coordination and support of statewide emergency services involving natural and manmade disasters.

2023 Highlights

- The Investigations Branch developed the framework and protocols for a NJSP "Under 1K" initiative to reduce shooting- victims in New Jersey. This historic undertaking was predicated on a holistic approach to strategically deploying limited resources, a reliance on and exploitation of data and technology, community engagement, and law enforcement partnerships which together kept the number of New Jersey shooting hit victims under 1,000 for 2023. At year-end, 924 people were shot in New Jersey, the lowest number since New Jersey started comprehensive recording of this information in 2009.
- This year, New Jersey became the first state with 100% Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearm (ATF) eTrace compliance. This enables the NJ Regional Operations and Intelligence Center (ROIC) to analyze trace results for all recovered crime guns in the state. This analysis has offered valuable insights into trafficking trends and identifying potential suspects of trafficking illegal firearms.
- Following a 9-0 United States Supreme Court decision issued in April, NJSP was mandated under state law to replace the Waterfront Commission of New York and New Jersey as the regulator and investigator of the shipping workforce at the Port of New Jersey, the second busiest port in the United States. NJSP is now responsible for conducting port-related investigations and intelligence gathering, timely licensing and regulation of businesses and port workers, and maintaining audit and administrative capabilities to ensure operational efficiency.
- NJSP identified the need for increased school security and recognized potential areas for improvement in the school resource trooper program. Twenty school resource officers were assigned to various Field Operation Section stations and were responsible for overseeing the 117 schools within NJSP's areas of responsibility. Unit members visit schools daily to build relationships with administrators, observe security drills and fire evacuations, check Knox Box availability, and assist administrators/staff with producing crucial crisis response presentations.

Division of Violence Intervention & Victim Assistance



Patricia Teffenhart, *Executive Director*

VIVA's mission is to prevent future violence by better addressing the needs of survivors in the aftermath of crime and trauma and by providing smarter and trauma-informed interventions to those more likely to commit violent acts. The VIVA directive established three offices— the Office of Violence Intervention and Prevention (OVIP), the Office of Victim Support and Assistance, and the Office of Trial and Criminal Justice Process—and brought a fourth, VCCO, under its roof. Together, these offices centralize the Department's work with respect to crime survivors and communities disproportionately impacted by violence.

2023 Highlights

- OVIP issued \$28 million in grant awards to community-based and hospital settings to address community violence through three of its key grant programs. The awards were made through the Community-Based Violence Intervention Program (\$15 million), the Hospital-based Violence Intervention Program (HVIP) (\$10 million), and the Trauma Recovery Centers (TRCs) program (\$3 million). These grant investments were provided to organizations serving the communities in New Jersey most impacted by gun violence. Starting at the hospital bedside, HVIP providers connect victims of violent crime to a multidisciplinary team of trauma-informed, survivor-centered service providers to facilitate recovery and reduce the long-term impact of victimization. The TRC program also works through community settings to provide outreach to victims of a wide range of crimes who typically are unable to access traditional services. TRC services include mental health and case management. Together these programs are supporting the development of a statewide infrastructure and ecosystem for community violence intervention.
- VCCO launched a new online case processing system that will increase and improve access to critical support available to victims of crime. Supported by a federal Building State Technology Capacity grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, the updates to the VCCO's existing case processing system create a more user-friendly experience for applicants filing from both desktop and mobile devices. Users are now able to file applications in 133 different languages and sign the applications electronically. The new system also provides greater flexibility on the methods of future communication from VCCO – electronic, traditional mail, or both.
- VIVA helped secure a multi-year \$4,000,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to enhance and expand existing community violence intervention strategies. One of the largest grant awards the Department has ever received, this project will be led by OVIP, which will use the funds to enhance local coordination among CBVI providers and other human service agencies. Through closer collaboration and strategic enhancements, OVIP will be able to identify service gaps and develop solutions tailored to the needs of communities most affected by violence.

Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor



Al Garcia, Interim Insurance Fraud Prosecutor

OIFP is responsible for investigating, prosecuting, and deterring insurance fraud and serves as the statewide coordinator for all anti-insurance fraud efforts in New Jersey. OIFP investigates a wide range of insurance fraud schemes and serves as a clearinghouse for cases referred by the public, insurance companies, the Medicaid Program, and other law enforcement agencies. In addition, OIFP provides funding to County Prosecutor's Offices to enable them to investigate and prosecute insurance fraud at the local level.

2023 Highlights

- In partnership with local law enforcement, OIFP committed staff and resources to the investigation and prosecution of arson-related insurance fraud throughout the State. As a result, in November 2023, the State grand jury charged a former Camden County man with, among other charges, second-degree aggravated arson and second-degree insurance fraud. The charges related to a 2018 fire that caused significant damage to a house in Cherry Hill. OIFP's investigation found that the defendant started the fire with the purpose of destroying the home and collecting insurance proceeds for the damage.
- In 2023, OIFP developed the School Outreach Program in which OIFP staff, including attorneys, detectives, and civil investigators, visit schools (elementary through college) in an effort to educate students about OIFP, insurance fraud, and law enforcement in general. The program exposes students to the daily responsibilities of OIFP staff and the journey that led them to their respective careers. Since the program's inception, OIFP presented at over 35 schools, building bridges between law enforcement and the public, while encouraging students to consider a career in law enforcement.
- Throughout the year, in furtherance of its mission, the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) aggressively combatted Medicaid fraud and the abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of elderly or disabled individuals. In 2023, approximately twenty-five defendants were indicted, pleaded guilty, or sentenced.
- In 2023, OIFP continued its successful statewide awareness campaign aimed at discouraging New Jerseyans from leaving their cars unlocked with the key fob inside, as we observed that for the vast majority of the vehicles stolen, the key fob had been left in the vehicle or the vehicle was left running.

Office of Law Enforcement Professional Standards



Christina Glogoff, *Director*

The Office of Law Enforcement Professional Standards (OLEPS) is responsible for reviewing NJSP rules, regulations, and standing operating procedures to ensure compliance with state and federal laws, and it is authorized to conduct operational audits of NJSP training and compliance with best practices. OLEPS is also authorized to conduct independent analyses of data to identify any potential disparity or changes in NJSP enforcement actions and to perform other duties, as necessary, to support county and municipal law enforcement agencies.

2023 Highlights

- In 2023, OLEPS reviewed and provided recommendations to approximately 78 NJSP Academy lesson plans, with associated training materials, to conform to best practices and enhanced the current NJSP practices on cultural awareness, law enforcement ethics and leadership, and constitutional law, including the laws of arrest, and search and seizure. This is an increase of 41.8% from last year. OLEPS also expanded the scope of its review to include the periodic assessment of additional lesson plans for NJSP recruit classes. OLEPS also audited 32 NJSP trainings to ensure appropriate presentation of the training material. Further, OLEPS presented to the NJSP Citizen's Academy, the NJSP Academy recruits, and to the Internal Affairs Investigator School.
- In 2023, OLEPS produced multiple reports. For example, OLEPS completed oversight reports, in which the office reviewed numerous data, motor vehicle digital recordings, and motor vehicle stop reports, among other materials, for over 600 motor vehicle stops conducted by NJSP. OLEPS also published reports detailing the NJSP internal affairs process, and provided data associated with reviewed and aggregated misconduct.

Office of Public Integrity and Accountability



Thomas J. Eicher, *Executive Director*

OPIA is responsible for strengthening public confidence in government institutions. OPIA is tasked with a dual mission: to investigate violations of public trust and to develop policies that rebuild faith in both government and the criminal justice system. OPIA includes both criminal prosecutors and trained investigators who work together to prosecute cases involving public corruption, criminal violations of civil rights laws, and illegal use of force by law enforcement officers. OPIA also includes an Office of Policing Policy, which develops systemic reforms to strengthen policing practices across New Jersey, oversight of the Police Training Commission, and the Shooting Response Team which investigates all fatal law enforcement encounters.

2023 Highlights

- Over the past 12 months, PTC has increased its staff by more than 50%, opened the ACADIS Portal, a public safety and compliance software, to over 500 law enforcement agencies, and trained over 1000 users. In addition, the staff conducted 10 in person licensing seminars, reaching 1,400 law enforcement professionals. OPIA/PTC staff drafted regulations to implement the Police Licensing Law which were approved by PTC and are being finalized.
- OPIA was the independent investigator for 21 civilian deaths during encounters with law enforcement, including nine fatal police shootings. OPIA presented 24 matters involving fatal police encounters/deaths in custody to the state grand jury this year, and of those, three indictments were returned resulting in charges against 10 law enforcement officers.
- In July 2023, the Attorney General and OPIA's Conviction Review Unit announced the release of Dion Miller, previously convicted of felony murder, robbery and weapons charges, after extensive reinvestigation by the Unit revealed that there was clear and convincing evidence that Mr. Miller should not have been convicted. A new investigation into the robbery, assault and murder of the victim is underway by the Attorney General's Cold Case Network.
- A report was commissioned from Dr. Matthew B. Ross, an Associate Professor at Northeastern University, who conducted an independent analysis of traffic stops made by the NJSP to determine whether there was a disparate impact on racial and ethnic minorities. Dr. Ross analyzed data related to 6.1 million traffic stops made by NJSP between January 2009 and June 2021. He found a significant disparity both in the decision to stop a motor vehicle and in the decision to engage in post-stop enforcement actions. The study included a solar visibility test that found that Black/African-American motorists were 2 percentage points (9.3 percent) and Hispanic/Latinx motorists were 2.9 percentage points (16.1 percent) more likely to have been stopped during periods when their race was more easily visible to police.

Statewide Affirmative Firearms Enforcement Office



Ravi Ramanathan, *Director*

Established by Attorney General Platkin through Attorney General Directive No. 2022-08, the SAFE Office is a first-in-the-nation office with the mandate to bring civil enforcement actions against firearm companies to hold them accountable for violations of the law that harm the health and safety of New Jersey residents. Specifically, the SAFE Office is authorized to bring civil enforcement actions against gun industry members that knowingly or recklessly contribute to a public nuisance in New Jersey through unlawful or unreasonable conduct.

2023 Highlights

- In its first enforcement actions, SAFE filed two groundbreaking lawsuits against members of the gun industry in December 2023. The first lawsuit seeks damages, costs, and injunctive relief from FSS Armory, a New Jersey licensed gun dealer in Pine Brook. As alleged in the lawsuit, FSS Armory failed to properly store its guns in violation of state law, which requires that guns be secured overnight and that they not be stored in any window or adjacent area where they can be seen from the outside. The company's failures put residents in New Jersey, as well as those in neighboring states, in danger by allowing the weapons to be trafficked and placed in the hands of criminals and others not legally permitted to own a firearm.
- SAFE's second landmark lawsuit, also filed in December 2023, seeks damages, costs, and injunctive relief from gun show operator Eagle Shows and gun show vendor JSD Supply. These defendants targeted the sale of ghost gun products to New Jersey residents. Unserialized, untraceable firearms, commonly known as ghost guns, are illegal in New Jersey. As alleged in the lawsuit, JSD Supply and others nonetheless continue to deliberately sell ghost gun products at Eagle Shows gun shows just across the New Jersey-Pennsylvania border, and Eagle Shows continues to directly advertise their shows in New Jersey.
- SAFE helped create the Attorney General's new standards and application process for microstamping-enabled handguns to be included on a State roster pursuant to the State's commercial microstamping law. Under the newly-established standards, which were announced in August 2023, a firearm qualifies for inclusion on the microstamping roster if, among other criteria, it regularly impart an identifying marker on expended cartridge cases, perform without physically deforming or deteriorating when firing rounds and with no less reliability than other commercial firearms sold in New Jersey, and otherwise complies with all applicable State and federal laws.



Juvenile Justice Commission

Jennifer LeBaron, PhD, *Executive Director*

As New Jersey's lead youth justice agency, the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) provides care, custody, and rehabilitative services to youth placed in the agency's care by the courts; supervises and coordinates services for youth on parole; and supports local efforts to provide prevention and early intervention services to at-risk and court-involved youth.

2023 Highlights

- Under the leadership of JJC, and in partnership with the Judiciary, New Jersey continues to serve as a national model for youth justice reform and as a model site for the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). Prior to New Jersey's launch of JDAI, approximately 12,000 youth were admitted to county detention centers pending resolution of their court cases annually, and approximately 1,200 youth were committed to the custody of JJC as a disposition. In 2023, the number of youth detained in county facilities had declined by about 87%, to 1,613 youth, and the number committed to JJC facilities by the Family Court had declined by 92%, to 94 youth. Of particular significance, youth of color account for about 85% of the reduction in youth placed in both county and state facilities, and youth crime has decreased by 83% since JDAI implementation.
- In 2023, JJC continued to grow its Youth Worker Apprenticeship Program. Providing access to meaningful, paid employment and job training opportunities is among the most effective strategy for ensuring the long-term success of youth returning home after time spent with in JJC care. The Youth Worker Apprenticeship Program hires youth released from JJC custody as paid, part-time youth worker trainees for up to 18 months, allowing them to obtain critical training, develop job skills, and enhance their eligibility to apply for full-time employment with JJC or other social service agencies. Apprentices receive continuous training, coaching, and support while in the program, and youth currently in the care of JJC benefit from the credible messenger approach, a peer-to-peer support model that has been embraced as an essential component of a transformative youth justice system.
- JJC took substantial steps to strengthen post-secondary, career and technical education, as well as employment readiness opportunities for young people in its programs. This effort included working with Defy Ventures, a national non-profit focused on helping formerly incarcerated individuals successfully re-enter their communities, to introduce an entrepreneurship program, "CEO of Your New Life," which teaches concepts that allow young people to find entrepreneurial success and build fulfilling careers. Further, in collaboration with Mercer County Community College, JJC launched a 24-week Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning, and Refrigeration technician certification program. Finally, JJC expanded its partnership with two institutions of higher learning that currently provide college level courses to youth in JJC's care who have obtained their high school diplomas and wish to pursue an associate degree. In 2023, JJC offered 34 academic college courses with 109 youth enrolled in one or more courses.



New Jersey Racing Commission

Judith A. Nason, *Executive Director*

The New Jersey Racing Commission (NJRC) regulates horse racing, pari-mutuel wagering, account wagering, and exchange wagering in New Jersey and is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the sport. NJRC is a nine-member, bipartisan body appointed by the Governor, with a staff of career employees who are charged with conducting daily functions involving the regulation of horse racing, including the permitting and licensing procedures of horse owners, trainers, drivers, and veterinarians involved in the sport.

2023 Highlights

- On May 22, 2023, Horseracing Integrity and Welfare Unit (HIWU) assumed jurisdiction over thoroughbred anti-doping and medication control pursuant to the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act, 15 U.S.C. §§3051 et seq. (Act). Pursuant to the authority granted to the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA) by the Act, HISA selected HIWU to conduct thoroughbred drug testing on its behalf. After the conclusion of legal challenges filed in several other states, HIWU commenced collecting and testing thoroughbred blood and urine samples on May 22, 2023.
- On May 18, 2023, NJRC entered into a limited services agreement with HIWU and HISA in connection with thoroughbred drug testing. HIWU and HISA agreed that HISA will pay NJRC the actual costs of the services performed by NJRC's employees.
- In 2023, NJRC acted on initial decisions issued by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) or reached settlements in pending OAL cases. NJRC saw to conclusion seven appealed enforcement actions that imposed penalties for drug positives, three for whipping violations, three involving interference or driving infractions, one for a trainer's failure to guard a horse from the administration of drugs that caused its death, one for misconduct in connection with a timed workout, and one for failure to cooperate during a barn search. In addition, NJRC also took direct action in imposing substantial penalties in another case for conduct detrimental to the sport which involved intentional abuse of a horse.

State Athletic Control Board



Larry Hazzard, Sr., *Commissioner*

The State Athletic Control Board (SACB) is charged with the regulation, supervision, and oversight of all contests and exhibitions of unarmed combat, including boxing, kickboxing, and mixed martial arts (MMA). SACB ensures the health and safety of contestants and ensures integrity and fairness in all contests. SACB also develops, prescribes, and charges fees for licensure and collects ticket and television taxes, licensing fees, and disciplinary fines.

2023 Highlights

- SACB regulated a professional MMA event held on May 6, 2023, which was the largest ticket gate for any sporting event ever held at the Prudential Center in Newark. The event featured the UFC's 288th event. The SACB also regulated a professional boxing event held on April 8, 2023, which was the second largest ticket gate for a professional boxing event ever held at the Prudential Center. The event featured Newark, New Jersey native, 2016 Olympic Silver Medalist, and World Champion Professional Boxer, Shakur Stevenson.
- SACB awarded grant funding in the amount of \$65,000 each for two New Jersey amateur boxing programs serving eligible at-risk youth participants in Atlantic City and Trenton. Aside from their boxing skills training and competitions, youths aged 11-18 years participate in educational workshops as well as field trips and mentoring group sessions that focus on life skills training and career development. Youths also receive case management services that help to track participants' progress and assist them with identifying and obtaining the resources necessary for healthy, successful development into productive individuals upon adulthood.
- In 2023, SACB conducted seminars for all New Jersey-licensed combative sports judges and referees in January and ringside physicians in October. The seminars featured presentations about industry standards, practices, and regulatory requirements as well as participation in live demonstrations, mock exercises, and lively discussions.



Coordinator for Addiction Responses & Enforcement Strategies

Kelly Levy, *Interim Director*

NJ CARES takes a multifaceted approach to New Jersey's drug crisis, focusing on the prevention and treatment of substance abuse as well as deterring illegal drug activity. NJ CARES coordinates the efforts of the agencies within the Department and partners with other State and private entities similarly committed to combatting the overdose epidemic.

2023 Highlights

- In early 2023, NJ CARES awarded funding to six public health agencies to establish Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) programs in six areas of New Jersey. Those programs aim to give officers discretion to forego criminal charges against individuals repeatedly engaged in low-level crimes driven by underlying issues of addiction, poverty, and/or mental health, and instead redirect them to community-based programs and services to address those issues. LEAD programs launched in Brick, Elizabeth, Irvington, Phillipsburg, and New Brunswick in the summer and fall of 2023.
- In early 2023, NJ CARES partnered with Rutgers, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, to offer LPS employees the opportunity to receive education on the opioid crisis, including how to administer naloxone, and have a free Narcan® Kit mailed to each attendee's home after the training. Between February and August 2023, 181 employees were trained, and 171 received Narcan® over the course of 9 trainings. NJ CARES also partnered with the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and DCA to launch Naloxone365, a program that makes naloxone available to individuals over the age of 14 at participating pharmacies (which include over 600 sites). Additionally, to combat growing concerns about xylazine, in August 2023, NJ CARES provided 108 boxes or 5,400 kits containing wound care supplies and fentanyl test strips to 18 law enforcement agencies that do direct outreach to individuals with substance use disorder.
- Through funding made available by DMHAS, NJ CARES, in partnership with DCA, provided drug disposal bags to hospices, home care agencies, and senior centers across the state. In February 2023, 142 Medium Pouch Cases (containing 28,400 disposal pouches) were shipped to 80 hospices and home care agencies across the state. In September 2023, 88 Medium Pouch Cases (containing 17,600 disposal pouches) were shipped to 44 hospices and home care agencies and 37 senior centers across the state.

Attorney General's Advocacy Institute



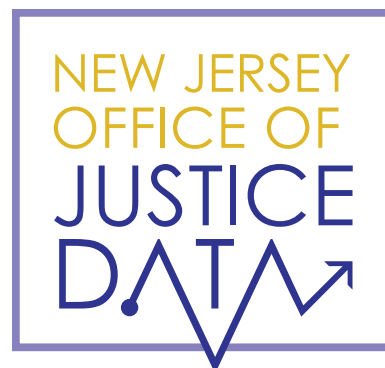
Margaret A. Cotoia, *Director*

The Attorney General's Advocacy Institute (AGAI) provides training that meets the practice needs of deputy and assistant attorneys general, county prosecutors, and other government lawyers. AGAI runs litigation skills courses and lecture programs and is an accredited New Jersey and Pennsylvania continuing legal education provider.

2023 Highlights

- The AGAI conducted 154 lecture and skills programs in 2023, educating 15,219 attendees with a focus on its core constituencies of Assistant and Deputy Attorneys General and County Prosecutors and Assistant Prosecutors. This is the third consecutive year that the AGAI surpassed its previous year's attendance record.
- The AGAI partnered with the New Jersey First Assistant Prosecutors Association to facilitate and accredit specialized programs for Assistant County Prosecutors and DCJ Deputy Attorneys General. A new monthly program series included courses on The Role of the Medical Examiner in Criminal Investigations, Regional Information Sharing, Cell Site Evidence Analysis, Arson Investigation and U-Visas. Other programs addressing timely and pertinent issues for prosecutors included Attorney-Conducted Voir Dire, First-Time In-Court Witness Identification, Biological Evidence (DNA) and CODIS.
- The AGAI provided its attorneys with 38 ethics programs, covering a wide range of topics and conferring 74.5 ethics credits. Nineteen of these programs were in the Diversity, Inclusion and Elimination of Bias category, including accrediting two inaugural programs in the Attorney General's Racial Justice Speakers' Series. Five ethics programs focused on attorney wellness.
- The AGAI hosted two national legal writing programs taught by faculty from the National Association of Attorneys General. A full day writing lecture presented by Brooklyn Law School professor Catherine DuBois trained 172 LPS attorneys and a comprehensive legal writing program provided a series of targeted lectures and individual writing coaching sessions to selected attorneys.

Office of Justice Data



Kristin Golden, PhD, Chief Data Officer

The Office of Justice Data (OJD) coordinates data collection and analysis across LPS, ensuring the Department meets various statutory obligations. With a particular focus on criminal justice data, OJD promotes transparency and accountability through timely and accessible public data releases. Working with other criminal justice and law enforcement stakeholders, OJD helps to ensure that the Department's policymaking is rooted in data and rigorous statistical analysis.

2023 Highlights

- OJD continues to promote transparency through development and maintenance of data collection initiatives and the publication of data dashboards. This year marked the release of the Criminal Justice Data Dashboard in May 2023, New Jersey's first comprehensive data warehouse visualizing information on arrests in New Jersey from 2017 to 2022, including warrants, charges, dispositions, restitution, and fines, as well as demographic data pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:17B-111.1(a)(1).
- OJD supports existing data dashboards operated by the Department: Major Discipline issued to and use of force by law enforcement officers. As a critical partner in priority initiatives, OJD analyzed survey data on SAFE Kits which help yield several policy changes that were codified into Attorney General Directive 2023-1. OJD also supports the ARRIVE Together program by collecting information from both law enforcement and mental health professionals on ARRIVE team interactions.
- OJD was awarded \$225,000 in federal funds for the FY 2022 State Justice Statistics Program for Statistical Analysis Center which will support OJD's continuing work in relation to the Criminal Justice Data Dashboard in accordance with P.L. 2020, c.120 [C.52:17B-111.1]. In conjunction with the DCJ and the VIVA, OJD helped win an award of \$2 million dollars in competitive federal funding to establish a standardized tracking system for the state's SAFE Kits and expand storage capacity for sexual assault kits, furthering the Department's commitment to supporting victims of crime.

Leading the Department

To help manage the day-to-day operations of the Department, Attorney General Platkin has assembled a diverse leadership team that brought together career public servants and experienced attorneys. Together, they are helping the Department's employees achieve a vision for New Jersey that is safer, fairer, and more just.



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