



The State of New Jersey

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*A Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods*

Governor  
Jon S. Corzine

# NEW JERSEY

## *A Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods*

To the People of New Jersey:

Violent crime threatens the safety of our State's residents and the vitality of our cities and towns. Criminal gangs, fueled by the revenues of drug distribution and armed with guns illegally obtained, contribute significantly to this threat and expose too many of our young people to actual or threatened violence. This Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods is a comprehensive approach to dealing with gangs, youth violence, and illegal guns: improving the delivery of the support and services that prevent our children from becoming delinquent; targeting and intensifying law enforcement's focus on those who perpetrate gang and street-level violence; and working to keep those individuals released from prisons and detention centers from engaging in future criminality.

The plan for a safer New Jersey has three pillars: enforcement, prevention, and reentry. We recognize that law enforcement cannot do it alone; arresting people, with nothing more, will not solve these problems. Our young people deserve, and require, more. Make no mistake, however: illegal gang activity and criminal gun possession are serious problems, and will not be tolerated. For those individuals and organizations that commit gang or gun violence, the law enforcement response will be immediate and severe.

By the time that a young person becomes involved with law enforcement, many earlier opportunities for prevention and intervention have passed. That is why effective prevention programs aimed at reducing the risk factors of delinquency for at-risk youth form the foundation for this strategy. Preventing the commission of crime by formerly incarcerated offenders, an all-too-prevalent type of crime, forms the third pillar of the strategy. Currently, almost two-thirds of the inmates leaving State prisons will be arrested within five years of being released from prison. These repeat offenders present a serious public safety issue. Accordingly, the strategy sets forth several approaches to reduce recidivism.

The ideas and approaches included here reflect the tremendous efforts and progress that people in our communities have made in addressing these issues. As a State, we want to support those programs that work to make our communities safer, and to make sure that we do so in the most coordinated, cost-effective manner possible. In identifying these approaches, we listened to community members, police officers, service providers, children, elected officials throughout the State, and countless other dedicated professionals and citizens who work every day to make our communities safer. We asked for their ideas about what works in combating violence, what needed resources are or are not available, and how the State could work with them and local agencies to most effectively address violence, with a particular focus on gangs and gun crime.

We have listened, and now we ask you to do your part in solving these problems. Local and state governments will take the lead, but it is the individual members of the community – who donate their time to young people, who assist in maintaining the safety and vitality of our communities – who will make these strategies succeed.

This strategy reflects the State's commitment to helping our citizens to live and work in our communities, free of the fear of violence. It changes the way the State pursues that goal. In an unprecedented collaboration, our State agencies will work together in allocating more than \$35 million to supporting prevention programs. The State is also contributing more than \$10 million

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to law enforcement initiatives and support. For reentry, non-criminal justice agencies will refocus more than \$3 million to coordinate with extensive and redeployed resources being provided by the Department of Corrections and the State Parole board. None of this is new money. Rather, it is the coordinated re-direction of existing state and federal grant money that we will put behind our goal of making New Jersey safer.

Government works best when it works together, and this strategy breaks down – in several instances for the first time – many of the artificial barriers to agency collaboration. It engages almost every single state department in our common goal, and the sheer number of agencies involved directly reflects the priority I have given this initiative. Working together with the people of our State, and putting our collective resources and efforts behind those programs and approaches that work, we can make our communities safer.

Jon S. Corzine  
Governor

- I. ENFORCEMENT: Targeting gangs and gang members who engage in violence and carry guns**
  - a. Encourage and assist local police departments to move towards intelligence-led, data-driven policing by requiring agencies to submit crime data on a monthly basis.
  - b. Perform local assessments of gang problems and create interagency task forces to target gangs and gun violence.
  - c. Stop the flow of illegal and deadly guns into the State and vigorously investigate all shootings.
  - d. Combat witness intimidation through witness protection programs and minimizing reliance on civilian witnesses.
  - e. Involve community in identifying law enforcement priorities and strategies and preventing violence.
  
- II. PREVENTION: Focus on giving young people the tools and resources to avoid delinquency, gangs, and criminality**
  - a. Coordinate among all levels of government.
  - b. Assist with local level planning and implementation.
  - c. Prioritize jobs and training.
  - d. Promote the adoption of best practices and model programs.
  - e. Require evaluation and accountability.
  
- III. REENTRY: Focus on reducing the recidivism rate to improve public safety and save resources**
  - a. Coordinate and create accountability for reentry through creation of Reentry Oversight Committee.
  - b. Launch a reentry Demonstration Project, with focused programming for up to 1,300 offenders.
  - c. Increase support and opportunities for youth returning home from Juvenile Justice Commission institutions.
  - d. Address unique needs of reentering ex-offenders through systemwide change.
  - e. Modify certain barriers to reintegration, with a focus on relieving impediments for persons who establish rehabilitation.
  
- IV. Oversight and Accountability**

## Safe Streets, Safe Neighborhoods

Today, violent crime represents one of the State's most significant public safety problems. While other major crimes are down across the State, murder and weapons possession are trending in the opposite direction. Criminal street gangs are responsible for a major part of this violence. Gang violence results in too many youth in our cities and towns left seriously wounded or dead. In 2004, homicide was the second leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Moreover, gang violence often strikes innocent victims who happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, thus creating and perpetuating a generalized fear in the community.

The problem of criminal street gangs and the violence they perpetrate and perpetuate is not limited to urban areas. In the New Jersey State Police Street Gang Survey, released today as a part of the Strategy for a Safe Streets and Neighborhoods and compiled by surveying local law enforcement officers on the scope and nature of gang presence in their community, 43% of the municipalities reported a gang presence. In some of these cities and towns, the total number of gang members may be less than 20; at the other extreme, some cities report multiple gangs each with memberships of 100 or more. The survey indicates that more than three major gangs are present in more than 100 municipalities. The survey also reveals that these gang members are engaging primarily in violent and narcotics-distribution offenses. As the survey also shows, gangs are not an urban problem nor unique to one part of our State; rather, gangs cross urban and suburban lines, and are present in 20 of our 21 counties.

Serious problems require serious attention and, where necessary, new approaches. It is not enough to continue to do things in the way they were done before if we can do them better in a different way. We must use available information more intelligently and, where gaps exist in what information is available, we must determine how to fill those gaps. We must increase coordination, communication, and collaboration between and among different agencies, organizations, and, most importantly, the affected communities. And, if we are truly serious about solving these problems, we must have critical evaluations of programs and policies and a willingness to change those programs and policies that could work better.

**Between 2001-2005, Statewide adult arrests increased in two categories**

- Murder increased by 8% (236 to 255)
- Weapons offenses increased by 23.7% (3674 to 4544)

**Between 2001-2005, Statewide juvenile arrests increased in three categories**

- Murder increased by 15% (25 to 30)
- Robbery increased by 22.4% (1176 to 1439)
- Weapons offenses increased by 16.4% (1720 to 2002)

**Majority of violent crime occurs in 20 municipalities**

- 78.9% of all murders
- 54.8% of all arrests with firearm
- 81% of all gang-related homicides

This strategy focuses on three areas critical to addressing violent crime: enforcement, prevention, and reentry. Law enforcement will target and prosecute those who engage in violence, and in particular gang and gun-related violence, but the goals of the strategy are much broader. For effective prevention, we will focus on at-risk youth and on fostering the protective factors that are known to lead to resiliency against delinquency, such as involvement with positive peer group activities, good relationships with peers, economically sustainable communities, and neighborhood cohesion. We will also focus on reducing risk factors that are known to correlate to problem behavior, such as truancy, antisocial behavior, gun possession, teen parenthood, and early onset of drug use. Reentry efforts will focus on providing persons being released from prison the skills and necessary support and supervision to prevent them from committing new crimes.

Across these areas, several fundamental principles guide the initiatives, programs, and actions that comprise the strategy. First, the implementation of the strategy, and every component part of the strategy, will seek to use data and analysis to identify problems, develop approaches to address those problems, and to assess the efficacy of those approaches. Second, the State's role is to support and to assist its local partners and communities in identifying and implementing the programs appropriate to a given community. Given the diversity and variations in our cities and towns, what works in one municipality may not work in another. Third, it requires that local, county, and State agencies communicate more fully with one another in the development, delivery, and assessment of anti-gang, anti-gun strategies. Fourth, the strategy imposes accountability at all levels. The State will subject its own programs and initiatives to the same rigorous evaluation as to effectiveness to which it will subject other programs that seek state funding and grant assistance in addressing gang and gun violence.

Together, the principles and the strategy reflect a renewed commitment to preventing and addressing youth violence in a way that maximizes effectiveness and accountability. Public safety requires an intensive focus on these issues; fundamental principles of good government require that the components of the strategy be subject to assessment and evaluation.

# I.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

### **TARGETING GANGS AND GANG MEMBERS WHO ENGAGE IN VIOLENCE AND CARRY GUNS**

Local, county, and State law enforcement have made tremendous gains in addressing the State's crime problems. From 2001 to 2005, total crime and nonviolent crime decreased significantly. Over that same period, however, the number of murders increased. In 2005, Trenton and Camden each had more than 30 homicides; in 2006, Newark experienced 106 homicides. Both Camden and Trenton are on pace to have more murders in 2007 than in 2006. Similarly, arrests for gun offenses also increased. A study by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services concluded that almost 40% of all homicides in the State in 2003-2004 were gang-related. Combined, the increase in homicides and the increasing prevalence of illegal guns present a serious and pervasive threat to public safety that warrants targeted and focused law enforcement efforts. As part of the strategy, State departments are re-allocating more than \$10 million in existing funds to support criminal justice initiatives.

In several criminal prosecutions that the Division of Criminal Justice has handled, state, local, and federal law enforcement have coordinated their efforts to take down statewide or regional criminal gangs, and those collaborations will continue as part of this overall strategy. Indeed, enhanced coordination and cooperation is a key component of this approach. Also critical to our approach is a law enforcement strategy that targets the most dangerous members of criminal gangs and focuses on preventing the flow of illegal guns into their hands.

To that end, the strategy pursues the following action items:

- Action 1. Encourage and assist law enforcement agencies to move towards intelligence-led, data-driven policing strategies by requiring agencies to submit crime data on a monthly basis.**
- Action 2. Perform local assessments of the gang problem and create interagency task forces to target violent gangs.**
- Action 3. Stop the flow of illegal and deadly guns into the State and vigorously investigate shootings.**
- Action 4. Combat witness intimidation through witness protection and minimizing reliance on civilian witnesses.**
- Action 5. Involve community in identifying law enforcement priorities and strategies and preventing violence.**

## **Action 1. Encourage and assist law enforcement agencies to move towards intelligence-led, data-driven policing strategies by requiring agencies to submit crime data on a monthly basis.**

The Attorney General will require, for the first time, that municipal law enforcement agencies collect, and provide crime data to the State Police Regional Operations Intelligence Center (“ROIC”) on a monthly basis. This will allow us to identify and analyze local and regional crime trends, and respond to them quickly, flexibly, and effectively. The technological and analytical capabilities of the ROIC make it a critical tool and resource in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence information statewide.

- **Assessments of local police agency technologies and identification of systems necessary for modern policing** – Many police agencies in this State utilize outdated, inadequate dispatch and records management technologies incapable of supporting intelligence-led policing. The Attorney General will collaborate with a number of municipalities and local law enforcement agencies to assess local needs, identify solutions and potential municipal, local, and State funding sources, and assist with installation and implementation of upgraded technologies.
- **Installation and integration of video surveillance into policing** – Funding for one-time grants to police departments for video surveillance equipment will be available through a competitive grant process. Video technology, when utilized fully, will allow local police agencies to increase their presence throughout communities, as well as assist municipalities in responding to any variety of traffic, weather, or other emergencies. The participating agencies will also provide the video feeds to the ROIC, allowing statewide analysis and response. Where local police departments can identify separate funding sources, the Attorney General’s office will offer to provide technical assistance, training, or project management assistance to these departments.
- **Collection and analysis of crime data at local, county, and state level** – Currently, no timely collection and analysis of crime data at a regional or state level takes place. Indeed, most municipalities in the state that collect and analyze crime data do not have the capability of doing it in near real-time. As an integral part of the approach to gang and gun violence, the Attorney General will mandate monthly reporting of some offenses.
- **Increased use of national information databases** – Any given crime or crime scene can generate biological evidence (such as blood), ballistics evidence (such as shell casings), and, where a gun is recovered, valuable data about the history of the gun (such as where, when, and by whom the gun was purchased). National databases contain valuable information about each of these types of evidence that assist in solving crimes and identifying perpetrators.

## **Action 2. Perform local assessments of gang problems and create interagency task forces to target violent gangs and gun violence.**

Although violent gangs are prevalent in many of our communities, their composition and the threats they pose in each community vary. In some communities, one cohesive group will dominate the criminal narcotics distribution, and violence in the community results predominantly from the group's efforts to repel others trying to invade their territory. In another community, a number of loosely knit gangs may fight other groups for dominance or market share, as well as engage in internal violence among the groups' members. Strategies that might prove effective in one situation may be largely ineffectual in another, depending on the nature of the community's gang problem. Local and county law enforcement are the most knowledgeable and in the best position to assess a local gang problem. Often, however, a gang's activities will spread across municipal boundaries and jurisdictions, requiring cooperation and collaboration between agencies.

- **Develop standardized and workable definition of gang activity** – The Attorney General will work with local, county, and State law enforcement partners to create a definition of “gang activity” that adequately identifies gang-related crimes while accounting for local variability. Using this definition, the ROIC will collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence about those crimes determined to be gang-related or involving a gun.
- **Define and assess scope and nature of local gang problem** – The Attorney General will require that local agencies assess their municipalities' gang problem. The identification of violent groups and members likely to engage in violence or carry a firearm are critical components of the assessment. The assessment will also identify those locations where crime problems, and especially gang-related violence problems, are most acute.
- **Ensure that law enforcement agencies coordinate investigations** – Increased intelligence sharing among law enforcement partners will allow agencies to make certain that their enforcement activities do not conflict with the activities of other agencies. The Attorney General will require that agencies make the appropriate inquiry to ensure that other agencies are not also investigating the target of a planned arrest or electronic surveillance.
- **Focus mission of county narcotics task forces on street gangs engaged in violence, gun possession, and narcotics distribution** – Each county has an existing narcotics task force, created pursuant to the Statewide Narcotics Action Plan. Given the nexus and interplay between narcotics, criminal gangs, and guns and gun violence, these task forces are best situated to focus on these related problems. Accordingly, the Attorney General is directing the county prosecutors to reconfigure the task forces to focus their efforts on those individuals responsible for gang and gun violence.
- **Appoint Statewide Gang, Gun, and Violent Crime Coordinator** – The Attorney General will appoint a statewide coordinator to collaborate with law enforcement agencies in the implementation of this strategy, to formulate and assess statewide strategies for the investigation and prosecution of gang members, and to advise the Attorney General on gang, gun, and violence-related issues.

### **Action 3. Stop the flow of illegal and deadly guns into the State and vigorously investigate all shootings.**

Guns flowing illegally into New Jersey exact an unacceptable toll on our cities and our young people. Criminal street gangs and illegal firearms make a lethal combination, and require a law enforcement response on both fronts.

- **Investigate and prosecute those who bring guns illegally into this state** – Pursuant to a historic agreement between New Jersey and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), law enforcement in this state will begin to more effectively trace the sources of illegal firearms through real-time electronic access to the ATF's eTrace system. This is the first agreement of its kind between the ATF and any state. The agreement gives the State Police real-time access to federal databases that help identify the source purchasers, source states, source vendors, types of weapons, dates of first purchases and individuals trafficking firearms into or within New Jersey. The information is so valuable to State and regional law enforcement efforts that the Attorney General will require that all law enforcement agencies enter all guns recovered or seized into eTrace.
- **Target those individuals that have committed or are most likely to commit gun violence** – Law enforcement will target for proactive investigations and vigorous prosecution those individuals that pose the greatest threat to public safety: those that commit or threaten violence and those that carry a firearm. For those individuals identified as priority targets due to gun violence, law enforcement will employ all investigative tools, techniques, and resources to arrest, detain, and convict those individuals.
- **Create shooting response teams to vigorously investigate gang-related shootings** – In several areas around the state, multi-agency, collaborative teams have reduced gun violence by investigating each shooting with the same intensity and resources afforded a homicide investigation. These efforts have increased public safety by reducing gun violence and intensifying investigations into such shootings. The county prosecutor will decide whether to create a shooting response team in a given county, and the region within which it operates, based on their local gang assessment and shooting prevalence and distribution. Additionally, we will continue to implement Operation CeaseFire, a program that combines complete investigations of shootings with a sustained community outreach component.
- **Mandatory reporting of all shootings** – Accurate and timely information about the incidence of gun violence is crucial to developing, assessing, and modifying anti-gun violence strategies. Such information is currently unavailable at a statewide level. Accordingly, the Attorney General will mandate near-real time centralized reporting of all incidences of shootings, including any aggravated assaults, attempted murders, or murders with a firearm.
- **Legislation** – The Legislature is an important partner in the fight against violent crime. The Governor and the Attorney General will ask the Legislature to significantly stiffen penalties for illegal gun possession, witness intimidation offenses, and other gang- and gun-related crimes; to create new offenses and to pass pending bills that would give law enforcement the tools needed to aggressively prosecute gang and gun-related conduct; and to establish laws to protect victim and witness personal information.

## **Action 4. Combat witness intimidation through witness protection programs and minimizing reliance on civilian witnesses.**

Witness intimidation perverts the criminal justice system and constitutes an unacceptable but real deterrent to the cooperation of witnesses with law enforcement. The strategy calls on law enforcement to develop effective, flexible witness protection programs that serve the needs of victims and witnesses of gang violence. Additionally, it calls on law enforcement to develop cases and strategies that minimize the use of civilian witnesses who may be susceptible to intimidation.

- **Evaluate existing witness protection programs and modify or create programs as necessary** – Currently, the State has two witness protection programs, one administered by the State Police and one by the Division of Criminal Justice. The Attorney General will ask law enforcement professionals to assess both witness protection programs to determine whether they are meeting the needs and demands of victims and witnesses, to review the programs in comparison to other states, and to advise as to their conclusions. The Attorney General will then modify existing programs, or create new programs, as necessary, to best provide witness protection services to victims and witnesses. The Attorney General will ask for a completed review by March 1, 2008.
- **Partner with Department of Community Affairs to expand housing options** – For the first time, the Department of Community Affairs has agreed to make available a number of housing choice vouchers for witnesses and victims of violent crime. The vouchers will allow the victim or witness recipients to choose housing anywhere in the country that meets certain requirements established by the federal government and provides substantial rental assistance.
- **Minimize the importance of civilian witnesses in prosecuting a defendant** – The strategy calls on law enforcement agencies to reduce the opportunity for witness intimidation by relying on law enforcement officers as witnesses. For instance, rather than relying upon a statement by a witness that a targeted individual had a gun, the law enforcement agency could build a case against the target sufficient to provide reasonable suspicion for a stop or probable cause for a warrant. Prosecutions for weapons offenses, which require only proof of unlawful possession and often only police officer witnesses, can be supported in this way. As part of this strategy, the Governor and Attorney General will ask the Legislature to enact several new weapons offenses, and to modify some existing offenses, to punish more severely those who illegally carry guns.

## **Action 5. Involve community in identifying law enforcement priorities and strategies and preventing violence.**

Effective law enforcement requires the involvement of the community in identifying priorities, developing strategies, and allocating resources. The active involvement and participation of citizens and community organizations provide law enforcement with a clear idea of community concerns and priorities.

- **Work with community to identify priorities and targets** – Along with a focus on violent gangs and illegal guns, law enforcement must respond to the public safety concerns of a community in order to assist the community in feeling safer. Active participation of the community in identifying neighborhood concerns will lead to better lines of communication between the community and law enforcement, which, in turn, can provide valuable information about past, current, or planned criminal activities.
- **Community outreach to prevent retaliation** – In Operation CeaseFire communities, outreach workers engage high-risk victims of gun violence and their families in a meaningful dialogue about stopping retaliatory shootings and ending the violence. Through their continuous presence, trained outreach workers build sufficient trust with victims and their families, many of whom have criminal histories. By providing Operation CeaseFire educational materials, referrals to needed resources such as drug treatment, social services, faith services, and educational resources, the trained outreach workers help to de-escalate and defuse tense situations before they turn deadly. The Attorney General will also make the Operation CeaseFire outreach materials available to other municipalities.



# II.

## PREVENTION

**P**revention saves money and it saves lives. The goal is to target at-risk youth and to provide necessary services before youth turn to delinquency, and become involved with the criminal justice system. It is demonstrably more cost-effective and efficient to engage in prevention, and in intervention, than to wait until youth have begun to offend.

The strategy recognizes that law enforcement is only one component of a comprehensive approach to violence and to gang membership, and that stemming the tide of youth involvement with guns, gangs and delinquency is equally important to ensuring public safety and promoting a healthy society. It concentrates on identifying points of intervention that can reduce risk factors that are associated with problem behavior and delinquency while increasing protective factors and resiliency that protect youth against such behavior.

Historically, numerous state agencies have supported delinquency prevention efforts, but with little coordination among the departments. This plan seeks to provide a statewide vision for delinquency prevention, and to provide tools for state agencies, local governments, and communities to use in achieving this goal.

The prevention component of the strategy includes action items in the following areas:

- Action 6. Coordinate State-level prevention efforts, beginning with the awarding of \$35.6 million in grants through a competitive bidding process.**
- Action 7. Facilitate and encourage local-level planning and implementation of prevention strategies.**
- Action 8. Provide jobs and training to at-risk youth.**
- Action 9. Encourage the use of evidence-based primary prevention programs and use targeted outreach to maximize participation.**
- Action 10. Evaluate and assess effectiveness of prevention programs.**

## **Action 6. Coordinate State-level prevention efforts.**

Ten state agencies have dedicated more than \$35.6 million towards collaborative, coordinated funding and implementation of prevention programs. Moreover, many agencies and departments not previously involved with prevention efforts have responded creatively to the formulation of this comprehensive strategy and have brought ideas and resources to this effort. Agencies participating include: Department of Children and Families; Department of Human Services; Department of Health and Senior Services; Department of Transportation; Department of Community Affairs; Department of Agriculture; Department of Environmental Protection; Department of Corrections; Department of Military and Veterans Affairs; Department of Education; New Jersey State Police; Motor Vehicles Commission; and the Governor's Council on Drugs and Alcohol.

Historically, many state departments have funded prevention programs with no coordination or collaboration among the departments. That they have done so is a credit to their commitment to the young people of this state; that they have done so in an uncoordinated manner provides an opportunity for improvement. A lack of an overall delinquency prevention strategy and the lack of a mechanism for sharing and coordinating the state's response to crime and delinquency have created a fragmented, complex system of programs and services. It has also resulted in duplication of services, concentrations of services in some areas, while not enough in others, and an inability to gauge, at the state level, how successful these efforts are in preventing and reducing delinquency and crime.

While the \$35.6 million represents only part of the total monies dedicated by the State to prevention programs, we expect that the monies given out collaboratively will increase as a proportion of total expenditures on prevention programs.

- **Appoint Prevention Coordinator** – The coordinator will report to the Attorney General and will be responsible for implementing and institutionalizing State-level strategies.
- **At-Risk Youth Prevention Funding Guide** – Provide State agencies with a Delinquency Prevention Funding Guide to ensure coordination, fiscal responsibility, and efficiency consistent with the State strategy.
- **Consolidated Grants Management Process** – This process will ensure that State agencies are using limited resources efficiently and effectively, consistent with the strategy. Attendees will include representatives of State, local and municipal government, local providers, educators, and employers.

## **Action 7. Facilitate and encourage local level planning and implementation of prevention strategies.**

Local and county agencies are responsible for implementing the overwhelming majority of crime prevention and intervention strategies. It is crucial to establish linkages among the state, county, and municipal governments that will increase the collective ability to prevent and intervene in delinquency, and to provide support to counties and municipalities interested in engaging in reducing and preventing crime.

- **Support and encourage municipal planning and programming of delinquency prevention programs** – Several mechanisms exist that focus on the planning and programming of delinquency prevention services at the municipal level. The State will support the development of municipal entities responsible for conducting municipal-level community crime / resource assessments, identifying gaps in municipal delinquency prevention programming, and implementing delinquency prevention programs that will assist in bringing needed prevention programs to local communities. Examples of such entities include the Municipal Youth Services Commissions and Municipal Alliance.
- **Community Resource Tool Kit** – We have developed a Community Resource Tool Kit that will be available on-line and will provide groups and individuals information on local, State, and federal programs and funding, community mobilization, coalition building, public and private funding sources, examples of evidence-based delinquency prevention programs, and contact information for county and State programs and resources.
- **Expand Family Success Centers** – Family Success Centers provide a wide range of prevention services at one central, accessible location. The Centers provide services designed to prevent delinquency and to intervene as early as possible with at-risk youth and families in a way that is tailored to their communities. The programs aim to prevent delinquency, child abuse, and neglect by providing families with convenient access to a wide array of resources that can help them keep children safe.
- **Funding for Community Justice Coordinators** – The State will provide funding for a minimum of 12 Community Justice Coordinators, who will assist with the development, implementation and evaluation of crime, delinquency and prevention strategies in communities.



## **Action 8. Provide jobs and training to at-risk youth.**

Young people who do not have access to education, training, or fulfilling employment are more likely to engage in delinquent or criminal behavior. Encouraging interest in education and work can reduce delinquency in the short-term, and provide youth with both short- and long-term pathways to employment that increase their work capacity and increase the likelihood of improved long-term outcomes.

- **Provide summer jobs and additional year-round career development** – The Department of Labor and Workforce Development will take the lead, through the One-stop Career Centers, to establish, enroll, place and retain youth in paid and unpaid summer youth positions. To that end, the Department has committed a \$1 million investment. The initiative will enlist public and private partners to provide summer jobs, mentoring, and training. The Department of Labor and other public partners will mentor and support youth to provide a positive experience for both employee and employer. The initiative will also develop corporate partners that are willing to provide youth with exposure to different careers and to learn the skills that will lead to long-term employment. The training component of the program will provide youth with at least eight hours of basic skills, career preparation, work readiness training and will place youth in paid or unpaid summer jobs. The initiative will also provide on-going support to the employer and the youth candidates.

## **Action 9. Encourage the use of evidence-based primary prevention programs and use targeted outreach to maximize participation.**

The State encourages funding and implementation of best practice and model programs in communities. These programs will improve outcomes for at-risk and court involved youth and will provide additional program options for the courts.

- **Expand evidence-based primary prevention programs** – The programs will offer families and communities opportunities to develop a broad range of primary delinquency prevention programs that address risk factors and increase protective factors throughout the young person’s maturity. Primary prevention is concerned with preventing the initial occurrence of problem behavior and delinquency by proactively affecting risk and protective factors.
- **Expand evidence-based and model intervention programs** – The State seeks to expand opportunities for evidence-based delinquency intervention programs to redirect youth before they commit crimes that are more serious. Intervention refers to diversion mechanisms and service programs targeted to youth that have exhibited problem behavior or have had an initial contact with the juvenile justice system. By expanding the availability of certain model programs, New Jersey is putting resources behind the replication of effective strategies, and is willing to ensure fidelity to these models in doing so. Funding will be available through the competitive grant process to local communities and counties interested in expanding or developing Blueprint Programs through the Governor’s Collaborative Community Crime Prevention Notice of Availability of Funds. Blueprint Programs are programs that have been demonstrably shown to effectively address various juvenile justice issues. Successful applicants will select a model, buy the model, including technical assistance, from the developer, and agree to outside evaluation of both the implementation process and its outcomes.
- **Develop and implement an evidence-based Truancy Reduction Pilot Program** – Truancy is a risk factor for a range of problems, including delinquency, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts and attempts, weapon related violence, early sexual intercourse, drinking/drinking and driving, teen pregnancy, and school dropout. The New Jersey Department of Education will collaborate with the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of State to develop and implement an evidence-based truancy pilot program.
- **Coordinate a conference on Prevention model programs and best practices** – To support replication of model and best practice programming in delinquency prevention and intervention, the State and the Statewide Association of County Youth Services Commissions will jointly sponsor a statewide multi-disciplinary conference highlighting national and local model programs and best practices.

## **Action 10. Evaluate and assess effectiveness of prevention programs.**

The goal of the entire strategy is to improve public safety by reducing violence. Regardless of the particular action item, the item and the strategy as a whole should contribute to that goal. It is therefore necessary to ask a number of critical effectiveness questions of the initiative, including: To what extent did the State achieve the overall goal? How did each of the strategies affect achievement of the goal? Were the individual programs associated with delinquency prevention successfully implemented, and what were the overall outcomes? Did the State achieve any cost savings or create any efficiency through the implementation of these strategies?

- **Restructure the Statistical Analysis Center** – New Jersey currently lacks statewide capacity to conduct regular evaluations of major initiatives or of local programs. A restructured Statistical Analysis Center (SAC), located in the Office of the Attorney General, will ensure that baseline measures are collected, tracked over time, and available for decision-support. Generally, the SACs are federally funded units or agencies at the state government level that use operational, management, and research information for all components of the criminal justice system to conduct objective analyses of statewide and system-wide policy issues. It will also provide support for broader system and program evaluation. The Office of the Attorney General will provide staffing for the SAC. The staff will include a Director of Research, as well as several analysts, geo-mapping specialists, and information technology staff. The SAC will have a broad range of responsibilities including: collecting relevant baseline state and local data on crime and its correlates, tracking the use of stationhouse adjustments statewide, and evaluating the outcomes of crime reduction strategies funded by the Attorney General’s Office.
- **Develop evaluation and benchmarking component** – The State will develop a comprehensive evaluation plan to conduct an ongoing analysis of the implementation and outcomes of recommendations found in the prevention plan. By measuring the extent to which the implementation meets the strategy’s objectives over time, local communities and the state can plan and assess their work in the area of delinquency prevention and intervention. These measures will be assessed qualitatively through surveys and site visits and quantitatively by tracking the numbers of counties and local governments participating in these initiatives and the amount of services provided.

# III.

## REENTRY

Crimes committed by former prisoners represent a serious threat to public safety. Each year, almost 16,000 adult and juvenile offenders are released from state custody. Unfortunately, the majority of these individuals return to the correctional system with enormous costs to community safety and the state's budget. For these reasons, a serious reentry initiative that focuses on those policies, programs and services that improve an inmate's prospects for successful integration into society is a necessary part of any comprehensive public safety plan.

The reentry component of this strategy focuses on what is needed to reduce the high number of former inmates who return to prison for new offenses or for technical parole violations. In doing so, it recognizes that, while reducing recidivism is unquestionably challenging, it can be done. The vast majority of individuals who participate in New Jersey's drug courts do so successfully, and similar results have been demonstrated in other efforts throughout the state. What is equally clear, however, is that the State has not embarked on a coordinated strategy that builds on what has proven successful, takes steps that can be refined over time to maximize results, and addresses policies that interfere with the goal of recidivism reduction. This reentry initiative serves that purpose.

Several key principles animate this effort. First, reentry is not solely the responsibility of a correctional authority. Successful reentry requires collaboration and coordination between multiple state agencies, levels of government and private partners, to meet the education, treatment, housing, employment, and healthcare needs of those being released. Second, all reentry efforts must recognize that individuals must take responsibility for their actions. Thus, while this plan talks of services, programs, and policies, its premise is that individuals who are willing to take positive steps to reintegrate with their families and communities should be supported as they do so, but those who do not must face appropriate punishment. Finally, it emphasizes the need for accountability across all agencies at all levels of government and at the community level, especially necessary given the limited resources available. The plan is data-driven and includes an evaluation component that will track outcomes to determine if these efforts are successful in reducing offender recidivism.

- Action 11. Coordinate and create accountability for reentry through creation of Reentry Coordinating Council.**
- Action 12. Launch a reentry Demonstration Project, with focused programming for up to 1,300 offenders.**
- Action 13. Increase support and opportunities for youth returning home from Juvenile Justice Commission institutions.**
- Action 14. Address unique needs of reentering ex-inmates through system-wide change.**
- Action 15. Modify certain barriers to reintegration, with a focus on relieving impediments for persons who establish rehabilitation.**

## **Action 11. Coordinate and create accountability for reentry through creation of Reentry Coordinating Council.**

In order to reduce recidivism and use limited resources effectively, reentry efforts must be closely coordinated and monitored for accountability. The resources, programs, and rules that affect the experience of ex-inmates in our society involve multiple agencies. These include the Department of Corrections, the State Parole Board, the Office of Public Defender, and the Departments of Community Affairs, Health and Senior Services, Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development, and Law and Public Safety. A critical aspect of the state's reentry initiative is ensuring that the efforts of these agencies are coordinated and aligned, with clear accountability and benchmarks. This emphasis must be extended to the interactions with local government and community groups who are key participants in the initiative.

- **Oversight and Accountability** – The Attorney General will establish a Reentry Coordinating Council to assist in coordinating the aspects of reentry that cut across numerous state departments and agencies, including the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development, Corrections and the State Parole Board. This group will also collaborate with public and private reentry experts, advocates, and programs, and build partnerships with these groups.
- **Appoint a full-time coordinator to oversee State's reentry efforts** – The Attorney General will appoint a Reentry Coordinator, who will chair the Reentry Coordinating Council and oversee the State's reentry programs and efforts to ensure their focus on reducing recidivism, including a demonstration project. The Coordinator will report directly to the Attorney General.
- **Employ objective and measurable benchmarks and goals** – The Reentry Coordinator, assisted by the Reentry Coordinating Council, will adopt a data-driven approach to its work and regularly review performance metrics on the state's reentry programs. The Coordinator shall report relevant performance metrics, as appropriate.

## **Action 12. Launch a reentry demonstration project, with focused programming for up to 1,300 offenders.**

To begin the process of implementing and evaluating a multi-department collaborative approach to reducing offender recidivism, the state will launch a demonstration project utilizing existing resources. The program will be rigorously monitored, evaluated, and implemented in conjunction with local government and community partners.

- **Provide comprehensive reentry services for up to 1,300 offenders** – Provide comprehensive reentry services for up to 1,300 offenders returning to Newark, Trenton and Camden from four Department of Corrections’ prisons. The demonstration project will begin the reentry process at admission to prison and follow the project participants into the community. All of the services that will be provided are designed to give the participants the knowledge and skills that they will need to become law abiding, productive members of society while balancing community supervision to protect public safety.
- **Assess individual risks and needs** – Research has demonstrated that offender recidivism can be reduced when individual risk and need factors are addressed. The services and supervision that each participant in the demonstration project will receive will be individually tailored based on an assessment of each offender’s risks and needs. Assessments will be conducted at prison admission, to guide in-prison programming, and at regular intervals thereafter, through parole supervision. These assessments ensure that resources are targeted to provide services that are most critical to help individuals adjust to community life.
- **Increase preparedness throughout incarceration** – Demonstration project participants will be offered educational and vocational programs to improve their job readiness. All demonstration project participants will be offered the Department of Corrections’ new comprehensive pre-release preparatory curriculum, Successful Transition And Reentry Series (STARS).
- **Job assistance and health care** – All participants in the demonstration project will be given the opportunity to develop entry-level proficiency skills necessary to enter high-demand industry trades, as identified by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Participants will also be given access to literacy programs, tools to explore their career interests and aptitudes and specific information about high-demand occupations suitable for ex-offenders. Each participant in the demonstration project will be assigned a job coach who will assist with job placement and remain involved after placement to assist with any on-the-job problems. Each participant will leave prison with a copy of their medical record and those participants with an identified health issue will receive follow-up care. Additionally, the State Parole Board, with the assistance of the Department of Banking and Insurance, will provide parolees with information on financial literacy.
- **Ensure housing availability** – The Department of Community Affairs is contracting for transitional housing in each of the demonstration project’s target cities to ensure that all participants in the demonstration project have housing upon release from the correctional institution.

## **Action 13. Increase support and opportunities for youth returning home from Juvenile Justice Commission institutions**

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission is the state agency charged with the care and custody of juvenile offenders placed by the courts into JJC's institutions and facilities. The agency is also responsible for parole supervision of juvenile offenders in the community. Reentry for youth leaving JJC programs and facilities requires multi-disciplinary planning to deal with school, family, employment, mental health, and substance abuse issues. Enhanced planning and programming for incarcerated youth and increased family involvement in the reentry process will provide significantly more support for the youth.

- **Establish a Pre-release Center at the New Jersey Training School for Boys** – Research has shown that individuals transitioning from institutional settings to communities are most likely to fail in the months just after release. In order to ensure support for residents during this critical time, residents at the NJ Training School for Boys will focus their reentry efforts through the Pre-release Center. The Center will provide counseling services, curriculum to assist youths returning to the community, videoconferencing in support of family reunification, and case management support for residents with mental health problems.
- **Establish a One Stop Career Center at the New Jersey Training School for Boys** – For those JJC residents who turn 18 before release, job placement may be as important of a reentry goal as education. These residents may require assistance in career exploration, readiness, and job placement. In order to address these needs, and provide continuity of effort post release, the JJC and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development will integrate One-Stop Career Centers in JJC facilities, beginning with the facility in Jamesburg. These centers will support residents in job readiness, career exploration, and job placement, with a special focus on meeting workforce needs and providing opportunities to obtain credentials meaningful to potential employers.
- **Provide vocational training programs to closely align course offerings to workforce demand occupations** – Educational achievement and job skills are two factors that are strongly correlated to reentry success. Recognizing this link, the JJC will provide opportunities for youth to begin training in certification programs, culinary arts, and degree programs in high-demand occupations. The Commission will provide certification training in barbering/cosmetology, work with Local 54 to provide culinary arts training, and work with Essex County Community College to provide residents with the opportunity to pursue Associate's Degrees in utility technology. Residents taking advantage of these opportunities while residing in JJC institutions and facilities will continue their training and work upon release.

## **Action 14. Address unique needs of reentering ex-offenders through system-wide changes.**

Ex-offenders may face a litany of difficulties taking the steps necessary to reenter society. Steps to increase the likelihood of successful reentry, and ultimately reintegration, promote public safety because they may make re-offense less likely. The plan includes some system-wide changes to address the unique needs of those returning to the community from prison, as appropriate steps to foster reentry and reintegration. Further evaluation by the Coordinating Council will result in additional recommendations.

- **Provide adult inmates leaving the Department of Corrections with a valid photo ID that will be recognized by the MVC** – Difficulties obtaining a driver’s license or official State identification hinder the ex-offender’s ability to secure housing and employment, among other necessities. An agreement between the Department of Corrections and the Motor Vehicles Commission will allow ex-offenders to receive, at discharge, a valid photo ID. The JJC will enter into a similar agreement.
- **Implement the STARS course, a comprehensive reentry course presented to DOC inmates as part of discharge planning process** – The Department of Corrections has developed a comprehensive 24-module curriculum of reentry preparation education called Successful Transition And Reentry Series (STARS), including components on housing, employment, and financial literacy skills. STARS was funded through a Governor’s Budget Initiative, adopted by the Legislature in FY2007.
- **Review and revise vocational programs offered in correctional institutions** – The Departments of Labor and Workforce Development and Corrections will collaborate to review and, as needed, revise vocational programs offered in correctional institutions, so that they are closely focused on industry demand. The combined expertise and broad experience of these two agencies will further maximize the State’s investment in training and workforce readiness in correctional settings.
- **Develop and distribute a guide to demand occupations that will assist those returning to the community in obtaining employment** – The guide will provide valuable information to ex-offenders on obtaining employment in occupations that provide significant employment opportunities.

## **Action 15. Modify certain barriers to reintegration, with a focus on relieving impediments for persons who establish rehabilitation.**

Certain statutes and administrative policies, although enacted with understandable sentiments, can present roadblocks to successful reentry and reintegration. These include certain employment restrictions and other disqualifications. They also include other collateral issues that attend criminal sentencing, such as fines, penalties, and drivers' license suspension; and, more practically, private and public employment policies regarding ex-offenders. Measures to address this issue require a careful balancing between legitimate restrictions enacted for public safety purposes, and providing ex-offenders appropriate opportunities to successfully reintegrate. Such a balancing ultimately promotes public safety, by making recidivism reduction possible. As a part of the reentry plan, the Governor will work with the Legislature to enact measures to further recidivism reduction and promote public safety, including the following:

- **Collateral consequences** – In order to enhance the employability of previously convicted offenders, the Administration will work with the Legislature and interested stakeholders to provide measured relief from collateral sanctions in appropriate cases, where certain objective criteria are met, and such relief is consistent with the public safety. In addition, this proposal would address measures barring employment opportunities that are not related to public safety and other impediments, such as driver's license issues. In particular, these efforts are designed to open appropriate employment options for ex-offenders.
- **Expand eligibility for drug court** – With the Attorney General and the Legislature, the Governor will call for a broadening of the successful drug court program to allow more individuals to undergo treatment in lieu of imprisonment, thus breaking the cycle of addiction and criminal activity. This initiative, recommended by the Commission to Review Criminal Sentencing, would expand the eligibility criteria for the program to allow persons with two or more convictions to apply to drug court; give courts discretion in determining the type of treatment required for participants, based on a substance abuse evaluation; and authorize early discharge from special probation for individuals who make exceptional progress.
- **Allow judicial discretion in imposing or remitting certain fines and penalties, or allowing alternatives to monetary penalties** – A measure to address monetary sanctions would include allowing judges some discretion to impose a single DEDR penalty, rather than require the penalty to be imposed on all counts. It also would afford judges limited discretion to impose reformatory service in lieu of certain mandatory fines, or to remit portions of certain fines, where the defendant has no ability to pay or as an incentive for the defendant completing treatment or other reformatory goals. This will also include a broader assessment of the appropriateness of fines, penalties and assessments.
- **Modify expungement statute to promote employability** – This proposal would allow expungement in a broader variety of cases, for ex-offenders who have successfully reintegrated, including: allowing first offenders to seek expungement in a wider variety of cases; reducing the time frame requirements for compelling cases; and modifying juvenile expungement requirements.

# IV.

## **OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### *The Governor's Oversight Committee for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods*

A newly created accountability structure, led by the Governor's Oversight Committee for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods, will provide leadership for this public safety initiative. Chaired by the Attorney General, and reporting to the Governor, members of the committee will include the following:

- Executive Branch Members – Department of Children and Families, Department of Education, Department of Corrections, Department of Health and Senior Services, Department of Law and Public Safety, State Police, Department of Treasury, and other departments or personnel as needed and determined by the Governor or the Attorney General.
- Four public members, to be selected by the Governor, who may be drawn from local government, the business community, and community organizations.
- Co-Chairs of the Statewide Association of County Youth Service Commission Administrators

Led by the Attorney General, the Oversight Committee will work to remove cross-department and other barriers to effective coordination, implementation and evaluation of the strategies set forth in this Plan.

### *The Coordinating Councils*

The Attorney General will establish a Coordinating Council for each of three components of the initiative; Law Enforcement, Prevention and Reentry. The Councils will be chaired by the three new coordinators created by this initiative. The coordinators will be appointed by the Attorney General. Specifically, the Statewide Gang, Gun and Violent Crime Coordinator will chair the Law Enforcement Coordinating Council; the Prevention Coordinator will chair the Prevention Coordinating Council; and the Re-entry Coordinator will chair the Re-entry Coordinating Council. The three Coordinators, supported by the Coordinating Councils, will be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day implementation of the public safety strategy. The Coordinators will also be responsible for developing and implementing evaluation mechanisms to monitor the progress and identify any weaknesses that may be evident with respect to relevant strategies in their particular areas.

Recognizing the importance of statewide collaboration and coordination to the success of the Plan, the Coordinating Councils will be charged with ensuring that information critical to the initiatives is shared, as appropriate, among state departments agencies and with local

governments and public stakeholders. To that end, the Councils will work together to eliminate any obstacles that may currently impede the ability of the departments, agencies, local governments and the public to collaborate on the enforcement, prevention and reentry strategies set forth in the Plan.

Although the role and structure of each Coordinating Council may vary depending on its specific focus, major constituent stakeholders, and areas of expertise, each Council will report directly to the Attorney General and will provide the Governor's Oversight Committee with an annual report on the status of its implementation and evaluation efforts.

### Law Enforcement Coordinating Council

The Law Enforcement Coordinating Council, chaired by the Statewide Gang, Gun and Violent Crime Coordinator, will comprise several Working Groups established and appointed by the Attorney General. The Working Groups will draw on the expertise of a broad array of law enforcement professionals in overseeing the implementation and evaluation of the enforcement goals.

### Prevention Coordinating Council

The Preventing Coordinating Council, chaired by the Prevention Coordinator, will engage state agencies in developing and implementing a collective vision of efficient and effective prevention program funding for New Jersey. The Council will consist of members appointed by the Attorney General and will draw on the expertise of the following lead agencies and departments in this area: The Juvenile Justice Commission; the Department of Children and Families; the Department of Education; the Department of Human Services; and, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The Council will form working groups as necessary, develop best practices for implementation and evaluation of prevention goals, and work with other state departments and agencies, as well as local governments and public stakeholders to achieve its objectives.

### Reentry Coordinating Council

The Reentry Coordinating Council, chaired by the Reentry Coordinator, will assist the Coordinator in overseeing, coordinating and evaluating the State's re-entry efforts. The Council will consist of members appointed by the Attorney General and will work with following lead departments and agencies in this area: the Department of Corrections; the Juvenile Justice Commission; the State Parole Board, the Department of Children and Families, the Department

of Community Affairs, the Department of Health and Senior Services, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development; the Department of Human Services; the Department of Education; and the Office of the Public Defender. The Council will also draw on the expertise of other state and local entities, including community-based organizations that provide services to ex-offenders, local governments, and learn from the experiences of victims and ex-offenders themselves in implementing its goals.

***Fiscal Integrity***

The State Treasurer shall be responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the plan are implemented with fiscal integrity, and shall report to the Governor's Oversight Committee as necessary in this regard.