



PUBLIC POLICY & INFORMATION

Promoting Addiction Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Through Advocacy and Education

POSITION PAPER **No. 15/213th Legislature** **(2008-09)**

ISSUES:

A-4199 requires correctional officer training and establishes the Department of Public Advocate as the depository for all inmate complaints; A-4201 eliminates post-release Medicaid enrollment gap, establishes prisoner re-entry commission, mandates the use of community corrections for all those released from prison, requires the Department of Corrections to provide certain information to inmates upon release; A-4202 gives inmates special credits toward further remission from time of sentence, allows inmates to enter into agreement for education and training that decreases parole, allows formerly incarcerated persons to visit any prison in the state for motivational purposes, and reviews vocational programs in order to meet demand job skills and standards.

BILL NOS.

A-4199, A-4201, A-4202 (Watson Coleman)

NCADD-NJ POSITION:

NCADD-New Jersey (NCADD-NJ) supports these bills as they help to prepare incarcerated people for reentry into society and will help reduce recidivism. However, NCADD-New Jersey believes that a few minor changes addressing the alcohol and drug addiction problems of offenders would make these bills stronger and would further reduce recidivism:

A-4199 - Amend this bill to include training on addiction will assist many people with an addiction.

A4201 - Amend this bill to include someone with addiction and recovery expertise on the commission. And require corrections to provide information on addiction treatment to released inmates.

A-4202 - Amend this bill so that inmates can ac-

quire credits and enter into agreements to reduce time for participation in addiction treatment and twelve step meetings.

The link between substance use and criminal activity has been well documented. In New Jersey, 29 percent of New Jersey prisoners are incarcerated due to a base offense involving drugs, and 81 percent have an addiction problem, were under the influence when they committed their crime, or committed a crime that was economically motivated linked to their drug use.¹ Eighty percent of inmates with five or more prior convictions used drugs regularly.² According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) data from the 2008 Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM II), the majority of arrestees in 10 major metropolitan areas tested positive for illicit drug use, with as many as 87 percent of arrestees testing positive for an illegal drug³.

To prevent criminal activity in New Jersey, more than 10,000 nonviolent inmates have a need for drug and alcohol treatment⁴. Despite high levels of substance use disorders and links to criminal activity and recidivism, relatively few nonviolent drug or alcohol offenders receive treatment before they are incarcerated, while they are incarcerated, or after they are incarcerated.

Scientific research shows that addiction treatment helps many drug using offenders change their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors towards drug abuse, avoid relapse, and successfully remove themselves from a life of alcohol and drug misuse and crime. Studies show that treatment can cut drug abuse in half, reduce criminal activity up to 80 percent, and reduce arrests up to 64 percent. By addressing the alcohol or drug disorders of offenders, New Jersey will save millions and perhaps billions of dollars in reduced crime and reduced recidivism and reclaim thousands of individuals to live as responsible parents, members of the workforce, taxpayers and law-abiding citizens.



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Endnotes

- 1 Travis, The Urban Institute. A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey, 12/8/2003
- 2 Addiction Treatment in Prison Will Reduce Crime, Save Billions of Tax dollars, Says CASA Report Behind Bars: Substance Abuse and America's Prison Population," January 1998; Christopher Wren, "Alcohol or Drug Link Seen in 80% of Jailings," New York Times, January 9, 1998.
- 3 Office of National Drug Control Policy, WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov, Factsheet, 2008
- 4 According to the New Jersey Department of Corrections there are 12,834 offenders incarcerated for non violent offenses. 81% of those is over 10,000 inmates

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