

INSIDE CORRECTIONS

Newsletter of the New Jersey Department of Corrections



THE CLOSURE OF EDNA MAHAN: FIRST PHASE COMPLETED

By Mackenzie Fitchett
Senior Public Information Officer

In October, the New Jersey Department of Corrections completed the first phase in the closure of the 110-year-old Edna Mahan Correctional Facility (EMCF), New Jersey's only women's correctional facility.

"The closure of the minimum units at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility is a complex and significant undertaking that required contributions from units across the Department," said Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq. "This move would not have been possible without the cooperation of our dedicated staff and incredible coordination between the Division of Operations, Division of Programs and Reintegration Services, Division of Women's Services, and many more units that assisted in making this transition as seamless as possible."

In June 2021, Governor Murphy announced the closure of the state's only women's prison and plans to reimagine incarceration for women in New Jersey, at a modern, more centrally-located facility with greater access to major roadways and public transportation.

The first phase of the closure moved all full-minimum incarcerated persons to the nearby Edna Mahan Satellite Unit on an interim basis while planning continues for a new female correctional facility. The Edna Mahan Satellite Unit is located on the grounds of the former William H. Fauver Youth Correctional Facility in Clinton Township and was constructed in 1991. It offers more modern housing conditions, a temperature-controlled environment with more natural light, a newly created Honors Dorm, enhanced educational and social activities, sufficient personal living and programming space, and outdoor and passive recreation spaces.

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"For two years, our Administration has worked in tandem with our partners in the Legislature and external stakeholders to determine the best way to safely and responsibly close the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility. The completion of the first phase in this plan moves us closer to the full closure of the facility," said Governor Phil Murphy. "The safety and well-being of our incarcerated population is of the utmost importance. As they continue to do the necessary work to rehabilitate their lives, our Administration will continue to work to provide them a safe and secure environment to do so."

Currently, the EMCF Main physical facility remains open and still houses the medium- and maximum-security population.



HEADED TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION

By Mackenzie Fitchett
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Graduates of the Custody Staff Training Academy can now get college credit for their Academy experience through Thomas Edison State University.

NJDOC custody staff may now receive up to 23 credits for their Academy State Basic instruction and up to 12 credits for additional Professional Development courses/Instructor courses offered by the Division of Training. Some of these courses include Methods of Instruction, Firearms Instructor and the Physical Conditioning Instructors course. All of the courses that fit the criteria are listed on the [TESU website](#). Individuals who have participated in these courses as early as April of 2010 may be eligible for credits.

“New Jersey Department of Corrections officers who graduate from the Correctional Staff Training Academy complete some of the most rigorous and intensive training of any corrections agency in the country,” said NJDOC Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq. “We are pleased to announce this partnership with Thomas Edison State University that will recognize their accomplishments at the Academy and transform those experiences into college-level credits.”

Correctional police officers can save up to \$12,500 on the cost of their TESU degree by applying these earned credits. Officers who are recent graduates of the training program may also be eligible for grant funding to complete their degree. And, by receiving credit for their training, students can complete their degree programs more quickly. According to the University website, to get the best use out of the credits received, participants should consider an Associate Degree in Applied Science (Criminal Justice) or a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice.

TESU's Professional Learning Review (PLR) program evaluates workplace training, industry-recognized credentials and professional education to identify college-level learning and has determined the Correctional Staff Training Academy meets the criteria to earn college-credit.

“Thomas Edison State University's PLR program is dedicated to empowering individuals with the recognition they deserve for their hard-earned expertise,” said TESU President Merodie A. Hancock, PhD. “We believe in the value of knowledge gained in the workplace, and through PLR. With this recognition, we open doors to new educational opportunities, career growth and the enhancement of skills that can transform lives.”

“ Officers who graduate from the training academy complete some of the most rigorous and intensive training of any corrections agency in the country.

————— *Victoria L. Kuhn* —————

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The goal of this initiative is to accelerate students' progress toward completing a degree or certificate. This initiative offers many significant benefits, from financial savings and increased visibility and enhanced career opportunities, to accelerated degree completion.

“The goal of the Professional Learning Review was to try and access higher education for our custody staff by creating a route from workplace training and professional credentials to a college education,” said Denise Cranmer, Education Program Specialist in the Division of Training. “By earning credit for our Correctional Staff Training Academy and Professional Development courses, it allows our custody staff to save money on their degree by earning their degree faster. We are looking to allow our college-level training to be visible to all trainees in hopes for them to gain opportunities in the future. We are demonstrating how NJDOC is building a path for our trainees to merge higher education opportunities with career advancement.”

In addition to individuals earning college credits toward a TESU degree, those who wish to create a transcript of their Academy training for use at another college or university may be interested in the Individual Learning Account, a non-degree service provided by the university. This service is for individuals who wish to document college-level learning on a TESU transcript to be used towards another learning institution.

For more information about this program, please visit the University's PLR student information page at [TESU.EDU/PLRSTUDENT](https://tesu.edu/plrstudent). Interested individuals can also contact TESU admissions representatives at admissions@tesu.edu or by calling 609-777-5680. When reaching out, please mention that you have "PLR Credit" to ensure that your inquiry is routed quickly.



WORKING ON WELLNESS

MENS WELLNESS SUMMIT



Building on a year of firsts for the Department's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts, the inaugural Men's Wellness Summit was held on November 17, bringing together men from across the New Jersey Department of Corrections for a day of information sharing, self-care and valuable conversations.

Inspired by the inaugural Women's Empowerment Summit and Black Leadership Summit, the Men's Wellness event at New Lisbon was designed to reach men on the NJDOC staff and bring them into the community of diversity and wellness being fostered by the Division of Diversity & Legal Affairs.

Assistant Commissioner Melinda Haley, Esq. and her staff led the planning of the event, with Assistant Commissioner Christopher Holmes acting as event host and leader. Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq. kicked off the day with a heartfelt message to the attendees about wellness, self-care and taking the time to check in on each other. Representatives from Rutgers University Correctional Health Care, the Credit Union of New Jersey, 4BlueNJ and other groups were on hand, participating in panel discussions about physical, mental, and financial wellness.

Dr. Herbert Kaldany, Director of Psychiatry, sat on a panel and said the discussions were important as we consider the overall wellness and resiliency of our staff.

"Traditionally, men are viewed as warriors and so sharing things about emotions, sharing things about their personal lives is difficult," he said. "Today, as modern men, we're trying to help our staff to be broader in their view of men, and be able to share their emotions, their problems. And then they can be closer with their family, be a better worker, and that makes them a better person working in the Department and to serve as a role model for those we're caring for – those that are incarcerated."

More than 30 members of custody and civilian staff from across the Department attended the day-long event, offering a chance to connect, share and learn.

"I found the Men's Wellness Summit to be extremely informative and helpful," said legal specialist Peter Thambidurai, who attended the event. "The presenters were well informed in their respective domains and answered questions that made their presentations even more meaningful to us. The presence of the Commissioner and the Chief of Staff demonstrated their commitment to providing such a helpful forum for DOC staff."

AC Haley said feedback from the event was positive, and it will likely continue in the future.

"Being committed to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion means making sure all our staff have seats at the table," AC Haley said. "This event was a key way to demonstrate our commitment to inclusion and overall staff wellness, and we are grateful to all the men who attended and participated."

By Amy Z. Quinn
Director, Office of Public Information

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Some limited vocational programs and medical services will remain at the EMCF Main complex. Overall, the full closure of EMCF is expected to result in cost avoidance for capital projects of approximately \$166 million that would otherwise be required to keep the facility functional and ensure its long-term viability.

The Satellite Unit consists of two main buildings, each with a capacity of 192 persons. Currently, the population of the Satellite Unit is approximately 176 women.

Twenty-four of the women who were moved to the Satellite Unit were chosen to live in the newly created "Honors Dorm." Honors housing is a new-to-NJDOC initiative to encourage positive behavior, pro-social interaction and personal growth through incentives like more home-like living spaces and greater privacy.

For the incarcerated population, access to existing programs, including reintegration services and support, religious services, trauma and victim services, medical, mental health, and substance use disorder treatment will continue to be made available at the Satellite Unit.

In addition, the day-to-day living experience at the Satellite Unit is more robust, with extensive planned social and recreational activities, including clubs for books, crafts, and creative pursuits like drama, writing and painting. Living spaces are more home-like and community-focused, encouraging social interaction and positive relationships. Sports and exercise opportunities include basketball, yoga, outdoor fitness equipment, volleyball, and other activities to encourage positive social interaction as well as physical and mental wellness.



UNION SETTLES CONTRACT FOR 4,000 EMPLOYEES

By Mackenzie Fitchett
Senior Public Information Officer

The State of New Jersey and Policemen's Benevolent Association Local 105 announced an agreement for a four-year contract benefitting 4,000 New Jersey correctional police officers during a meeting on Monday, Nov. 27.

"As a staunch supporter of organized labor, I am thrilled that we have been able to come to an agreement that benefits the thousands of correctional police officers in our workforce," said Governor Phil Murphy. "Our hard-working correctional police officers will now have access to salaries and benefits that will better reflect the essential work they undertake, which will in turn allow the Department of Corrections to become a more competitive employer."

The ratified contract will provide enhanced salary and benefits for NJDOC correctional police officers, including across-the-board salary increases of 3.5 percent each year over the life of the four-year agreement. Results will include increased take-home pay and changes to pay grade steps that will increase the salary guide for many officers.

"We know our correctional police officers are highly trained, deeply skilled professionals who are sworn to protect the safety of the public and the incarcerated population, and this contract reflects their commitment," said New Jersey Department of Corrections Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq. "This contract supports competitive salaries and will bolster our efforts to attract and retain outstanding public servants to the Department."

NJPBA 105 President William Sullivan expressed personal gratitude to Governor Murphy, Commissioner Kuhn, and the staff and negotiating teams who made the agreement possible.

"This contract marks a critical turning point for us. It's a testament to the unwavering commitment and hard work of everyone involved and sets a trajectory toward a brighter future for our entire department," Sullivan said. "Our members have resoundingly approved the contract terms, bringing us a step closer to the goal of retaining, attracting, and recognizing our dedicated members."

The contract is retroactive from July 1, 2023 and is valid through June 30, 2027.