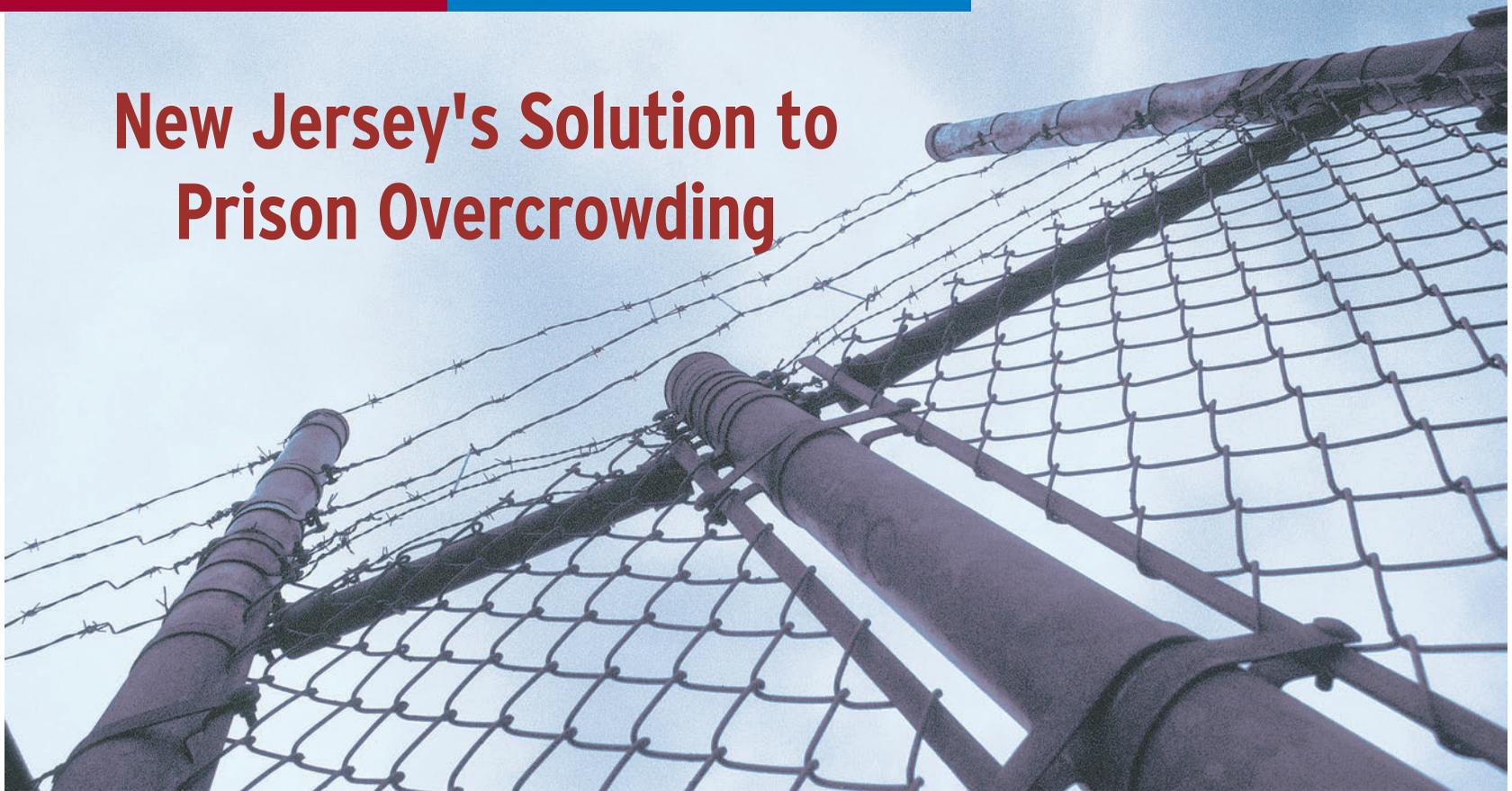


# New Jersey's Solution to Prison Overcrowding



Since 1999, New Jersey's prison population has actually declined 14 percent according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

By WILLIAM J. PALATUCCI  
COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTERS, INC.

**N**EW JERSEY RESIDENTS AND TAXPAYERS demand a basic service from government: keep me safe from criminals. They also want that security provided professionally and cost effectively. The good news is that since 1999, New Jersey's prison population has actually declined 14 percent according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. This has occurred at a time when most states have seen a dramatic increase in the same population.



BILL PALATUCCI

What's going on here? New research indicates that New Jersey's efforts over the past six years to alleviate the burden of prison overcrowding and reduce recidivism have been successful thanks in part to an increase in treatment programs for various segments of the state's prison population.

Treatment and education programs, like those designed and operated by Community Education Centers (CEC), help ease offenders' transition to the community and provide an alternative to prison for parole violations. New Jersey recognized earlier than most states that nearly 98 percent of individuals who are sent to prison eventually come out and end up back on

our streets. Without addressing the individual's behavioral and educational needs, our jails have a revolving door—and an expensive one at that.

CEC programs provide a seamless continuum of care from assessment and treatment to work-release, outpatient monitoring, and alumni services. All of our programs focus on substance abuse treatment, life-skills training, and educational and vocational instruction

CEC's corporate team is part of a company that helps to change people's lives. John Clancy, president and CEO of Community Education Centers, for more than 30 years has developed programs that improve the lives of thousands of men and women to help them successfully reenter society.

CEC has a strong presence in New Jersey, where the company operates six large residential community corrections facilities and provides services to nearly 5,000 offenders on a daily basis. It has developed strong relationships with the New Jersey Department of Corrections and the State Parole Board to meet the needs of the referred offenders. CEC also operates 14 similar programs in seven other states from Colorado to Pennsylvania

Treatment and education are the building blocks of CEC's programs. Its philosophy is rooted in the belief that providing offenders with the necessary tools to change criminal thinking and behavior, prevent relapse, and succeed in the community will reduce recidivism and its costs to society.

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CEC has a strong presence in New Jersey, where the company operates six large residential community corrections facilities and provides services to nearly 5,000 offenders on a daily basis.

A recent study implemented in conjunction with Drexel University and the New Jersey Department of Corrections found that participants in CEC treatment programs had recidivism rates 30 percent lower than a random group drawn from the Department. The study also found that reduction was especially noteworthy since the CEC group was comprised of individuals with high-risk

factors for recidivism.

Moreover, the cost of housing and successfully treating residents at CEC facilities was 30 percent lower than the cost of merely housing offenders at state or federal institutions. These findings were published in *Corrections Compendium*, the peer-reviewed journal of the American Correctional Association.

As part of the company's commitment to providing performance-based residential community release programs, CEC participates in outcome research projects like the Drexel study. These studies enable us to see the positive effects of our programs, as well as make improvements in the services we provide.

As CEC moves forward in expanding its programs, New Jersey should continue to experience a decline in the state's prison population and remain a leader in showing others states how to achieve similar goals. ■

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