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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 31, 2018

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SHERIFF, PROSECUTOR & PARTNERS IN DRUG RECOVERY SERVICES ANNOUNCE NEW PATH TO RECOVERY FOR INMATES WITH ADDICTION

Freehold: Sheriff Shaun Golden, Prosecutor Christopher Gramiccioni, Gov. James McGreevey and certified peer recovery specialists are embarking on a new initiative for incarcerated individuals with substance use disorder called Next Step. The drug recovery program, which is the first of its kind in the state, is aimed at combatting drug addiction and reducing jail reentry by offering a new path for inmates with addiction. According to a recent published report in the American Journal of Public Health, incarcerated individuals with substance abuse disorder are among the highest at risk populations for drug overdose deaths when released from jail without a recovery support plan.

“This is a new and progressive approach which will lead the way when it comes to addressing addiction and the high rate of recidivism from drug related crimes,” said Sheriff Shaun Golden. “Addiction is a disease and while we are intent on holding people responsible for their actions, we are just as determined to secure a path to healthier living. Next Step allows substance abuse recovery specialists and clinicians to work inside the Monmouth County Correctional Institution and provide a treatment plan and recovery for inmates upon release, who, would otherwise end up on the streets, with no direction or necessary services.”

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An estimated 76 percent of the individuals booked into New Jersey county correctional facilities have a substance abuse disorder. Through working at the jail three days per week, certified peer recovery specialists ensure that inmates entering the facility are screened prior to being released on bail reform. Recovery support services, treatment referrals and access to community services/resources when entering and staying in recovery are provided.

Inmates who qualify for the Next Step program includes those who are charged with drug and DUI offenses. Sentenced inmates, fugitives, individuals charged with first and second degree offenses, child abuse and child support payments will not be considered.

“The opioid crisis is a constant battle – one that necessarily requires dedicated partners and innovative ideas,” said Christopher Gramiccioni, Monmouth County Prosecutor. “Our Office’s Opioids Diversion Program – a first of its kind - has shown success in steering low-level, non-violent offenders suffering from addiction towards life-saving treatment. This Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office initiative helps further the reach of our diversion efforts by giving recovery specialists immediate access to those struggling from addiction within hours of their being detained at MCCI. Being arrested and sent to jail for a crime is often a person’s lowest point, but also happens to be one of the best opportunities to convince them to accept necessary drug treatment. I thank Sheriff Golden, our recovery specialists, and all of our law enforcement partners in Monmouth County for helping us expand our efforts in this regard.”

Lifeline Recovery Support Services and New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC) are in charge of the certified recovery specialists reporting to MCCI and provide registration for Medicaid, healthcare, legal services, referrals to sober structure housing, workplace training and employment, and addiction treatment referrals. The recovery specialists are trained and required to follow the policies and procedures of the facility. The program is operational Monday, Thursday, and Saturday between 1pm - 9pm.

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Once inmates are booked into MCCI they are screened by corrections staff who will select at risk individuals to be interviewed by a certified recovery specialist. The specialists then reviews the list and requests an escort to the appropriate housing units to conduct interviews.

There are two recovery specialists per shift, one male and one female, who will work with each inmate and immediately begin to establish the Next Steps for them. If an inmate is recommended for substance use disorder detox and/or treatment, and the recovery specialist is able to have the inmate assessed by an approved treatment facility, the recovery specialist will work with staff to begin transportation approval by the assigned judge. Should an inmate be unable to be immediately placed into a detox/treatment program, active steps will be put in place for the inmate to follow upon his/her release from MCCI.

“Our intention is to help inform inmates of the benefits of treatment and recovery as well as the benefits this positive action will have in living healthy lives,” said John Brogan, CEO Lifeline Recovery Support Services. “We believe all individuals with a substance use disorder should have access to treatment.”

“Today represents a unique partnership and commitment to responsible recovery and accountability and for helping the young people of Monmouth County to restore their lives,” said Gov. James McGreevey, Chairman of the Board, NJRC. “I’m grateful for the leadership of Sheriff Golden and Prosecutor Gramiccioni’s hard work in recovery and reentry into the community, which provides the critically needed support for people to live sober and healthy lives.”

Next Step would not be made possible without the support of Hackensack Meridian Health and Carrier Clinic.

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