

# Delaware to Participate in National Criminal Justice Reform Project

*Efforts will focus on reducing recidivism, improving substance abuse & mental health treatment for offenders*

WILMINGTON, Del. – Governor John Carney announced on Monday that Delaware has been selected to participate in the [National Criminal Justice Reform Project](#) – an initiative led by the National Governors Association and the National Criminal Justice Association Center for Justice Planning to assist states in implementing evidence-based criminal justice reforms.

Governor Carney's office, the Delaware Criminal Justice Council, and a newly-created Criminal Justice Reform Committee will lead Delaware's work with the national project.

Reform efforts will focus on two specific areas:

- Improving the reentry process for offenders in Delaware's correctional system, and reducing recidivism;
- And improving access to mental health and substance abuse treatment for offenders in Delaware's criminal justice system.

"We all have a stake in making sure that, once offenders serve out their sentences in Delaware's correctional system, they are able to successfully reenter their communities and positively contribute," said **Governor Carney**. "This work will not only help offenders successfully transition back into society, but will improve public safety, more effectively coordinate treatment services, and reduce costs for Delaware taxpayers."

Earlier this month, Delaware and Vermont joined Illinois, Arizona and Oregon as states participating in the National Criminal Justice Reform Project. The project [assists participating states](#) in using data to plan and implement evidence-based criminal justice reforms.

Delaware continues to experience high rates of incarceration and recidivism, which come at a high cost for Delaware taxpayers. The average cost of incarcerating one prisoner each year is \$35,000 – or 20 times the cost of probation.

Additionally, 24 percent of Delaware's offender population was receiving some form of mental health treatment in 2015, and 80 percent of the offender population experienced issues with substance abuse.

Challenges with substance abuse and mental health can prevent offenders from successfully reentering their communities. The Delaware Criminal Justice Reform Committee will focus on more effectively coordinating treatment services.

“The Delaware Criminal Justice Council is excited to work with Governor Carney and the Criminal Justice Reform Committee to build on the continuing work of improving reentry services to all offenders and providing treatment to those in our system with mental health challenges,” said **Christian Kervick, Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Council**. “This is a great opportunity to work with experts and implement national best practices to improve our Criminal Justice System.”

The Delaware Criminal Justice Reform Committee will begin meeting next month. The committee will use technical assistance from the National Criminal Justice Reform Project to improve collaboration between various state agencies working on reentry issues and community groups, and to improve data collection. Its members also will focus on strengthening and streamlining strategic planning processes around criminal justice reform.

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*The Criminal Justice Reform Committee will include representatives from:*

- Law Enforcement
- Delaware Department of Justice
- Delaware Courts
- Office of Defense Services
- Department of Labor
- Department of Health and Social Services
- Department of Services for Children, Youth & Families
- Department of Safety and Homeland Security
- Department of Correction
- Department of Education
- Research Partners from the University of Delaware
- Statistical Analysis Center
- Community Members
- Local Govt. Representatives
- Delaware Center for Justice