



## State of New Jersey

### STATE PAROLE BOARD

JON S. CORZINE, GOVERNOR

PETER J. BARNES JR., CHAIRMAN

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# Media Release

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## Former San Juan Police Officer to Head State Parole's Street Gang Unit

*Lt. Hector Reyes: Education, Law Enforcement Are Key to Preventing Violence*

Lieutenant Hector Reyes has been appointed to head the New Jersey State Parole Board's Street Gang Unit, Parole Board Chairman Peter J. Barnes Jr. announced today.

Reyes has been a New Jersey State Parole officer since 1997, and works at the State Parole Board's district office in Newark. He previously served as an officer in the San Juan City Police Department (Guardia Municipal de San Juan) in his native Puerto Rico.

"Lieutenant Reyes is an outstanding law enforcement officer," Parole Board Chairman Peter J. Barnes Jr. said. "He is deeply committed to protecting communities from violence, and protecting young people from becoming involved in gangs, through education and tough law enforcement."

The Street Gang Unit includes 15 State Parole officers across New Jersey, supervising about 850 parolees who are known gang members. The Unit uses several aggressive methods to prevent gang violence and recruitment. These include intensive supervision of parolees, and sharing gang intelligence with other police departments statewide.

"We are different from other law enforcement agencies, in unique ways that help us develop a full picture of gang activity in New Jersey," Reyes said. "We work statewide, not just in a single city or county, which gives us a global look at what is happening. And we interact with the parolees under our supervision on an everyday basis. We go into their homes, and get to know their families. This gives us a street-level view of what is happening in their lives and communities."

In addition to its supervision role, the Street Gang Unit educates the public by conducting gang recognition seminars for police departments, hospitals and school officials. The Unit helps prevent young people from joining gangs, by teaching the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) programs to elementary school students. GREAT helps students understand conflict resolution and peer pressure, and builds positive attitudes toward law enforcement.

"The young people who join gangs are looking for something: a substitute family, and a way to get respect," Reyes said. "We have the chance to show them something else in life. That one-on-one interaction between an officer and a parolee cannot be underestimated. It lets them see the experience of someone who is making a living without crime. Even though we are stern and hold them to the rules, the parolees know we want to help them change, and the government we represent wants to help them change."

*(more)*

**About Lieutenant Hector Reyes:**

Born: 1964, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Career: Served as an officer in the San Juan City Police Department (Guardia Municipal de San Juan) from 1984 to 1988 before moving to New Jersey. Joined the New Jersey State Parole Board as a parole officer recruit in 1997.

Family: He and wife Carmen were married in Puerto Rico. They have three sons, and live in Bergen County.

**About the State Parole Board:**

The New Jersey State Parole Board protects New Jersey’s families and communities by helping parolees learn to make the decisions that will help them reenter society as law-abiding citizens.

The agency focuses its efforts on major obstacles that keep ex-offenders from changing their behavior and turning away from crime: Lack of employment opportunities; lack of education and job skills; lack of strong family connections; drug addiction; mental illness and chronic disabilities. The State Parole Board addresses these issues by connecting parolees with job training, mental health treatment, GED or other education needs, housing, drug and alcohol treatment, and other needed programs.

“Reyes and his fellow parole officers have one of the most challenging jobs in law enforcement,” said Chairman Barnes, who himself is a 27-year veteran FBI special agent, and former director of two city police departments. “Parole officers have to be part cop and part social worker. They have to get into each parolee’s mind, keep them on the right path, and help them change their lives to become law-abiding citizens.”

The New Jersey State Parole Board (SPB) is New Jersey’s lead reentry agency, and works to ensure ex-prisoners return to society as law-abiding citizens. As required by law, appointed Parole Board Members and staff conduct more than 20,000 hearings per year, solicit input from victims and decide parole matters. SPB sworn parole officers supervise more than 15,000 offenders statewide. In addition, SPB is New Jersey’s primary law enforcement agency responsible for sex offender supervision. SPB officers are also active partners with multiple Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies and task forces. Finally, SPB’s Community Programs Unit partners with government, non-profit and private agencies to connect ex-prisoners with vocational, mental health and related services, targeted to break the cycle and risk of crime.

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