



New Jersey Department of Corrections

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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS WELCOMES NEWEST OFFICERS

TRENTON, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) welcomed 72 graduates of the Correctional Staff Training Academy into the ranks of correctional police officers, after 19 weeks of rigorous training.

The new officers join the state’s largest law enforcement agency, where more than 4,900 custody staff members supervise the care of more than 13,000 incarcerated persons in nine facilities.

“I am proud to welcome the latest cohort of exceptional correctional officers joining the Department of Corrections ranks,” **said Governor Murphy**. “The individuals comprising Class 254 embody what it means to be a correctional officer in maintaining the security, safety, and well-being of those under the Department of Corrections care. With their steadfast commitment and unwavering professionalism, this group will undoubtedly make a significant impact on the rehabilitation of our incarcerated population.”

Class 254 graduation ceremonies were held at the Patriots Theater at the Trenton War Memorial on Aug. 25.

“We’re immensely proud of the graduates of Class 254, and welcome them to the corrections family. Their careers will involve work that is always challenging but also rewarding. Corrections is a meaningful, honorable profession they can take pride in,” **said Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq.**

Class 254 completed 17 weeks of study before two weeks of immersive, on-the-job training at NJDOC facilities. Course work included instruction in firearms training, defensive tactics, conflict resolution and de-escalation, gender- and trauma-informed policing, emergency medical care, and more than 50 physical training sessions.

Officers serve in a variety of roles inside and outside NJDOC facilities, and can pursue career fields and opportunities including the Special Operations Group, Custody Recruitment, the Ceremonial Unit, Special Investigations Division and more.

“These new officers join a department where hard work, integrity and opportunity can lead them to success in many different career paths. We welcome these new officers and look forward to watching them progress in their law enforcement journey,” **Commissioner Kuhn** said.

Several instructors and members of Class 254 received awards, including:

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| • <i>Harry Ellifritz Leadership Award:</i> | Officer Christopher Smit (CSTA Instructor) |
| • <i>Stone/Ratajczak Professionalism Award:</i> | Melanie Santos-Caceres |
| • <i>Police Training Commissioner Merit Award:</i> | Stefan Borota (Alpha) and Jordan Pierce (Bravo) |
| • <i>Wayne Mantream Physical Fitness Award:</i> | Jonathan Ospina |
| • <i>Commissioner’s Physical Fitness Award for Most Improved:</i> | Grant Howell |

- *Fred Baker Memorial Academic Award:* Michael Larsen
- *Michael R. Pofahl Memorial Firearms Award:* Misbah Rafee

Class 254 by the Numbers:

- The class includes 59 men and 13 women.
- 12 graduates have earned Associate Degrees and 12 have earned Bachelor Degrees
- Three have earned Masters Degrees.
- Graduates hail from 17 New Jersey counties: Atlantic (two), Bergen (five), Burlington (three), Camden (one), Cumberland (seven), Essex (ten), Hudson (two), Hunterdon (one), Mercer (nine), Middlesex (seven), Monmouth (one), Morris (one), Ocean (seven), Passaic (four), Salem (one), Somerset (one) and Union (eight).
- Nine graduates have military service backgrounds: United States Marine Corps (three), Army (one), Army Reserve (one), Army National Guard (four).
- 19 graduates come from families with a tradition of law enforcement service.

NJDOC is currently recruiting future officers and encourages anyone interested to visit www.NJDOC.gov for more information. Class 255 begins training in September, and recruitment for Class 256 is ongoing.

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About New Jersey Department of Corrections

The mission of the New Jersey Department of Corrections is advancing public safety and promoting successful reintegration in a dignified, safe, secure, rehabilitative, and gender-informed environment, supported by a professional, trained, and diverse workforce, enhanced by community engagement.