



## New Jersey Department of Corrections

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 18, 2025

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### New Jersey Department of Corrections Expands Partnership With Freedom Reads

*Partnership with national nonprofit Freedom Reads opens 27 new libraries at South Woods State Prison, bringing total to more than 60 in New Jersey Department of Corrections facilities in 2025*

**December 18, 2025 (Trenton, NJ)** – The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) has expanded its partnership with [Freedom Reads](#) with the opening of 27 new libraries at South Woods State Prison. The libraries are placed directly inside housing units, increasing daily access to books for incarcerated individuals and advancing the Department’s broader rehabilitative mission. With these additions, more than 60 libraries have now been opened across NJDOC facilities in 2025, building on earlier installations at Northern State Prison and Edna Mahan Correctional Facility.

“Access to literature is essential to creating the normative, dignified environments that foster true rehabilitation. By expanding Freedom Libraries to South Woods State Prison, we are ensuring that more individuals in our care have the tools they need to broaden their perspectives, unlock their potential, and prepare for a successful return to their communities,” said New Jersey Department of Corrections Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq.

Each library features a carefully curated collection of poetry, fiction, history, memoir, and contemporary literature. Installed inside living areas, the libraries make reading a visible and accessible part of daily life and support personal growth, reflection, and preparation for a successful return to the community. By placing books where people live, the program encourages daily reading and helps create calmer, more purposeful housing environments.

Freedom Reads founder and CEO Reginald Dwanye Betts noted that “We have a vision of putting a Freedom Library in every cellblock in every prison in the country. We’ve been to six facilities in New Jersey and we will come back.”

The expansion builds on the Department’s broader collaboration with Freedom Reads, which also includes literary engagement initiatives such as the Inside Literary Prize and ongoing efforts to embed reading and reflection into daily facility life. These programs support the Department’s focus on rehabilitation, personal growth, and successful reintegration.

Launched in 2023, the Inside Literary Prize is the first literary award in the United States judged exclusively by currently incarcerated readers. The Inside Literary Prize is part of a broader effort to

elevate incarcerated voices and expand access to meaningful literary engagement. The program supports reflection, critical thinking, and personal growth through sustained interaction with literature.

Founded by Reginald Dwayne Betts, Freedom Reads works nationally to increase access to literature in correctional facilities and to foster a culture of reading through thoughtfully designed library spaces and literary engagement.

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### **About New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC)**

The mission of NJDOC is to advance public safety and promote successful reintegration in a dignified, safe, secure, rehabilitative, and gender-informed environment, supported by a professional, trained, and diverse workforce, enhanced by community engagement. For more information, visit: [NJDOC.gov](https://www.njdoc.gov).

### **About Freedom Reads**

Founded by Reginald Dwayne Betts, who knows firsthand the dispiriting forces of prison, Freedom Reads works to empower people through literature to confront what prison does to the spirit. Inspired by the recognition that freedom begins with a book, Freedom Reads supports the efforts of people in prison to transform their lives through increased access to books and writers. For more information about Freedom Reads and the Freedom Libraries project, please visit [freedomreads.org](https://freedomreads.org).

### **About the Inside Literary Prize**

In 2023, [Freedom Reads](https://freedomreads.org), the [National Book Foundation](https://nationalbookfoundation.org), and the [Center for Justice Innovation](https://centerforjusticeinnovation.org), with support from literary podcaster Lori Feathers, announced the launch of the [Inside Literary Prize](https://inside-literary-prize.org), the first-ever US-based literary prize awarded exclusively by currently incarcerated people. The Prize is awarded each year to one of four shortlisted books by a jury of 300 incarcerated readers from prisons across the nation. This initiative seeks to honor the insights incarcerated readers add to cultural conversations and expand access to our country's most thought-provoking literature for people who are incarcerated.

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