



## NJ State Parole Board Receives AG's Initiative Award for Dedicated Effort to Help Combat Opioid Problem

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The New Jersey State Parole Board was one of eight State law enforcement agencies and officers honored with the Inaugural Attorney General's Excellence in Policing Awards during a recent "virtual" online ceremony last week featuring Governor Phil Murphy and State Attorney General Gurbir Grewal. The State Parole Board received the Attorney General's Initiative Award for its Swift, Certain, and Fair supervision program (SCF) that assists parolees addicted to Opioid drugs including heroin.

SCF is a judicial model in which the intervention is achieved through behavior modification via incentives and sanctions. The goal of the program is to successfully reintegrate individuals addicted to a substance while also working to reduce recidivism.

"One year ago, I was joined by some of our state's most dedicated law enforcement leaders to announce the Excellence in Policing Initiative, a comprehensive set of law enforcement policies designed to enhance public safety and public trust and to promote the professionalism, accountability, and transparency that are the hallmarks of our finest law enforcement agencies," said Attorney General Grewal.

New Jersey State Parole Board Chairman Samuel J. Plumeri, Jr. said "In 2017, there was an astonishing 24% increase in Opioid-related deaths over the prior year. After recognizing the gravity of this alarming trend and the dire situation faced by parolees addicted to Opioids, we decided that we would attempt to help turn the tide of the endless cycle of addiction, re-arrest, re-conviction, re-incarceration, and in some cases, hospitalization and even death."

Beginning in January 2019, the State Parole Board began enrolling parolees in the SCF supervision program in Ocean County—one of the State's counties with the highest number of Opioid-induced fatalities—in conjunction with the New Jersey Reentry Corporation and the RWJ Barnabas Health Institute for Prevention and Recovery. This coalition's program later expanded into Monmouth County—another region within the state adversely affected by the Opioid crisis.

The SCF program assists individuals with at least six months left on parole, who reside in either Ocean or Monmouth counties and have a history of Opioid use. Core team participants include a New Jersey State Parole Officer, a social worker and recovery Coach (1 full and 1 part-time), and several interns.

The approach of the State Parole Board's SCF program is three-fold: To reduce Opioid overdose fatalities among parolees in Ocean and Monmouth County;

Support participants with a history of Opioid use and assist them in successfully completing their supervision and becoming pro-social members of the community; and SCF is aimed at reducing the number of individuals sent back to prison for technical parole violations and, rather, focus on the risks/needs of each individual.

"While we are honored and thank Governor Murphy and Attorney General Grewal for this prestigious recognition, we realize that our work is only just beginning," continued Chairman Plumeri.

The New Jersey State Parole Board is committed to promoting public safety, utilizing effective methods to aid supervised offenders in reentering society, and in reducing the state's recidivism of offenders while addressing the needs of crime victims. As required by law, appointed parole board members and staff conduct approximately 13,500 hearings per year, solicit input from victims, and decide upon parole matters. Approximately 400 sworn parole officers supervise more than 16,000 offenders and act as New Jersey's primary law enforcement agency responsible for sex offender supervision. Additionally, State Parole officers are also active partners with a variety of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and task forces. The agency's Community Programs Unit partners with government, non-profit, and private agencies to connect former inmates with vocational, mental health, addiction services, and related services.