

First Statewide Youth Helpline Launched

2NDFLOOR serves as key component of crime prevention initiative

TRENTON - Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner Kimberly Ricketts announced today the launch of New Jersey's first statewide youth helpline, 2NDFLOOR, a key component of the Governor's Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods announced last year.

"Improving the well-being of our children is the most important investment we can make," Governor Corzine said. "The 2NDFLOOR youth helpline gives young people a place to turn to before violence or tragedy occurs. It's important for kids to know that they can call about anything, anytime, anywhere."

The new youth helpline is available 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week to children and young adults ages 10-24. Youth can either call the helpline, 1-888-222-2228, or access the interactive Web site www.2NDFLOOR.org. Calls to the 2NDFLOOR youth helpline are anonymous and confidential except in life-threatening situations.

A statewide review had found no existing helplines in New Jersey were interactive with a professional counselor, universal in scope, and designed for teens and young adults.

"Before the statewide launch of 2NDFLOOR, there was no one place youth could call where no topic was off limits," DCF Commissioner Kimberly Ricketts said. "Now youth can call to talk through any challenges they might be facing - whether the issue is substance abuse, domestic violence, self-esteem, eating disorders, family conflict, racism, bullying, gangs or peer pressure."

In addition to providing guidance and direction, 2NDFLOOR youth helpline counselors provide important information and referrals to other resources DCF and other community groups throughout the state have to offer to help teens.

"This is a giant step forward for New Jersey in its prevention efforts and it is very exciting to be leading the way," Anna Diaz-White, 180 Turning Lives Around's executive director, said.

DCF awarded \$626,000 to 180 Turning Lives Around, Inc. a nonprofit organization based in Monmouth County, NJ to expand the 2NDFLOOR youth helpline statewide, a helpline that had been serving youth in Monmouth, Mercer and Union Counties since 2003.

This award was part of the \$13.7 million DCF allocated in state and federal funds, matched by \$1 million from the Department of Human Services, to support critical components of the Governor's initiative.

2NDFLOOR youth helpline has also secured nearly \$800,000 in federal funding through a federal Housing and Urban Development grant and support from New Jersey's

bipartisan representation in the U.S. Congress. 2NDFLOOR youth helpline is also supported by a \$100,000 grant from both the Philip D. and Tammy S. Murphy Foundation and New Jersey Natural Gas.

In October 2007, Governor Corzine announced a broad plan to prevent crime and deter gang involvement in New Jersey by investing in key prevention programs serving at-risk youth in communities experiencing a high incidence of violence and gang activity. For more information on the full plan, visit: <http://nj.gov/oag/crimeplan/> (If the link does not take you directly to our Web site, please copy and paste the address in your Web browser.)