

## **NJ ends prison ban on interviews**

### **The Star-Ledger**

> > NEWARK, NJ - The New Jersey Department of Corrections said yesterday it  
> > would rescind a controversial 5-month-old policy that prohibited inmates  
> > from being interviewed by the news media.

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> > Deirdre Fedkenheuer, a spokeswoman for the department, said officials  
> > would return to a policy of evaluating interview requests on a  
> > case-by-case basis, with security considerations factored into each  
> > decision.

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> > She said acting Corrections Commissioner George Hayman, who established  
> > the prohibition on interviews when he took office in January, would  
> > personally evaluate each request.

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> > "It was something he did very early in his tenure," she said of the  
> > prohibition. "We are going back to looking at it on a case-by-case  
> > basis."

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> > The policy reversal came on the day The Star-Ledger reported that New  
> > Jersey's restrictions on interviews were among the most stringent in the  
> > nation. A department spokesman said there would be no scheduled  
> > interviews, reporters could not be placed on inmates' visitation lists  
> > and they could not receive collect calls from inmates.

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> > The restrictions reversed decades of tradition in which reporters were  
> > given free access to the prisons if inmates wanted to be interviewed.  
> > The new restriction even barred reporters from access to the prisons to  
> > cover new programs or activities.

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> > The New Jersey Press Association, the American Civil Liberties Union and  
> > other groups sharply criticized the new policy, saying the public had a  
> > right to know what was going on in a public institution.

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> > Fedkenheuer said yesterday that inmates now would be able to put  
> > reporters on their list for collect phone calls as long as they were not  
> > calling 800 numbers or cell phones or had to be switched to an  
> > extension.

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> > She said reporters could be on prisoners' visitation lists but still  
> > would not be allowed to bring a pad or paper inside.