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# Newsletter

## Why is it important to have Reentry Services available to individuals leaving incarceration?

From Barbara Mongar, the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Coordinator

There are a number of reasons that people would list if they were asked this question, but the thing most people don't think of is the number one reason behind Reentry Services, it helps to increase public safety. In 2021, 593 people were released in the Mat-Su from Correctional Institutions and history shows us that within 3 years over 61% of these individuals, 362 of the 593 people released, will wind up back in prison. According to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), over half of those that re-offend are arrested for public order crimes, which include probation or parole violations, DUI's, possession of weapons, and other miscellaneous violations. However, even with taking those individuals out of the picture, that leaves 180 individuals in the Mat-Su alone that will be re-arrested within three years of release for committing a crime in the community. According to BJS, the three most common crimes from released prisoners are assault, theft, and drug possession.

Reentry Services are needed to help prevent the continuation of this revolving pattern and in doing so promote public safety. The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition focusses on strategies to increase community resources in five areas that affect reentrants the most in the Mat-Su, which includes housing, employment, access to physical health/mental health/substance abuse services, transportation services and cultural/community connection services.

The Mat-Su also has a Reentry Case Management program the offers the following:

- "Wraparound" Case Management & Coordination
- Information and Referral
- Resource Navigation
- Employment Assistance
- Parole / Probation Support
- Comprehensive Goal and Transition Planning
- Community Barrier Mitigation

In FY2022 the Mat-Su Reentry Case Management Program had approximately 155 clients that utilized their services. Out of those 155 participants, only 8 have recidivated, which puts their Reentry Program Yearly Recidivism Rate at 5%. The Mat-Su Reentry Case Managements Recidivism Rate for the last three years is at approximately 30%, which is more than 50% lower than the Alaska Statewide Recidivism rate of 61.47%.

As you can see, Reentry Services not only assists the individuals that are being released back into the community after incarceration, they also assist the community as a whole by helping to reduce recidivism and promote public safety.

*Barbara Mongar*

**Coordinator, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition**

# A Second Chance: The Impact of Unsuccessful Reentry and the Need for Reintegration Resources in Communities

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Each year, between 700,000 and 800,000 people are released from incarceration into the community (<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/18upr9yfup0514.pdf>). Their release serves as a second chance, an opportunity to repair damages caused by their entry into the criminal justice system. In April 2008, Congress passed the [Second Chance Act](#) (SCA), which “supports state, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations in their work to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for people returning from state and federal prisons, local jails, and juvenile facilities.” One of the SCA’s provisions designates April as National Second Chance Month: a time to focus on prevention, barriers to reentry, and social support of citizens before and after entering the criminal justice system.

When discussing reentry, and second chances, it is important to discuss recidivism. The National Institute of Justice defines recidivism as “one of the most fundamental concepts in criminal justice. It refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime.” Recidivism can encompass a return to incarceration, due to violations of supervised release, parole, or probation; new arrests; and new convictions. A 2010 United States Sentencing Commission report exploring recidivism of federal offenders found that “over an eight-year follow-up period, nearly one-half (49.3 percent) of federal offenders released in 2010 were rearrested” (<https://www.ussc.gov/research/research-reports/recidivism-federal-offenders-released-2010>). State prisoner recidivism rates average around 68 percent for rearrests within the first three years post-release. This rate increases to 79 percent and 83 percent at five and nine years post-release, respectively (<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/18upr9yfup0514.pdf>). In all, at least half of citizens released from incarceration will recidivate in some way following release.

A major contribution to recidivism rates throughout the United States is lack of resources or connection to resources that aid prisoners’ prosocial integration into the community. “People exiting prison from long-term confinement need stronger support around them. Many people exhibit a low crime risk but have high psychological, financial, and vocational demands that have been greatly exacerbated by their lengthy incarceration” (<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/a-new-lease-on-life>). Additionally, unemployment presents a significant barrier to many reentrants, as employment is essential to securing other major needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. Unemployment rates for reentrants are significantly high: “formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at a rate of over 27 percent, higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any historical period, including the Great Depression” (<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>).

Innovative steps towards addressing the lack of resources and vocational skill necessary to gain suitable employment and maintain a prosocial existence in the community are essential if released prisoners are to be given a true second chance. To support this effort, many organizations across the country have implemented strategies to support prisoners in the reentry process:

- In Iowa, Hawkeye Community College has developed the [Pathways to Education and Employment for Reentry](#) (PEER) program. PEER supports incarcerated persons and those who have been released from incarceration with resource referrals, educational and career counseling, and hands-on job training. Engaging prisoners in employment training before their release fosters a connection with services to support employability upon release. **(Continued on Page 3)**



- To stay connected with the latest information on reentry and correctional education, Janice Weiss, Reentry Program Manager; Michael Clark, Criminal Justice Planner for Education; and Kris Black, Program Coordinator for Reentry; are currently attending the Correctional Education Association conference in Tampa, Florida. With 486 people in attendance and 3 days of workshops, they will be certain to bring back new ideas for both reentry services and for education.
- With COVID continuing to be an issue, people should continue to check with each institution they intend to visit prior to arriving.
- Some institutions have started reentry in-reach events again. If you offer a reentry service and want to participate, contact the education coordinators at the institution you wish to enter.

## A Second Chance: The Impact of Unsuccessful Reentry and the Need for Reintegration Resources in Communities (Continued from page 2)

- In San Francisco, California, [The Last Mile](#) offers a pathway into careers in tech during incarceration and release through a hands-on software development curriculum in Web Development Fundamentals and MongoDB, Express, React, Node (MERN) Development divided into two six-month training cohorts. When it started in 2010, the technological training program was the first of its kind and has since expanded to six additional states. Providing prisoners with a technological skills portfolio prior to release allows them access to technological career pathways when they enter the community.
- In Washington, D.C., the [EZ Street Music Industry Academy](#) takes a unique approach to connecting with reentrants through exploring creative artistry in music, visual and performance arts, and media production. Participants in the program receive life skills and job readiness training, hands-on training in music and video production, and exposure to broadcast media. Exposure to various creative outlets provides participants with skills that can translate into careers within the media industry.

Innovative strategies like these to assist incarcerated persons and reentrants can support efforts to reduce recidivism and increase public safety by offering a true second chance upon release.

LaToshia Butler  
Policy Analyst  
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Social Science Analyst  
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### Upcoming Mat-Su Events:

- **Mat-Su Reentry Services Forum**  
**Wednesday, September 21st**  
**10:00 to 11:30 AM**

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and Reentry Case Management Program invites you to join us in a virtual Reentry Services Forum every third Wednesday of the month. Service providers, Field PO's, Institutional PO's, Case Managers, and any others who are interested in attending are welcome.

- **Mat-Su Reentry Community Wide Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 4th**  
**8:30 to 10:15 AM**  
**In the Mat-Su Health Foundation Conference Room**

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition is hosting a hybrid Community Wide Meeting, you are invited to attend either in-person or via Zoom. The topic is Crisis Response in the Mat-Su and we have speakers from Agnew-Beck, Tue North Recovery, Knik Tribe, Mat-Su Health Services, and the DOC Reentry Unit.

*For more information on either of the events listed above please e-mail me at:*

[Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org](mailto:Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org)

- **Knik Tribe is starting Men's Talking Circles on Monday, October 3, 2022**  
**Where: Band of Brothers, 2050 N. Merciful Cir., Wasilla**  
**When: 5 pm—8 pm**

The talking circle Provides a safe space for sharing, healing, and connecting with others who have experienced crime victimization.

For more information contact Jessica Svetkovich at 907-671-6872 or [jsvetkovich@kniktribe.org](mailto:jsvetkovich@kniktribe.org)



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

# Mat-Su Job Center Update

By: **Amanda Carlson**, Mat-Su Job Center Manager

## Mat-Su Reentry Coalition

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition is a collaboration of individuals, community stakeholders, public and not-for-profit agencies, faith-based and business partners who are united and committed to reducing recidivism among returning citizens to the Mat-Su community.

### Our Mission

To promote public safety by identifying and implementing strategies that increase former prisoners' well-being within the community and reduce the likelihood of their return to prison through recidivating.

We will accomplish this by:

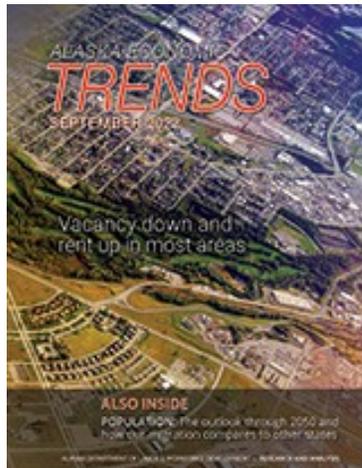
- Improved communication and collaboration between Alaska Department of Corrections and the community.
- Building community partnerships to strengthen local services.
- Identifying barriers for those being released from incarceration and taking an active role in addressing those concerns.
- Promoting community educational and training opportunities for those releasing regarding resources.
- Work in conjunction with the Department of Corrections to inform and promote reentry efforts in Alaska.

The Mat-Su Job Center will be hosting an open house the week of September 12-16<sup>th</sup> to celebrate Workforce Development Month. All are welcome, Employers, Partners and Job Seekers please come in and learn about the services provided at the Mat-Su Job Center, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

We are open Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm and are located at 877 W. Commercial Drive in Wasilla, for any questions contact us by phone at 907-352-2500 or email [matsu.jobcenter@alaska.gov](mailto:matsu.jobcenter@alaska.gov)  
We hope to see you there!

The Mat-Su job center hosts various recruitments in our job center each month, if you are a job seeker looking for work or you are an employer looking to hire and you would like more information about our ongoing recruitments, please reach out to our new Business Connection Staff Lana Kosek at 907-352-2515 or [Lana.Kosek@alaska.gov](mailto:Lana.Kosek@alaska.gov)

Our job center is proud of the front of the line services offered to our local Veterans, this includes providing veterans with priority of service for employment and training programs funded through the US Department of Labor. Our office has two dedicated staff that provide individualized career, and training related services to veterans and other eligible individuals with significant barriers to employment (SBEs). They also assist local employers in filling their workforce needs with job-seeking veterans. We encourage any veterans within our community to learn more about the services we offer to both job seekers and employers at the Mat-Su Job Center, please contact Holly Brien at 907-352-2516 or [Holly.Brien@alaska.gov](mailto:Holly.Brien@alaska.gov) or Jay Easter at 907-352-2558 or [Jay.Easter@alaska.gov](mailto:Jay.Easter@alaska.gov) for more detailed information.



**September Trends:** Our annual rental survey shows vacancy rates have fallen and rents have increased in many areas. We also take a closer look at the reasons behind the tight rental market.

Also in this issue: New population projections through 2050 show the smallest likely increase in Alaska's history. What new IRS data show about how our migration patterns and population turnover compare to other states.

**2022 Workforce Development Month**  
**Job Center Open House!**

**Welcome, Job Seekers!**  
See who is hiring and learn about state jobs, funding for training, apprenticeship opportunities and much more!

**Welcome, Employers!**  
Highlight your business and open positions. We have space for interviews or speak to Business Connection staff about any other business need!

**Welcome, Partners!**  
Come and meet staff, learn about what the Job Center offers, and let us know how we can better support you as a community partner!

**Mat-Su Job Center**  
877 Commercial Drive, Wasilla  
Phone: (907) 352-2500  
Job seekers: [matsu.jobcenter@alaska.gov](mailto:matsu.jobcenter@alaska.gov)  
Employers: [matsu.employers@alaska.gov](mailto:matsu.employers@alaska.gov)

**Monday-Friday, Sept. 12-16, 2022**

We are an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.