



January 2023
Volume 3, Issue 1

Inside this issue

Reentry Simulation Gives a Glimpse of Life After Incarceration.....	2- 3
DOC Reentry Unit Update...	3
Upcoming Mat-Su Events....	3
Mat-Su Job Center Update..	4
Mat-Su Reentry Coalition....	4

Newsletter

Mat-Su Reentry Coalitions Reflection Over 2022

From Barbara Mongar, the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Coordinator

Greetings All,

We begin the year with a reflection of what has happened on the Reentry front during 2022. During 2021 and at least half of 2022 we were all still in recovery mode from the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, about halfway through 2022 things started really moving forward, both in the Mat-Su area and around the State. Most service providers are now doing in-person appointments and groups as well as virtual services, most Reentry Coalitions are having in-person or hybrid type meetings, and we have all started attending in-person conference. There has also been Reentry Simulations conducted around the State in several different communities, such as the Mat-Su, Anchorage, and Juneau (see page 2-3 for more information on Juneau's Reentry Simulation).

Inside the Correctional Institutions they have started to conduct group classes again. Also, Service Providers, Reentry Coalitions and Case Managers have been invited to send in their Request for Clearance so that they can start conducting in-reaches inside the Correctional Institutions again.

The Crisis Now Initiative has made big strides in the Mat-Su; According to Melissa Toffolon, the Mat-Su Crisis Now (CN) Community Coordinator (funded by the Mat-Su Health Foundation and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority), "Crisis Now services are very close to starting in Mat-Su. Congratulations to True North Recovery and their grant award to start up the Mobile Crisis Team in Wasilla. We are so fortunate that True North will be doing this work because they already have experience providing peer support services for the Fairbanks Mobile Crisis Team. The Mobile Crisis Team does not exist on its own. There are emergency, law enforcement, dispatch, and behavioral health providers who will be intricately involved with the MCT and the services they provide." In her roll as the Mat-Su Crisis Now Community Coordinator, Melissa will be assisting True North by organizing planning meetings for the Crisis Now system in the Mat-Su.

As we embark on a new year, we move toward possibilities. Positive changes as well as challenges are on the horizon. We need to continue working together and sharing ideas in order to make a better future, not only for reentrants, but for all Alaskans.

Barbara Mongar

Coordinator, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition

Reentry Simulation Gives a Glimpse of Life After Incarceration

By Clarise Larson, Juneau Empire, Thursday, Nov 3, 2022

Finding affordable housing and transportation can be a challenge for anyone in Juneau — for recently released incarcerated people it's even more difficult and only adds to the numerous other hurdles and hardships they have to overcome to reenter society.

On Wednesday afternoon the [Juneau Reentry Coalition](#) hosted a reentry simulation at Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall with the goal to educate Juneau residents about the myriad challenges people face after being released from incarceration back into the general public.

The group of around 30 people who participated and simulated the life of a person reentering society used fake money, bus passes and items to pawn during the hour-long activity in an attempt to understand the burdens and difficulties that many people face as soon as they are released.

Though at the end of the day it was merely a few-hour activity for the people who attended, for residents like Rocky Stiers, a volunteer at the event who was released from Lemon Creek Correctional Center in late September, the struggles of reentry are his constant reality.

“There’s a lot of hoops to jump through,” he said. “It’s application after application, approval after approval. I think it’s even harder than what this simulation represents.”

Stiers was released from Lemon Creek Correctional Center just over a month ago after serving a three-year sentence for drug charges. Stiers has spent around 10 years in prison during his life and has tried to re-enter society four times. He said the past three have been unsuccessful, but he hopes this time will be different.

Stiers said he decided to volunteer at the event to share his story and educate people about the struggles he and other incarcerated people go through once released. He said though the simulation was only a few hours long for those who participated, reentry is a constant reality for him and he wants to break the cycle.

According to a 2018 study released by the [Department of Justice](#), about 68% of people released from incarceration in the U.S were incarcerated within 3 years of their release, followed by 79% within 6 years, and 83% within 9 years. The recidivism rates were lowest among Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander prisoners at just under 80% and highest among black prisoners at just under 87%.

Don Habeger, Juneau’s Reentry Coalition Coordinator, said though the simulation is an extreme truncation of the steps and struggles many people face when reentering society, he emphasized the importance of bringing more community education and dialog as a vital step to raise more awareness about barriers in place that are holding many people back from being successful after incarceration.

“It just illustrates reentry is not a piece of cake,” he said. “It just allows our community to understand some of the gaps and barriers in reentry and see for themselves how the struggle that it is to re-enter if you come out of interaction with very little resources and try to put all those little things together.”

Habeger said he hopes by inviting residents from all sides of Juneau people can show more empathy for people struggling and advocate for change, and urged people to get involved in the coalition or community if they want to help.

“Once you can understand some of the struggles, you can do things like write a letter to the assembly, talk to your [neighbors](#), and help look for solutions that benefit the community,” he said. **(Continued on page 3)**



Participants sit in “jail” Wednesday afternoon at a reentry simulation at Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall hosted by the Juneau Reentry Coalition. (Clarise Larson / Juneau Empire)

- **Mat-Su Reentry Services Forum**
Wednesday, January 18th
10:00 to 11:00 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.

- **Knik Tribe is holding Men's Talking Circles**

When: Every other Monday, January 9 and January 23, from 6 to 8 PM

Where: Band of Brothers, 2050 N. Merciful Cir., Wasilla

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

- **Knik Tribe is holding Family Culture Nights**

When: Wednesdays, 5:30 to 7:30 PM

Where: 758 shoreline Dr, Wasilla, AK

Food / Family / Fun

**Compact@KnikTribe.org
907-373-7991**

Register!

18th Annual
Reducing Recidivism & Reentry Conference
February 6—7, 2023
Captain Cook Hotel, Anchorage
Questions: Contact Bridget at Confcoor@gmail.com

- DOC Second Chance Act Grant is continuing through September 2023 in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Reentry More information is available from stacie.williamson@alaska.gov.
- In addition, Reentry Services funding continues to be available to recent reentrants who have been incarcerated for at least 30 days. A third party, such as a probation officer, case manager, or peer support specialist, must sign the application. For an application and instructions, write to doc.reentry@alaska.gov. Assistance is available for housing, clothing, transportation, household items, and other needs.

Reentry Simulation Gives a Glimpse of Life After Incarceration (Continued from page 2)

Habeger said one of the biggest barriers in Juneau is the lack of affordable housing, and said taking steps to address the lack of housing, specifically low-income housing, would be a major aid to people in Juneau struggling with reentry.

City and Borough of Juneau Assembly members Michelle Bonnet Hale and Christine Woll agreed and said affordable housing is a major priority for the Assembly. The pair were the only two Assembly members who participated in the simulation, Hale as a probation officer and Woll as someone reentering back into society.

Both Hale and Woll said the event was eye-opening and said it made them think about what the Assembly can do to change certain city policies that could alleviate certain obstacles.

"It's another reminder of how hard it is to get a leg up," Woll said.

Both pointed to transportation as a major obstacle that stops many people from being able to do the necessary tasks to maintain their reentry and livelihood.

While Woll said she would like to look at how the Assembly can further make public transportation easier to access by "keeping prices affordable," Hale took a more aggressive stance and said she would like to see the city provide free bus services in the future.

Woll said she is interested in continuing to look at other ways that the city could pursue to help people trying to reenter, and pointed to the possible removal of food sales tax as a step the Assembly could take that would directly impact people trying to reenter. In early August, [the Assembly OK'd \\$40,000 toward a survey](#) of Juneau residents on the question of whether the city should consider removing the sales tax on food.

Stiers said he hopes the event inspires people in the Juneau community to show more empathy and compassion for people trying to enter back into the community and to reach out and help them.

"It's a struggle — life is just a lot, even if you're not trying to reenter society," he said. "So you're facing all these burdens and restrictions on top of it and it's not easy — it feels almost impossible."



City and Borough of Juneau Assembly members Michelle Bonnet Hale volunteers as a probation office Wednesday afternoon at a reentry simulation at Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall hosted by the Juneau Reentry Coalition.



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' wellbeing 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.

Happy New Year from all of us at the Mat-Su Job Center!

We want to thank you for getting the word out about our annual Mat-Su Employer Expo, we are at full capacity for employers participating and could use your help at getting the word out to any job seekers that would like to attend. This event will be held at the Menard Center, March 29th from 10am-3pm. Please post the attached flyer and share with your customers, friends and family. We hope to see you all there!

Alaska Works Partnership has a new training schedule for the Alaska Construction Academies (ACA) this is free training offered in the Mat-Su, Anchorage and Fairbanks areas. They are also offering a Spring Break Carpentry course for interested Youth, and have Health & Safety classes such as First Aid/CPR/AED all for FREE. Visit their website for all the details at www.alaskaworks.org

The Department of Labor & Workforce Development has 14 job centers statewide to connect job seekers and employers, our centers are open Monday-Friday 8am-5pm for the most up to date contact information please visit <https://jobs.alaska.gov/offices/>. The Mat-Su job center is located at 877 W. Commercial Drive in Wasilla, or call our main line at 907-352-2500.

Reentry Success Stories

The Mat Su Job Center Resource Room staff have skills and experience working with reentrants. Two recent reentrants worked on Individualized Employment Plans which included filling out job applications, taking career assessments, gathering documentation and ID's needed for immediate employment, researching the labor market for easily obtainable temporary employment and long term goals, earning online Food Worker Cards, researching Peer Support Providers job requirements, researching and applying to Peer Support Training classes.

Within a few days, both reentrants were working part time in local businesses. Although those positions are not yet self-sustaining, their employers will work around their recovery services schedules. These part time jobs will provide much needed income, confidence, and references as they work towards their long term goals, complete recovery programs, and job training in Peer Support services. Because these reentrants were highly motivated and went out and applied to many jobs, they were quite successful.



We are getting the word out to job seekers about our upcoming job fair the Employer Expo on March 29th, 10-3 pm at the Menard Center. Please encourage reentrants to visit the Mat Su Job Center. We can provide assistance preparing for the job fair. The Point of Contact for to refer Reentrant's to is Heather McCausland, Resource Room Supervisor, at heather.mccausland@alaska.gov

[January Trends](#): Alaska's employment outlook for 2023.