

mat-su Reentry coalition Newsletter

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The November Mat-Su Reentry Simulation was an Eye-Opening Experience

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition held a Reentry Simulation at the Menard Sport Center on November 12, 2024. Twenty-six community members participated in the event and twenty volunteers assisted.

Over the course of approximately two hours participants experience the first month of post-release life. Each week takes place in a 15 minutes segments. At the end of each of these simulated weeks, participants must line up at the Probation station to have the determination made on how successful they have been in satisfying the conditions of their release and accomplishing their assigned tasks. If they were successful they will remain free to start another week, if they were unsuccessful they might find themselves remanded back to prison.

During the simulation participants were given a fictional identity of an ex-offender and received a packet of materials, including "Life Card". The "Life Card" explains the reentrant's criminal background, current living situation, current job situation, and instructions on the specific tasks that the individual must accomplish each week. Participants were also given some money, and transportation tickets. Using these tools, participants had to navigate through various stations to complete their weekly tasks to avoid being sent back to prison for non-compliance with the requirements of their release.

The goal of our Reentry Simulation is for participants to gain an understanding of the significant obstacles faced by men and women attempting to navigate the system upon their release from incarceration and returning home to their communities. To walk the shoes of someone who is returning home from incarceration gives invaluable insight for professionals who are tasked with helping those individuals achieve a successful reentry back into society.

At the end of the Reentry Simulation we gave a survey to participants asking how impactful the reentry simulation was in teaching participants about the challenges of reentry and 100% of those surveyed stated it was very to extremely impactful. Also 100% of those surveyed stated they would recommend participating in a reentry simulation to others.

There were many takeaways from this simulation, but the most important one is this: Once you've been incarcerated, the journey to returning as a productive member of society is a difficult one. It is full of barriers and obstacles and the best way for justice-involved individuals to be successful and break the cycle of incarceration is by providing them with assistance, resources, and a strong support system.

Barbara Mongar,
Coordinator, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition



Reentry Simulation participants navigating through various stations to complete their weekly tasks to avoid being sent back to prison.



By the end of the Reentry Simulation over 70% of our participants ended up back in prison.

Nebraska plans ‘transformational change’ to improve inmate reentry

By: Alex Gryczanowski, The Daily Nebraskan—Nov 4, 2024

Nebraska is laying out plans to improve re-entry of inmates into society and reduce recidivism under the national [Reentry 2030](#) initiative.

Rob Jeffreys, director of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, described the state's strategic plan in a webinar on Monday.

Nebraska is the fourth of six states so far to join the program, which is sponsored by the Correctional Leaders Association, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the U.S. Justice Department and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



The Nebraska State Capitol building on Monday, Jan. 30, 2024 in Lincoln, Nebraska. [Photo by Justin Diep](#)

Other states that have signed on are Washington, New York, Missouri, North Carolina and Alabama.

“(We will) look at (inmates’) end goal at the very beginning,” Jeffreys said. “Let’s not wait 30 days or 60 days and then try to come up with a plan. That’s been our breadth of how we’re trying to achieve this transformation change in Nebraska.”

The state will establish a statewide reentry council to lead a systematic approach to the problem. The correctional services department lists many details of its goal to "prioritize reentry from intake to release" in its [strategic plan](#).

Jeffreys’ plan will stress five points: positive relationships, positive social engagement, meaningful work trajectories, healthy thinking patterns and effective coping strategies.

“The only way we can achieve change is by doing something differently,” Dawn-Renee Smith, deputy director of rehabilitative services in Nebraska, said. “We really focus on that with folks.”

The state has about 5,880 inmates in nine facilities, well over the design capacity of 4,079. About 28% of released inmates return to prison within three years because of a new crime or a parole violation.

Jeffreys was joined in discussing the program by Kasey Moyer, the executive director of the Mental Health Association of Nebraska, and Diane Good-Collins, the director of the Metropolitan Community College’s Re-Entry Program.

Other topics discussed included TRANSFORM Nebraska, which integrates various rehabilitation dimensions to meet needs of inmates and will aid in the reduction of recidivism.

2025 Juneau Legislative Fly-In: January 26-29, 2025

Sponsored by the Alaska Reentry Partnership / <https://www.akreentry.org/advocacy/>

Details and Registration below:

Advocacy for Justice-Involved Alaskans. People with lived experience of incarceration or other justice involvement, family members, providers of services are invited to fly to Juneau, Alaska to learn advocacy skills for talking with policymakers about their experiences, challenges, successes, and recommendations for solutions.

The four-day Legislative Fly-In features the following:

- ✓ **Advocacy Training**
- ✓ **Meetings with Legislators**
- ✓ **Reentry Simulation**
- ✓ **Legislative Reception**

Details

- All costs for transportation, meals, and lodging are on your own.
- There is no cost to participate in the fly-in, but participants must register in advance.
- Meetings with policymakers will be arranged for participants based on recommendations and preferences.
- Participants agree to work in solidarity with the Alaska Reentry Partnership's mission and talking points.

TO REGISTER, CONTACT: advocacy@akreentry.org

[DOWNLOAD REGISTRATION FORM](#)

Mat-Su Reentry Events:

- **Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meeting**
Tuesday, January 7, 2025
9:00 to 10:30 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition has a virtual Steering Team Meeting on the first Tuesday of each month.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 7, 2025.

All are welcome to attend.

- **Virtual Mat-Su Reentry Services Forum**
Wednesday, January 15, 2025
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. Service providers, PO's, Case Managers, and anyone interested in attending are welcome.

For questions, to sign up, or for zoom links to the above events please contact Barbara Mongar at: barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org

Knik Tribe Events:

- **Knik Tribe Family Culture Nights** — Bi-Weekly,
Wednesday, 5:30 - 7:30 PM;
Location: 758 Shoreline Dr.
Wasilla, AK; Open to All
Compact@KnikTribe.org
907-373-7991
- **Talking Circle** — Tuesday, at 6:30 and Wednesday at 5:30;
Same location above;
Contact Ralph Lewis at 907-841-9773
- **Youth Wellbriety Circle** —
Fridays, from 1 to 3PM;
Location: MyHouse, Wasilla



* During this season of giving, be a
Holiday Sponsor
Help AARS provide a happy and healthy
holiday for our clients by becoming a
Holiday Sponsor.

Sponsor: \$100 per client

Client wish list items include winter clothing,
toiletries, shoes, headphones, books,
and more!

Deadline is Dec. 25th

 Alaska Addiction
Rehabilitation Services, Inc.

[Become a \\$100 Holiday Sponsor](#)

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 (DOC) 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 Alaska DOC to inform and promote reentry efforts in Alaska.



Mat-Su Job Center Update

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

The Mat-Su Job Center staff would like to wish you all a safe and happy holiday season!! We are open Monday-Friday 8am-5pm and are located at 877 W. Commercial Drive in the Westside Center. Our knowledgeable and friendly staff are available to assist both job seekers and employers one-on-one with employment and training needs. If you are interested in staying up to date with current job openings in the Mat-Su area, please reach out to our Business Connection staff Faith Woolsey to be added to the weekly email list, Faith.Woolsey@alaska.gov.

Alaska's minimum wage will increase Jan. 1, 2025, from \$11.73 to \$11.91, Additionally, with the passage of Ballot Measure 1, on July 1, 2025, the Alaska minimum wage will increase to \$13, and will subsequently increase to \$14 on July 1, 2026, and \$15 on July 1st, 2027. Thereafter the minimum wage shall be adjusted annually for inflation. For more information about Alaska's wage laws can be found at: <https://labor.alaska.gov/lss/whhome.htm>.

Our office provides WorkKeys testing twice a month, the WorkKeys assessments measure foundational skills required for success in the workplace. Individuals who successfully complete the three WorkKeys assessments in Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents earn a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). The scores can be used for applications with local apprenticeships, community, or technical colleges, this credential can be added to your resume, and can help build confidence in workplace skills, or assist in building up skills in areas needing improvement. The WorkKeys curriculum can also measure interests, values and behaviors that can lead to greater job satisfaction. Contact us for available testing times at 907-352-2509 or matsu.jobcenter@alaska.gov.



December Trends: Our population projections for 2023-2050 show a long-term decline for the first time (-2%). Also in this issue: Jobs and average/total wages all went up last year as inflation fell to 1.5 percent.

Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su

- **Banyan Alaska: Outpatient Drug and Alcohol Treatment Center:** Providing specialized care for military personnel, veterans and civilians struggling with substance abuse.
Phone: 907-531-9217; **Address:** 4701 Begich Circle, Wasilla, AK 99654
Website: [Drug Treatment & Rehab | Alaska | Banyan Treatment Center](#)
- **Alaska Addiction Rehabilitation Services, Inc.:** Serving adults struggling with substance use disorder (SUD) and co-occurring disorder. Their treatment program provides a combination of twelve-step recovery, group and individual counseling, life skills training, and work therapy in a supportive
Phone: 907-376-4534; **E-Mail:** intake@aarsrecovery.org
Website: [AARS – Alaska Addiction Rehabilitation Services](#)

Note: For more information on the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition contact Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org or go to our Webpage at [Mat-Su Valley Reentry Program | Valley Charities Inc](#)