

# mat-su Reentry coalition Newsletter

September 2025  
Volume 5, Issue 9

## Inside this issue

First-of-its-Kind Plan for States to Support Children and families with Incarcerated Parents.....	2
2025 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: Building Bridges to Success (Continued).....	3
Reentry & Knik Tribe Events.....	3
Monthly Resource Highlights.....	3
Mat-Su Job Center.....	4

## 2025 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: Building Bridges to Success

We had a great turnout for our 2025 Mat-Su Reentry Summit. A total of 85 unduplicated participants attended our Summit this year.

### Day One Overview

On day one, 70 people attend. We started our Reentry Summit with a Land Acknowledgement that was given by Jay Cross, an elder from Knik Tribe. Our Keynote Speakers were Dr. Johnson, from UAF, and Dr. Shimizu, from UAA, who talked about Restorative Justice and its potential to reduce recidivism in Alaska.

We also had local experts share their programs, such as the Alaska VA Justice Outreach Program, the Mat-Su Job Centers Reentry Services, and DOC Reentry, Education, and Vocational Services. The last two sessions that day were an Advocacy 101 Training session and a Suicide Prevention session.

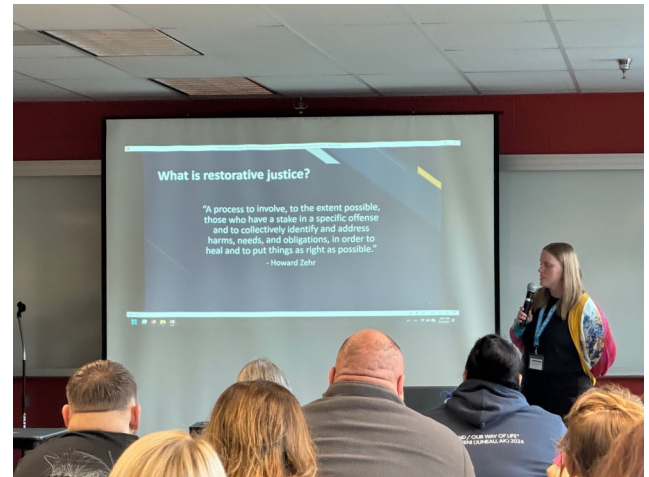
### Day Two Overview

On day two, 59 people attended. Our Keynote Speaker was Claude Ouellette, an individuals with justice involved lived experience, that shared information on his life and his successful program “I Will Rise and You Will Too” ([I Will Rise And You Will Too | Motivational Speaker](#)).

Our statewide presenters included a session on the findings of a Fairbanks Native Justice Study, a session on Knik Tribe’s Tribal Your Program, and a presentation about Partners for Progress Reentry Programs. We also had the Associate Director of the National Center for College Students with Disabilities share tips and tools to make stronger pathways for people with disabilities in the reentry process. The day ended with a justice involved lived experience panel who spoke about their road to success.

### Survey Results

The surveys collected after the Summit showed that 91% of those surveyed on day 1 and 83% of those surveyed on day 2 felt that the knowledge/skills and information gathered during the Reentry Summit will help them make improvement on their programs. Also, over 91% on day 1 and 93% on day 2 stated that it was likely they would recommend/attend future Mat-Su Reentry Summit. ([Continued on page 3](#))



Day 1 Keynote Speakers: Dr. Johnson & Dr. Shimizu



Day 2 Keynote Speaker: Claude Ouellette

## A Big Thank You to Our Sponsor:



# First-of-its-Kind Plan for States to Support Children and Families with Incarcerated Parents

By: CSJ Justice Center Staff, The Council of State Governments (CSG), September 3,

Millions of children in the U.S. experience the traumatic incarceration of a parent, which can harm their education and health and increase their own risk of incarceration. On average, **at least one kid in every kindergarten class has or will have a parent who's incarcerated at some point in their childhood.**

Meanwhile, only 60 percent of parents in prison or jail speak to their children on the phone. Some states have made it free for families to talk to their loved ones who are incarcerated, but in many states, kids and their families often can't afford the high cost of conversation with a parent.



When they do get the chance for an in-person visit, the experience can be traumatic for children.

Every state prison system offers a program to help people parent while incarcerated, but one review found that only half or less focused specifically on issues related to parenting while in prison, and relatively few covered anger and stress management.

Until now, corrections departments and policymakers haven't had a single, comprehensive framework for all the various ways they can **help maintain and even improve children's relationships with their parents in jail or prison.**

Our first-of-its-kind action plan—developed with the National Resource Center on Children & Families of the Incarcerated at Rutgers University-Camden and the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy at UConn—provides **evidence-based, trauma-informed strategies for corrections leaders and policymakers** to implement or improve:

- Child-friendly visiting spaces
- Parenting programs
- Affordable and accessible communication
- Prison nurseries for mothers and babies

Strengthening parent-child connections benefits everyone by reducing the likelihood and cost of recidivism and making our communities safer.

[Explore the action plan.](#)

For article: [First-of-its-Kind Plan for States to Support Children and Families with Incarcerated Parents - CSG Justice Center](#)

# 2025 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: Building Bridges to Success was a Big Success

(Continued from page 1)

Some comments we received after the Reentry Summit included the following:

- “I enjoyed all the speakers, all provided valuable information.”
- “It was a wonderful experience. I learned a lot. And it was fun to network with old friends and meet new ones.”
- “Claude Ouellette was amazing. Testimonials help inspire & provide tools/techniques to do better.”



Participants at the 2025 Mat-Su Reentry Summit

In conclusion, I would like to give a big thank you to all the amazing speakers, planning committee members, and volunteers that helped to make this year’s Reentry Summit a success. Also, I would like to thank the Mat-Su Health Foundation for supplying the funding for our annual Mat-Su Reentry Summit. We will have the filmed sessions of the Reentry Summit up on our Reentry Website in October (<https://www.valleycharities.org/mat-su-valley-reentry-program/>).

**Barbara Mongar,**  
**Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Coordinator**

## Mat-Su Reentry Simulation

Experience an interactive event that highlights the struggles individuals face when transitioning from incarceration back into their communities.

**When:** Thursday, November 6th, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

**Where:** Menard Sports Center, 1001 S. Clapp Street, Wasilla

**To signup to participate in the reentry simulation or to volunteer to assist,**  
please E-mail Barbara Mongar at [barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org](mailto:barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org)

## Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su September is National Suicide Prevention Month

- **Mat-Su Health Services, Inc.:** They provide crisis intervention services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to those who are experiencing distress or need emotional support in Alaska  
**Phone:** (907) 367-2411  
**Website:** [Behavioral Health | Mat-Su Health Services, Inc. | Alaska Health Care](#)
- **True North Recovery Crisis Services:** Their Day One Center offers walk-in crisis services available at the Launchpad. Their crisis peers can help people navigate their next steps and services they need immediate access to.  
**Phone:** (907) 313-1333  
**Address:** 2650 Broadview Ave, Wasilla, AK99654  
**Website:** [SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SERVICES - True North Recovery](#)

## Mat-Su Reentry Events:

- **Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meeting**  
Tuesday, Oct 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. All Welcome to attend.

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



## 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: **Michele Bentz**, Mat-Su Job Center Manager

The Mat-Su Job Center is open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Our staff is available to assist one-on-one with employment or training needs. We currently offer the following workshops at our job center during regular business hours: Effective Resumes, Employment after Incarceration, Interviewing Strategies, Workplace Alaska (how to apply for State of Alaska Jobs), and Career Support & Training Orientation for grant funding. We also proctor WorkKeys and provide certified typing and 10-key testing, all at no cost. You can reach us at (907) 352-2500 or in person at 877 West Commercial Drive, in Wasilla.

Our center offers two conference rooms, available to partners and community members at no cost, that can accommodate recruitment sessions, staff training, testing, or meetings. One of the conference rooms has a computer lab of 15 computers available. If you are interested in learning more or scheduling a visit to view our space, please call our main line.

Mr. Norm Lingley is one of our Employment Services Technicians at the Mat-Su Job Center. He provides in-reach services at Goose Creek, Point Mackenzie, and Palmer Correctional, and works one-on-one with reentrants who are returning to the workforce. Norm assesses their needs, focuses on their abilities and skills, while addressing gaps that could use additional support. Norm provides a multitude of services and resources to help individuals overcome barriers to employment and achieve success. If you are working with a reentrant that needs one-on-one assistance with any employment and training services, please reach out to Norm at 907-352-2525 or [Norm.lingley@alaska.gov](mailto:Norm.lingley@alaska.gov).

You can join us for our Job X meetings. This is a partnership between agencies and employers to help individuals find suitable employment. This meeting is held twice a month and features a local employer/business, or partner who would like to express their business needs, market themselves, network with others in our community, and meet with professionals who provide employment services. Building relationships between agencies, community business partners, and employers is beneficial for everyone! If you would like to be a presenter at Job X or would like to participate to learn more about local resources and agencies, please get in touch with our Business Connection staff, Faith Woolsey, at (907) 352-2523 or email and request an invitation to [faith.woolsey@alaska.gov](mailto:faith.woolsey@alaska.gov)



**September Trends:** Rental costs were up an average of 5 percent across surveyed areas in March, and vacancy remained historically low, although with some area exceptions. **Also in this issue:** On the road to Tok and Delta Junction

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