

Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Housing Project

We see individuals being released from prison every day who fall through the cracks in obtaining short-term emergency housing and long-term permanent housing. Housing assistance impacts everything including accessing employment, mental health services, outpatient treatment and staying alive during the winter months.

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Housing Project started on July 1, 2020 with funding we received from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and we have been doing it every year since that time. Through this project we have been able to assist 224 reentrants with their housing needs and in FY25 alone, we assisted 61 individuals. Out of the 224 individuals we have assisted through this project, only 39 have returned to prison, making our recidivism rate for this program 17%, which is far below Alaska's recidivism rate of 54%. Note: Recidivism Data for our housing project is only collected for the active program period and not for 3 years, like the state data is.

Below is a list of our Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Housing Projects guidelines and eligibility criteria:

Coalition Housing Project Guidelines:

- Assistance with up to 3 months of housing fees while in Transitional/Sober Living and/or one time assistance with permanent housing placement.
- Assistance given to each person, once per a year from the last assist given, (Example: If the individuals was given assisted in April through June, they cannot receive assist until following June).
- For permanent housing assistance, individuals must provide documentation of sustainability moving forward (ie: we must show that their rent/income is sustainable after the first month).
- If moving into permanent housing, a signed copy of lease (landlord and tenet) and a W9 (completed by landlord) are needed prior to funding approval.
- Funds must be utilized within Mat-Su (we cannot assist individuals housed/moving out of Mat-Su)

Eligibility for our Coalition Housing Project, (individual MUST meet all criteria listed below):

- Must be an Alaska Mental Health Trust Beneficiary (<https://alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/beneficiaries/who-they-are/>)
- Must have been incarcerated/released within the last 1 year (from time of application)
- Must have been incarcerated for at least 7 days or more.
- Must be residing in the Mat Su Borough
- Charges must have been in the State of Alaska

Below are some comments from individuals that were assisted through this project:

- "The assistance made it possible to take care of health, educational, and food needs better. It decreased the amount of stress I lived with."
- "Having the help and access to mentors, while not worrying about funding for safe housing and daily essentials, was instrumental in allowing stability during my reentry."
- "Because of the services I have received I have been able to maintain my sobriety, be very active in my recovery, save money for a vehicle, license, and insurance. Thank you."

We would like to give a big thank you to the **Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority**, without their funding and support we could not offer projects like this one.

Barbara Mongar, Mat-Su Reentry Program Coalition Coordinator

Housing, Homelessness, and Reentry 2025

By: Joe Cullen, Fractional COO & Business Advisor, Published on September 21, 2025

Introduction

Housing is more than a roof overhead; it is the cornerstone of rebuilding a life after incarceration. For individuals returning from prison or jail, stable housing is often the first, most critical hurdle on the path to reintegration. Yet many find themselves locked out; barred from public housing, turned away by landlords, or priced out of the few affordable options that exist. Without this foundation, everything else: employment, healthcare, even family connection, becomes nearly impossible.



In 2025, the stakes are higher than ever. The homelessness crisis in the U.S. has reached record levels. In January 2024, the Point-in-Time count recorded 771,480 people experiencing homelessness, an 18% increase from the previous year. Meanwhile, housing supply has failed to keep pace. Even with nearly 18,000 new permanent housing units added in 2024, demand has far outstripped availability in most states.

For justice-involved individuals, this crisis is more than a headline; it is often the deciding factor between freedom and failure. Stable housing is not just a matter of human dignity; it is deeply tied to public safety, health, and long-term success. When housing fails, recidivism rises. When people have a safe place to land, they stand a far better chance of staying free. 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.**

This article takes an updated look at the intersection of housing, homelessness, and reentry in 2025: exploring the barriers, the human costs, and the solutions that offer hope for change.

The Scope of the Problem

The numbers reveal the scale of the crisis.

- **General Homelessness is Rising:** Roughly 771,480 people were homeless in January 2024, a staggering 18% increase in one year. Rising rents, stagnant wages, and a shortage of affordable units all feed the surge.
- **Housing Supply Is Not Enough:** While 17,877 new permanent housing units came online in 2024, many states saw shelter demand increase far faster than capacity. Some even lost permanent housing capacity compared to the prior year.
- **Justice-Involved Individuals Face Greater Risk:** Formerly incarcerated people are nearly 10 times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population. The risk is highest within the first two years of release, but even after several years, their rates remain far higher than average.
- **Degrees of Instability:** For every 10,000 formerly incarcerated people, about 570 experience some form of housing insecurity. Of those, 105 are unsheltered, 98 are in shelters, and 367 are in marginal housing like motels or boarding houses.
- **Impact of Multiple Incarcerations:** People with more than one incarceration on their record face homelessness rates 13 times higher than the general population.

These numbers illustrate a grim reality: housing insecurity is not a side issue of reentry; it is central. And without targeted solutions, the crisis will only deepen. **(Continued on Page 3)**

Barriers to Stable Housing

The path to housing for justice-involved individuals is full of barriers, such as:

- **Stigma and Criminal Records:** Private landlords routinely use background checks to screen out tenants with criminal records. For many applicants, rejection is automatic, regardless of their ability to pay or their progress since release.
- **Legal Restrictions:** Public housing authorities often enforce blanket bans on people with certain convictions, especially drug or sex offenses. These restrictions can result in lifetime exclusions, closing off what might otherwise be the only affordable option.
- **Financial Hurdles:** Most people leave prison with little or no savings. Many carry debts from court fees, parole supervision, or child support. Even basic costs like a security deposit or first month's rent are out of reach. Those who find landlords willing to rent often face predatory terms, like inflated deposits or unsafe properties.
- **Support System Gaps:** Not everyone has family who is able or willing to provide a place to stay. Lease restrictions, strained relationships, or fear of losing their own housing often prevent relatives from stepping in. Without that support, many are left with shelters or the street.
- **Case Example:** In Charlotte, NC, a 32-year-old man released in 2023 described applying to nearly 40 apartments before finding a landlord who would rent to him. Even then, he had to pay an extra two months' rent upfront, draining the money he had saved. His story reflects a nationwide struggle; persistence met with repeated rejection.

These barriers don't just slow reentry; they derail it. Housing becomes the bottleneck through which every other aspect of success must pass.

The Human Cost: Homelessness and Recidivism

The consequences of unstable housing ripple outward:

- **Recidivism:** Without housing, the chance of returning to prison skyrockets. Meeting parole requirements like curfews, employment, or treatment attendance is nearly impossible without a fixed address.
- **Mental Health and Addiction:** Housing instability worsens preexisting struggles with mental illness or substance use. Shelters and streets magnify stress, disrupt medication, and increase relapse risks.
- **The Revolving Door:** Homeless individuals are more likely to be arrested for low-level offenses like loitering or trespassing. For someone on probation, even minor charges can trigger re-incarceration. The result is a cycle driven less by crime and more by circumstance.
- **Economic and Community Costs:** Each re-incarceration costs taxpayers an average of \$30,000 annually per person. Hospitals see higher emergency room visits from homeless individuals. Communities pay in policing, lost productivity, and increased strain on public services.

Behind these numbers are people struggling to start over. The mother is unable to regain custody of her children without stable housing. The father misses job interviews because shelters require early arrival and departures. The older man released after decades in prison, rejected from every apartment he applies to. (Continued on Page 4)

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.

- **Mat-Su Reentry Simulation**
Thursday, Nov 6, 2025
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
At the Menard Sport Center

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

Sign up by Oct 31, 2025

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:

- **Gathering Together**—Oct 25, 2025
11:00 am—1:00pm (Open to All)
Location: 2501 E Bogard, Wasilla
Compact@KnikTribe.org
- **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, 907-841-9773
- **Women's Talking Circle**—
Supporting women who have been victimized by Domestic & Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, and Sex Trafficking.
Oct 10th & 24; 10:30am - 12:30pm
Location: 1001 S Knik Goose Bay Rd
For More Info: 907-373-7991
socialservices@kniktribe.org
- **Youth Wellbriety Circle** —
Fridays, from 1 to 3PM;
Location: MyHouse, Wasilla

Housing, Homelessness, and Reentry 2025

(Continued from page 3)

Stable housing does not guarantee success. But the absence of it almost guarantees failure.

Promising Approaches and Best Practices

Solutions exist, and they work when housing is treated as the foundation for reentry, such as:

- **Transitional Housing Programs:** Programs in cities like Denver provide six to twelve months of housing combined with case management. These bridges stabilize individuals while they secure work and rebuild relationships.
- **Housing First:** This model places people directly into housing without requiring sobriety or employment first. Utah and other states have adapted it for justice-involved individuals, cutting both homelessness and recidivism.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Los Angeles's Just In Reach program partners landlords with risk-mitigation funds and guaranteed rent. Case managers provide support, creating stability for both tenants and landlords.
- **Community-Led Solutions:** Organizations like the Fortune Society in New York City provide housing rooted in lived experience, pairing shelter with mentorship and community.
- **Proof of Impact:** In Ohio, a pilot program that provided rental assistance and mentorship cut recidivism by more than half compared to the state average.

These programs prove that when housing comes first, progress follows.

Policy and Reform Needs

Scaling solutions require systemic reforms, for example:

- **End Blanket Bans:** Public housing restrictions should move from automatic disqualification to individual assessments that weigh time since conviction and evidence of rehabilitation.
- **Expand Affordable Housing:** Increase the construction of affordable units and create incentives for landlords who rent to returning citizens.
- **Support Landlords:** Provide insurance protections, guaranteed rent, or risk funds to encourage participation.
- **Fund Wraparound Services:** Invest in supportive housing that integrates healthcare, counseling, and job placement.
- **Coordinate Locally:** Federal funding must be paired with local collaboration across housing, corrections, health, and workforce agencies.

The choice is clear: pay endlessly for re-incarceration or invest upfront in stability.

Conclusion: Building a Pathway Home

Housing is not optional: it is essential. Without it, justice-involved individuals face steep odds of failure. With it, the chances of success rise dramatically.

The evidence is overwhelming: stable housing reduces recidivism, strengthens families, lowers costs, and restores dignity. Yet too many are still released into homelessness, expected to rebuild their lives while carrying the weight of rejection.

If we want safer communities and stronger futures, we must start with the basics. Every person leaving prison deserves a safe place to go, not after they prove themselves, but immediately.

Stable housing does not guarantee success, but the absence of it almost guarantees failure.

Link to the full article: [Housing, Homelessness, and Reentry in 2025](#)

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.

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



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.

The Department of Labor has many employer incentives that support the labor market, employers, and job seekers in the community. <https://labor.alaska.gov/landing-pages/employers.html>

- Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) - <https://labor.alaska.gov/dets/iwtp.htm>
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) - <https://jobs.alaska.gov/forms/OjtIntro-employer.html> OJT is a short-term training program, typically lasting 8 months or less.
- Registered Apprenticeship (RAP) - <https://awib.alaska.gov/apprentice/index.html>
- Alaska's Fidelity Bonding Program - This program provides no-cost, no-deductible bonding for at-risk job seekers to overcome barriers to employment. It helps alleviate employer concerns about hiring at-risk job applicants.
- Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) - [AlaskaJobs WOTC Login Instructions](http://AlaskaJobs.WOTC.Login.Instructions)

If you have questions about any of the employer incentives, please contact our Business Connection staff Faith Woolsey at (907) 352-2515 or Faith.Woolsey@alaska.gov



October Trends: A look at Alaska workers over 65 and working teens aged 14-17. These two groups have changed considerably over the last two decades.

Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su

- **Blood-n-Fire Ministry of Alaska / Knik House:** They provide housing, food, education and case management for people in housing crisis and transition.
Website: Blood-n-Fire Ministry of Alaska | Knik House - Compassion in Action
Phone: (907) 864-0463
- **Euthus House:** A Christ-centered residential safe and sober house that endeavors to empower men to create a productive future. They provide reentry services that will move its residents toward the goals of self-sufficiency and pro-social living.
Website: Euthus House