mat-su Reentry Coalition

Newsletter

September 2026
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September celebrates National Recovery Month

National Recovery Month is an annual awareness campaign that celebrates the achievements of individuals in recovery from substance use and mental health disorders. It seeks to change the national conversation around addiction by focusing on hope, healing, resilience, and recovery, and on the people who have rebuilt their lives.

Recovery Month is for everyone: people in recovery, their families and friends, treatment and behavioral health professionals, advocates, community organizations, and the wider public. It recognizes the strength of the recovery community while honoring the dedicated service providers who help make recovery possible.

Substance use and mental health conditions affect millions of individuals and families, yet stigma continues to prevent many people from reaching out for help. National Recovery Month challenges that stigma by showing that recovery is real, possible, and worth celebrating.

Recovery and Reentry

Recovery is particularly important during reentry, when individuals are returning to their families and communities after incarceration or other periods of justice-system involvement. Reentry can bring significant challenges, including finding stable housing and employment, rebuilding relationships, reconnecting with family, managing mental health, and establishing a healthy routine.

For individuals with substance use or mental health conditions, maintaining recovery during this transition can be a critical part of building a stable and successful life in the community. Recovery provides more than freedom from substance use, it can provide the foundation for stability, healthy relationships, employment, personal responsibility, and long-term well-being.

Strong recovery supports can help individuals navigate the pressures and triggers that may arise during reentry. Access to treatment, peer support, recovery communities, housing, employment services, transportation, and other community resources can make the difference between facing reentry alone and having a meaningful support system.
Supporting recovery during reentry also benefits families and communities. When individuals have access to the resources they need to maintain their recovery, they have greater opportunities to reconnect with loved ones, contribute to their communities, and pursue positive goals. Recovery can help transform reentry from simply returning home into an opportunity to rebuild, reconnect, and move forward.

National Recovery Month reinforces several important messages: behavioral health is essential to overall health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover. These messages are especially meaningful for individuals navigating reentry. A history of substance use, mental health challenges, or incarceration does not have to define a person's future.

By celebrating recovery, reducing stigma, and investing in strong reentry and recovery supports, communities can help create pathways to lasting change. Every person deserves the opportunity to heal, rebuild their life, reconnect with their community, and experience the hope that recovery makes possible.

Recovery is not just about where someone has been. It is about where they are going, and reentry can be the beginning of that journey.

Barbara Mongar, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Coordinator

Note: For more information on the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition see page 4

AFN releases landmark study on Alaska Native Incarceration and Recidivism

By: the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inside Bethel News, July 22, 2026

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) released findings in January 2026 from a comprehensive study examining the disproportionate rates of incarceration and recidivism among Alaska Native people and offering culturally grounded recommendations to address these deep systemic inequalities.

Alaska Native people make up about 14–19% of Alaska's population, yet they account for 44% of those incarcerated in the state's prisons. Once released, Alaska Native individuals experience a recidivism rate of 60% — the highest among all monitored racial and ethnic groups tracked by the Alaska Department of Corrections (2025). These disparities have serious consequences not only for individuals but also for families, communities, and the overall social and economic fabric of Alaska.

These numbers are not just statistics — they represent our relatives, our communities, and generations of unresolved trauma," said Kendra Kloster, AFN's Director of Government Relations, who played a key role in this study. "This study is a vital step toward understanding the root causes of these disparities and finding meaningful, culturally appropriate solutions."

Kloster testified before the House State Affairs Committee and Senate State Affairs Committee, and on February 20, she also presented to the Senate Judiciary Committee regarding the Alaska Native Incarceration Report prepared by AFN with the Alaska Department of Corrections, the University of Alaska Anchorage, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The DOC contracted AFN to conduct a study to offer recommendations to reduce the overrepresentation of Alaska Native people in the criminal justice system, a provision added in House Bill 66, an omnibus crime bill that passed in 2024.

The study was ordered under Section 64 of House Bill 66, passed by the Alaska Legislature in May 2024 and signed into law on October 9, 2024. The legislation instructed the Department of Corrections to contract with a statewide Alaska Native organization to examine why Alaska Native people make up such a disproportionate share of the state's prison population and to create practical recommendations.

AFN partnered with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) to conduct community interviews, surveys, and a comprehensive literature review, and with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Alaska Justice Information Center (AJiC) to analyze data on Alaska Native overrepresentation in jails and prisons. The effort was guided by an Indigenous-led Advisory Team of Alaska Native individuals who bring lived experience and professional expertise from tribal programs, tribal justice systems, and community advocacy.

The study examines eight key areas for intervention identified in the legislation, including:

- Establishing restorative justice programs tailored to Alaska Native cultural needs
- Early intervention for at-risk Alaska Native youth and young adults
- Expanded mental health diagnosis and treatment
- Affordable housing solutions to reduce homelessness and law enforcement encounters
- Improved alcohol and drug misuse treatment options
- Job training and mentoring opportunities Digital access and training for tribal, state, and federal services
- Identification of federal funding opportunities across agencies, including the U.S. Department of Justice, Indian Health Service, SAMHSA, and the U.S. Department of Labor

AFN recognizes that meaningful reform requires collaboration across policymakers, justice stakeholders, and Alaska Native communities. Reducing these disparities is both a matter of justice and fiscal responsibility — and a pathway to healthier, safer, and more resilient communities throughout Alaska.

Go here for article: [AFN releases landmark study on Alaska Native Incarceration and Recidivism – The Delta Discovery, Inc.]

Recovery Month 2026

From: Office of Governor Mike Dunleavy; Sep 1, 2026

WHEREAS, it is essential that all Alaskans recognize the critical need for affordable, accessible, and high-quality substance abuse treatment; and

WHEREAS, substance abuse, co-occurring mental disorders, and related physical illnesses are significant public health challenges that affect thousands of Alaskans of all ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds, in all communities; and

WHEREAS, addiction has far-reaching consequences, damaging individuals, families and communities alike. Through treatment and support, people can overcome substance abuse disorders and create healthier, more connected, and purposeful lives; and

WHEREAS, with timely access to appropriate and effective treatment, individuals struggling with substance abuse can and do recover, and they should be able to readily access the services and support they need to achieve lasting recovery; and

WHEREAS, we recognize and honor the service of first responders, healthcare providers, all family, friends, and advocates undertaking the battle against addiction. These committed workers, loved ones, and volunteers deserve our gratitude and support; and

WHEREAS, we can support fellow Alaskans struggling with substance abuse disorders by promoting prevention, recognizing the signs of substance misuse, and connecting those in need with effective treatment, recovery, and support services.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Mike Dunleavy, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF ALASKA, do hereby proclaim September 2026 as:

Recovery Month

in Alaska and encourage all Alaskans to have compassion for those who are struggling with addiction; to foster open, honest, and supportive dialogue about the effects of substance abuse in individuals and their communities; and to support programs that improve the circumstances for fellow Alaskans striving for recovery.

Dated: September 1, 2026; Link: Recovery Month 2026 - Mike Dunleavy

Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su

September is Nathanial Recovery Month

- **Set Free Alaska:** Set Free Alaska is a Christian treatment center that uses a mind-body-spirit approach to recovery. They provides services to the community by addressing the areas of substance abuse and mental illness through a trauma informed approach.
  Website: Set Free Alaska | Substance Abuse Treatment | Alcohol and Drug Rehab
  Phone: 907-373-4732
- **True North Recovery:** Our mission is that we say yes to people seeking help for addiction and mental health. We create pathways to recovery and purpose by providing the right services at the right time, with lived experience at the center.
  Website: True North Recovery – Alaska Drug and Alcohol Treatment Center, Addiction Treatment Program
  Phone: 907-313-1333; (Press 1 for Wasilla, 2 for Fairbanks, and 3 for Ketchikan)
- **Alaska Addiction Rehabilitation Services, Inc.:** AARS' mission is to provide client-centered quality residential treatment services to adults living with substance use disorder and co-occurring disorders from all regions of the State of Alaska.
  Website: AARS – Alaska Addiction Rehabilitation Services
  Phone: 907-376-4534

Mat-Su Reentry Events:

- **Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meeting**
  Tuesday, October 6, 2026
  9:00 to 10:00 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition invites you to attend their Monthly Steering Team Meeting via Zoom

- **2026 Mat-Su Reentry Summit**
  Tuesday, Sept 15, 2026 and Wednesday, Sept 16, 2026
  9:00 AM to 3:30 PM

Our annual 2-day Reentry Summit is geared toward individuals who work with reentrants or those that would like to learn more about reentry services. This year's summit will feature compelling national and statewide speakers

Website: 2026 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: Building Bridges to Success Event Website

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

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Knik Tribe Events:

- **Knik Tribe Family Culture Nights —** Bi-Weekly, Wednesdays, 5:30 - 7:30 PM;
  Location: 758 Shoreline Dr. Wasilla, AK; (Open to All)
  Compact@KnikTribe.org
  907-373-7991

- **Youth Wellbriety Circle**
  Fridays, from 1 to 3PM;
  Location: MyHouse, Wasilla

Chickaloon Village Traditional Council Events:

- **Wellbriety Talking Circle**
  Wednesdays, 1 to 3PM;
  Location: Sutton Library
  More Info: 907-761-3912

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

Mat-Su Job Center is located at 877 W. Commercial Drive, in Wasilla, Alaska, and we are open Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.– 5 p.m. Stop by or call (907) 352-2500 or email: matsu.jobcenter@alaska.gov

Our staff is available to assist with employment needs. 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 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, Highland, 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.

For the most up-to-date information on open recruitments, job fairs, and virtual job readiness workshops, please visit www.jobs.alaska.gov/jobfairs. The Mat-Su Job Center hosts various recruitments each month. If you want more information about how we can promote and host a recruiting event for your business, or would like to know what employers are participating each month for job seekers, please reach out to our Business Connection representative, Faith Woosley at (907) 352-2523 or faith.woolsey@alaska.gov



September *Trends:* Rents across Alaska increased this year, although by less overall than the few previous years. **Also in this issue**: Homebuying became marginally more affordable in Alaska last year, but interest rates in 2026 are volatile.

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