

**Anchorage Reentry Coalition
Meeting Minutes
12/9/21
Hosted online via Zoom**

Representatives in attendance included those from the following organizations/groups:

Alaska Department of Corrections (Reentry Unit; Anchorage Probation; HARS); GEO Group; Partners For Progress/Partners Reentry Center; Southcentral Foundation, Family Wellness Warriors; Alaska VA; Alaska Native Justice Center; Fairbanks Reentry Coalition; Running Free Alaska; True North Recovery; Dept. of Health and Social Services (ASAP; Ladies First); Restorative and Reentry Services; Food Bank of Alaska; Division of Juvenile Justice; ACLU of Alaska; Compassion Prison Project; Legacy Builders Painters Academy.

Estimated Total Attendees: 35

1. *Introduction: Jonathan Pistotnik, Coalition Coordinator, Anchorage Reentry Coalition (jpistotnik@nwalska.org)*

Mr. Pistotnik opened the meeting by introducing the speakers for the meeting.

2. *Presentation: Alaska DOC MAT and SUD Services. Doug Zock, Criminal Justice Planner for Substance Abuse Treatment, Alaska Department of Corrections (dzock@alaska.gov)*

Mr. Zock stated that he has been with DOC for years, six of which were as a mental health clinician at ACC. Mr. Zock explained that he encounters misunderstandings and lack of awareness surrounding SUD treatment options and services available within, or offered by DOC. Mr. Zock stated that across the DOC system, on any given day, there are approximately 2,500 sentenced individuals and approximately 2,500 unsentenced individuals in-custody. Mr. Zock stated that similar to national statistics, in Alaska approximately 60-80% of individuals inside DOC are convicted of crimes or are accused of crimes that are either directly or indirectly related to SUD issues.

Mr. Zock explained that beginning this year, DOC began asking individuals that come into a facility to voluntarily self-identify whether they have any drug or alcohol use habits. The findings suggested that, even through voluntary admission, about half of individuals reported drug or alcohol use prior to coming into DOC custody, further substantiating a great need for treatment and services. In terms of staffing, there are both DOC staff and contractors engaged to provide SUD services and there are about 40 counselors across the system. Mr. Zock stated that when an individual comes through booking or into a facility, an assessment or screening is completed; this information is given to counselors to assist with treatment and coordination of services. Between 1.5 to 2 years ago DOC began using the ASAM Continuum and Continuum Triage tool, which is a computer-based assessment tool that can immediately, and efficiently generate suggestions on treatment needs and has proven to be a highly effective tool for staff.

Mr. Zock stated that for at least the last four years DOC has offered naltrexone to any individual leaving DOC's care with an identified opiate use disorder (OUD); Vivitrol is available and efforts will be made to ensure an individual can access this treatment after release to the community as well. For individuals on methadone or Suboxone that come into a facility, after having verified they have been authorized for these treatments, they will continue to receive them for 30 days at which point a determination will be made

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regarding tapering administration or continuing with the medication. Mr. Zock explained that for individuals on methadone that are at either ACC or Hiland, they must be transported to a community-based provider that offers this medication as this is not currently offered in correctional settings; efforts have been underway to be able to deliver methadone inside the facilities. Mr. Zock stated that Rhode Island is a model state that offers robust MAT services that Alaska is looking to emulate. Mr. Zock stated that DOC has teamed with Project Hope to provide Narcan kits to individuals leaving a facility so that they have a kit when they return to the community; this is available at many facilities currently, and efforts are underway to offer these kits at all facilities.

Mr. Zock detailed some of the other treatment options across the DOC system of care, including: Level 0.5 which is available in five locations and has a capacity of up to 120 individuals at a time; Level 2.1 intensive outpatient services are available in two male facilities and Hiland with a total capacity of 134 individuals; Level 3.5 residential treatment services are available at three locations and has a capacity of up to 80 men and 24 women; and there are Level 2.1 services for both men and women with co-occurring disorders. There are also three community-based organizations (Salvation Army, IAA, and Set Free Alaska) contracted to provide intensive out-patient programs in the community. Mr. Zock stated that there is a high demand and need for Level 3.5 residential treatment services. Mr. Zock shared that two probation-based counselors have been added to the staff (one in Palmer, one in Kenai); a new position has been filled for a Substance Abuse Reentry Coordinator (SARC) who is tasked with assisting with reentry planning and coordination of services particularly for hard-to-place individuals, and that Agnew::Beck has been contracted to look at improving preventative services within DOC.

Mr. Zock responded that for Level 2.1 and 3.5 services typically sentenced individuals have priority placement in those programs, but there are circumstances in which unsentenced individuals can access those services; MAT services are available to both sentenced and unsentenced individuals. It was stated that if someone is in a situation where they want to engage in treatment but are unable to start programming inside a facility that efforts will be made to help link that individual to care in the community. Mr. Zock also explained that during the pandemic there was a period of time in which all programming was suspended and contract staff were not permitted inside the facilities, which led to the use of a hybrid approach to delivering some 2.1 and 3.5 level treatment services. This approach included telephonic communication, workbooks and correspondence to help get those already engaged through the process. It was stated that programming is available again, and that there are some disruptions but things are moving forward again. Mr. Zock stated that there are staff that work with individuals in their care to coordinate, plan, and access services post-release.

3. *Presentation: Legacy Builders Painters Academy. Lechaun Baker (legacy.painters.academy@gmail.com; 907-519-9178; 405 E. Fireweed Ln Anchorage, AK 99503)*

Mr. Baker stated that he has over 30 years of experience painting, and is an NCCR certified painter instructor. Mr. Baker explained that he created the non-profit Legacy Builders Painters Academy because he has witnessed first-hand a need for qualified, skilled painters and stated that there is a shortage of labor for commercial and residential projects. Mr. Baker explained that he has an interest in working with

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reentrants and that gainful employment is possible in this field; there are potential barriers to working in this field, but there are ways to work around such barriers. Mr. Baker explained that his program is open to anyone that is interested in obtaining training to work in this field.

Mr. Baker described some demographics and statistics regarding the painters industry: it is predominately people that identify as white or Hispanic/Latino, is mostly male, and the workforce is getting older; the average wage is over \$57k annually for a journeyman painter and it was stated that an apprentice would earn 60% of that wage. An apprentice works for three years and 6,000 hours to become a journeyman painter. Mr. Baker stated that individuals that engage in this program will obtain employment, and that he has created a network of companies that have staffing needs; jobs have been put on hold and are scheduled out into the future because of a shortage of labor. Mr. Baker stated that he currently has 4 people enrolled and that he is committed to recruiting a total of 25-28 additional painters.

Mr. Baker stated that he is sensitive to the needs of reentrants and is going to offer other kinds of support through this program, including: financial skills, CPR, OSHA 10, and other soft skills. (e.g. communication skills, appropriate behavior on the job, sexual harassment, etc.). It was stated that for students that have prior skill development, training, or experience that it is possible to immediately test out of that particular skill. Additionally, Mr. Baker is interested in getting to know the students so that he can advocate on their behalf and place them into positions which they can be successful. Mr. Baker expressed an interest in working to place students into employment as soon as possible, as that will benefit the student and the companies in need of labor support.

Mr. Baker expressed his concern that for reentrants, not having a driver's license is a challenge; there was some discussion surrounding the challenges with obtaining an ID and a driver's license. There was some discussion surrounding the idea of reentrants being around one another and that being a potential violation; it was clarified that there are circumstances in which such association can be allowed.

Mr. Baker stated that the cost of the course which is inclusive of all the tuition, materials, and tools necessary to complete the course, is \$8,600. Mr. Baker stated that he is looking for grant funding, but expressed a desire to connect with any organizations or programs that may have funding opportunities that can help cover the cost of tuition.

[Handouts will be included with the distribution of the notes]

4. *Presentation: "Alaska's Unified Correctional System and Potential Implications for Public Safety Anchorage." Jonathan Pistotnik, Anchorage Reentry Coalition.*

Mr. Pistotnik began his presentation by explaining that he has been listening in to Anchorage Assembly meetings online and had heard some individuals experience some grievances with Anchorage Correctional Complex. Mr. Pistotnik explained that despite disagreeing with 99.9% with what these individuals say at these meetings, they are not totally wrong to express their grievances in front of Anchorage leadership as in many large cities across the U.S. the local jail is operated at the local level. However, Alaska has a unified system and the Municipality of Anchorage doesn't have anything to do with jail operations.

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Mr. Pistotnik explained that the objective of his presentation was educational and is intended to heighten awareness, and was not meant to be critical of stakeholders nor of any particular elected administration. It was stated that the framework and assumptions surrounding the presentation were: Anchorage is a large city with about 40% of the state's population and 45% of releases from DOC are to Anchorage; unified systems are not common (AK is 1 of 6 states with a unified correctional system); there is a natural division of government between the Municipality of Anchorage and the State of Alaska; money and time are not unlimited resources; and that laws and the judicial system have an impact on this conversation around public safety and there are elements of this system that won't be touched on in the presentation.

Mr. Pistotnik showed the Sequential Intercept Model and explained that it is a framework for understanding how people can enter into and move through the judicial and correctional process, and honed in on Intercepts 4 and 5 which depict prison and parole, and jail and probation. It was explained that these are depicted as distinct tracks because in a non-unified system the state would manage prison and parole, and a local level government would be responsible for jail and probation. It was stated that things are different in Alaska with a unified system, in that it is just the State that manages these processes.

Mr. Pistotnik proceeded to explain that in a non-unified system there are elected and non-elected officials that operate at a state level (Governor, State Attorney General, Reps., Sens.; Law Department; Corrections Commissioner that oversees prison and parole) and those at a local level (Assembly/County Commissioners/Board of Supervisors; Mayor; District Attorney; Law Department; Sheriff/Commissioner that oversees a jail, probation, and engages in community policing). Mr. Pistotnik explained that with this arrangement both levels of government have some stake or involvement in the act of incarceration and both contribute to reentry, in some form. It was stated that in Alaska it is different: only the State has direct involvement in incarceration, and that the Municipality of Anchorage isn't directly involved and therefore isn't directly involved in reentry. It was stated that in Anchorage voters have the ability to influence policy and approaches to incarceration and reentry through state-level officials; but in most other large cities there would be opportunities for voters to influence local-level jail and jail reentry efforts as well through the officials that they elect.

Mr. Pistotnik explained that as a result programs and models that work in other large cities may not work without adjustments, and that pathways to promoting successful reentry or diversion away from jail may be different as compared to other "large" cities that have stakeholders at the local level operating a local jail system. Mr. Pistotnik stated that it is his impression that "reentry outcomes" are not a natural output of public safety conversations in Anchorage, and that since there are certain stakeholders missing from these conversations in Anchorage there is an inherent lack of data, knowledge, and awareness surrounding incarceration and reentry informing understanding of public safety in Anchorage. Mr. Pistotnik stated that as a result there needs to be an intentional effort to reach out and break down natural bureaucratic barriers in order to include these concepts at a local level.

Mr. Pistotnik provided some examples of local jail responsibility: San Diego County and Veteran's Moving Forward; a special housing unit in Los Angeles County Men's Central Jail for self-identified gay and transgender people; Clark County Jail and collaboration with the local homelessness coalition. He also presented the example of Sheriff Joe Arpaio from Maricopa County, AZ as a counter to clarify that just because there is a local jail system does not mean there is inherently a benefit to the community.

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Mr. Pistotnik wrapped his presentation by explaining that messages of public safety in Anchorage may not organically include concepts related to reentry, that data may be missing from decision making around public safety, and advocacy efforts at the local level may require additional framing and background if reentry/justice involved people are the target population. Mr. Pistotnik challenged the audience to reflect upon

5. *Updates & Information Sharing:*

Janice Weiss, Reentry Unit Manager, Dept. of Corrections (Janice.weiss@alaska.gov)

The Alaska DOC Unit has funding for reentry services. It is a one-page application that reentrants can complete to request funding support for some type of support service; it must come through a 3rd party (e.g. an organization) or through a probation officer. This is a resource that is available statewide and covers a very wide-array of services and resources. Ms. Weiss explained that DOC staff will work to ensure that if someone requests a resource that is already offered or available elsewhere, that those options be explored prior to using this funding opportunity. Ms. Weiss also explained that there is interest in expanding this resource. It was stated that those on ankle monitor and those at a halfway house are eligible for this opportunity, and LSIR score is not a consideration; the one requirement is that one must have been incarcerated for at least 30 days. For more information or to submit a request, you may contact either of these email addresses: doc.reentry@Alaska.gov OR stacie.williamson@alaska.gov.

Christina Shadura, Partners Reentry Center (christinashadura@pfpalaska.org) – PRC is open and accepting walk-in clients and referrals, and it was stated that PRC has expanded eligibility for individuals that have been incarcerated anytime within the last three years. It was also stated that PRC is moving towards accepting individuals with open cases; they will announce that when the change is fully implemented. Ms. Shadura explained that expansion efforts are continuing to move forward and will include having ANJC case management services on-site, as well as having SCF Family Wellness Warriors offer court-approved anger management, Learning Circles, and recovery support groups on-site.

Chet Adkins, Family Wellness Warriors, SCF (one2onementorship@gmail.com;) – Mr. Adkins reiterated that in January, 2022 SCF Family Wellness Warriors will begin offering sober support groups at the PRC building and court-approved anger management classes free of charge. For those interested in engaging in anger management services, an intake is necessary; call 907-729-5440 for details and to schedule an intake.

Next Meeting
TBD