

**Anchorage Reentry Coalition**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**1/7/21**  
**Hosted online via Zoom**

**Representatives in attendance included those from the following organizations/groups:** Alaska Department of Corrections (HARS and Reentry; institutional staff; medical services; Anchorage Probation; chaplaincy); Southcentral Foundation; Partners Reentry Center; Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Alaska Native Justice Center; U.S. Probation; Alaska Dept. of Juvenile Justice; Division of Behavioral Health, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services; Alaska Criminal Justice Commission; Public Defender Agency; NeighborWorks Alaska; Running Free Alaska; Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center; Christian Health Associates; Supporting Our Loved Ones Group; Anchorage Public Library; Cook Inlet Tribal Council; Ladies First Program, Dept. of Health and Social Services; OSMAP, Dept. of Health and Social Services; Alaska VA; GEO Group (Parkview); Alaska Air National Guard; Food Bank of Alaska; Kenai Reentry Coalition; The Bridge (Fairbanks); Fairbanks Reentry Coalition; Mat-Su Reentry Coalition; Norris House; Arc of Anchorage; Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness; Alaska Behavioral Health; Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital; U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Alaska; Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Alaska Dept. of Health and Social Services; and AMHB/ABADA.

Estimated Total Attendees: 53

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

Mr. Pistotnik welcomed attendees and introduced the agenda of speakers for the meeting.

2. *Laura Brooks, HARS Deputy Director, DOC* ([laura.brooks@alaska.gov](mailto:laura.brooks@alaska.gov))

Ms. Brooks acknowledged the events that took place the day prior at the U.S. Capital and expressed gratitude for the good work being done locally despite numerous challenges. Ms. Brooks explained that she oversees the health and rehabilitation division at DOC which includes physical and mental health services, treatment programs (SUD, sex offender), and education and reentry programming. It was stated that the COVID-19 Response Plan has been updated many times over the last year; there have been approximately 18,000 COVID-19 tests completed among those in-custody; and outbreaks have been managed at five DOC facilities and two CRCs.

Ms. Brooks explained that the first major outbreak inside a DOC facility did not occur until November, 2020. It was stated that the outbreak at FCC has been cleared; the outbreak at Goose Creek is winding down; the outbreak was managed and is under control at Mat-Su Pre-Trial; the outbreak at Hiland Mountain is appearing to remain at steady levels; and the numbers of positive cases are reportedly slowing at Anchorage Correctional Complex.

Asymptomatic spread is still of great concern, and testing at in-take has revealed about 160 positive cases which has allowed for quarantining and limiting further spread. It was explained that actions to mitigate COVID-19 spread and exposure include: testing at intake and quarantining as necessary; limiting movement in facilities; limiting transfers in or out; testing people prior to releasing to a CRC; and testing people prior to releasing to transitional housing or other treatment programs in the community. It was

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stated that 5 inmates have passed away due to COVID-19 complications. Since mid-December there has been, under an FDA EUA, a monoclonal antibody treatment that has been given to about 40 inmates that meet certain criteria (newly diagnosed with COVID-19, 65 years and older with qualifying underlying medical conditions). The anecdotal evidence is that these treatments have proven successful in reducing hospitalizations.

Ms. Brooks stated that Securus, the DOC phone contractor, agreed to add a 4<sup>th</sup> free 15 minute phone call for inmates per week. Also, DOC began administering COVID-19 vaccine as part of the Phase 1, Tier 1 which covered staff and patients in DOC infirmaries; most people that were offered the vaccine accepted it. Vaccination of people 65 and older is scheduled to commence starting January 11<sup>th</sup>, but further vaccination dates are unknown at this time. Ms. Brooks emphasized that vaccines will not be mandatory, although incentives may be used to encourage uptake. Onsite clinics will also be offered for staff to receive the vaccine. DOC visitation is still prohibited.

Ms. Brooks explained that DOC created a release form for individuals that were releasing and trying to return to a community that required some proof that the individual was not COVID positive.

It was explained that there is likely to be a bill coming through the next legislative session regarding the use of technology inside the correctional institutions to aid with habilitation and rehabilitation programming, and that it was likely to have passed last session except for the onset of the pandemic.

Ms. Brooks reiterated that there is limited use video conferencing for attorney visits and that networking capabilities inside the institutions tends to be very limited; there have been efforts to understand what limitations exist and what can be done to build capacity to allow for more technological tools to be used inside the institutions. There are still restrictions on allowing groups of inmates to gather.

3. *Dr. Mark Simon, Alaska Department of Health & Social Services ([mark.simon@alaska.gov](mailto:mark.simon@alaska.gov))*

[NOTE: MUCH OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BELOW IS STANDARDIZED AND NOT NECESSARILY TIME SENSITIVE; IF YOU ARE SEEKING THE LATEST INFORMATION ABOUT THE VACCINE SCHEDULE AND DATES PLEASE REFER TO "[COVIDVAX.ALASKA.GOV](https://www.covidvax.alaska.gov)" FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION. THE PPT FILE USED BY DR. SIMON IS AVAILABLE]

Dr. Mark Simon introduced himself as an emergency physician that works with an SUD/ODU treatment clinic, and who is also working with DHSS on the COVID-19 response. Dr. Simon acknowledged the events in Washington D.C. and also the good work being done in reentry. Dr. Simon began his presentation by explaining that there are currently two very effective and safe vaccines available for COVID-19; asking questions about the vaccine is good and OK, as is being informed about potential side-effects and benefits. The website "[COVIDVAX.ALASKA.GOV](https://www.covidvax.alaska.gov)" has a wealth of information about the vaccine and upcoming scheduling.

Dr. Simon described the procedures for how vaccines are typically created and authorized, including how the clinical trials operate. It was stated that no steps were skipped during the clinical trial process for a COVID-19 vaccine and that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized COVID-19 vaccines

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for emergency use (EUA) for both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Dr. Simon emphasized that safety standards for the COVID-19 vaccines were held to the same standards as other vaccines, and that there was a rigorous review of the safety data before authorization was given to distribute the vaccine. Dr. Simon explained that the speed in which the vaccine was created and approved was a result of a successful approach taken by the federal government and the companies involved in making the vaccines, including mitigating risks for companies in some ways and speeding up certain parts of the process.

Dr. Simon explained some of the science regarding how the COVID-19 vaccine works in the human body, and some of summative points regarding the clinical trials that determined efficacy of both the vaccines. Both vaccines currently available are a 2-dose series (Pfizer is 3 weeks apart; Moderna is 4 weeks apart) and both are very effective at preventing COVID-19 and deemed to be very safe with minimal side-effects for most people (some allergic reactions have been identified). Dr. Simon stated that a person that gets the vaccine should expect to get a reaction and that is normal, such as headache, soreness, a fever, muscle aches; these are indicators that the vaccine is doing what it is supposed to do. It was explained that vaccines are a way to acquire long-term immunity from COVID-19 without the risks of being ill from the disease.

It was stated that vaccine safety is monitored by the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System; V-SAFE is also a monitoring system intended to monitor for potential adverse reactions, post-vaccination. Dr. Simon explained that it is important for each individual to consider the risks and benefits of receiving a vaccine.

Dr. Simon explained the structure of the Alaska COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, and stated that as of 1/4/21 there were 114,800 doses of vaccine allocated to AK. Dr. Simon explained about the Vaccine Allocation Advisory Committee and how the Federal and State guidelines for releasing vaccine work, including the Phases and Tiers. As of the meeting Phase 1a is fully open and Phase 1b is set to open 1/11/20; Phase 1B, Phase 1C, and Phases 2-3 dates are still TBD. A public meeting is scheduled for 1/11/21 in which the public may offer comment on distribution of vaccines; see COVIDVAX.ALASKA.GOV for details.

Dr. Simon explained that the vaccine is free and that individuals should not incur any charges, and that there are no plans for a vaccination mandate. Dr. Simon stated that individuals should still continue to wear a mask. He explained that the logistics of getting vaccines to people is very complicated, and that there are still a lot of elements of the vaccination process being developed in real time and that leadership is aware of some of the potential stumbling blocks associated with signing up for an appointment to get vaccinated.

4. *Teri Tibbitt, Advocacy Coordinator, AMHB/ABADA ([teri.tibbitt@alaska.gov](mailto:teri.tibbitt@alaska.gov))*

Teri Tibbitt introduced her roles as the Advocacy Coordinator for the Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse which is a citizen's advisory board, the Coordinator for the joint advocacy efforts for the Alaska Mental Health Trust (AMHTA) and partner advisory boards, the Co-Chair of the Juneau Reentry Coalition, and the Coordinator of the AK Justice and Reentry Partnership.

Ms. Tibbitt, in response to Ms. Brooks, added that there is a stakeholder group that is standing by to advocate for and assist DOC with moving their technology needs along, with an interest in enhanced

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access to habilitation and rehabilitation services (e.g. education and training; substance use and mental health treatment; visitation; and faith-based services and programming).

Ms. Tibbitt explained that she was attending the meeting under the auspices of the AMHTA, and that starting January 22<sup>nd</sup> there will be statewide legislative advocacy calls each Friday during the legislative session through May. These calls are intended to provide an opportunity to discuss and review legislation that is being tracked that impacts Trust Beneficiaries, such as budget items, impacts to service providers, families; areas of interest include potential impacts to the criminal justice system. There are also opportunities for joining in on advocacy efforts. The calls this year will be hosted via Zoom and will take place from 12:15-1:15pm; if interested in participating on the Zoom calls, or joining the list to get advocacy alerts feel free to reach out to Ms. Tibbitt via email. Lastly, Ms. Tibbitt stated that it appears that generally the proposed budget released by the Governor is flat-funding budget items that she is tracking, including reentry and DOC; it is anticipated that the Governor will release an amended budget in February.

5. *Barbara Mongar, Coalition Coordinator, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition ([barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org](mailto:barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org))*

Ms. Mongar explained that the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition is hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Mat-Su Reentry Summit is being hosted virtually on January 12 and 13 from 9am-3pm (with plenty of breaks). The theme this year is “Building Effective Partnerships for Successful Reentry” and the conference will include both state and national speakers. The four different areas covered by the conference include employment and job training, housing, mental health and drug treatment, and criminal justice issues. CME credits are available. Speakers include the internationally recognized Dr. Stephanie Covington Stephanie Taylor Silva is a person in long-term recovery that is also a certified in peer support; there will also be a panel of people with lived experience. Registration [as of 1/7/21] was still open. Feel free to contact Ms. Mongar if you encounter problems registering.

6. *Jonathan Pistotnik, Coalition Coordinator, Anchorage Reentry Coalition*

Mr. Pistotnik made two announcements regarding other conferences that were forthcoming. The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Reducing Recidivism and Reentry Conference is scheduled for February 9-12. It will be held online, and run from 9am-3pm (with breaks between sessions). The registration link and more details are expected to be available soon. Also, it was announced that there is a Tribal Reentry Conference on March 16-18<sup>th</sup>; this is still in the planning phasing with more information is forthcoming. All information will be shared with the coalition as it is available.

7. Open Discussion

*Demetria Veasy (Midtown Job Center, DOLWD)* – Ms. Veasy alerted meeting attendees that there were some virtual job fairs in the planning stages, including the City-Wide Virtual Job Fair and the Annual Employment First Job Fair. Information will be shared once those details have been finalized; dates are

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still TBD but the Employment First Job Fair may occur around March and the City-Wide Job Fair in May. Fliers are shared via GovDelivery and there is information about job fairs on the DOLWD website ([jobs.alaska.gov/jobfairs/index.html](http://jobs.alaska.gov/jobfairs/index.html))

*Jonathan Pistotnik (Anchorage Reentry Coalition)* – Shared a link to an upcoming webinar/training: GAINS Center Self-Care for Criminal Justice Professionals Across the SIM: Considerations for Intercepts 3-5. The link is [here](#).

**Next meeting TBD**