

Anchorage Reentry Coalition
Meeting Minutes
3/31/22
Hosted online via Zoom

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

Alaska Department of Corrections (Reentry Unit; Anchorage Probation; HARS; Spring Creek); Partners For Progress/Partners Reentry Center; Southcentral Foundation, Family Wellness Warriors; Alaska VA; Alaska Native Justice Center – Youth Reentry Program; Adult Reentry Program; Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, Coordinated Entry; Alaska Natives Reentry Group; One2One Mentorship Program; Supporting Our Loved Ones Group; ACLU of Alaska; Compassion Prison Project; FOCUS Group; Dept. of Health and Social Services (DBH; Project Hope; Ladies First); Division of Juvenile Justice; Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; Recover Alaska; The Arc of Anchorage; NeighborWorks Alaska; Anchorage Coordinated Resources Project (Mental Health Court); Akeela Development Corp; RurAL CAP; Alaska Public Defender Agency; Christian Health Associates; Alaska Mental Health Board; Alaska Therapeutic Alumni Group; Anchorage Public Library (Loussac & Mt. View); Get By

Estimated Total Attendees: 53

Jonathan Pistotnik (jpistotnik@nwalska.org), Coalition Coordinator, Anchorage Reentry Coalition

Mr. Pistotnik opened the meeting by announcing that April is Second Chance Month, and that the purpose of the coalition meeting today is to highlight just some of the services that are available in the community to help those who are justice involved. The format of the meeting is intended to give some of the programs, resources, and advocates an opportunity to provide updates, offer new introductions, or reaffirm their engagement in this space of working with justice involved people. He acknowledged that despite the policy changes, continually shifting focus and prioritization, there is still an immense amount of resources and opportunities for engagement, and the meeting is geared towards highlighting some of those opportunities.

Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness - Coordinated Entry.

Mac Lyons (mlyons@aceh.org), Coordinated Entry Manager

Ryan Chernikoff (rchernikoff@aceh.org), Transition Coordinator

Website: <https://aceh.org/our-work/coordinated-entry/>

Mr. Lyons explained that Coordinated Entry (CE) is a system that helps to streamline placement and access to housing for those that are homeless. It was explained that if someone is homeless, they may go to an access point and conduct an assessment. This assessment takes about 20 minutes, and after completing the assessment it will put individuals into the Homelessness Information Management System (HMIS) from which placements into housing resources can take place. Mr. Lyons explained that they work with youth, single adults, and families, and also stated that ACEH is involved in the Mass Care Exit Strategy and is in the process of housing an estimated 800 individuals through the next few months. Mr. Lyons explained that they are open to suggestions on how CE works and that feedback from the community is welcomed to help improve the system. Mr. Lyons clarified that living in transitional housing can count as “homeless” and pointed out that there are many resources listed on the ACEH website, including a list of Access Points where one may complete an assessment.

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Alaska Nations Reentry Group
Bob Churchill (rock4af@gci.net)

Mr. Churchill explained that the Alaska Nations Reentry Group (ANRG) began in 2015 as a Talking Circle, and that ANRG is centered around traditional Alaskan Native culture. It is open to all, men and women, and it meets on Friday mornings at PRC at 9:30am. ANRG has helped develop a process to assist those who may be trying to return to their home (e.g. a rural Alaskan village) after incarceration. ANRG has worked with the Anchorage Police Department to educate new officers on cultural diversity within the Anchorage community, and among Alaskan Natives communities. The group has helped to promote village safety as well. Mr. Churchill explained that they have not been meeting in-person for some time due to the pandemic however they are looking at starting in-person meetings again in the next few weeks. For more information you may contact Mr. Churchill via email or the staff at Partners Reentry Center.

One2One Mentorship Program
Stephanie Rhoades (one2onementorship@gmail.com; 907-229-3016), Founder

Ms. Rhoades explained that prior to beginning this program she was a District Court Judge for 25 years, began the first mental health court, and became very knowledgeable about systems and navigating them. Upon retiring Ms. Rhoades began a program to help mentor justice involved women and help them to navigate systems. Currently, groups take place on Saturdays at New Life Development and on Monday evenings at House of Transformation. Ms. Rhoades explained that individuals on bail also face many of the same collateral consequences as those who are reentering; many women she works with also have caregiver/parental responsibilities that may add to the complexity of their situation. Through the program women engage with one another, problem solve and talk through challenges they are facing, and offer support to one another. Ms. Rhoades explained that due to COVID, the matching of mentors and mentees is no longer a component of the program but rather she is working with women herself and providing guidance and mentorship on a case-by-case basis to those that could use assistance navigating complex systems or situations (e.g. DVR, OCS).

AK Dept. of Corrections - Anchorage Probation
John Hirst (john.hirst@alaska.gov), Probation Officer II

Probation Officer John Hirst explained that their office has backpacks that contain basic hygiene items and a list of resources courtesy of the DOC Reentry Unit. Other resources that are available include bus passes, cell phones, clothing vouchers; there is a reentry services request form from which people may request financial support for other needs and services (e.g. clothing, work-related items, housing, etc.). PO Hirst also explained that Anchorage Probation is interested in collecting information about resources that are available in the community, and that they have a board in their office with QR codes that staff can use to access various resources. If your organization has a flyer or handout, please share that via email with PO Hirst so that he can pass those resources along to the other staff in his office. He also stated that there is interest in exploring some ways of utilizing Coordinated Entry to place people into housing pre-release.

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Alaska Veterans Administration

Samantha Adams-Lahti (samantha.adams-lahti@va.gov), Veterans Justice Outreach Social Worker

Ms. Adams-Lahti explained that she is a Veterans Justice Outreach Social Worker, and her colleague is Mindi Thomas. Ms. Adams-Lahti stated that they work with any veteran that has had some engagement with the criminal justice system, whether it be someone who had some involvement with the police, whether they are currently incarcerated, sentenced, unsentenced, or formerly incarcerated. It was explained that sometimes you won't know if someone is a veteran and rather than asking if someone is a veteran, it is better to phrase the question and to ask if someone has served in the military. Ms. Adams-Lahti explained that they can assist with healthcare enrollment and facilitating access to treatment services. They also assist with Veterans Court, which is a part of the Therapeutic Court system in Alaska, and are open to doing presentations or sharing information with stakeholders engaged in the court system.

Supporting Our Loved Ones Group (SOLOG)

Angela Hall (sologrouplady@gmail.com), Founder

Website: <https://www.solog.org/>

Ms. Hall explained that she is the founder of Supporting Our Loved Ones Group (SOLOG) which is a support group comprised of family members and friends of loved ones who are currently incarcerated in Alaska. It is a volunteer-based group that provides peer support to family and friends, engages in advocacy, assists with resources and supporting members in working with corrections, and hosts group meetings that are currently held virtually over Zoom. SOLOG has members and engages with people from all across the State of Alaska.

Alaska Native Justice Center - Adult Reentry

Jarrell Daniel (jjdaniel@anjc.net), Case Manager

Website: <https://anjc.org/services/adult-reentry/>

Mr. Daniel is an Adult Reentry Case Manager. Mr. Daniel explained that the adult reentry program has a focus upon personal safety, housing, and employment, and that it is open to all (all races/ethnicities; to people with open or closed cases). Through this program clients can receive assistance with bus passes, clothing, rental assistance. Mr. Daniel explained that ANJC does not directly provide housing to program participants, but has begun a program in collaboration with a transitional housing provider called the Independence Program that can provide shelter to participants. Mr. Daniel explained that referral partners include House of Transformation, Partners Reentry Center, Department of Corrections, and others. Clients can participate in MRT, receive intensive, one-on-one case management support, employment support, and join in support groups. Email addresses for the case managers working with this program: Amy.gilmore@anjc.net, Jjdaniel@anjc.net, and Kuuipo.miramontes@anjc.net.

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Alaska Native Justice Center – Youth Reentry
Austin Johnson (austin.johnson@anjc.net), Program Manager
Website: <https://anjc.org/services/youth-reentry/>

Mr. Johnson is the Youth Services Program Manager. Mr. Johnson explained that eligibility requirements for the program are that one is 14-22 years old, and is for youth that have a conviction of a crime; all cultural backgrounds are accepted, but AN/AI youth can be eligible for additional services offered through Cook Inlet Tribal Council. This program is delivered in collaboration with the Division of Juvenile Justice, McLaughlin Youth Center, and the other youth detention facilities located around the State. Mr. Johnson explained that program services include development of leadership and life skills, mentoring and coaching, promotion of emotional and spiritual healing, the building of relationships, and building of other protective factors. Emergent needs are also addressed in terms of resources, court accompaniment, referrals, resume building, clothing, rental assistance, school supplies, laptops, and more. Mr. Johnson stated that clients are offered opportunities to engage in cultural activities and group events.

NeighborWorks Alaska – Supportive Housing
Laura Cox-Wilson (lcox@nwalaska.org), Director of Supportive Housing
Website: <https://www.nwalaska.org/permanent-supportive-housing>

Ms. Cox-Wilson prepared and presented a short PowerPoint presentation and began by explaining that NeighborWorks Alaska (NWA) has several lines of business that includes managing affordable/low-income housing, operation of a home ownership center, and supportive housing for homeless individuals and families. It was explained that the supportive housing programs offered through NWA include: Sponsor-Based Rental Assistance (SRA); Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA); Resources and Initiatives to Support and Empower (RISE); Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP); CV Transitions; and Forest Park Optional Relocation Program (FROP). [Brief overviews of these programs can be found in the slides]. It was explained that permanent supportive housing is available through NWA to help safeguard against a return to homelessness; it is a scattered site model, that utilizes case management, is trauma informed, and is based on a low-barrier, housing first model. Ms. Cox-Wilson explained that housing contributes to better health outcomes. It was stated that funding sources for these programs include HUD, the State of Alaska, AHFC, and the Municipality of Anchorage, and provided an extensive list of state and local partners.

Partners Reentry Center
John Boullion (johnboullion@pfpalaska.org), Director
Partners Reentry Center 208 E 4th Ave 907-272-1192; reentrycenter@pfpalaska.org
Website: <https://www.partnersforprogressak.org/partners-reentry-center>

Mr. Boullion explained that Partners Reentry Center (PRC) works with individuals that have been released from incarceration, completed a treatment program, or had a conviction within the past three years. The program is 4-6 months, potential longer in certain instances, and includes goal setting, workshops, referrals

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to other community services (e.g. assessments, mental health or SUD treatment, etc.), peer support groups onsite, on-going case management, employment support, resume preparation, training placements, and other more tangible supports such as securing identification, offering bus passes, and assisting with transitional housing. PRC will assist with transitional housing placements and support, and for those that successfully transition into independent living there is the opportunity to receive financial support with that housing transition (e.g. first/last months rent, deposit). Mr. Boullion stated that in collaboration with AHFC, PRC has recently hired a new Homeless Outreach Manager, Brad Schmitz (907-310-8770) to assist with placing people that are homeless into housing; so long as a person was living in a place not meant for continued habitation a person can be eligible for this opportunity. PRC is open and available for walk-ins.

Partners Reentry Center – Anchorage Reentry Coalition Case Management Program
Christina Shadura (christinashadura@pfpalaska.org), Reentry Coalition Case Manager

Ms. Shadura introduced herself and explained that her position is funded through a Recidivism Reduction Grant, through the AK DHSS Division of Behavioral Health and that there is collaboration with the Alaska Mental Health Trust and NeighborWorks Alaska. Ms. Shadura explained that in her role she assists with pre and post-release services for medium to high risk reentrants (based on LSIR scores and IPO referral). This particular program can begin 3 months prior to release and can continue for 6 months in the community. Participants may be male or female; must be an adult over 18 years old; be releasing from an Alaska correctional facility; and have a recent LSIR score. All individuals with a sex offense may qualify, and all referrals must come through DOC (IPO, PO, Ed Coordinator). Besides the usual referral process, interested candidates for this program can submit a normal PRC application and indicate on it that they would like to participate in the Coalition Case Management program. Ms. Shadura explained that clients can receive access to services offered by PRC, including housing assistance, bus passes, referrals, employment support, vouchers, and more.

Anchorage Public Library
Rebecca Barker (rebecca.barker@anchorageak.gov), Community Resources Coordinator
Ziona Brownlow (ziona.brownlow@anchorageak.gov), Community Resources Coordinator

Ms. Barker explained that in 2017 the Anchorage Public Library discovered that about 1 in 4 visitors reported experiencing homelessness, and a similar number also reported being Mental Health Trust Beneficiaries. That led to the implementation of a program to have social workers at the library. There are five libraries in the Anchorage Municipality, however supports offered by Ms. Barker and Ms. Brownlow are only available at the Muldoon, Loussac, and Mountain View locations. Ms. Barker explained that they do not carry a caseload and that they do not offer clinical services, rather they are connectors and serve as facilitators to accessing/re-accessing services. Ms. Barker explained that they are free to talk to people that come in, assist in hosting events (e.g. Connect: Housing Event, 2-5 pm on every first Friday; <https://anchorage.librarycalendar.com/event/connect-housing>), and are always interested in making more

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connections with resources and stakeholders around the community to aid those who may be in need of support. Ms. Brownlow stated that they are able to meet individuals “where they are at” and serve as very low-barrier resources; they are also interested and able in helping to serve as advocates and help communicate the potential needs of an individual to resource providers. Ms. Brownlow reiterated to attendees to reach out with questions or with resources.

ACLU of Alaska

Mike Garvey (mgarvey@acluak.org), Advocacy Director

Mr. Garvey began by explaining that the ACLU of Alaska is a non-partisan organization that aims to defend the civil liberties and civil rights of all Alaskans and that is achieved through communications and publications, legal action, political and policy advocacy, and community organizing. It was stated that as an organization there is an interest in protecting and advancing the rights of incarcerated people and advancing reforms within the prison system. Mr. Garvey explained that they don't provide direct services, but currently they are engaged in legislative advocacy around technology in prisons and new criminal statutes; the ACLU is also building partnerships in the community and is seeking to be informed by those who have been incarcerated and their families and loved ones who have been impacted. Mr. Garvey explained that within the last few months the ACLU started an Action Network geared towards prison reform and building up momentum; bi-weekly meetings take place every other Wednesday. Mr. Garvey also stated that they began leading an ongoing community needs drive to collect goods and basic essentials that can be given to those reentering the community. Mr. Garvey made mention of an event being held at the Akela Space with art by Mr. Nick Showers-Glover who is currently incarcerated at Spring Creek.

- ACLU Prison Action Network Registration: https://aclu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYsdumppjsvGtUzMyiiCKchbdH_3Wqkqo8U?_x_zm_rtaid=C0291NAIQkyBC2VasZkNpw.1648747851146.39b4b8ee8d160d4590c13d7cd4cc43b4&_x_zm_rhtaid=753
- Needs Drive Online Form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeDkRH4aL2FG57Z3bCHRPnnce6oUKjcySQq0PREtzmO9ZuTsQ/viewform>
- “From Remorse to Reform” Art Event Announcement: <https://www.facebook.com/events/524238342662192/?ref=newsfeed>

Department of Labor/Alaska Job Center Network

Demetria Veasy (demetria.veasy@alaska.gov; direct line: 907-269-4733), Assistant Director

Ms. Veasy explained that there are job centers in Anchorage (Midtown and Muldoon) and also one in Wasilla, and went on to say that employment and job training services are available for everyone including reentrants. Ms. Veasy explained that they offer an employment after incarceration workshop which is conducted every Monday from 2-3pm over Zoom; resume building and interviewing strategies are other workshops that are being offered and are also delivered online at this time. Ms. Veasy also explained that justice-involved people can obtain jobs with the State of Alaska if they have the corresponding qualifications and skill-set, and that

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there are some state agencies that do not conduct background checks. Ms. Veasy stated that it is possible and there are staff at the Job Centers that can assist with applying to state jobs; there is a pre-recorded video currently available to assist with that process and the ability to receive support in applying for positions with the State. Ms. Veasy explained there is also support for using the Alaska Jobs system (this replaced ALEXsys); assistance for veterans; and career support and training services that can assist people with potential employment prerequisites (e.g. trainings, certifications, work clothing, work tools, etc.). Ms. Veasy stated that there is engagement with DOC to build some sustainable programming and referrals processes to support those who may not be going to PRC, ANJC, and others, and that there is interest in going back into the institutions to deliver job training and readiness activities pre-release and to deliver post-release employment support. Ms. Veasy stated her interest in continuing to engage and build partnerships with other stakeholders in the community.

- Phone numbers: Midtown Job Center - 907-269-4759; Mat-Su Job Center -907-452-2500; Muldoon Job Center - 907-269-0000; Career Support and Training Services for funding for training and/or support services - 907-269-0088

Compassion Prison Project

Jess Angel (vivid907pss@gmail.com), Peer Support Specialist

Website: <https://compassionprisonproject.org/>

Ms. Angel stated that she is a peer support specialist with a focus on trauma and supporting those who are impacted by incarceration. Ms. Angel stated that she helps to hold virtual groups and volunteers her time with Compassion Prison Project. Ms. Angel is interested in bringing a pilot program called Trauma Talks to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated population, and in connecting with partners and community to help deliver the curriculum. Ms. Angel explained that Compassion Prison Project is based in Los Angeles, but Trauma talks is being delivered in Africa and Europe and around the U.S. Ms. Angel encouraged folks to reach out to learn more about the support groups she offers as well as the Compassion Prison Project.

FOCUS Group & Southcentral Foundation Family Wellness Warriors

Chet Atkins (cadkins@southcentralfoundation.com), Learning and development Specialist

Mr. Adkins stated that he was formerly incarcerated himself for 28 years, and has been out for 7 years. Mr. Adkins stated that FOCUS Group began in 2015 and was originally aimed at supporting those who had been incarcerated for 15 years or more, but it has evolved into a general support group and a safe space for those that have been incarcerated to come together to talk, connect, and support one another. Mr. Adkins explained that there has been changes at SCF over the last year and that there is continuing to be growth and expansion into reentry work – as evidenced by what is taking place at PRC. SCF Family Wellness Warriors offers support groups at PRC five days a week: Sober Support group meets on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday from 12-1pm and Tuesday from 6-7pm; a court-recognized Anger Management class is offered free of charge

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on Tuesdays starting at 11:30am. Mr. Adkins also stated that there is support for a chaplain at Hiland Mountain. Mr. Adkins explained that his experience and insights as a formerly incarcerated person are being utilized to help inform efforts and activities within SCF FWW; he stated that trauma informed approaches are employed by FWW and that there are discussions around the creation of a trauma-focused, culturally sensitive therapeutic community at Palmer Correctional Center when it opens full time.

Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni Group

Isaac Pacor (groupcoordinator@pfpalaska.org), Administrative Support Staff

Steve Corven (stevecorven@aktcalumni.org), Peer Support Coordinator

Website: <https://www.aktcalumni.org/>

Mr. Pacor started by stating that the Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni Group (AKTCA) began in 2006 by graduates of the therapeutic courts to continue to support those who went through these court programs. Currently, AKTCA is a non-profit organization with two part-time staff positions that provides peer support in collaboration with Veteran's Court, Wellness Court, children in need of assistance in Anchorage and across the state. Through this program there is the opportunity to offering role modeling and mentorship, and the building of community. AKTCA organizes recreational activities for members (e.g. bowling, hiking, get-togethers, etc.), as well as advocacy on behalf of the wellness courts both in-state and nationally. Mr. Corven introduced himself as an alumni and graduate of the Anchorage Felony Treatment Court in 2019; he was volunteering his time with AKTCA until they were able to obtain some funding to help cover a paid position. Mr. Corven stated that locally there are about 40 peer support groups per month, primarily over Zoom right now, and reiterated that they offer support to those engaged in the therapeutic courts and assist those navigating systems that can be overwhelming. Mr. Corven stated that they are engaged with alumni groups and organizations outside of Alaska to help inform their own efforts, and that they will be speaking at NADCP (National Association of Drug Court Professionals) this year.

Alaska Department of Corrections - Reentry Unit

Stacie Williamson (stacie.williamson@alaska.gov), Program Coordinator

Ms. Williamson reiterated that there are some resource bags for individuals that have been released; additionally, through their program they have provided bus passes, clothing vouchers, and cell phones. There is a one-page application for funding opportunities that must be submitted through a third-party. Ms. Williamson provided other updates including that the Second Chance Act Grant is set to conclude in September, 2022, all correctional facilities are out of their outbreak status and are open to visitation and outside contractors (inclusive of reentry programs), contact visits and programming are coming back online with limited size and distancing, masks are still required, and that isolation and quarantining policies are still in effect for those with COVID-19.

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Jonathan Pistotnik, Coalition Coordinator, Anchorage Reentry Coalition

Mr. Pistotnik closed the meeting with few additional remarks. He stated that he knows that there are other resources in the community that can help those reentering that were not covered or represented in the meeting today. Mr. Pistotnik reminded people that his email distribution list has around 400 email addresses and that he is always happy to share information via his periodic updates as well as on the Reentry Coalition Facebook page; he is also connected to the other seven reentry coalitions around the state and is happy to share information to them if that is of interest. Reentry Coalition meetings are another platform and method for connecting to the community, so please reach out if that is of interest. Mr. Pistotnik explained that reentry simulations are starting to come back and that there are simulations scheduled throughout the month in Kenai, Mat-Su, Dillingham, and Fairbanks; reach out to Mr. Pistotnik if there is interest in hosting a simulation or otherwise getting involved in some way.

OTHER RESOURCES SHARED IN THE CHAT DURING THE MEETING:

- Drop Box folder with flyers and documents from the meeting:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kwcm6igyld33jqu/AABj6dCjMpBLSNVDROQ1F7sXa?dl=0>
- Amanda Hillberry, Program Coordinator, Alaska Public Defender Agency SAME Justice (AmeriCorps) Program. Amanda.hillberry@alaska.gov, 907-322-6638. Our members connect low income, justice involved Alaskans with critical stabilizing resources in their communities. We serve pre and post-sentence populations. Our goals are to connect our clients with substance use disorder treatment, stable housing, public assistance, and any other services to address their non-legal barriers to success.
- Dimitrios Alexiadis, founder of Get-By. I was released in 2015, successfully completed my probation in 2018 (and my Bachelors degree) and I've been living in Anchorage as a reintegrated citizen since. Here's a brief overview of my business: Get-By connects formerly incarcerated and underemployed people with small business owners looking to fill on-demand shifts. Get-By operates a mobile on-demand marketplace with pre-screened and pre-vetted applicants, allowing managers to make quick and data-driven hiring decisions while alleviating the stress of finding workers urgently. If you'd like to get in touch: info@get-by.org
- Melissa White (mbwhite@southcentralfoundation.com), Learning & Development Advisor Southcentral Foundation Family Wellness Warriors also added that SCF offers peer support leader and coaching training programs and are becoming certified to offer a SAMHSA trauma-informed training for those who support justice-involved individuals.
- Corrections Populations in the United States, 2020 Statistics Tables -
<https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus20st.pdf>