

Anchorage Reentry Coalition
Meeting Minutes
5/27/21
Hosted online via Zoom

Representatives in attendance included those from the following organizations/groups: Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority; Alaska Department of Corrections (Reentry Unit; HARS; Anchorage Probation; ACC); GEO Group (Parkview; Midtown; Cordova); Partners Reentry Center; Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Southcentral Foundation, Family Wellness Warriors; Alaska Native Justice Center; Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center; Alaska VA; Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Alaska; Turyia of Alaska; Running Free Alaska; Anchorage FACT; Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness; Arc of Anchorage; NeighborWorks Alaska; Alaska Public Defender Agency; Dept. of Health and Social Services (OSMAP; Ladies First); New Life Development; Alaska Correctional Ministries; U.S. Probation; Alaska Legal Services Corporation; Alaska Criminal Justice Commission; Cook Inlet Tribal Corporation, Chanlyut; One2One Mentorship Program; Division of Juvenile Justice; AK Reentry Partnership; Akeela Inc.; Fairbanks Reentry Coalition; Juneau Reentry Coalition; Bristol Bay Native Association; Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage Aging & Disability Resource Center; AK National Guard, Counterdrug Support Program.

Estimated Total Attendees: 56

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

Mr. Pistotnik stated that he will be wrapping up three years in his position as the Coalition Coordinator in July when the current grant comes to a completion, and that he intends to stay on. Mr. Pistotnik stated that the future of how he will operate is still a bit of an unknown. Despite some of the unknown he will continue to maintain his email contact list and is interested in adding email addresses to that list; continuing to expand contacts and connections to programs engaged or supportive of reentry; hosting coalition meetings and serving as a convener; and engaging in educational activities and advocacy for reentry and reentry services. Mr. Pistotnik stated that he is starting to think about reentry simulations again, and is looking forward towards hosting them again. Mr. Pistotnik encouraged coalition partners to utilize his email list or reach out if you may be seeking connections or information, or have information that you would like to share. Mr. Pistotnik said that he regularly receives phone calls and emails from people in the community asking about reentry services and referrals to key stakeholders, and that there is an interest within the community regarding reentry and regarding those coalition partners that are engaged in this work.

2. *Travis Welch, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority* (travis.welch@alaska.gov)

Mr. Welch is a Program Officer with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (Trust) and oversees projects relating to Disability Justice. Mr. Welch explained that the Trust is a state corporation that has a Board of 7 Trustees, and that the Trust serves people (beneficiaries) living with mental illness, behavioral health issues, those living with Alzheimer's, traumatic brain injury, and other cognitive impairments. It was stated that three aspects to the Trust's work is to serve as a convener and to bring different organizations together to address issues that impact beneficiaries; to serve as a funder for programs benefiting beneficiaries (~\$30 million annually); and to provide advocacy on behalf of beneficiaries. Mr. Welch

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explained that the Trust has an interest in trying to prevent beneficiaries from becoming involved with the criminal justice system, and that there is an interest in ensuring appropriate services are available during various stages of the criminal justice process (e.g. therapeutic courts, in-prison program reentry services) to help reduce potential trauma to that beneficiary. More specifically to reentry, the Trust provides funding for community reentry coalitions in the Mat-Su, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Anchorage. Mr. Welch explained that the Trust provides funding for housing through AHFC, and provides funding for the APIC program. Mr. Welch expressed his gratitude towards those engaged in reentry and the positive efforts directed towards beneficiaries. Mr. Welch also stated that the Trust is able to provide technical assistance to organizations that provide services to Trust beneficiaries, including grant writing, strategic planning, and more. The Trust also provides mini-grants that can go towards an individual beneficiary. More information about services available through the Trust and their work can be found on their website; contact information can also be found on the website. [<https://alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/>]

3. *Laura Brooks, Health and Rehabilitative Services, AK Department of Corrections*
(laura.brooks@alaska.gov)

Ms. Brooks is the Operations Manager of Health & Rehabilitation Services within the Department of Corrections. Ms. Brooks stated by clarifying that the general recidivism rate in Alaska (~60%) is inclusive of felony return to custody, misdemeanor and probation violations, and stated that figure has dropped about 9% over the last decade. Ms. Brooks stated that while probation violations and technical violations are important, new crime recidivism in Alaska is 29% which represents a 11% decrease over the last five years. Ms. Brooks stated that these figures indicate that the efforts of those engaged in promoting reentry and related efforts, they are working and expressed appreciation for the contributions of those engaged in these efforts.

Ms. Brooks proceeded to provide updates pertaining to COVID-19, stating that 35,000 COVID tests inside DOC facilities have been completed, just under 6,000 vaccinations have occurred, resulting in nearly 3,000 fully-vaccinated individuals. It was stated that DOC is seeing people coming into their facilities that are already vaccinated as well, and that individuals are continuing to be offered vaccinations while in-custody including those coming into the facilities from the community. Clinics are continuing for inmates and staff, incentives are being offered, videos are being used to try to inform and reach those that may have yet to be vaccinated, and assistance is being provided to DJJ facilities throughout the state.

Ms. Brooks stated that staff and inmates are still wearing masks inside the facilities, screening is taking place for those entering the facilities, and DOC is opening the facilities to pre-COVID levels effective as of 5/27/21. Ms. Brooks stated that this normal movement within the facility is being allowed, and that access to all classes, group activities, recreation, religious services, etc., are not going to be limited except in those instances where the physical space and distancing among individuals may be a factor. It was stated that public access is returning to normal, meaning all volunteers, case managers, professional visits, outside contractors will be allowed in so long as they wear a mask and pass the basic COVID-screening procedures; one exception is that there is no contact visitation yet for those interested in visiting with

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individuals at DOC facilities. Ms. Brooks clarified that there are no restrictions or limitations on the basis of vaccination status for inmates or outside visitors.

4. *Joanne Wiita, Reentry Unit, AK Department of Corrections* (joanne.wiita@alaska.gov)

Joanne Wiita is the Grants Administration Manager for the Alaska DOC Reentry Unit. Ms. Wiita provided a brief overview of the Second Chance Act Grant (SCAG) and the Correctional Adult Reentry Education, Employment. Ms. Wiita explained that there continues to be federal Second Chance dollars available to various entities, and encouraged others to look into those opportunities. It was explained that Alaska was awarded a SCAG in 2018 and it entails: establishing a reentry program (currently operational in Anchorage, Mat-Su, and Fairbanks); establishing a reentry unit; improving risk and needs assessment (LSI-R); promoting quality programming (e.g. offering evidenced-based programs); conducting quality improvement with the assistance of UAA; developing a peer mentor network, which will include an opportunity to obtain a certificate as a Peer Support Professional II; and strengthening relationships with AK Native people and rural communities. Ms. Wiita expressed interest in engaging with community-based organizations that are interested in offering culturally-relevant programming. Ms. Wiita detailed that currently among SCAG participants 31 are active in the program, 62 have successfully completed, and 70 have not completed/failed/no-shown. Ms. Wiita proceeded to display an organizational chart of the staff people working within the Reentry Unit. Ms. Wiita explained the different ways that DOC is staying engaged and communicating with the community including various work groups, reentry coalitions, AK Reentry Partnership, and other local engagement. It was stated that DOC has another grant, the Recidivism Reduction Strategies Program (CAREERRS) which will be explained at a future time.

5. *Janice Weiss, Reentry Unit, AK Department of Corrections* (janice.weiss@alaska.gov)

Janice Weiss is the Reentry Program Manager of the Reentry Unit. Ms. Weiss explained the purpose of the reentry unit, and stated that they are close to being fully staffed (9 people). Ms. Weiss stated that due to the fact that Alaska is unified system and that there are a variety of people in each institution (sentenced and unsentenced; short-term and long-term) it can prove difficult to delivery programming and meet the needs of all individuals; programming offered through the reentry unit is intended to help overcome some of those barriers and will be available across all institutions for those that would like to partake. It was stated that a series of modules will be available (cognitive self-change; victim impact; treatment and recovery; employment/housing; setting goals; writing a case plan; surviving probation & parole), based off of a framework from *The Ex-Offender's Reentry Success Guide: Smart Choices for Making It on the Outside* (2020). Ms. Weiss proceeded to provide more details about each of the modules, and stated that efforts are being made to finish development of the modules with the intent that it will be available in the next fiscal year.

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6. *Daniel Perkins, Chanlyut Program, Cook Inlet Tribal Council (DGPerkins@citci.org; Office: 907.793.3640)*

Mr. Perkins introduced himself as the new Program Manager at the Chanlyut Program at Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC). Mr. Perkins explained that the Chanlyut Program was first created back in 2006 by Bill Turnos, and that it was initially an 18-month program modeled off of the Delancy Street Model, and that micro-enterprises were utilized to help fund the program. It was stated that as of February, 2021 the program became a 3.1 ASAM level of care (low-intensity residential program) and is now a 4 to 6-week program. Mr. Perkins explained that the program is still for men, is located in the same location in Mountain View, and has 18 beds (max 24 beds). Mr. Perkins explained that there are staff on-site to assist residents with personal needs to facilitate their success, and that residents have the ability to access employment and job preparation resources through CITC (interview preparation, resumes, job seeking, skill training and job development, etc.). Mr. Perkins explained that at Chanlyut there is an in-house village council model, and that each individual takes on and practices having certain responsibilities in the home over time. Mr. Perkins stated that residents will have access to peer support and sober support during the program and after completion, and that out-patient clinical care is available after graduation as well. Mr. Perkins stated that graduates have been experiencing a great deal of success since the change to the shorter program.

Other information from the chat box: Chanlyut is not CURRENTLY full. We do serve Men only, ages 18+, BOTH native and non-native. We are a 6-week Low-Intensity Residential Program (ASAM 3.1). We typically exclude the SO population, but are willing to consider marginal cases. For application to Chanlyut, please call 793-3600 and we can get an appointment for assessment or addendum (as-needed). Online other articles:

- <https://citci.org/2020/12/a-lot-to-offer/>
- <https://citci.org/2021/02/reimagining-chanlyut/>

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

Ms. Rhoades introduced herself as a retired District Court judge that created the first Mental Health Court in Alaska, and upon retiring started the One2One Mentorship Program which services justice-involved women. Ms. Rhoades explained that the program started out of an interest among women that she was working with to have access to mentors to aid professional development. Ms. Rhoades explained that she is continuing to hold in-person group meetings again at New Life Development. Ms. Rhoades stated that there are currently six mentees in the program, and that while there are interests and efforts being made to assist with employment, there are a host of other matters that are being attended to. Ms. Rhoades stated that matching mentees and mentors was largely put on pause during the pandemic, but now that things are opening up again that could lead to more normal programming. Ms. Rhoades is seeking referrals into the program for those women that are open to engaging and interested in the support the program has to offer.

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8. *David Westlake, Turiya of Alaska (turiyaalaska@gmail.com)*

Mr. Westlake explained that Turiya of Alaska brings yoga, mindfulness meditation, and trauma-informed practices into correctional facilities and other organizations around the community. It was explained that prior to COVID Turiya of Alaska was engaged in yoga teacher training inside Spring Creek CC, and was engaging with people and visiting facilities and programs such as the Lima Unit inside ACC, McLaughlin Youth Center, Northstar Hospital, JBER, and other places. Mr. Westlake proceeded to explain some of the philosophy and approach that Turiya of Alaska takes to engage with people through yoga and mindfulness activities, and engaged in a short breathing exercise with the attendees. Mr. Westlake encouraged those in attendance to reach out if there is any interest in partnering. Mr. Westlake has a radio program on 106.1 (KONR) called Breathing Stillness that can be heard on Friday afternoons or streamed online.

9. *Lisa Keller, Running Free Alaska (lisa@qci.net; info@runningfreealaska.com; 907-242-9361)*

Ms. Keller is the General Manager of Running Free Alaska. Ms. Keller explained that traditionally Running Free has been operated out of Hiland Mountain, and that while the in-prison component has been largely put on hold during the pandemic that has allowed for more energy to be spent on the reentry component of the program called “Released Runners.” Ms. Keller stated that in the past Running Free has helped women get connected with people in the running community, covered entry fee costs, and provided running gear. Ms. Keller explained that last summer the “Peek A Week” program was started, which entailed hiking a new peak or trail each week; last summer there was one woman that partook and reported that she really benefited from the activity. Ms. Keller stated that there are currently 8 women who have committed to the activity for the upcoming summer. Ms. Keller explained that a long-term goal of Peak A Week is to try and get women out of state to engage in trail races in places such as Zion, Bryce Canyon, and Grand Canyon National Parks. Ms. Keller explained that The Running Free 4 Miler race will be held virtually this year, from June 24-July 4. Ms. Keller explained that Running Free has made the decision to help cover the cost of child care for women that are participating in programming, as that was cited as an area of need among participants.

Sign up for Running Free 4 Miler through our website: www.runningfreealaska.com.

10. *Teri Tibbett, Alaska Reentry Partnership (teri.tibbett@alaska.gov; akreentrypartnership@gmail.com)*

Ms. Tibbett stated that the Legislature is still in-session, and that there are still some items worth tracking; a recent budget alert went out that has information about items of interest relating to mental health and other issues (reach out for more information if interested). Ms. Tibbett proceeded to describe the Alaska Reentry Partnership, which is a statewide grassroots collaboration of various stakeholders engaged in reentry. It was stated that meetings happen once a month and serve as an opportunity to share information and connect with stakeholders around the state. To date, there has been some advocacy efforts surrounding legislative matters including access to and use of technology inside DOC facilities. Ms. Tibbett stated that there is a continued interest in engaging with other organizations and partners doing this work, and also connecting with people that have lived experience who can share their story. Ms.

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Tibbett encouraged attendees to reach out if interested in learning more, sharing one's story, or getting engaged. [Website: www.akreentry.org]

11. Trey Watson, Cordova Center, GEO Group (twatson@geogroup.com)

Mr. Watson, introduced himself as the Facility Director at Cordova Center. Mr. Watson stated that the Cordova Center is a Community Residential Center located in the Ship Creek area of downtown Anchorage that primarily houses males, and that they currently have contracts with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) to house individuals from their respective corrections systems. Mr. Watson explained that they do cooking on-site and catering for the other two local facilities. Mr. Watson explained that individuals typically housed through the BOP contract have longer sentences and that they receive support in finding employment and treatment services in the community while at Cordova. Mr. Watson stated that individuals coming to Cordova through DOC are either confined or furloughed; confined residents engage in activities on-site or via community work services, while furloughed residents are able to access treatment services in the community and engage in employment. Mr. Watson stated that COVID-19 protections has limited some of what they can typically do in-house, but increased vaccine availability has allowed the facility to begin to open up again. It was stated that at Cordova evidenced-based cognitive programs are offered, including MRT and Living In Balance. Mr. Watson explained that a new culinary training program has started up for residents, and that there is a basic 15-hour training course option and an advanced 25-hour course, and that there are efforts to aid individuals in gaining employment in the culinary field.

12. Silifu Tito, Midtown Center, GEO Group (stito@geogroup.com)

Ms. Tito, Facility Director at the Midtown Center, explained that Midtown Center is an all-female facility that has many residents coming over from Hiland Mountain with a current contractual capacity of 24 residents. It was stated that Midtown is contracted with DOC, and that it mirrors much of what happens at Cordova Center. Ms. Tito stated that there has been efforts to utilize video technology to connect residents with family members, which has had a positive impact. Ms. Tito expressed an interest in continuing to network with people and programs engaged in reentry work in the community.

13. Michael Collier, Parkview, GEO Group (mcollier@geogroup.com)

Mike Collier, Facility Director, Parkview Center stated that June 22nd, 2021 will mark the one-year anniversary of the re-opening of Parkview which had been closed since 2016. Mr. Collier stated that during the height of the COVID pandemic that Parkview became a quarantine facility, in collaboration with DOC and public health; residents receive regular testing, monitoring, and on-site vaccinations have been offered. Mr. Collier stated that once approval is given through DOC, they are eager to operate in a normal fashion and offer routine programming.

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14. *Christina Shadura, Partners Reentry Center (christinashadura@pfpalaska.org)*

Christina Shadura stated that Partners Reentry Center has re-opened for clients without an appointment, and that the job lab is open again, and that case management meetings and support groups are set to start again at PRC. Ms. Shadura shared that John Boullion is the new Center Director and Josh Adams is the new Deputy Director.

15. *Jonathan Pistotnik, Anchorage Reentry Coalition*

Mr. Pistotnik stated that since pivoting to Zoom, Anchorage Reentry Coalition meetings have averaged more than 50 people per meeting and that continuing to use Zoom to host these meetings may be the long-term approach. He encouraged people to reach out if they are interested in sharing information at a future meeting, or if they would like to give a presentation.

Other Information Provided In the Chat Box Separate from Speakers:

- Trish Main, Anchorage Aging & Disability Resource Center - We are an information & referral center and we have programs that help pay rent deposits or arrears and electric bills. www.muni.org/ADRC.
- Timothy Ledna introduced himself as the new Reentry Coalition Coordinator for Fairbanks.
- Demetria Veasy, Alaska Job Center Network, Anchorage/MatSu Regional Manager, AK Department of Labor and Workforce Development (Demetria.veasy@alaska.gov; 907-269-4733) - ALL Job Centers statewide will be re-opening to the public effective JUNE 1st. Due to social distancing requirements, there will be limited capacity; however, we will be returning to full service delivery. Starting 06/14, we are hosting a Virtual Statewide Job Fair (<https://jobs.alaska.gov/jobfairs/virtual.html>). We have several employers with very high employment needs, especially in the tourism and hospitality industry. Please don't hesitate to contact me for questions or concerns.

**Next Meeting
TBD**