

Anchorage Reentry Coalition
Meeting Minutes
1/19/23
Hosted online via Zoom

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

Alaska Department of Corrections (Anchorage Probation; HARS; Hiland Mountain); Southcentral Foundation, (Four Directions; Family Wellness Warriors); Alaska VA; Alaska Native Justice Center (Adult Reentry Program); Alaska Department of Health (DBH; Project HOPE); NeighborWorks Alaska; Alaska Public Defender Agency; Christian Health Associates; Alaska Mental Health Board; Get By; Running Free Alaska; Alaska Legal Services Corporation; Alaska CHARR; Fairbanks Reentry Coalition; Cook Inlet Tribal Council; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Dept of Labor & Workforce Development; Alaska Behavioral Health; Catholic Social Services; Anchorage Public Library; True North Recovery; The Arc of Anchorage; Valley Charities; Vivid Reading Connections; House of Transformation; Partners Reentry Center; National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation; Restorative & Reentry Services, LLC.

Estimated Total Attendees: 46

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

Mr. Pistotnik opened the meeting and introduced the speakers and meeting agenda.

Patricia D. Gill, Director of Workforce Development, National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (pgill@nraef.org)

Ms. Gill gave a presentation about the Hospitality Opportunities for People (Re)Entering Society (HOPES) Program. Ms. Gill explained that her organization has overarching goals of attracting people to the hospitality industry, empowering them, and providing them opportunities to advance their careers within the industry. Ms. Gill described a vision for a hospitality career pathway and proceeded to describe the steps that one can take to advance their career through work readiness, training and certifications, and job advancement. Ms. Gill further described some of the apprenticeship and training opportunities they offer and stated that there are career opportunities beyond low-skilled, menial jobs. It was stated that generally, if one were to go through a hospitality training program but ultimately move into a different industry, that those skills and training could still be applicable elsewhere.

Ms. Gill stated that the HOPES Program is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor and that it is built upon a “community collaborative model.” It was explained that the HOPES Program model involves collaboration between local Department of Corrections or justice agencies, community-based organizations, state restaurant associations (e.g. Alaska CHARR), and employers [further description of the roles of each entity can be found in the slides]. Ms. Gill explained that performance metrics of this program include: enrollment, pre-release education, credentialing, job placement, and job retention. The HOPES Program is currently operational in eight states, and with several more interested in implementing the model. Typically eligibility criteria includes: 18+ years old; ideally pre-release engagement and enrollment between 20-180 days; returning to the community where services are; sex charges may impact eligibility but that may depend on funding source; and candidates are best suited if they have prior experience and/or interested in the work. Ms. Gill reiterated that the HOPES Program creates pathways for justice-involved people to become employed in the industry, that the model is

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collaborative in nature, and that there are other supports that are likely necessary in order for participants to be successful (e.g. case management and other resources), and that employment is key.

Ms. Gill explained that within the model the NRAEF and local restaurant associations help to work with the employers in the hospitality industry and help promote the idea of career pathways for people engaged in the HOPES Program (and other training and apprenticeship programs that they offer) and promote the idea of investing in their employees in an intentional way. Ms. Gill stated that supervision status could be a factor in program eligibility, however that would be something that local partners and the funder have flexibility to decide. Mr. Pistotnik reflected on the fact that the model relies on the state restaurant association to be a partner in this program; BreeAnna Erickson from Alaska CHARR supported the idea that there is interest for pursuing a HOPES Program locally. Ms. Gill reiterated that apprenticeship opportunities help pay for training, which can be a benefit for both the employee and employer; there is upside of offering apprenticeship opportunities but it can sometimes necessitate advocacy and education about the value to prospective employers. Ms. Gill stated that the hospitality landscape is a bit unique in Alaska and that there is opportunity to build upon existing programs, and that their programs promote living wages. Mr. Pistotnik added that there would be a session at the upcoming Reducing Recidivism Conference surrounding second chance hiring and working with employers.

[A PDF of the slides presented by Ms. Gill are available]

[More information: <https://chooseresaurants.org/programs/hopes/>]

Julie Sanchez, Intake Coordinator, Adult Mental Health Residential Program, The Arc of Anchorage (jsanchez@thearcofanchorage.org)

Ms. Sanchez provided an overview of the new Adult Mental Health Residential (AMHR) program that will be operational soon, once sprinklers are installed; the hopes are that it will be operational by the end of January/early February. Applications are being accepted, however there is a wait list. It was explained that it is a 5-bed facility for men, +18 years old, who suffer from acute mental health needs (e.g. schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, etc.); individuals with SUD or intellectual and developmental disabilities can be admitted, however a mental health diagnosis must be their primary need. Ms. Sanchez stated that it is a 24/7 facility that will have onsite peer support, case management, clinician, nurse practitioner, and a program manager. It is a sober living facility and a tobacco-free environment where each individual will have their own room, and a structured daily program. The intention of the program is to provide treatment and therapies, stabilize their clients, teach life skills for independent living. It was explained that individuals will enter at Level 1 (90 days), upon which the individual will be re-assessed and if they need to stay longer they will be moved to Level 2 (180 days); bed-to-bed transfers are accepted and referrals from other organizations are accepted so long as the potential client has completed an integrated assessment within the last four months; there is a clinician available to conduct an assessment if need be.

Ms. Sanchez stated that they had made contact with DOC staff, and there has been contacts made with other community-based programs. When asked about future expansion, Ms. Sanchez stated that the goal is to expand bed capacity and to allow females into the program, however there is not a timeline on that yet. It was explained that it is a closed facility, however there will be group outings and leaving the facility to go to appointments will

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be allowed. Medicaid will be accepted; individuals that have an arson or sex offense conviction are not allowed in the program. Ms. Sanchez is interested in continuing to make connections with organizations and partners in the community to help get word out.

[Program materials will accompany the notes]

Ariel Berg, Program Director, Third Avenue Resource & Navigation Center (907-717-3731; aberg@cssalaska.org) and David Rittenberg, Sr. Director, Adult Homeless Services (907-744-9329; drittenberg@cssalaska.org), Catholic Social Services

Mr. Rittenberg began by presenting some information about Brother Francis Shelter (BFS). It was explained that BFS is an overnight shelter that first opened in 1983 and is a place where services have adapted to the needs of the community over time; one can access basic needs services such as showers, laundry, clothing, case management, medical services, and more. BFS uses a trauma-informed care model, and has leaned into partnerships centered around homelessness and medical needs. It was stated that due to the pandemic, shelter capacity was reduced to 76 total beds (down from 240) and a focus was placed on serving medically fragile clients that may have limitations in accessing the shelter at the Sullivan Area. BFS became a 24/7 program with three meals per day for clients, and became a referral-based program. Mr. Rittenberg explained that CSS opened a program at the former Sockeye Inn (on Fireweed Lane) about six months ago that is geared towards housing individuals with complex medical needs; BFS is continuing to provide low-barrier shelter services, 24 hours per day, but has increased capacity back up to 120 beds and is primarily a referral-based program. It was explained that Beans Café is no longer adjacent to BFS, but it will be where the new Third Avenue Resource & Navigation Center will be located. If one is seeking a referral the number to call to arrange that is 907-744-0571.

Ms. Berg explained that the new Resource Center is intended to connect individuals to resources and tools that will support their path towards stability; it is geared towards working with people currently experiencing homelessness but may also serve to protect against homelessness as well. Ms. Berg explained that this new service was realized through a partnership between CSS, Weidner Homes, and the Rasmuson Foundation. The anticipated opening date will be late February/early March; hours of operation are planned to be 10am-4pm, Monday through Friday to start.

Ms. Berg stated that this new resource center is intended to serve as a hub for programmatic partnerships, and also for facilitating connections between clients and community resources; there have been about 25 partner organizations that have been identified that can come in and assist with connections and support to housing, mental health services, SUD treatment, identity documents, SNAP, Medicaid, employment opportunities, and more. The facility will have private rooms for programs to connect with clients, there will be basic needs services (e.g. showers, restrooms, phone charging, computer access, storage), and there will be a shuttle to facilitate access to the center and also to take people to appointments. Ms. Berg impressed the importance of partnership and how that is a key component of this program. Mr. Rittenberg added that there will be CSS staff (e.g. navigators) at the facility and that case managers from other programs can utilize the space and provide services tied to their own programs; he also clarified that once they are closer to program launch that they will make their list of partners public. Mr. Rittenberg stated that the resource center will be open to the public and anyone experiencing homeless can access services – there are no program enrollment expectations and that it is intended

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to serve adults 18 years old and up; he clarified that it will not serve as a casual day shelter for folks to just hang out and it is not intended to serve as a food security resource. Mr. Rittenberg and Ms. Berg spoke about the interest in collaborating with SUD treatment services and building connections with those services; they are certainly open to continuing to build partnerships and collaboration even after opening their doors. There was some discussion about the importance of providing concrete and tangible resources, and it was reiterated that there is the intent on providing substantive services in a way that also helps build efficiencies within other programmatic partners. Ms. Rittenberg explained that bus passes may be available for clients but there will be a reliance on the shuttle they intend on operating.

[A PDF of the slides presented by Ms. Berg are available]

Updates & Other Business

Jonathan Pistotnik, Reentry Coalition

Mr. Pistotnik reminded attendees about the upcoming Reducing Recidivism and Reentry Conference that is coming up in February; information about that can be found in the most recent email sent out by Mr. Pistotnik.

Rozel Buzby, Program Manager, Alaska Behavioral Health (rbuzby@akbh.org)

Ms. Buzby shared a save the date for the Alaska Advanced Trauma Training Institute, for June 1-2, 2023 at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage; the target audience are mental health and social service providers, and there will be no cost to attend. Ms. Buzby also shared that they have received two grants to provide trauma trainings, including to those operating in rural Alaska or serving individuals from rural settings; you may reach out to Ms. Buzby if there is any interest in receiving training.

Marsha Oss, Coalition Coordinator, Fairbanks Reentry Coalition (moss@fairbanks.us)

Ms. Oss encouraged people to sign up soon for the Reducing Recidivism Conference, the closing date was expected to be Feb. 1st. Ms. Oss also stated that she was involved in two different ECHO's one for co-occurring disorders and another for peer support; she encouraged others to join in and if there is an interest in giving a presentation there are opportunities to do so.

[Peer Support ECHO Registration link: <https://echo.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcofumtqjqpEtYV-ufkVUfudyEXO-YI6H9f>]

Next Meeting
TBD