

Alaska State HR Office
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EMPLOYING EX-OFFENDERS:

Capturing Talent from an Untapped Resource.

Presented by:
Cathleen McLaughlin, J.D./M.B.A., Director of the Partners Reentry Center
in collaboration with Morgan Jaco, Reentry Coordinator for Dept. of Corrections

OVERVIEW

1. Why should communities and community members care about prisoner reentry?
2. The face of an ex-offender.
3. Barriers to Reentry
4. Partners Reentry Center – Transitioning Back into the Community
5. The 3 Basic Components of Successful Reentry
6. Employment
7. Benefits to an employer to hire Ex-offenders

1. Why should community members care about prisoner reentry?

- Promotes safe communities
- 95% of all prisoners are released
- Ex-offenders will reenter, it is up to all of us to decide what that looks like.

WHY WE SHOULD CARE

- Research shows a correlation between employment and recidivism. Unstable employment is among the major predictors of continued criminal conduct.
- As an employer, you are giving hope that former prisoners can move on and change themselves for the better.
- *Employment* is one of the most effective ways to break this cycle. Fewer crimes, fewer victims and the ex-offender's life and their family's life may be permanently changed for the better.

WHY WE SHOULD CARE

- 1 in 36 Alaskans are under Alaska Department of Corrections jurisdiction
- The crime rate has declined since the 1980s but the number of Alaskans in prison has increased, as have costs for the State.
- The cost is more than \$58,000 per year to incarcerate one adult
- Prison population grows 3% per year. At this rate by 2016 DOC will be at 100% capacity.
- If prison population rates continue as forecasted, there will be twice the number of Alaska prisoners by 2030, necessitating the construction of thousands more prison beds or shipping incarcerated Alaskans to the lower 48 to serve their sentences.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS MISSION STATEMENT

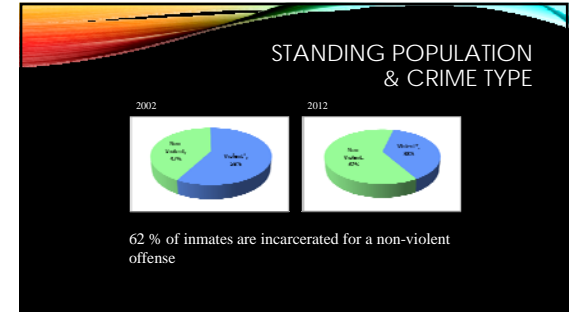
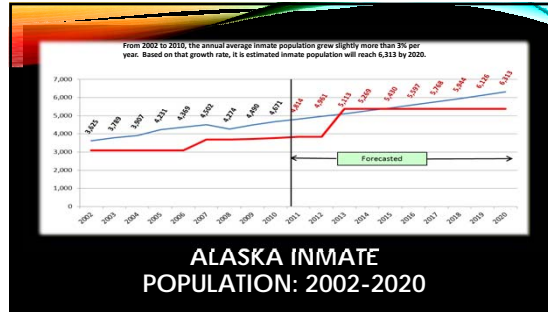
The Alaska Department of Corrections enhances the safety of our communities by providing secure confinement, reformative programs, and a process of supervised community reintegration.

For every prisoner who does not return, there is one fewer crime and one fewer victim.

STATE STATISTICS

- FY 2013 – Dept. of Corrections booked 39,203 individuals into its facilities.
- Snapshot – On June 30, 2013
 - 6,056 individuals were in custody (prison, CRC, or EM)
 - 5,988 individuals were on probation or parole
- Prison capacity-

• Hard beds	5,352	\$58,000.00 per year	\$159.00 per day (2 nd highest, NY #1)
• Soft beds	839	\$31,000.00	\$85.00
• EM	430	\$7,000.00	\$21.00
- Community jails 157 variable
- Estimated growth rate in incarceration rate is 3% a year.
- Alaska will have to build a new prison to accommodate this growth rate by 2016.
- PRC average age of participants is between 37-38.
- 95% of those incarcerated release back into the community.



NATIONAL STATISTICS

- 1 in 4 U.S. adults has a criminal record
- United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world.
- U.S. has 4% of the world's population and 25% of the world's incarcerated people
- Depending on which study you look at, #2 is either Iran or Russia
- At any given time in 2014, there are over 2,200,000 individuals in custody in the United States
- 14,000,000 people move through the prison system every year
- States with highest recidivism rates – Southern belt states & Alaska
- U. S. Prison business - \$1 trillion per year
- Most social systems are based on punishing after the punishment has been already given through sentencing, community service and the shame of doing time

INCARCERATION DOES NOT REDUCE RECIDIVISM

"Lengthy prison sentences are ineffective as a crime control measure... [and] an inefficient approach to preventing crime by incapacitation unless they are specifically targeted at very high-rate or extremely dangerous offenders."

National Research Council (2014)



PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH'S WHEN SIGNING THE SECOND CHANCE ACT, APRIL 9, 2008

"The country was built on the belief that each human being has limitless potential and worth. Everybody matters. We believe that even those who have struggled with a dark past can find brighter days ahead. One way we act on that belief is by helping former prisoners who've paid for their crimes – we help them build new lives as productive members of our society... The work of redemption reflects our values. The bill I'm signing... basically says: We're standing with you, not against you."
 –George W. Bush

2. The face of an offender.

FACE OF A PRISONER

- Gender
 - Men 87.59%
 - Women 12.41%
- 65 - 70% are Non-violent offenders
- 37% are Native Alaskans (with an 85% recidivism rate)
- The majority of ex-offenders live below the poverty line
- 72% have children under the age of 18

RE-ENTRANTS WITH CHILDREN

- In 2010, 2,700,000 children in the U.S. under the age of 18 had a parent in prison.
- In 2010, 1 in 28 kids had a mother, father or both in prison.
- PRC serves or has served 1159 clients with children (out of 2203)
- There are multi-generational family members in prison, sometimes at the same time.
- Most parents are low-risk, non-violent offenders
- From the reentrants perspective:
 - Fear
 - Shame
 - Uncertainty
 - Lack of good role models for themselves
 - **FEELING LIKE AN OUTCAST**

FACE OF THE ALASKA NATIVE PRISONER

- Annually, 35 – 40% of PRC's participants are Alaska Native
- The majority are re-entering society with:
 - Little to no urban skills
 - Requiring post-release treatment as a condition of probation or parole
 - Lack a support system because of the nature of their crime and the banishment from their village
- Level of active participation by Alaska Native Corporations is limited:
 - CITC provides one-time general assistance of \$411.00
 - Access to Recovery - one-time offering of services, capped/no longer in existence
 - Wellness Circles through SouthCentral Foundation
 - Alaska Native Justice Center



BARRIERS TO REENTRY

Statutory

There are over 1700
statutorily mandated
barriers to employment.
(Handout will be provided
at presentation)

Regulatory

7 AAC 10.905(b)

Barrier Crimes Matrix

Societal

- What reentrants release to:
- Little to no support system, especially if they must have probation or treatment in a place that is not their home
 - The lack of an intact family
 - Mistrust of POs and society. "Treat them, nail them, & jail them."
 - Unwelcome
 - Probation and/or parole conditions that set them up to fail

CHALLENGES

- Lack of resources for Rural Re-Entrants
- Social Security Reinstatement
- Mental Health
- Housing (particularly for Alaska Natives in urban settings)
- Lack of Reentry Services Statewide
- Mandated treatment based primarily in Anchorage
- No felon-to-felon contact

**4. Partners Reentry Center –
Transitioning Back Into the Community**



THE PARTNERS REENTRY CENTER



- ### GOALS OF RE-ENTRY
- Stable Housing
 - Employment within 30 days
 - Supportive Services
 - Behavioral Modification
 - Reunification with healthy family and friend support systems

- ### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – FOR HOUSING
- Be within 6 months of conviction or release from incarceration
 - Free from current or pending criminal issues
 - For housing, must be coming out of incarceration or a treatment facility with a Felony and Misdemeanors with an ASAP requirement
 - Our transitional and permanent housing partners have discretion on whether to house individuals with certain offenses and to terminate housing if there is a violation of house rules.
 - Willing to participate in all aspects of the program. PRC is NOT an entitlement program. It is VOLUNTARY, not MANDATORY.

PROGRAMS OFFERED THROUGH PRC

- Employment Readiness
 - Job Readiness Lab Orientation
 - 4 Weekly Employment Workshops
 - Individualized Computer Lab Assistance
 - Daily Updates on Immediate Job Openings
- Reentry Case Management and Support Groups with ANIC
 - Orientation
 - Weekly Men's and Women's Support Groups
 - Individual meetings with Case Managers
 - Community Service Projects
 - MRT Classes
 - Individualized referrals to other programs, services and assistance
- Programs offered each week for Reentrants
 - Ready-To-Rent
- Financial management (credit report and repair) with Money Management, Inc.
- Rear-To-Rear Support groups
- On-line Parenting classes (Zonta Grant)
- DOL Job Search Presentation
- Assistance & Supportive Services for:
 - Housing:
 - Immediate/transitional housing
 - Permanent housing
 - Emergency rental assistance
 - State IDs
 - Food Handler Cards
 - Appropriate work clothes
 - Bus Passes for job search and employment
 - Food cards (for emergency food and toiletries)

ASSISTANCE OFFERED

- Support Groups
- Life Skills Training
- MRT
- Probation violation prevention
- Interview and employment skills
- Goal setting
- Controlling emotions
- Relationships/getting along
- Relapse Prevention
- Mentoring
- Job Readiness
- Budgeting and money management classes
- One-on-One support
- Short-term assistance with housing, bus passes, clothing, and food
- Referrals to other community services and resources
- On-line Parenting Classes

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & COLLABORATION

- Building relationships with private employers in order to refer qualified job applicants to employers;
- Pre-screening for employers;
- Collaboration with the Department of Labor for job search, specific certifications, and specialty work gear;
- Collaborating with New Life Development;
- Reentry Walks (providing educational opportunities for professionals and students to learn about reentry);
- Community presentations to businesses and community organizations;
- Coordinating Community Mentorships with women from "Success Inside and Out."

CURRENT STATISTICS

Individuals Served as of August 31, 2015	2216
Daily average number of reentrants at Center (August 2015)	49-51
Average # of Re-entrants actively in Center working toward self-sufficiency at any given time (i.e. open cases)	276
Re-Entrants who have received supportive services (bus passes, clothing vouchers, food cards, State ID's, etc...)	
Total	1439
Last 60 Days	205
Unique Re-entrants actively using Job Readiness Services (Monthly Average)	271

HOUSING STATISTICS

Housing Assistance	To 8/31/2015
Temporary Housing Placements	714
Long-term Housing Placements (at least 18 with children)	81
Assistance to avoid eviction (26 with children)	80
Total	875

- ### KEY OUTCOMES
- **Employment** – 66 re-entrant hires in August 2015
 - **Employers** – Over 501 employers willing to hire program participants
 - **Housing** – Over 94 landlords willing to rent to program participants
 - **Financial Management** – Money Management, Inc., reports that 6 months after initial consultation, average credit score increased by 42 points, average debt reduced by \$2,219.

KEY PARTNERS

- Dept. of Health and Social Services
- Dept. of Corrections
- Dept. of Commerce, Community & Economic Development
- Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
- Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- Ninestar Education & Employment Services
- Rural CAP
- Alaska Peer Consortium
- Anchorage Community Mental Health Services
- Zonta
- Choices
- Alaska Native Justice Center
- New Life Development
- Money Management International
- Alaska Correctional Ministries
- Case managers at Halfway Houses
- Anchorage Reentry Coalition
- Access Alaska
- Goodwill Industries
- Southcentral Foundation
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council
- Lions's Club
- Alaska Work Source

5. THE 3 BASIC COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL REENTRY

THE 3 LEGS OF THE STOOL

<u>Housing</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Behavioral and Community Support</u>
Transitional	Willingness to get a survival job while looking for a permanent job	Staying accountable
Permanent		Building healthy relationships
Probation or EM approved	Overcoming the shame to apply	Setting short and long term goals

ISSUES A REENTRANT FACES:

- Housing – Ever tried applying for jobs while homeless?
- Transportation – Most reentrants don't or can't have Drivers Licenses. The bus does not always run. How can I get to my job?
- Employment – Will my employer be flexible when I have to report to EM or probation or treatment?

REALITIES OF REENTRY

6. EMPLOYMENT

HOW PRC MANAGES RISK OF HIRING AN EX-OFFENDER

- Evidence-based risk needs assessments
- Pre-employment screening for employers
- Informing job applicants and employers of Fidelity Bonding Program, Tax Credits and DOL collaborating programs.
- Respecting confidentiality of employers

BANNING THE BOX

The budding "Ban the Box" movement across the country calls for employers to wait until a prospective employee is being interviewed or has a provisional job offer before inquiring whether he or she has a criminal past. The idea is that ex-offenders will have a better chance at getting a job if they're not eliminated at the very beginning of their job search. This process also measures the individual's character and honesty at the time of the interview.

Alaska is actively looking at this through the Criminal Justice Working Group (handout will be available at presentation)

Many Alaskan employers have voluntarily "Banned the Box" and provisionally hire individuals with criminal records.

ASSESSING THE RISK

- Obtaining the criminal history and check it against some simple criteria.
- Asking the applicant about a criminal history will provide information about attitude and acceptance of responsibility.
- Determining circumstances such as alcohol or drug use that may have contributed to the offense and if the applicant has addressed the issues.
- Criminal histories of applicants can be retrieved from a probation or parole officer if the applicant will consent to that disclosure. (Ex: Courtview - one resource but not always accurate.)

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Training
- Alaska Career Ready
- Resume development and job search assistance
- Apprenticeship
- Bridge to Success
- Workshops on Employment After Incarceration
- MASSI Program
- Veteran Assistance
- Ticket to Work
- Assistance to get Work Gear and Clothing

EX-OFFENDERS CAN BE THEIR OWN WORST ENEMY

"What should one do after prison? Give up? Cower in a corner? Let life pass quietly by because we are no longer entitled or allowed to be part of a community? After 17 months in the federal correctional system, I walked out with fear, shame, and a paralyzing sense of uncertainty. Each time I applied for a job, I was unsettled and afraid because I knew rejection would follow. Then something happened. I screwed up enough courage to apply for a job as an assistant to a disabled professional. To this day, I thank and admire him because he gave me a chance to regain a sense of worthiness. We all want to be relevant no matter which side of the fence we have been on."

7. BENEFITS TO AN EMPLOYER TO HIRE AN EX-OFFENDER

EX-OFFENDERS CAN MAKE GOOD EMPLOYEES

- Trained/pre-screened allows for:
 - Transitional employment
 - Work readiness "soft skills"
 - Specific job skills training
 - Motivated to succeed can be measured
 - Close monitoring of credibility, honesty and trustworthiness
 - Assess eagerness to work
- (Reality – Not all ex-offenders are willing or capable of committing to legitimate work but that is often the exception, not the rule.)

ECONOMIC HIRING INCENTIVES


- Fidelity Bonding- \$5,000 bond for 100% coverage up to six months.
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
- ** Handouts to be provided at presentation

WHY I HIRED A FELON

"What do you like yourself for being – a trustful person or a distrustful person? When I hired an ex-offender I knew I couldn't lose. She was highly motivated to succeed, and sincere. When she disclosed her criminal record, it was clearly painful for her and from that moment on, I felt I could trust her. This was a big moment for me for 2 reasons: (1) A prior employee had embezzled from me so I had every reason to question and doubt anyone with a criminal record, and (2) I am blind. I have to trust those around me as a matter of necessity. Some may think I took an unreasonable risk in hiring an ex-offender but from my point of view, it was the best hiring decision I ever made because she came with the need and desire to prove she was worthy. All I did was give her that chance." –BH – Professional employer

SUCCESSES IN REENTRY

- Reentrants who have partnered with PRC are now working in:
 - State agencies, including through DOL's MASST program
 - Oil and gas subcontractors, including those on the North Slope
 - Social service and non-profit agencies
 - Construction (many with union membership)
 - Retail businesses throughout the State
 - Apprenticeship programs
 - Tourism
 - Seafood industry



CONTACT INFORMATION

- Cathleen N. McLaughlin, J.D./M.B.A.
Director
Partners Reentry Center
419 Barrow Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-258-1192
907-258-1193 (direct line)
907-240-1159 (office cell phone)
541-941-6739 (cell phone)
cnmclaughlin@efnnet.org
