

Networking with inspiring individuals at the National Association of Reentry Professionals (NARP) Conference

Greetings,

Cindy Yeager, the Mat-Su Reentry Program Coordinator, and I had the opportunity to attend the National Association of Reentry Professionals (NARP) Reentry 2024: A “Wholistic Approach to Reentry” Conference in Franklin, Tennessee last month.

We had the chance to listen to some inspiring presentations and also got to reconnect with some of the speakers that attended our 2023 Mat-Su Reentry Summit last year. Dr. Tolliny Rankins and her husband Rodney Rankins both presented at the NARP conference, along with Shelia Bruno and Ian Bick. If you would like to hear their presentations from our 2023 Reentry Summit click on this link: [2023 Mat-Su Reentry Summit - YouTube](#) (Session 01 - Dr. Rankins, Session 07 - Ian Bick, Session 09 - Shelia Bruno, and Session 11 - Rodney Rankins)

Furthermore, we touched base with two speakers who will be presenting at our 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit this September:

- **Tanaine Jenkins:** A reentry expert and strategist, as well as the best-selling author of “From Prison to President: 7 Ways to Succeed in Your Second Chance.” Tanaine is a formally incarcerated individual who channels her experiences to inspire transformation. Recognized as a thought leader, she conducted a TEDx Talk in 2022, sharing insights on overcoming post-conviction challenges.
- **Dr. Sandra Smith:** the Vice President of Via Hope, which is the Mental Health Resources of Texas (USA). Dr. Smith is a Certified Reentry Peer Specialist and also a SAMHSA GAINS Center trainer for “How Being Trauma-Informed Improves the Criminal Justice System Responses.” Dr. Smith is a Reentry Advocate based on her own lived experience as a formally incarcerated individual.

One of the best things about going to reentry conferences and trainings, both in and out-of-state, are the inspiring individuals you meet and the new programs you learn about. In future newsletters I will go into more details about some of the programs and concepts that were discussed at the 2024 NARP Conference, but for now I just wanted to mention some of the dedicated reentry professionals that we were able to network with.

Barbara Mongar
Coordinator, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition



Cindy Yeager, Mat-Su Reentry Program Coordinator, Barbara Mongar, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Coordinator, and Sheila Bruno, 2023 Mat-Su Reentry Summit Speaker and author of “Wife after Prison” at the 2024 NARP Conference.

California to expand re-entry programs for formerly incarcerated individuals. Here's how they work

By: Levi Sumagaysay, Economy Section, calmatters.org / April 24, 2024

As California closes prisons and shifts its focus to rehabilitation, it is expanding programs that help formerly incarcerated people transition back into society.

The state's Corrections Department is touting its male and female community re-entry programs as among its most successful tools in helping former inmates become self-sufficient after they get out of prison.

Data cited by the state shows that participation in both programs helped reduce repeat offenses — and could possibly save California some money.

The women themselves know they face an uncertain future, and while some worry their convictions will make it difficult for them to find jobs, a few recently told CalMatters they're grateful for the program's help.

Michaela Twyman, 28, has been incarcerated for about three years, is now in the Female Community Reentry Program, and hopes to get out next summer. "Prison was not what I expected," Twyman said. "There are so many opportunities in prison. They don't want people to sit around and do nothing."

Before she landed at the re-entry program, she was at the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, where she took part in a labor apprenticeship program. Recently, Twyman completed a vocational training program at Saint John's Program for Real Change, the Sacramento halfway house where she is serving out the rest of her sentence. Shortly afterward, she and six other women from the facility went to a job fair, where they handed their resumes to prospective employers.

The decade-old voluntary re-entry program gives some state inmates the opportunity to serve out the rest of their sentence — anywhere from 60 days to two years — in places with fewer restrictions than prison. Once they complete certain requirements, they can get permission to go offsite for school, work or church. The program at Saint John's currently has 47 participants, including those attending community college and some who are working toward getting their GED diplomas. At least one has graduated from Sacramento State University.

The re-entry programs by the numbers

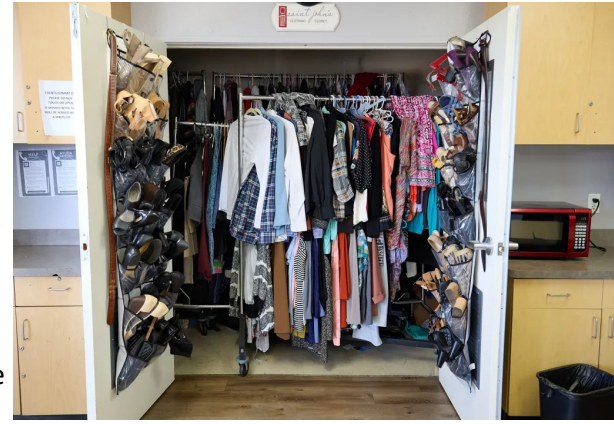
There are 12 re-entry centers of varied sizes around the state: six that have a total of about 600 male participants, and six with about 375 female participants. The program for men has three facilities in Los Angeles, and one each in Butte, Kern and San Diego counties. Besides Sacramento, the other women's facilities are in Bakersfield, Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Fe Springs and Stockton.

For the 2023 to 2024 fiscal year, California spent almost \$112 million on the male re-entry program, and almost \$28 million on its female counterpart. For 2024 to 2025, the [budget](#) for the program for men is almost \$81 million, while the budget for the women's program will increase to almost \$35 million.

The Corrections Department plans to add six more sites for men and has already identified three new locations: One will be in Stockton, while a facility in Fresno is set to open this summer and one in Sacramento is scheduled to open next year.

California's prison population is now at about 95,000, and the state projects it will drop to [about 93,000 incarcerated individuals](#) this summer.

The most recent state data shows that California's recidivism rate fell from [44.6% in fiscal year 2017 to 2018](#) to [41.9% in fiscal year 2018 to 2019](#). The state uses conviction rates within three years as its primary measure of recidivism, and arrests and return to prison as supplemental measures. **(Continues on Page 3)**



A closet filled with clothes at Saint John's Program for Real Change, which houses the Female Community Reentry Program, in Sacramento on March 8, 2024. The program offers formerly incarcerated people clothes they can wear for job interviews or other activities as they transition out of prison. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

California to expand re-entry programs for formerly incarcerated individuals. Here's how they work

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In 2021, a Stanford Public Policy [study](#) commissioned by the Corrections Department found that Male Community Reentry Program participants who were there for at least nine months saw their likelihood of re-arrest decrease by 13% and their likelihood of reconviction drop by 11%.

The researchers also figured out that two of the programs for men cost taxpayers less than the average annual cost of incarceration, which now stands at [more than \\$132,000](#). In the Butte County facility, the average cost per inmate was \$48,000 a year, while the average cost per inmate at the Los Angeles County Amity facility was \$38,500 a year, according to the study. The researchers recommended that California expand the programs and conduct a more in-depth analysis of the costs and benefits, especially around recidivism.

Mary Xjimenez, a spokesperson for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, said the agency's recent research efforts are focused on evaluating its various programs' effectiveness on recidivism. "Our newest data show the effects of the passage of [Proposition 57](#) (which has increased the number of nonviolent inmates eligible for parole), and our determination that education, vocational and cognitive behavioral programming are effective at reducing recidivism," Xjimenez said in an email.

She added that the department is looking at preliminary recidivism rates for its parole program called Specialized Treatment Optimized Programming, for individuals released in the fiscal year 2018 to 2019. This examination comes after [a CalMatters investigation](#) found that the state was not collecting data on whether participants of that program were finding jobs or going back to prison.

The state's most recent data about the female re-entry programs, from [fiscal year 2015 to 2016](#), shows that women who participated in it (at the time, it was called Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Program) had lower recidivism rates than female offenders overall: 20.3%.

As for more recent tracking of the female re-entry programs' results, Xjimenez said 24% of current participants are employed, and 43% are getting education and training. Laura Pierson, the vocational program instructor at Saint John's, said she doesn't know what happens to her students afterward because she is not allowed to have contact with them after they leave; they are tracked by their parole officers afterward.

Elsa Chen, a professor and chairperson of the political science department at Santa Clara University whose research focus includes [criminal justice](#) reform and re-entry from incarceration, said it's a "great idea" that the state is investing in re-entry programs.

"It's important to focus on the ability of people to support themselves" after they get out of prison, Chen said.

The collection and reporting of recidivism data is [tricky and inconsistent](#), the professor added. "It's important to think a little harder when people are talking about recidivism" because there are so many variables, she said. Among them: How long people are tracked by parole officers after they get out of prison; a parole violation might be because of a technical reason and not necessarily because somebody committed a crime; and the way one jurisdiction defines recidivism may be different from another.

Chen also said what may be reflected in recidivism data is "not a measure of a person's behavior after release so much as it is a measure of a person's interaction with the criminal legal system after release."

NOTE: For full article go to [California to expand re-entry programs for formerly incarcerated - CalMatters](#)

Mat-Su Reentry Events:

- **Virtual Mat-Su Reentry Services Forum**
Wednesday, May 15
10:00 to 11:00 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and Reentry Case Management Program invites you to join us in a virtual Reentry Services Forum. Service providers, PO's, Case Managers, and anyone interested in attending are welcome.

- **Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meeting**
Tuesday, June 4
9:00 to 10:30 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition has a virtual Steering Team Meeting on the first Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 7, 2024. All are welcome to attend.

SAVE THE DATE!!!

September 5 & 6, 2024

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition will be holding its 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit on Sept 5 & 6 at the Menard Sport Center, Wasilla. More info to come.

For questions or zoom links to the above events please contact Barbara Mongar at:
barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org

Knik Tribe Events:

- **Knik Tribe Family Culture Nights** — Bi-Weekly, Wednesday, 5:30 - 7:30 PM; Location: 758 Shoreline Dr. Wasilla, AK; Open to All (See Attached Calendar) Compact@KnikTribe.org 907-373-7991
- **Talking Circle**—Tuesday, at 6:30 and Wednesday at 5:30; Same location above; **Contact Ralph Lewis at 907-841-9773**
- **Talking Circle**—Thursday, from 12 to 2PM; Location: Willow Library, Willow, AK

Mat-Su Reentry Coalition

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition is a collaboration of individuals, community stakeholders, public and not-for-profit agencies, faith-based and business partners who are united and committed to reducing recidivism among returning citizens to the Mat-Su community.

Our Mission

To promote public safety by identifying and implementing strategies that increase former prisoners' wellbeing within the community and reduce the likelihood of their return to prison through recidivating.

We will accomplish this by:

- Improved communication and collaboration between Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) and the community.
- Building community partnerships to strengthen local services.
- Identifying barriers for those being released from incarceration and taking an active role in addressing those concerns.
- Promoting community educational and training opportunities for those releasing regarding resources.
- Work in conjunction with Alaska DOC to inform and promote reentry efforts in Alaska.

Note: For more information on the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition contact Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org or go to our Webpage at Mat-Su Valley Reentry Program | Valley Charities Inc



Mat-Su Job Center Update

By: **Amanda Carlson**, Mat-Su Job Center Manager

Our office is busy assisting job seekers and employers gear up for the summer season, the Mat-Su Job Center is also hiring. We are taking applications through Workplace Alaska for 2 Employment Service Technicians, one to work with the public in our resource room, and the other is a dual role with Career Support & Training Services and our Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (Veterans are highly encouraged to apply). Visit Workplace Alaska or go to our DOL recruitments page for more information <https://www.jobs.alaska.gov/jobfairs/>

The Mat-Su Job Center is open weekdays 8am-5pm for both job seeker and business services. We are located at 877 W. Commercial Drive in Wasilla or call us at (907) 352-2500. We want to partner with you for the success of our fellow Alaskans!

The Department of Labor & Workforce Development has Incumbent Worker training available which provides eligible employers with funds for employees to gain the necessary skills to keep a job or advance. This benefit can make employers be more competitive by ensuring their employees have the necessary skills to keep a job or advance. Incumbent worker training also increases productivity and profits, helps grow the company, prevents layoffs, and reduces turnover. It can benefit employees by providing advancement opportunities; industry recognized credentials, and transferrable skills. To learn more please contact dol.iwt@alaska.gov

ABC Alaska & Alaska Safety Alliance is inviting the public to register for free training at the 2nd Annual Safety Expo and Training held at the BP Energy Center May 9th in Anchorage, see the flyer for more details on available training and how to register.



May Trends: Home sales prices and interest rates continued to rise in 2023, denting affordability. **Also in this issue:** Alaska has hundreds of ghost towns. Here are three places abandoned for very different reasons.

Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month

- **Alaska Family Services—Behavioral Health Treatment Center (BHTC): They offer professional substance use and mental health counseling services**
Address: 5851 E. Mayflower Court, Wasilla, AK; **Phone:** (907) 3731135
Website: <https://akafs.org/programs/behavioral-health-treatment-center/>
- **Alaska Department of Health: 988 and Careline: Both offer 24/7 access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing mental health-related distress**
Careline Crisis Services Phone: 877-266-4357;
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Phone: 988
Website: 988 - Careline Alaska