



# Newsletter

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## The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Seeking Organizations to Join our Coalition

What is the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and why is it important?

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition (MSRC) 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 reentrants to the Mat-Su community.

The MSRC Steering Team, the governing body of the full coalition, consists of 10 members representing state, public and private organizations within the Mat-Su Borough.

Our current Steering Team consists of members from the following organizations: Goose Creek Correctional Center, Palmer Probation Office, True North Recovery, Mat-Su Job Center, Access Alaska, Mat-Su Housing & Homelessness Coalition, Veterans Affairs, Set-Free Alaska, Knik Tribe and Mat-Su Health Services.

Each year the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition has grown stronger, adding more community partners and increasing the education of community members on the importance of providing services to individuals being released from correctional institutions. We do this through community reentry simulations, annual reentry summits and community-wide presentations. It is important to have community engagement as part of the reentry process because the more the community understands some of the struggles that reentrants go through the more likely they are to support reentry services being put in place to assist these individuals. Having reentry services available to assist these individuals to be successful and become contributing members of society is essential for public safety.

Along with increasing community engagement, building strong partnerships is also a vital part of our Reentry Coalition work. Representatives from community partner organizations regularly attend our monthly Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team and community-wide meetings, sharing updates about their organizations and bringing back the information to help to educate their organizations and the community at large about the importance of reentry services.

Reentrants face a number of obstacles when they are released from incarceration and having access to community resources plays an important role in their success. This is why the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition focuses on building and maintaining strong community partnerships with different service providers within the Mat-Su. These partnerships address not only a wide range of social services, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment; they also address job training, employment, housing, cultural events and other issues. Maintaining strong partnerships with agencies and service providers in the Mat-Su helps to expand our reentry programs ability to provide reentrants with the resources they need for a successful transition back into the community.

If your organization is not already a member of the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and is interested in becoming a member or learning more about our Coalition, please contact me at [Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org](mailto:Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org)

**Barbara Mongar,**  
**Coordinator, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition**



Questions and answer session during our 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit

# The Domestic Abuse Survivor to Prison Pipeline

By: Shannon Heffernan, Sept 14, 2024; The Marshall Project; [closingargument@themarshallproject.org](mailto:closingargument@themarshallproject.org)

When a [team of researchers](#) at Stanford Criminal Justice Center started surveying people in California women’s prisons who had been convicted of manslaughter and murder, it was immediately clear that intimate partner violence (IPV) played a big role in many of their cases.

One person fatally stabbed an ex-boyfriend she said attacked her after months of stalking. Another said she killed a partner who had beaten and raped her, after law enforcement failed to protect her, despite her reports.

Of the 649 people who filled out the survey, nearly three out of four were abused in the year before their offense. According to [“Fatal Peril,”](#) the report that analyzes the survey’s findings, most of the survivors who were surveyed were at extreme risk of being killed by their abuser, as determined by a modified version of a danger assessment tool used by [prosecutors](#), victim advocates and [domestic violence shelters](#).

In a recent [New York Times opinion piece](#), [Rachel Louise Snyder](#), author of [“No Visible Bruises,”](#) noted that U.S. self-defense law originates in part from the “castle doctrine,” a 17th-century English common law principle, which allowed a man to protect himself against outside attacks in his home.

Snyder wrote that what “these visions of self-defense have yet to adequately imagine is a spouse in a situation in which she is attacked, repeatedly, with increasing severity by another person with an equal right to be in that home.”

But the connection between domestic abuse and incarceration goes beyond the limits of self-defense law.

As they surveyed people, the Stanford researchers quickly realized that their original focus on women who killed their abusers was not broad enough to capture the myriad ways domestic violence can land a person behind bars.

Some survey respondents were in prison for helping an abuser with a crime, because they were afraid of what he would do if they didn’t comply. Other respondents said they were punished for failing to protect their children from deadly abuse. Those responses mirror the findings of a [recent Marshall Project investigation](#).

One survey respondent was in prison because her abusive partner killed one of her children while she was at work. She said he discovered supplies she had packed in order to leave him, and punished her by hurting her kids. [California law allows a parent to be punished if they put their child in a dangerous situation](#).

“When a person is experiencing extreme and severe IPV, their risk of being killed extends to everyone around the survivor,” said [Debbie Mukamal](#), executive director of the [Stanford Criminal Justice Center](#) and one of the study’s authors.

The experiences of the people in California’s prisons are not unique. [The Marshall Project’s investigation](#) found nearly 100 cases across the country of people — almost entirely women — who were punished for the actions of their abusers under little-known laws like [“failure to protect”](#) and [“accomplice liability.”](#) While laws vary, every state has some version of accomplice liability.

Some of the people Stanford [surveyed](#) said they were in prison for actions they took while trying to escape. One person wrote: “I fled from my house with four of my children. I was hit in the back of my car by my ex-husband which caused me to crash.” She said she was in prison for vehicular manslaughter because one of her young children died in the accident.



*A woman who left her home because of intimate partner violence, stares out a window at the Dream Center, a residential recovery facility, in Jackson Tennessee, in 2023. Jamar Coach / Jackson Sun / USA Today Network*

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# The Domestic Abuse Survivor to Prison Pipeline

(Continued from page 2)

By: Shannon Heffernan, Sept 14, 2024; The Marshall Project; [closingargument@themarshallproject.org](mailto:closingargument@themarshallproject.org)

At least 16 respondents said they were incarcerated for driving-under-the-influence homicides connected to drinking or drugs they used to cope with abuse.

Several states are trying to mitigate punishment of domestic violence survivors. [New York](#), for example, has a law that allows a person's history of intimate partner violence to be considered at sentencing or resentencing.

Last month, Oklahoma became the latest state to [make such a move](#). The [Oklahoma Survivors' Act](#) allows [survivors of abuse](#) to serve shorter sentences in some circumstances. April Wilkens [was the first person](#) to file an application for resentencing under the new law. Wilkens has served 26 years behind bars for killing her fiancé. According to [The Oklahoman](#), he had [handcuffed and raped her](#), but, prior to the new law, "she couldn't use evidence of domestic abuse when she applied for early release."

Illinois has also [recently expanded](#) who can apply for resentencing because of domestic violence. [Since 2016, state law has](#) allowed abuse to be considered in sentencing if the abuse was directly connected to the crime. The Illinois Supreme Court had ruled it couldn't apply to anyone who had pleaded guilty, however. A [law signed in August changed that](#).

Other Illinois cases still remain ineligible. Pat Johnson, [whose case was covered by The Marshall Project](#), was not eligible for resentencing in Illinois, despite strong evidence of abuse and minimal participation in the crime, because Johnson was serving a mandatory life sentence. Unlike in New York, Illinois' law doesn't say judges can diverge from mandatory minimums when considering this kind of sentencing relief.

Efforts to pass laws to help incarcerated survivors of domestic violence in [other states](#) have failed in recent years, including in [Oregon](#), [Louisiana](#) and [Minnesota](#).

Given the significant share of women in prison who report being abused, it's possible changes in these kinds of laws could have at least some effect on their numbers behind bars. The [incarceration rate for women](#) has grown [twice as fast as it has for men in recent decades](#). "Between 2021 and 2022 alone, the number of females in prison grew by 5%," according to the [Fatal Peril](#) study.

Addressing the incarceration rates of women means confronting how surviving abuse and committing an offense can be intertwined, and recognizing that survivors of intimate partner violence might not fit into tidy societal expectations. "There is a myth of a 'perfect' victim that needs to be dispelled," Mukamal said.

## Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su

### October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

- **Alaska Family Services (AFS) - Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services (DVSA) - They have a 32-bed emergency shelter for women and their children seeking safety from domestic violence**  
**24 Hour Hotline:** 907-746-8026;  
**Website:** [Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services - Alaska Family Services \(akafs.org\)](https://www.akafs.org)
- **AARS—Alaska Addiction Rehabilitation Services: Their mission is to provide client-centered residential treatment services to adults living with substance use disorder and co-occurring disorders from all regions in the State of Alaska**  
**Phone:** 907-376-4534 / [intake@aarsrecovery.org](mailto:intake@aarsrecovery.org)  
**Website:** [AARS – Alaska Addiction Rehabilitation Services \(aarsrecovery.org\)](https://www.aarsrecovery.org)

## Mat-Su Reentry Events:

- **Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meeting**  
Tuesday, Nov 5, 2024  
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, Nov 5, 2024. All are welcome to attend.

- **Virtual Mat-Su Reentry Services Forum**  
Wednesday, Nov 20, 2024  
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.

## SAVE THE DATE!!!

### November 18 & 19, 2024

The 2024 Reducing Recidivism and Reentry Conference will be held on November 18 & 19, 2024 in Anchorage. More info to come.

**For questions or zoom links to the above events please contact Barbara Mongar at:**  
[barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org](mailto: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 Flyer for dates)  
[Compact@KnikTribe.org](mailto: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**
- **Youth Wellbriety Circle —**  
Fridays, from 1 to 3PM;  
Location: MyHouse, Wasilla, 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.



## Mat-Su Job Center Update

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

The Mat-Su Job Center is open Monday-Friday 8am-5pm, we are located at 877 W. Commercial Drive in the Westside Center. Our staff are available to assist both job seekers and employers one on one with employment or training needs. We hold regularly scheduled employer recruitments in our center, please contact us at 907-352-2500 to learn more about the vast job opportunities in the Mat-Su valley.

From the Department of Labor & Workforce Development Newsroom. "August's statewide job count was up by 6,400, or 1.8 percent, from last August. Federally funded infrastructure projects and North Slope oil and gas projects contributed to over-the-year growth, boosting construction by 2,600 jobs, professional and business services by 1,000, and the transportation, warehousing and utilities sector by 500. Oil and gas also added 500 jobs.

Healthcare was up by 2,000 jobs over the year. Strong visitor numbers supported leisure and hospitality growth (100 jobs) and retail stability and contributed to transportation employment gains. While most industries added jobs, seafood processing disruptions drove losses in manufacturing (-1,300), and the information sector continued its long-term downward trend (-200). Federal government was up by 500 jobs, local government added 200, and state government remained flat.

Alaska's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.6 percent in August and the U.S. rate was 4.2 percent. Both have risen slightly over the last year but remain well below historical averages.

For the State of Alaska Background Check Variance Application visit <https://health.alaska.gov/dhcs/Pages/cl/bgcheck/default.aspx> also available on the site is the Barrier Crime Matrix – this matrix was developed based on the statues and regulations that the Background Check Program uses to evaluate applications, it is a reliable tool for determining barrier time frames for those reentering the workforce.

The State of Alaska currently has 346 job openings posted in Workplace Alaska, if you would like to learn more about state employment, please come into the job center during regular business hours and ask about our Workplace Alaska Workshop. Our staff can assist with online applications, cover letters, and provide feedback on how to be more competitive in applying for State of Alaska positions. Once scheduled with an interview contact us to set up a mock interview to improve confidence, receive constructive feedback, and be better prepared for panel interviewing.



### October Trends:

October's issue is our biannual job projections for Alaska industries and occupations from 2022 to 2032.

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