

# mat-su Reentry coalition Newsletter

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## Year in Review of 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Events

As we push forward into the new year, let's reflect back over last year and revisit some of the undertakings the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition provided to the community.

In 2024, with funding support from both the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the Mat-Su Health Foundation, we were able to provide the Mat-Su community with several free educational/training events, to include:

- A Community-Wide Reentry Coalition Meeting with guest speakers: The [April 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Community Wide Meeting](#) celebrated Second Chance Month. The meeting was focused on the Alaska Legal System and reentrant success stories.
- We held two Reentry Simulations in 2024: One in February and the other in November. These events are a participatory activity that seeks to raise awareness about the process of reentering the community from a correctional institution. Below is a link to an article in the Frontiersman regarding our February 2024 Reentry Simulation: ["It's pretty eye-opening." Mat-Su Reentry Coalition hosts simulation, spotlights struggles, frustrations of prior inmates reentering society | Local News | frontiersman.com](#)
- We also hosted a two-day in-person 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit in Wasilla, Alaska on September 5 & 6, 2024. The Reentry Summit featured both national and statewide experts in the field of criminal justice, mental/behavioral health, crisis response, Alaska Native Wellness/Talking Circles and reentry. Below is the link to the recordings of the different sessions of our Reentry Summit: [2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit](#)

We look forward to being able to continue to provide free reentry educational/training events in 2025. We are already planning to have a Community-Wide Reentry Coalition Meeting in either March or April, the exact date is still to be determined. We are also planning to hold two more Reentry Simulation this year and our annual Mat-Su Reentry Summit is scheduled to be held in September.

If you are interested in attending our monthly Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meetings that are held the first Tuesday of each month from 9:00 to 10:00 AM via Zoom please contact me by e-mail at [Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org](mailto:Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org) or by phone at 907-414-4077.

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



*Participants at the February 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Simulation trying to complete all their weekly tasks before time runs out.*



*Question and answer portion during the DOC Educational Contractors Panel Session on Day 2 of our 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit*

# Strengthening Tribal Justice: Alaska ITWG Brings Together Record Number of Tribes

By: Staff of Alaska Native Justice Center, November 18, 2024

In October 2024, the Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC) hosted its second [Inter-Tribal Technical Assistance Working Group \(ITWG\)](#) meeting welcoming 36 Alaska Tribes to Anchorage. The unprecedented turnout—98 participants including tribal leaders, justice personnel, and senior state and federal officials—signals a transformative moment in Alaska tribal justice. The ITWG serves as a forum, bringing together Alaska Tribes to collectively strengthen safety and justice in tribal communities, with particular focus on preparing for the exercise of Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ). This mission gained new urgency following the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2022 (VAWA 2022) and its pioneering Alaska Pilot Program, which for the first time provides a path for Alaska Tribes to begin to exercise STCJ over non-Indians for certain crimes in their villages—addressing a critical gap in tribal public safety.



*Group photo taken at the Inter-Tribal Technical Assistance Working Group (ITWG) meeting held in October 2024*

“The combined expertise in the room represented approximately 80 years of experience in tribal justice,” noted ANJC COO Alex Cleghorn, highlighting the depth of knowledge shared during the intensive sessions. Participants engaged in discussions covering essential topics such as the current legal landscape, emerging opportunities, intertribal courts, youth diversion programs, and healing to wellness courts.

The gathering broke new ground in fostering unprecedented dialogue between tribal, state, and federal representatives. During the Department of Justice consultation, tribal leaders spoke truth to power about systemic challenges in federal-tribal relations. In one powerful moment, a tribal chief drew a direct line between current funding practices and historical trauma, comparing contemporary consultation methods to her grandmother’s boarding school experience.

The ITWG meeting serves as more than just a conventional gathering— but a platform for tribal sovereignty in action. Participating tribes represented the full spectrum of justice system development—from those with decades of experience to communities taking their first steps toward establishing tribal courts or police departments. This diversity of experience proved invaluable in identifying practical solutions to long-standing barriers.

The meeting gained additional significance from VAWA 2022 and the U.S. Department of Justice’s recent memorandum affirming Alaska Tribes’ inherent authority to exercise full civil and criminal jurisdiction over all Native people within their Villages.

As ANJC prepares for its next ITWG meeting in Fairbanks (spring 2025), the energy is palpable. One participant captured the spirit of the gathering, expressing hope that attendees would leave with “fire in their bellies” for Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction. The path forward depends on sustained collaboration between tribes, government representatives, tribal organizations and non-profits to enhance safety and justice across Alaska’s tribal communities.



*Photo taken during the ITWG meeting, October 2024*



# CRISIS NOW: Implementing a Behavioral Health Crisis System of Care in Alaska

Implementation Update 12: December 2024

## Implementation Updates

Communities and organizations across the state continue to explore how best to meet behavioral health crisis and continuing care needs of their regions. Partnership, communication and shared learning are essential elements in developing robust behavioral health systems for crisis and post-crisis care around the state. This Crisis Now Implementation Update highlights collaborative work to develop robust care systems, as well any opportunities for shared learning and workforce development across providers and communities.

### Mat-Su

There continues to be robust crisis coordination and service provision in the Mat-Su. Recent collaborations included working with leadership from the local transit provider to discuss how to increase transit accessibility for riders with behavioral health needs. The Mat-Su Community Care Team also held a lunch and learn in mid-November with the Anchorage Police Department Mobile Integrated Team (APD MIT). APD MIT learned how the Community Care Team partnerships provide behavioral health crisis response and follow up services. Participants of the lunch and learn also discussed how to improve collaboration and care delivery for clients who spend time in both the Mat-Su and Anchorage.

During July through September of this year [2024], the True North Recovery MCT responded to 139 call outs for 107 unique clients in Palmer and Wasilla. The True North Recovery Launchpad had 364 visits from 141 unique clients and My House had intakes for 34 new clients. Mat-Su connector services are also keeping busy this quarter. Set Free Crisis Stabilization had 47 intakes, the Palmer Navigation Center had 93 clients, and the High Utilizer Mat-Su (HUMS) program has 15 active patients.

A [short video](#) was made in honor of the MCT for their Mat-Su Health Foundation 2024 Bert Hall Award. The video highlights both the MCT and community partners on the impact of mobile crisis response in the Mat-Su.

For full Crisis Now Newsletter Update click on the following link:

<https://alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Crisis-Now-Newsletter-December-2024.pdf>

## Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su

- **King's Dream Center:** A faith-based discipleship and leadership residential program that equips people to lead successful, purposeful lives.  
**Phone:** 907-357-2077; **Address:** 8117 E. New Hope St., Palmer AK  
**Website:** [King's Dream Center](#)
- **Knik House –Blood-n-Fire Ministry of Alaska:** A faith-based transitional living facility located in the Mat-Su. An 18-month program that provides a safe, stable, sober, faith-based environment for at risk people who are in a housing crisis. Including shelter, food, education, referrals, strategic planning, and respect.  
**Phone:** 907-864-0463; **E-Mail:** [knikhouse@mtaonline.net](mailto:knikhouse@mtaonline.net)  
**Website:** [Blood-n-Fire Ministry of Alaska | Knik House - Compassion in Action](#)

## Mat-Su Reentry Events:

- **Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meeting**  
Tuesday, January 7, 2025  
9:00 to 10:30 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition has a virtual Steering Team Meeting on the first Tuesday of each month. All Welcome to attend.

- **Virtual Mat-Su Reentry Services Forum**  
Wed, January 15, 2025  
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

For questions, to sign up, or for zoom links to the above events please contact Barbara Mongar at: [barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org](mailto:barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org)

## Mat-Su Project Homeless Connect

Providing people experiencing homelessness with access to:

- Employment Assistance
- Clothing, Food, Toiletries and More

**Date:** Tuesday, January 28, 2025  
**Location:** Menard Sports Complex  
**Time:** 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
See attached flyer for more details

## 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  
[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

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.

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

Happy New Year from all of us here at the Mat-Su Job Center!

We are excited for our upcoming Mat-Su Employer Expo, this annual event is held at the Menard Center Wednesday March 26<sup>th</sup> from 10 A.M. - 3 P.M. This is an amazing community event for the public to meet and network with employers, community partners, and vocational program professionals. The attached flyer is promoting space at the event as we still have a few vendor tables to fill, this is a free event and one of the largest job fairs in the state. Don't miss out, get your registration completed soon as we always have many vendors on our waitlist to attend this event. Next month we will have the public flyer available and would ask for your help in getting the word out to the community.

From the Department of Labor & Workforce Development Newsroom, November's statewide job count was up by 7,700, or 2.4 percent, from November 2023. Construction added 2,100 jobs over the year, mostly through North Slope oil and gas projects and some off-season federally funded infrastructure projects. Those projects also supported growth in professional and business services (700) and transportation, warehousing and utilities (1,000). Oil and gas employment was also up by 700. Health care continued its strong growth, adding 1,500 jobs from last November. Most industries added jobs, but seafood processing disruptions drove losses in manufacturing (-500) while information (-100) and retail (-100) continued their long-term declines. Financial services employment was flat. State government added 800 jobs, followed by local government (300) and federal government (100). Alaska's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained at 4.6 percent in November and the U.S. rate ticked up slightly to 4.2 percent.

The Mat-Su Job Center staff are working hard to get new reentry staff trained and back to providing various workshops and services at Goose Creek Correctional Center, Palmer Correctional Center and Pt. Mackenzie Correctional Farm. We anticipate these services to be provided again starting in January.

The Mat-Su Job Center is open Monday-Friday 8am-5pm, our staff are available to assist one-on-one with all employment or training needs. We currently offer the following workshops at our job center during normal business hours - Effective Resumes, Employment after Incarceration, Interviewing Strategies, Workplace Alaska (how to apply for State of Alaska Jobs), and Career Support & Training Orientation. We also host monthly recruitments held in our Job Center, the last Friday of each month we host the "Career Resource & Connect Event" where various employers, and community service providers are available throughout the day to discuss their services or job openings. We also host regular Department of Public Safety, Municipality of Anchorage, and informational workshops such as Alaska Works Partnerships. If you'd like to learn more about our informational workshops or employer recruitments, please contact us at (907) 352-2500 or stop by in person at 877 W. Commercial Drive in Wasilla.



**January Trends:** Our annual employment forecast for the state, Anchorage, the Fairbanks area, and Southeast.

**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](http://Mat-Su Valley Reentry Program | Valley Charities Inc)