



## Alaska Reentry & Justice Partnership

*A statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that support justice-involved Alaskans at all phases of their justice involvement. Members include people with lived experience, family members, reentry coalitions, reentry case managers, community providers, local and statewide organizations.*

### 2022 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

The Alaska Reentry & Justice Partnership supports improved access to supports and services for justice-involved Alaskans that include substance use and mental health treatment, reentry services, education and training, housing and employment assistance, faith-based, peer support, tribal, and visitation—to promote successful recovery, reentry, reintegration, and reduced recidivism. The following are bills and budget items of highlight in the 2022 Legislative Session.

#### BILL PRIORITIES

**HB 118 – Access to ID, Driver’s License, Digital Technology** (Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins). This legislation would require the Division of Motor Vehicles to send an ID/Driver’s License to the Department of Corrections upon request for eligible individuals serving 120 days or more, before their release. Additionally, it expands the allowable uses for access to computers and digital technology in Alaska’s corrections for improved reentry planning, access to treatment and recovery services, education and training, faith-based, tribal, visitation, and other activities. This law does not give incarcerated individuals free access to the Internet, but allows DOC to *use* the Internet to provide safe and secure programs and activities, delivered through digital solutions, such as tablets, video-conferencing, closed-circuit television.

**HB 246 – Access to Marijuana Conviction Records** (Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins). This legislation addresses background checks and makes certain records confidential for individuals previously convicted of minor marijuana possession crimes that would be legal under today’s law (less than one ounce, at least 21 years old, no other convictions in the same case). It removes these records from public access and online sources, such as Court View, but does not permanently remove (expunge) them from the Courts’ permanent files. This legislation addresses an important barrier for getting employment and housing for justice-involved Alaskans, which increases the likelihood of stability and success in their communities after their justice-involvement.

**HB 265/SB 175 – Health Care Services By Telehealth** (Rep. Spohnholz/Sen. Wilson). This bill allows a health care provider to provide services within the provider's authorized scope of practice to a patient in Alaska through telehealth without first conducting an in-person examination if the health care provider holds a license in good standing. It also requires the state to establish fees for telehealth services that are equal to in-person services; increases access for audio-only appointments; eliminates in-person barriers to medication assisted treatment; and requires the state to allow telehealth services via Medicaid for behavioral health, waiver/demonstration services, community health aides, behavioral health and dental aides, chemical dependency counselors and rural health clinics (with some limitations). Many justice-involved Alaskans have depended on telehealth services to access both behavioral health and reentry supports and services, and will continue to benefit if telehealth options remain available.

**SB 124/HB 172 – Crisis Stabilization** (Governor Dunleavy). Improves access to crisis stabilization services for Alaskans experiencing a mental health or substance use emergency. The bill offers law enforcement and first responders additional tools for addressing behavioral health crises, including the option to drop off at a crisis stabilization center, access to mental health care, triage, referral, and stabilization. The bill also addresses the administration of psychotropic medication and involuntary commitment.

## FY23 BUDGET PRIORITIES

**Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants and Behavioral Health Prevention and Early Intervention Grants.** Support additional general funds for behavioral health grants to community providers of mental health and addiction services, residential and outpatient services, prevention and early intervention services, FASD awareness, suicide prevention, and drug and alcohol prevention for Alaskan youth. **\*\*TALKING POINT:** *The pandemic has disrupted and altered access to critical behavioral health services, employment opportunities, and housing security across Alaska, and the need for behavioral health services out-paces what is available in the community. More resources are needed to meet the current need, not reduced or maintained at last year's levels.*

**Technology/Telehealth Service System Improvements.** Support additional general funds for the state's telehealth project. Alaskans who live outside of regional hub communities consistently experience delays in getting timely assessments, and meeting the requirements for receiving treatment, recovery, and reentry services. Other challenges include the cost of travel to hub communities, in-person consultation costs and requirements, rescheduling, and delays. **\*\*TALKING POINT:** *Telehealth allows increased access to behavioral health care and reentry planning for justice-involved Alaskans receiving services from community providers. By promoting more video-conferencing, distance learning, and telehealth, more justice-involved Alaskans can access rehabilitative services, programming, and activities.*

**Peer Support Certification.** Support additional general funds for the state's Peer Support Certification program to continue with professional guidelines, training, and steps for professional certification. **\*\*TALKING POINT:** *Peer Support Certification provides Alaskans with lived experience of incarceration, addiction, mental illness, and other challenges, the ability to provide one-on-one support and to other people with lived experience. Peer Support Specialists/ Professionals/Workers work across multiple systems of care—including behavioral health, senior and disabilities, reentry, courts, and corrections—and provide direct support to Alaskans in need.*

**Crisis Stabilization Grants.** Support adding general funds for crisis stabilization efforts that serve people experiencing a mental health, substance use, or other crisis. These funds will support enhanced crisis care in Anchorage, Mat-Su, Fairbanks, and Juneau, using the 'Crisis Now' model—part of a collaboration between the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the departments of Health & Social Services, Corrections, Public Safety, and Alaska Court System. **\*\*TALKING POINT:** *Crisis stabilization is critical for serving Alaskans experiencing behavioral health crises. Mobile crisis teams can provide on-the-spot access to a mental health clinician and peer support specialist who work to de-escalate and stabilize and refer to appropriate care. Crisis stabilization reduces the need for more expensive services, like law enforcement, emergency medical services, hospital emergency rooms, courts, jails, and prisons.*

**Intensive Early Intervention Services for At-Risk Families and Children.** Support additional Mental Health Trust Funds for grants to community agencies for early childhood specialists to serve an additional 200-plus high-risk families across Alaska. Services help families experiencing addiction, mental illness, domestic violence, incarceration, and can include screening, parenting guidance and training, referral to appropriate supports, and specialized services for young children with developmental delays and/or early behavioral concerns. **\*\*TALKING POINT:** *Early recognition of developmental challenges and addressing them before they become more complex and costly, is key for serving individuals and families, and saving state dollars. By expanding the pool of services available to families and children at-risk, we increase the likelihood they will engage with those services and reduce their involvement with OCS, foster care, juvenile justice, and residential care.*