



Alaska Reentry Partnership

A statewide coalition of individuals and organizations promoting success for justice-involved Alaskans at all phases of their involvement—pretrial, incarceration, reentry. Members include people with lived experience, family members, reentry coalitions, community providers, state and local agencies.

Access to Digital Technology to Better Serve Justice-Involved Alaskans

The Alaska Reentry Partnership supports efforts to expand digital technology resources in Alaska's prisons, halfway houses, courts, and communities to better serve justice-involved Alaskans. Digital technology improves access to treatment and recovery services, education and training, housing and employment assistance, reentry and transitional planning, faith-based, peer support, tribal, visitation, and more—all of which increase the likelihood of success in the community after release, and reduced recidivism.

Other states are safely and securely using digital technology to deliver rehabilitative programs and activities through video-conferencing, closed circuit channels, tablets, distance learning, computer labs, and more. Alaska needs to update its laws, policies, and practices to be better able to fulfill its rehabilitation obligations outlined in AS 33.30.011. Successful reentry means safer communities.

BACKGROUND:

Before the COVID public health emergency, the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) offered a vibrant array of rehabilitative programming and activities to incarcerated Alaskans, delivered by DOC staff and volunteers, and contracts with community agencies. During COVID, DOC prioritized inmate and staff safety, requiring suspension or reduction of most programs and activities. Individuals who previously participated in treatment and reentry programs, had minimal or no access to those vital programs.

Today, because of staffing and other challenges, Alaska's prisons and halfway houses struggle to re-instate the full array of programs once offered pre-COVID. Community providers report an increased number of men and women leaving custody without recovery or reentry support, putting them at greater risk for relapse, recidivating, and homelessness.

In today's world, people need to be 'digitally literate' for basic functioning. People who have been incarcerated for decades may not have the skills needed to function in a digital world—for filling out applications, finding jobs, communication, etc.—all critical for reentry success.

Recommendations:

- Update Alaska statutes related to inmate access to technology.
- Update institutional policies related to digital technology.
- Expand infrastructure inside Alaska's prisons, halfway houses, and therapeutic court settings to better provide safe and secure video conferencing, closed circuit education channels, digital tablets, computer labs, software, and more.