

Reentry Simulation Summary – June, 2019

The Anchorage Reentry Coalition hosted the second-ever prisoner reentry simulation in Alaska on the morning of June 24th at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage. The simulation is intended to build awareness and knowledge about the complex set of real-world challenges that individuals commonly encounter when they return to the community after incarceration through a hands-on, engaging activity. A total of 52 people participated in the simulation, representing an array of sectors and perspectives from across the Anchorage community, including state and local leadership. Another 36 people aided in the facilitation of the simulation and the day's events.

Reentry simulation participants were assigned the role of a person that has returned to the community after incarceration (a “reentrant”) and given a series of tasks to complete within a finite amount of time. The tasks reflect real-world activities such as checking in with probation, obtaining identification, seeking employment, engaging with social services, and handling unexpected events. As the reentrants move through the activity, they encounter various supports, challenges, and barriers that aid or restrict them as they attempt to complete their tasks during the allotted time. The simulation was created so that no two participants will encounter exactly the same outcomes during the activity, but will nevertheless experience a variety of actual barriers associated with reentry.

Among those that participated in the activity as a reentrant, nearly all either strongly agreed (58%) or agreed (38%) that the activity was a worthwhile use of their time. Similarly, the vast majority of attendees found the activity extremely impactful (30%) or very impactful (54%). Nearly all attendees were extremely likely (67%) or likely (31%) to recommend participating in the simulation to someone else. All of the volunteers that helped facilitate the activity expressed positive feedback about their experience with the simulation. In total, there was overwhelmingly positive feedback indicating that the simulation was well received by those that attended.

“Extremely helpful in understanding challenges. It will be useful in working with clients.”

Simulation Participant, June 2019

Given the positive feedback from both reentry simulations hosted in Anchorage and the general interest in prisoner reentry, the Anchorage Reentry Coalition aims to periodically host reentry simulations that engage new community members, organizations, and leaders to educate them about the challenges associated with reentry and build connections within the reentry community. Contact Jonathan Pistotnik, Anchorage Reentry Coalition Coordinator (reentry@nwalaska.org) to learn more or to request participation in a future reentry simulation.

Thank you to all those that participated in the simulation. Special thanks to the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Alaska, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and NeighborWorks Alaska for their support; to the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Southern Florida for supplying the simulation materials; to the BP Energy Center for providing use of their conference room. And thank you to the Coalition member organizations and partners that helped make the simulation a reality: Alaska Dept. of Corrections; Alaska Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development, Midtown Job Center; Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority; Alaska National Guard, Counter Drug Support Program; Alaska Native Justice Center; Anchorage Health Dept. & Anchorage Public Libraries; Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center; Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Reentry Services; NeighborWorks Alaska; One2One Mentorship Program; Oak Residential & Treatment Center; Partners For Progress; REAL About Addiction; Southcentral Foundation, Family Wellness Warriors Initiative; United States Attorney's Office, District of Alaska; and United States Probation and Pretrial Services, District of Alaska.

