

Trust

Alaska Mental Health
Trust Authority

Alaskan Seniors
Living Longer Growing Stronger
from the Alaska Commission on Aging



Serving Justice-Involved Trust Beneficiaries

The philosophy behind justice reforms is to prioritize prison beds for people convicted of serious crimes and enhance alternatives to incarceration—such as addiction and mental health treatment—for lower-risk individuals who can benefit from rehabilitation programs.

The Trust and partner advisory boards believe that justice-involved Trust beneficiaries¹ are best served with improved supervision, treatment, case management, and other supports so they are more likely to be rehabilitated and less likely to commit new crimes.

How do justice reforms serve Trust beneficiaries and improve public safety?

- Alaska's justice reforms have steadily been building a more effective system for serving Trust beneficiaries involved in the justice system (*see page 2 for details*).
- Since about 95% of incarcerated Alaskans will serve their time and be released to our communities, it is smarter to provide rehabilitative services during incarceration, and at the pretrial and reentry levels, so justice-involved individuals receive the services they need to return as rehabilitated citizens able to contribute productively in their communities.²

How have justice reforms worked across the U.S.?

- Since 2007, more than half the states have passed justice reforms that have resulted in expanded access to treatment and other programs, improved supervision, more effective law enforcement, and reduced prison costs. For example,
 - Utah invested over \$35 million in treatment and other programs, and saw the state's overall crime rate decrease.⁴
 - North Carolina closed five correctional facilities and reinvested \$38 million in probation and community-based treatment.⁵
 - Hawaii invested in treatment and hired more corrections and victims' services staff, saved \$2.5 million, and saw a 4% reduction in prison population.⁶

What are some facts about crime rates in Alaska?

- Alaska crime data shows that both violent and property crimes were rising prior to the passage of justice reforms in 2016. Specifically, violent crimes have steadily increased since 1986,⁷ and property crimes have been rising since 2011.⁸
- It is important to consider that numerous factors have influenced Alaska's rising crime rates—including a dramatic increase in opioid and other substance misuse, unemployment due to the state's economic recession, and budget cuts to police, prosecutors, and community treatment programs.

Justice reforms underway in Alaska serve Trust beneficiaries by promoting treatment, rehabilitation, and increased supervision

Trust beneficiaries account for more than 40% of Alaska incarcerations each year and their median length of incarceration is “significantly longer than for other offenders.”⁹ The Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) reports that DOC is “by default the largest provider of mental health and substance use disorders services in the state.”¹⁰

Additionally, inmates over 50 years old represent the fastest growing population in Alaska’s prisons, and 1 in 10 inmates over age 65 display signs of dementia or other conditions related to aging.¹¹ Advocates are concerned about people with dementia being charged with crimes they may not have knowingly committed due to their disabling cognitive condition.

Reforms enacted in SB 91 provide:

- Individualized case management planning 90-days prior to release to increase the likelihood of successful reentry.
- Funding for institutional and community treatment programs because treatment has shown to be better at reducing criminal behavior than stiffer prison sentences.
- Strengthened community supervision (probation and parole) practices that focus resources on high-risk offenders and use incentives and sanctions more effectively.
- Pretrial Enforcement Division provides increased supervision and diversion opportunities for low-risk defendants.
- Access to a limited driver’s licenses for people convicted of a first felony DUI offense who complete certain requirements, including: 1) participation in a therapeutic court program, or, if living where there isn’t a therapeutic court, participation in a treatment program similar to a therapeutic court program, and 2) can prove he or she has been sober for 18 months.
- Expanded definition of time served to include any time spent in a residential program for treatment of substance use disorders under prerelease furlough.
- Improved prison population management approaches—such as keeping low-level offenders separate from serious violent offenders—which follows a large body of research showing that mixing low-level misdemeanants with high-level criminal offenders results in the low-level offenders learning more anti-social coping skills, adopting more serious criminal behaviors, and returning to the community at higher risk for committing additional crimes.
- Discretionary parole allowing early release for certain geriatric inmates.
- Identifies 50% of the revenue collected from marijuana taxes to be put into the “Recidivism Reduction Fund,” which is invested in services and programs serving justice-involved individuals. ❖

Support justice reforms that promote rehabilitation and increased supervision in order to reduce crime and increase public safety.

¹ Trust beneficiaries include people with mental illness, substance use disorders (SUD), intellectual-developmental disabilities (IDD), Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia (ADRD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD).

² Alaska Department of Corrections presentation to Alaska State Legislature, 2018.

⁴ Data Trends: Utah Criminal Justice Reform, May 2018. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2018/05/data-trends-utah-criminal-justice-reform>

⁵ Justice Reinvestment Initiative State Assessment Report, 2014.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Violent Crime Reported in Alaska, 1986-2015,” Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center FACT SHEET, University of Alaska Anchorage, February 2017, https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/justice-center/alaska-justice-statistical-analysis-center/_documents/Fact_Sheets/ajsac.17-02.viol_crimes_1986-2015.pdf

⁸ “Property Crime Reported in Alaska, 1986-2015,” Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center FACT SHEET, University of Alaska Anchorage, January 2017, https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/justice-center/alaska-justice-statistical-analysis-center/_documents/Fact_Sheets/ajsac.17-02.viol_crimes_1986-2015.pdf

⁹ Trust Beneficiaries in Alaska’s Department of Corrections, Hornby Zeller Associates (May 2014), pii). <http://mhtrust.org/mhtawp/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ADOC-Trust-Beneficiaries-May-2014-FINAL-PRINT.pdf>

¹⁰ “Substance Abuse Treatment Services – Alaska Department of Corrections,” Presentation to Alaska State Legislature, January 2018.

¹¹ Ibid.

For more information, go to: www.alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/jointadvocacy