

# **The Alaska Prisoner Reentry Initiative (AK-PRI)** **Primary Messages and Talking Points**

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## **PRIMARY MESSAGES**

### **What is AK-PRI?**

- AK-PRI is tough on crime and strong on public safety and community benefits.
- AK-PRI is built on local leadership with state support.
- AK-PRI's goal is to support ex-offenders to become effective citizens.
- AK-PRI is a paradigm shift in corrections for the State of Alaska.
- AK-PRI starts with the vision that every citizen will return to the community prepared for success.
- AK-PRI approaches public safety from a community perspective and not just from a criminal justice point of view.
- AK-PRI recognizes that incarceration alone does not change behavior.
- AK-PRI provides a comprehensive, local case management system to support parolees and former prisoners in reengaging with families and communities.
- AK-PRI works with a local community collaborative to address the unique human service needs in their respective communities.
- AK-PRI is starting with pilot sites across the state to learn from and adapt to the Initiative according to best practices.
- AK-PRI acknowledges the wealth of knowledge and resources of staff and communities in serving problematic populations.
- AK-PRI is based on individual assessments and a client-centered case management model.
- AK-PRI supports the local human service sector by using pooled resources and collaboration as well as leveraging funding opportunities.

### **AK-PRI is NOT....**

- AK-PRI is not an early release program.
- AK-PRI is not a "free ride" for ex-offenders.
- AK-PRI is not about coddling former prisoners or assuming responsibility for their lives.

## **TALKING POINTS**

### **They All Come Back**

Over 95% of all prisoners are eventually released back into the community. Alaska has spent hundreds of millions of dollars constructing and operating prisons to help keep Alaska safe, but eventually prisoners get out. The question is: *How can we better prepare returning citizens and increase the odds for their success so that they do not commit new crimes?*

### **Public Safety is the Number One Goal**

The Alaska Prisoner Reentry Initiative (AK-PRI) is a statewide strategic approach to reduce crime and create safer neighborhoods and better citizens through the delivery of a seamless plan of services, programming, support, and supervision—from the time of their entry to prison through transition, reintegration, and aftercare in the community—to returning citizens and

their communities. **The primary goal is to increase public safety and reduce crime.**

- Investing in prevention, the AK-PRI takes a proactive stance to preparing both the prisoner and the community *before* reentry occurs.
- Although no approach will completely eradicate crime, the AK-PRI reduces crime and the rate of those returning to prison.

### **Reducing Crime and the Cost of Crime**

The AK-PRI tackles the state's 63% recidivism rate head on, targeting repeat offenders and bringing them to self-sufficiency through improved management of personal, institutional, and community challenges that potentially lead to a cycle of crime. Consequently, the AK-PRI will reduce the prison population and end the spiraling cost of the state's prison system.

### **Public Safety Is Not Just a Corrections Issue, It Is a Community Issue**

Government, businesses, faith-based and community leaders, along with dedicated citizens, are all major stakeholders in public safety, and therefore have an important role in reentry. The AK-PRI approaches public safety from both a government and community perspective by creating awareness, educating the public, engaging in problem solving, and establishing appropriate entry points for participation. Based on research, we know that partnerships between government and community agencies have led to creative solutions in reducing and preventing crime. And it is important to remember these citizens not only come from your neighborhood, they also return to your neighborhood—it *is* a community issue.

### **A Different Way of Doing Business**

The AK-PRI reflects a change with the stated goal that returning citizens will be better prepared for successful reentry. This improved success in reentry will be the result of an improved process by which citizens return to their communities. The Alaska Department of Corrections will coordinate the implementation of the AK-PRI. State agencies are working together to coordinate services and integrate support systems to bridge the gaps that hinder successful return to the community. It is the first system created to synthesize the work of key state agencies involved in a returning citizen's release and reentry.

Capitalizing on existing community resources such as faith-based and community-based initiatives, as well as individual and collective leadership is helping to shape AK-PRI's comprehensive approach to reentry. The construction of a continuous process that provides programs, services, and supports that start in prison and continue in the community creates a critical system change that is holistic and inclusive.

### **A Collaborative Approach to Success**

By bringing everyone together and engaging in open and honest discussion about a common vision for an improved and fully-integrated system of reentry, Alaska will accomplish its goal of increasing public safety and reducing crime.

### **Evidence-Based Practices**

Based on three decades of research, the AK-PRI applies methodology and techniques drawn on evidence-based practices. Advanced research constantly conveys new information on reentry and the personal, social, and institutional obstacles blocking the path to successful reentry. AK-PRI strengthens its intelligence through an ongoing process of refinement and realignment with

well-researched data and evidence-based practices.

### **The Three Phases of AK-PRI**

The AK-PRI involves three phases: (1) Getting Ready – the Institutional Phase, which references the returning citizen’s term of imprisonment, (2) Going Home – the Reentry Phase, which focuses intensely on the returning citizen’s transition back to the community, and 3) Staying Home – the Community Phase, which spans the community supervision and the eventual discharge.

### **Offender Management Planning (OMP): Unlocked Returning Citizen’s Potential for Success**

The Offender Management Plan, or OMP, is an integral part of the initiative. The OMP spans all phases of a returning citizen’s experience, from sentencing (OMP 1), through incarceration (OMP 2), release (OMP 3), and discharge (OMP 4). At the time of incarceration, a thorough individual assessment is developed listing the responsibilities of the returning citizen, Department of Corrections, and other agencies, along with a profile identifying the returning citizen’s strengths and needs, risk factors, and behaviors. This information comprises the OMP, which is updated at regular intervals and utilized by the Department of Corrections, the State Board of Paroles, and other agencies to ensure the necessary systems, education, and programs are made available to the returning citizen in a timely manner to increase the odds of success.

### **Services and Support**

Services and support are not by-products of the AK-PRI—they are at the center of the reentry process. Investing in prevention is the pathway to reducing crime. Community groups provide a tremendous resource and help to complete the circle of support for returning citizens. Nonprofits and community organizations serve as an extension to state departments and fill gaps in services. Faith-based organizations (FBOs), victim and advocacy groups, and a number of other community organizations play a vital role in providing support to returning citizens in their neighborhoods.

Community in-reach and family reunification services are examples of the collaborative efforts that link the community with the returning citizen and prepare both for reentry.

Employment, education, health care, and substance abuse treatment are critical services targeting key areas that prevent a return to criminal behavior. Equally important, the AK-PRI seeks to provide housing and family reunification assistance. These services are designed to infuse resources at the critical point of reentry and to build self-sufficiency while empowering returning citizens and giving them the tools to help themselves.

- *Employment and Education:* Through stronger collaborations between Alaska’s criminal justice agencies and the state’s education systems, Department of Labor, local community partners, and others, the AK-PRI will expand opportunities for returning citizens to complete their GED and receive some level of vocational training while incarcerated. The AK-PRI moves beyond basic programming to intensify skill development and professional training.

The initiative incorporates a dynamic assessment process to identify the returning citizen’s strengths at the time of incarceration and focus on prerelease training to build

those strengths.

- *Health Care and Substance Abuse Treatment:* A high percentage of returning citizens incarcerated in Alaska prisons indicate that they have some type of substance abuse problem. Many returning citizens violate parole due to substance abuse. The OMP identifies an individual's problems with substance abuse at the time of incarceration. A plan of action is designed during the period of incarceration to address this need. In addition, the AK-PRI identifies support systems to address substance abuse before release and reentry.
- *Health Care Services:* Additional support services may include qualifying for Medicaid or other health benefits along with addressing the physical and mental health needs to prevent relapse.
- *Community and Family Support:* Without intervention, 70% of children with an incarcerated parent will end up in prison themselves. Providing family support and encouraging family responsibilities are essential. The AK-PRI assists these returning citizens in taking responsibility while aligning them with the necessary human services providers and a network of community supports to assure continued success.

#### **The AK-PRI Structure – an Integrated Approach**

The AK-PRI is organized under the Alaska Department of Corrections and supported by the Implementation Steering Team (IST) comprised of top-level leaders in state justice departments and others that provide essential services. The IST is co-chaired by the Governor and the Lt. Governor.

Three Work Groups perform planning and development tasks for the AK-PRI. An Implementation Steering Team (IST), chaired by the Assistance Secretary of the Department of Corrections (?), manages the activities and progress of the Work Groups, while various Committees address critical subjects across a number of work areas.

Also expected to be built into the structure is a statewide Advisory Council comprised of individuals and organizations from who we'll seek advice and counsel. These supporters and stakeholders will assist the reentry reforms by acting as conduits for communication and a mechanism for building community awareness, support, and participation.

Alaska benefits from a wealth of technical assistance being provided to assist with the development and implementation of the AK-PRI. Technical assistance providers for this effort include the Center for Justice Innovation.