

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 27, 2020

3:03 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Zack Fields, Co-Chair
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Andi Story
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Sarah Vance

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Laddie Shaw

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 148

"An Act relating to solemnization of marriage."

- MOVED HB 148 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PRESENTATION: ALASKA REHABILITATION & REENTRY

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 148

SHORT TITLE: MARRIAGE WITNESSES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CLAMAN

04/29/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/29/19	(H)	STA, JUD
02/20/20	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/20/20	(H)	Heard & Held
02/20/20	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
02/27/20	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

RON WILSON, Chair
Board of Directors
Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni (ATCA)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information during the presentation of "Alaska Rehabilitation & Reentry."

THOMAS ROEHL, Board Member and Activities Director

Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni (ATCA)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information during the presentation of "Alaska Rehabilitation & Reentry."

LAURA BROOKS, Health Care Administrator

Division of Health and Rehabilitation

Department of Corrections (DOC)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Alaska Rehabilitation and Reentry A Report to the Legislature" with the use of a PowerPoint presentation during the presentation of "Alaska Rehabilitation & Reentry."

JENNIFER WINKELMAN, Acting Deputy Commissioner

Department of Corrections (DOC)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the presentation of "Alaska Rehabilitation & Reentry."

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:03:17 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR ZACH FIELDS called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. Representatives Vance, Thompson, Fields, and Kreiss-Tomkins were present at the call to order. Representatives Hopkins and Story arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 148-MARRIAGE WITNESSES

[3:03:54 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 148, "An Act relating to solemnization of marriage."

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CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS moved to report HB 148 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal note.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE objected. She acknowledged the value of the proposed legislation for the marriage industry serving people coming to Alaska; however, she stated that she does not support easing the two-witness requirement under HB 148. She expressed her hope that the license application could be re-worked to make the process clearer for applicants, which would be another way of helping the industry.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Thompson, Hopkins, Story, Fields, and Kreiss-Tomkins voted in favor of HB 148. Representative Vance voted against it. Therefore, HB 148 was reported from the House State Affairs Standing Committee by a vote of 5-1.

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The committee took an at-ease from 3:08 p.m. to 3:11 p.m.

PRESENTATION: Alaska Rehabilitation & Reentry

[3:11:12 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS announced that the final order of business would be a continuation of the presentation on "Alaska Rehabilitation & Reentry" began during the 2/13/20 House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting.

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RON WILSON, Chair, Board of Directors, Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni (ATCA), relayed that he is a 2010 graduate from Alaska's therapeutic court system. He shared that he started using alcohol at the age of 15, grew up in a traditional family, and was the only one in his family with addictions or interaction with the judicial system. After high school graduation his engagement with alcohol and drugs went from recreational use to addiction. He had his first driving under the influence (DUI) charge in 1996; in 1999 he received his second DUI; and in 2002 he received a felony DUI. The felony sentence he received in 2002 "changed his life drastically." Through intensive outpatient treatment, he learned he had been "medicating" an anxiety disorder. In 2005, he was charged with cocaine use; and in 2008, he was charged with use of a controlled substance and

faced a six-year sentence. At the time, he was married with four children. He served six months of inpatient treatment at Akeela, Inc. [a 501(c)(3) mental health and substance abuse service provider], then transferred to therapeutic court. As a non-violent offender, he was able to address his treatment and legal issues while at home. He returned to work and completed the 18-month therapeutic court program; he learned how to manage his anxiety disorder and has been "clean" for ten years. He is a homeowner, a business owner, and works as a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

MR. WILSON pointed out that there are limited slots for therapeutic court participants - 60 in Anchorage, and less in Palmer, Kenai, Fairbanks, and Juneau. He maintained that due to the necessity for offenders to have access to the services that will change their lives, it is imperative that the state find ways to fund reentry programs, organizations, and resources that will provide those services. He emphasized that there are many offenders seeking that help, and many would be very successfully rehabilitated. He stated, "Drugs and alcohol take good people to bad places."

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CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS, after acknowledging that money is a major variable, asked whether there are other actions the legislature could take - beyond money - to further empower the therapeutic court system or have it serve more participants.

MR. WILSON replied that expansion of program and wrap-around services would be helpful. He mentioned that many people with addiction have lost the ability to have sustainable housing. With housing, they can begin to address their substance and alcohol issues. He maintained that the peer-to-peer component is important; the ATCA has developed rapport, alliance, and networking with reentry programs to assist offenders in navigating the recovery process.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked Mr. Wilson for his understanding of the demand for slots relative to availability in the therapeutic court system.

MR. WILSON answered that there is a large demand for treatment slots, and many offenders are being turned away. He stated that he did not know the numbers, but he does know that the therapeutic courts operate at about one-sixth of the cost of incarceration. There is a beneficial financial component to

using that type of alternate justice as opposed to conventional justice.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked about the composition of the board that Mr. Wilson serves on.

MR. WILSON responded that the board is exclusively for graduates of the program. The alumni group was started in 2006 and is the longest running such alumni group in the country. It offers peer support for offenders who have graduated from the stringent structure of the therapeutic court and are on their own.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether the board has any responsibilities for implementing the therapeutic court program.

MR. WILSON replied that the alumni group has rapport with the court's treatment team; and as the chair of the board and program coordinator, he meets with program coordinators statewide. [Members of the group] work with the current participants of the court on issues; they participate in process groups that participants are required to attend; and they share with participants the challenges and successes that they, as former therapeutic court participants, experienced. He confirmed for Representative Hopkins that the volunteer board provides support to graduates by connecting them with services, housing, employment, and whatever is needed to promote the success of the program.

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REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about any support that Mr. Wilson's family received or is receiving through ATCA.

MR. WILSON responded that a monthly game night has recently been implemented. It is a sober activity provided by the alumni to current participants and their families, friends, and children; about 50-70 people attend these functions. He added that it is a chance for children to see their parents doing a different type of activity than what they may have witnessed previously.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked whether there were other supports for the family during the time a participant was in the therapeutic court program.

MR. WILSON replied that outpatient treatment offered family counseling. He mentioned that family members attended and

participated in court proceedings. He added that summer picnics and holiday parties with families were a big component.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked whether Mr. Wilson is required to have SR-22 car insurance - a high risk vehicle insurance - because of his DUIs in the '90s.

MR. WILSON answered, "I did back then." He explained that his felony DUI was in 2002; the SR-22 was a five-year requirement; and he is past that requirement. He further explained that at that time, a 5-year revocation was imposed; today it is a lifetime revocation with the possibility of a limited license after ten years.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked for the monthly cost of the SR-22.

MR. WILSON answered that it was \$100 per month for him, totaling \$6,000 for five years.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked how the extra cost affected him.

MR. WILSON replied that it was a financial hardship to him and his family; he also was charged a \$10,000 fine.

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REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked whether Mr. Wilson's family ever mentioned the need for family supports, and whether the board is exploring other avenues besides the game night.

MR. WILSON answered yes. He said that there have been requests for "significant others" to participate in the weekly process groups; however, the dilemma is that the court team is not able to vet all of the significant others and there is a risk of exposing the participant to a harmful situation or person. The ATCA is always looking at adding groups, but since the position of facilitator is voluntary, it is difficult to find someone to take the time.

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THOMAS ROEHL, Board Member and Activities Director, Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni (ATCA), stated that he organizes events for families, including game night, bowling, and disc golf. He maintained that family involvement is very important and therapeutic.

MR. ROEHL relayed that eight years ago he hurt his back; his insurance was Medicaid; he was sent to a pain clinic and given an [opioid] pain medication - Dilaudid; he needed surgery, but no one was willing to perform surgery on a Medicaid patient. After a year of using and abusing his pain medication, a surgeon was identified who would do the surgery. He said that the surgery fixed his back and he was taken off pain medication, but he was addicted. When he returned to his medical provider to have his addiction treated, he was given a new medication - Suboxone. But the Suboxone didn't work, so he sold it "on the street" to be able to afford a medication like what he had been taking, which turned out to be Roxicet - an opioid pain medication he could buy on the street. A friend asked him why he was paying so much for Roxicet and introduced him to heroin. He said, "Once you find heroin, there's almost no escaping." He went on to methamphetamine, cocaine, and crack cocaine. He described one of his darkest moments: When the firefighters resuscitated him using NARCAN, he was angry that his life had been saved.

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MR. ROEHL relayed that a couple months later, he briefly met a man who was a graduate of Alaska's therapeutic court. The man explained that to get into therapeutic court, a person must have a drug-related crime or a DUI. Mr. Roehl said that a couple months later, he went into The Home Depot store to steal some items to pay for his addiction; he remembered what the stranger had told him and made up his mind to get caught, so that he could get into a wellness court. He made sure that he got caught and that the law enforcement officer recorded that he was stealing to pay for his addiction.

MR. ROEHL related that four months later, he entered wellness court. In the first three months, it paid for and arranged housing. The court has a rigorous schedule - two classes per day, five Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings per week, and one or two alumni meetings per week. He stated that another component of the success of wellness court is a medication called Vivitrol; Vivitrol blocks the [opioid] receptors in the brain and lasts 28 days. He said that his first day out of jail, he met with his probation officer (PO); he asked to be given Vivitrol that day, which his PO arranged; he had no insurance, but the first time sample was free; and the moment he received the Vivitrol injection, it erased all craving for heroin. He stayed on Vivitrol for ten months, paid for by Medicaid. He said, "I owe pretty much everything to ...

therapeutic court, and Vivitrol, and the whole [therapeutic court] team, and people like Ron, who was my peer support through [ATC] Alumni Group."

MR. ROEHL mentioned two close friends whom he met through Alaska's therapeutic court. He concluded by saying that he has seen Alaska's therapeutic court save many lives.

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CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked whether Mr. Roehl could identify ways - beyond funding and creating more slots in the program - that the legislature could help.

MR. ROEHL answered, "That's pretty much it." He said that ATCA partners with Partners for Progress, a reentry program. He offered that until there are more slots available, there is a need for such programs; they offer a way for people to become aware of therapeutic court. He stated that not everyone knows about therapeutic court; he didn't know about it; he had been in and out of jail many times; and he wished he had known about therapeutic court the first time he was caught for shoplifting. He expressed his conviction that the first time someone goes to jail for anything drug-related, that person should be assessed automatically as a candidate for therapeutic court. He stated that he wished that had happened to him five years ago; he definitely would have been open to the possibility.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked for more comment on non-violent offenders entering the criminal justice system and not being aware of therapeutic court.

MR. ROEHL responded:

Pretty much the only way you hear about Alaska Therapeutic Court - and I can vouch for this 100 percent - sometimes in therapeutic court they do give you jail sentences; that's usually a last resort; and it's usually 24 hours to 48 hours sentence. And when you're in there for that 24 to 48 hours, you're going to talk about wellness court. And that's pretty much the way the word is spread. And it's a positive experience usually because ... you know you're getting out. ... You know it's just a moment for you to reflect on what you did and what you can do to correct it. You usually have an assignment while you're in

there to come out with something written down about why it won't happen again.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS suggested that because therapeutic court [participants] are so segregated from traditional inmates serving time in correctional facilities, it creates a firewall of awareness. Awareness of therapeutic court comes about through hearsay.

MR. ROEHL answered that he didn't consider it segregated; once an offender gets a "jailable" sanction and is in for 24-48 hours, he is not segregated but is just in with one other roommate. The chances are very high that the roommate is also in for a drug-related offense.

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REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON asked whether some offenders fail in therapeutic court.

MR. ROEHL replied, "Absolutely, yes." He said that he doesn't know the percentages but offered that "some people are ready for it and some people aren't." He maintained that the ones who are ready for it "make it very well." He added that there are many success stories.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked about the qualities of the offenders who are ready for therapeutic court - if there are common denominators among them.

MR. ROEHL said no. He stated that addiction is ravaging every walk of life no matter the economic status of a person.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS clarified that he was not asking about the characteristics of those who get addicted, but the qualities of those offenders who are ready for therapeutic court and to put forth the effort.

MR. ROEHL relayed that some people use therapeutic court to get out of jail and "that's okay." He continued by saying that at some point, usually within the first three months, there is a "light switch moment" when the program starts working for the individual. The person engages more, shares more, attends AA and NA meetings, and engages with his/her sponsor. The whole team looks for that to occur and can see that the program is working. He added that once the offender starts to work his/her own program, the POs will fight for that person. He referred to

the reentry simulations and offered that he would like to see a therapeutic court simulation. Under the therapeutic court, the offender does not go back to jail for every sanction; there are alternatives, such as community service.

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REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether the 60 therapeutic court slots in Anchorage are always full and whether the other slots in communities around the state are always full.

MR. WILSON answered that the slots are not always full, and it varies. He said that it depends on the selection process and the criteria; because of the limited number of slots, there is a vetting process.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether slots are open because of the lack of awareness of therapeutic court. He asked whether an offender convicted of a drug-related crime could be told that therapeutic court is an option at the time of conviction. He expressed his understanding that the slots are all funded.

MR. WILSON agreed that the slots are all funded. He stated that increased awareness of the program is key. Many don't hear about the program until they are incarcerated and find out about it from another offender.

MR. ROEHL offered a suggestion: Show a video about Alaska's therapeutic court in the jails. He stated that his suggestion may come to fruition through the efforts of Partners for Progress.

MR. WILSON offered that the most successful people are those who complete the drug course; they are the ones proven to be less likely to recidivate. The alcohol offenders - because alcohol use is socially acceptable and legal - tend to be less successful after completing the program. He offered his guess for the success rate for completing the program to be about 95 percent. In answer to Representative Kreiss-Tomkins's question about commonalities among offenders who are ready to get help, he stated that the peer-to-peer component and the process groups allow offenders to be enlightened by those who have "hit rock bottom" and can share what's ahead for the offenders.

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REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked for the timeline of the program and the opportunity to give the offender additional time to reach that light switch moment.

MR. WILSON answered that there is an 18-month requirement for the DUI court; there is a 12-month timeline for drug offenses. He maintained that a continuum of care is what is really needed, because after graduation - when all the oversight and accountability is gone - there needs to be something to bridge the gap. He said that he has thought of collaborating with the Department of Corrections (DOC), the probation office, and prosecutors to implement a requirement that the graduate participate in the alumni group for four months after completion of the [therapeutic court] program to provide accountability.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked why the program is shorter for drug offenses compared with alcohol offenses.

MR. WILSON responded that he did not know why.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether a PO could request additional time in the program for an offender.

MR. ROEHL answered that the need for additional time becomes evident; sometimes people relapse in the program and the time is extended, or they are put back into an earlier phase to "reset." He mentioned that the alternative is jail time.

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CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS asked whether the peer-to-peer support is "baked" into the therapeutic court program.

MR. WILSON answered, yes it has been. He said that once the alumni group was formed, the peer-to-peer support component was adopted as part of the program. He offered that nationally it is recognized as an important component.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS referred to the lower recidivism rates among therapeutic court participants and the reduced cost - one-sixth the cost of incarceration. He expressed his interest in Pay for Success (PFS) - Social Impact Bonds - which is a financial tool to fund something proven to create better long-term social outcomes, even when there is considerable upfront cost. He offered that the limiting factors - the number of slots available and awareness of the program - could be addressed through policy changes.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed her interest in redirecting dollars from less successful programs to proven programs.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE commented that the public's perception is that this type of treatment is occurring in Alaska's DOC, but it is not; therefore, there is a false expectation that the issues that put offenders into the correctional system are resolved by the time they are released. She offered that the state needs to provide directives to DOC on how to give direction and options to offenders. She opined that it is unfortunate that it has taken the state this long to recognize and implement these effective programs. She lauded the two testifiers for their rehabilitation and testimony; their experiences are being used as a tool to help other offenders and to help the legislators provide better policy.

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The committee took an at-ease from 3:55 p.m. to 3:58 p.m.

[3:58:19 PM](#)

LAURA BROOKS, Health Care Administrator, Division of Health and Rehabilitation, Department of Corrections (DOC), continued her presentation (from the 2/13/20 House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting and included in the committee packet), entitled "Alaska Rehabilitation and Reentry A Report to the Legislature," by starting with slide 11, entitled "Vocational Programs." She explained that the report was a requirement under HB 49; it reviews DOC's rehabilitative programs and statewide efforts for reentry. She stated that lack of employment is one of the criminogenic factors that contribute to recidivism; the vocational programs through DOC are integral to rehabilitation. She pointed out the 15 programs listed on the slide and mentioned that there are vocational program coordinators in all DOC facilities who ensure the availability of a wide variety of programs. The programs are chosen based on inmate interest, instructor availability, size of the facility, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) occupational forecast to ensure that the programs being offered meet the needs of the offender and of Alaska. She stated that the programs are constantly being reviewed to make sure that DOC is providing the appropriate program to the right offender at the right time. The programs can take anywhere from one day for certification to two years. She relayed that last year, 24 individuals received a trade certification while in custody.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how DOC tracks the outcomes of training as far as inmates being hired upon release, and how the current occupational needs influence class offerings.

MS. BROOKS replied that DOC is continuing to develop a review process, but the outcomes are difficult to track. She said that DOC can determine if an individual is employed or not employed, but there currently is no mechanism in place that determines that an individual, who completed a program, was hired in that field upon release, except through anecdotal information from probations office and education coordinators. She relayed that DOC looks to DOLWD recommendations for programs that meet the needs of the offender population.

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REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked why information technology (IT) is not on the list on slide 11. She also asked if there is data on how many people enlisted in each of the classes.

MS. BROOKS answered that DOC keeps rosters for each class and tracks the number of people completing each class. She said that a computer skills class is one of the core programs under the education group of programs. The department is looking to expand that program.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether DOC has considered collaborating with employers that have apprenticeship programs; he mentioned union, non-union, regional and village corporations, and Alaska Native corporation shareholders. He said, "The model that the operating engineers and the iron workers developed could be extended beyond those trades and beyond union apprenticeships to more generally leverage multi-employer associations and some of our largest employers, which would be Alaska Native regional corporations." He asked her to discuss DOC's capacity to formalize those linkages.

MS. BROOKS responded that DOC has several partnerships related to the programs he mentioned. The education coordinators, institutional POs, and field POs are some of the strongest linkages to ensure that individuals - through the offender management program - have opportunities and linkages to employers in the community, once a class is completed. She added that through a grant, a job specialist from DOLWD was placed at one of the facilities with incredible success; the specialist placed about 130 women out of Highland Mountain

Correctional Center (HMCC) into jobs. The grant has expired, but DOC has partnered with DOLWD to put job specialists back into the facilities; there is one currently at HMCC, and DOC is trying to make that job fulltime. She maintained that job placement is a critical piece for inmates to use the skills they have learned.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked for the cost of having a DOLWD staff person fulltime in every facility.

MS. BROOKS answered that she did not know.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked to be provided the information and mentioned the possibility of it being included in the fiscal year 21 (FY21) operating budget request.

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REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked about the process for getting employment for the inmate and the contribution of the job specialist.

MS. BROOKS answered that it varies depending on the trade program. She said that often the job specialist works with the inmate on determining what job is a good fit, which class to take, and then prepares an employer in the community for the employee. She maintained that the effort is in collaboration with the other job skills programs provided to the inmates while in custody - resume writing and interview skills - to prepare them to succeed at the job and be a good employee.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS concurred that the first step for the inmate on release is connecting with reentry services and searching for a job; however, the more refined model is for them to leave incarceration and have a job lined up, which takes an additional level of coordination. He asked about the differences between facilities as far as involvement with these programs, considering the reliance on skilled instructors.

MS. BROOKS replied that it depends on size of the facility: at Goose Creek Correctional Center (GCCC), DOC can offer several robust trade programs by virtue of the size of the facility and the space available; Anvil Mountain Correctional Center (AMCC) and Fairbanks Correctional Center (FCC) cannot. She added that AMCC and FCC have large pretrial populations; however, Spring Creek Correctional Center (SCCC), Wildwood Correctional Center (WCC), and GCCC all have longer-term prisoners - the sentenced

population - therefore, are better positioned for those types of programs.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked her to discuss facilities with strong programs and what enables success at those facilities.

MS. BROOKS relayed that the barber program is one of GCCC's popular programs; there is an inmate who teaches the class and manages the program. She mentioned that the program is being replicated in WCC and SCCC. She offered that the welding class is taught out of a mobile welding truck. Some facilities have welding simulators for practice. The department has partnerships with the ironworkers; several individuals who operate the mobile welding truck were former inmates. The welding class is very popular and always full.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS commented that the building maintenance apprenticeship was an apprenticeship initiated by DOC with DOLWD; he asked for the status of that program.

MS. BROOKS stated that she would follow up with that information.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether DOC has leveraged its power of procurement to support these programs, that is, provide opportunities and incentives to the employers who employ returning citizens by offering the companies work at the facilities.

MS. BROOKS responded that she didn't know whether that opportunity is written into the procurement policy; however, she stressed that DOC has absolutely been able to forge those types of relationships through the instructors and the individuals that come into the facilities, who become familiar with the inmates, and in turn, work with the inmates, giving them every opportunity for employment upon release. She mentioned that DOLWD has the Fidelity Bonding Program [for the employment of at-risk job seekers] and there is a federal tax credit available to employers who hire at-risk employees.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS suggested that DOC consider procurement incentives for companies that hire returning citizens.

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REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether the job training was for sentenced inmates or all inmates.

MS. BROOKS answered that there are programs available for the pretrial population, but the length of the program is the limiting factor. A pretrial inmate can be put on the wait list but would be farther down the list than a long-term inmate.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked Ms. Brooks to comment on the status of seafood employment partnerships at the different facilities for both inmates and returning citizens.

MS. BROOKS answered that DOC is currently working on identifying a pool of offenders who will be eligible to work in the canaries next season. She offered that there is a demand for those workers.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether that type of work is limited to communities with both a correctional facility and a processing plant, or whether inmates can be dispatched to another community for the work.

MS. BROOKS replied that when DOC looks for a pool of offenders for seafood processing, it looks statewide. She relayed that inmates working at the seafood plant in Kenai would not have to necessarily come from WCC.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether there are processing plants in King Salmon, Naknek, and on the Aleutian Islands that are employing returning citizens and whether DOC has managed the hurdles, such as workers being able to meet with their POs.

MS. BROOKS answered that she is unsure and will follow up. She maintained that there has been interest from several employers across the state for inmate hire.

CO-CHAIR KREISS-TOMKINS commented that there is a perpetual undersupply of labor for seafood [processing]; importing people to do that work is difficult; and although the work is hard, the pay is good. He said that it is a partnership that he wishes to support.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS agreed. He maintained that hiring inmates is cheaper than hiring a J-1 [non-immigrant] Visa worker and "smooths" the transition of the inmate back into the community when released. He said, "That would be such a win for the state both in terms of the inmates and the processors."

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE mentioned that the University of Alaska (UA) is offering courses on seafood processing and trying to generate more activity, because the number of non-residents working in the industry is extremely large. She asked whether DOC has partnerships with UA in programs, such as seafood processing, to fill the need and provide for jobs.

MS. BROOKS replied, "We don't for seafood." She continued by saying that there are some college programs available to the offender population, most are self-study programs, and DOC provides tutoring. The department has an agreement with Ilisagvik College [Utqiagvik] to work with some of the women at HMCC.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked whether the program involving the seafood industry has started and if so, how many have participated.

MS. BROOKS relayed that last year some offenders participated in the program - with mixed success. She explained the difficulty in identifying offenders to go to the processing plants: it is the same population that DOC needs to fill the community residential center (CRC) slots, and some offenders are not interested in working in the seafood industry because it is very hard work. She offered that DOC is trying to build up a pool of workers so that when the processing plant is ready for workers, there will be a group ready to go. She maintained that the industry is very interested in the inmate population, and DOC is trying to encourage inmates to apply.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS remarked at the challenges of the processors in getting employees, the need for predictability of a supply of workers as they enter a very busy season, and the role of the state in providing workers.

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MS. BROOKS turned to slide 12, entitled "Faith-Based Programs," and offered that DOC provides many opportunities for offenders in custody to find spiritual supports; it has fulltime chaplains primarily provided by religious volunteers through Alaska Correctional Ministries [a nonprofit organization that partners with DOC Chaplaincy Ministry statewide]. There are about 1,200 active religious volunteers who provide the following: fulltime chaplains; chapel services; "faith mods" [an ecumenical residential model]; transformational living communities - an intensive faith-based residential program which offers a

spiritual approach to addressing anger management, criminal thinking, and addictions; religious studies; and spiritual support.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether there is an overlap between medication assisted treatment and faith-based programs, or are they separate tracks.

MS. BROOKS responded that someone in the faith-based program could participate in medication assisted treatment, but the two are separate programs.

MS. BROOKS continued with slide 13, entitled "Prison-Based Domestic Violence Programs," and relayed that DOC partners with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). Currently DOC and CDVSA are engaged in a comprehensive review of the domestic violence programming to ensure that the programs are evidence-based and being delivered as designed. Presently the domestic violence prison-based programs are only available in three of the facilities - GCCC, Lemon Creek Correctional Center (LCCC), and FCC. Once the review is complete and DOC implements the new curriculum, the hope is that it will be offered in every facility. She stated that the need for that program certainly exists.

MS. moved on to slide 14, entitled "Sex Offender Management," and stated that Alaska has the highest rate of sexual assault in the country and about 15 percent of DOC's population are incarcerated for sexual crimes. The department worked hard to establish the programs, and enrollment increased 25 percent last year. She mentioned that the "Institutional Sex Offender Treatment" program is in five institutions; there are 88 slots for treatment; and there are about 30 on the wait list. She mentioned that there are more offenders needing the program, but they prefer to wait until they are out of custody and can participate in the community treatment programs. There are about 240 slots in the community programs and the waitlist is about 80. She said that a little over a year ago, DOC started a "Video-Based Treatment" program; an Anchorage-based mental health clinician provides sex offender treatment to offenders who return to their rural communities.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked why the inmates wait to get sex offender treatment until that are outside of the facilities.

MS. BROOKS answered that the inmates are not required by the court to participate in in-custody treatment, and there is a stigma associated with being a sex offender in custody. The high-risk sex offender residential program in custody is intensive; the inmate lives on a "mod" and undergoes treatment every day. There are no residential sex offender treatment programs in the community, and for some, the community treatment model is more appealing.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether Ms. Brooks has a sense of which model is more successful.

MS. BROOKS responded that she doesn't have that data but can offer that Alaska operates on the "containment model"; once an individual is released from custody, there is a specially trained PO and the released inmate engages in cognitive behavioral treatment and undergoes polygraphs. For individuals who complete the program, the recidivism rate for sexual crimes is under 5 percent. It is a very successful model and considered the national gold standard for sex offender maintenance and treatment nationally. She clarified that the model is for released inmates. She explained that recidivism is defined as offending within three years post-release. For a non-sex offender, the recidivism rate is 59.9 percent.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked for the length of time the offender is subject to the containment model.

MS. BROOKS answered, it depends. She said that the treatment provider's recommendation in collaboration with the PO's recommendation determines whether the offender's treatment is complete. Goals are established, and once the offender achieves the goals, the treatment team meets and makes the determination.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether there are similarities between the wellness court and the containment model. She expressed her understanding that both the wellness court and the containment model are very successful models; however, there is "a huge swath of people in between" that are not getting what they need.

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MS. BROOKS replied that one of the most effective models for reducing recidivism is putting individuals through cognitive behavioral treatment. She maintained that the challenge for the Alaska correctional system is that only about 25 percent of the

population is released on probation and parole; that leaves a huge percentage of the offender population for whom there is no requirement to participate in substance abuse treatment, sex offender treatment, education, or any of the programs. She explained that DOC is working very hard to build up programs in custody, so that when the offenders are literally a captive audience, DOC can offer them the opportunities. She reiterated that DOC cannot force them to participate in the programs; it tries to incentivize the programs, and staff encourages inmates to participate. She maintained that the success stories that the committee heard is a powerful tool; therefore, DOC is trying to build up peer mentorship and support programs. That would allow individuals, who have been successful in the recovery and reentry process, to encourage and direct inmates toward recovery.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether mandating participation in the programs violates [inmate] freedoms, and whether there are court-ordered treatments.

MS. BROOKS responded that it depends: anyone convicted of a sex offense must participate in sex offender treatment; there are some substance use cases for which the offender is court ordered to participate in substance abuse treatment. She said that if there is not a court order in place, it may be put in place by a parole board. She mentioned that education is never a court-ordered program and DOC cannot require it; therefore, there must be intrinsic motivation for the offender to participate. She said that some inmates are not interested, and the most DOC can do is to offer it, make it attractive to inmates, and encourage them to participate.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed her understanding that there was a policy to give inmates credit for time served if they participated in treatment. She offered that it is a smart policy and asked for a history of such a policy.

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CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) was working on peer support certification, and whether DOC has worked with DHSS to bring more peer support into facilities. He asked for an update on that effort.

MS. BROOKS confirmed that DHSS is working on a peer certification program to ensure that people who are interested

in this work have the appropriate training. There are paid positions in the community currently. There is an agency out of Fairbanks doing that training and certifying people, which is not DHSS approved, but the training is required.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked where the sex offender treatment programs are located.

MS. BROOKS answered that the in-custody sex offender treatment programs are in GCCC, LCCC, AMCC, WCC, and HMCC.

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MS. BROOKS referred to slide 15, entitled "Prosocial & Give-Back Programs," and declared that a busy inmate is a safer inmate. Some of the programs listed on the slide are designed to keep the inmates busy and engaged in healthy prosocial programs. She said that yoga, running, and basketball are life skills which teach the inmates healthy living. Book clubs encourage healthy communication; quilting and hobby craft teach concentration and focus and perhaps the opportunity to create and finish something for the first time. She emphasized the power of these activities to foster self-satisfaction and an opportunity to be engaged in positive work. She mentioned the value of the canine program - to train a dog and experience a feeling of accomplishment. She maintained that the giveback programs offer the opportunity to put someone else first, give back to the community, and grow "self-worth." She stated that creative writing classes can be therapeutic for the offenders; the Lullaby Project at HMCC pairs inmates with musicians to write a lullaby to one's child. She offered that most of these programs are implemented through the special interests of the staff and community volunteers. She also talked about the knitting and woodworking projects that are dispersed as gifts. She asserted that the prosocial activities are an integral part of rehabilitation and addressing the criminogenic needs for developing prosocial attitudes, prosocial peers, and prosocial activities.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS expressed the importance of people in the community positively engaging with inmates.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked where the prison system gets their books, and what DOC can do to expand newspaper access. He stated that he understands that there is no access to news in the prisons.

MS. BROOKS answered that the facilities have libraries.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether the prison libraries were state-funded.

MS. BROOKS expressed her belief that most of the books in the DOC libraries are donated. She added that the General Education Development (GED) testing books are funded through the education program.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY mentioned two successful programs offered at LCCC: the Northwest Coast Arts Partnership Expansion program, sponsored by the Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI); and "The Flying University" program [the study of literature and philosophy led by a professor at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)]. She expressed her understanding that both programs were discontinued. She asked for follow-up regarding those two programs.

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MS. BROOKS continued by turning to slide 16, entitled "Reentry," which read: "PROCESS BY WHICH OFFENDERS WHO HAVE BEEN RELEASED RETURN TO THE COMMUNITY." She relayed that reentry is the process that helps offenders return to the communities and successfully resume family and community responsibilities. She maintained that reentry is not a new concept; Alaska has reentry coalitions, reentry events, reentry in-reach, and grant funds focused on reentry. The POs and mental health clinicians have been engaged with reentry for a long time. She stressed that "reentry" is not a buzzword and it's not a program but really a philosophy. The offender management plan (OMP) - from day one - builds toward successful reentry and returning the inmates to the community. She stated that given the fact that 95 percent of inmates return to the community, DOC has an obligation to ensure that these individuals return "better" than when they came to DOC and that someone in the community is ready to help them keep the momentum going.

MS. BROOKS moved on to slide 17, entitled "Systemwide Reentry Efforts," and stated that the slide represents a general overview of the report. She mentioned DOC's "Second Chance Act Grants" of \$1 million to develop a sustainable approach in establishing policies and practices to improve recidivism outcomes. The grants fund dedicated reentry POs to work with offenders while they are still in the facilities to transition them to the community with their OMPs and supports. The grants

also provide transportation, clothing vouchers, housing vouchers, or whatever is needed by the reentrants to "get on their feet" in the first few months after release. She stated that other Second Chance Grants have been awarded in Alaska; DOC collaborates with the other recipient agencies to ensure they are well equipped to maximize the grant opportunities.

MS. BROOKS discussed two mental health reentry programs - Institutional Discharge Project Plus (IDP+) and Assess, Plan, Identify, Coordinate (APIC) - that have been in place for a very long time and are specific to DOC's mentally ill population. Individuals who suffer from serious mental illness and/or cognitive disabilities have a very structured release plan when they leave prison, which includes a place to live, access to medications, case management, and Medicaid. These programs have support from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA). She stated that DOC is working on increasing case management access to DOC facilities; there is a request for proposal (RFP) for a reentry coordinator for substance abuse so that someone completing the substance program in custody has an immediate connection to aftercare in the community upon release. For an inmate who was assessed with a substance abuse problem but was unable to complete treatment in custody, a case manager will guide him/her to a program in the community.

MS. BROOKS described the in-reach projects of the reentry centers and reentry coalitions; community providers come into the facility to put on a "reentry fair" informing the inmates about community services that are available to released inmates.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked for information about the DOC staff person who coordinates with the reentry agencies to ensure the "web of support."

MS. BROOKS responded that currently DOC has one position who is an overall reentry coordinator. She stated that there is a request of \$740,000 in the current budget (FY21) to establish a reentry unit and add additional staff. She relayed that it is an area needing more collaboration, organization, prioritizing, and resource management.

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REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked about the release of inmates. She said that she heard while touring SCCC that inmates get a bus ticket upon release and are on their own; however, she maintained that busses bring inmates to the facility weekly.

She asked, "Why aren't we helping those ... people who are reentering get a bus ride back to the community, so that they're not feeling stranded that they ... have to create that first step on their own?" She asked whether what she heard was accurate.

MS. BROOKS answered that the bus that Representative Vance is referring to is a DOC bus; DOC has a statutory requirement to return people to the point of arrest. She added that because SCCC is for long-term offenders, they are from every possible community in Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether there is a differential between a person's point of arrest and the person's "home" community, where the released person can connect with his/her PO, housing, and employment.

MS. BROOKS replied that she doesn't have data, but generally an individual is returned to his/her home community, which is the point of arrest.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked that DOC offer comments and suggestions to the legislature on making a policy change that would offer the returning citizen a choice in that matter.

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JENNIFER WINKELMAN, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Department of Corrections (DOC), clarified that DOC has a statutory obligation to take the inmate back to the point of arrest, but that policy is often waived. She mentioned that for an inmate who has been in prison a long time, his/her family may have relocated. In answer to a question from Representative Fields, she confirmed that DOC takes the inmate back to his/her home community when it is in the best interest of the state.

MS. BROOKS referred to slide 18, entitled "Rehabilitative Services Moving Forward," and stated that DOC is looking for a "pilot" halfway house that will be reentry focused. It would give that released inmate, who is not quite ready to go back to the community, an opportunity to continue receiving program services. It would be an intensive program that might include DOLWD post-incarceration employment classes, GED classes, interview skill classes, or whatever classes the person may need. She offered that DOC is standardizing its core curriculum throughout its facilities; therefore, someone can transfer between facilities and continue in a program. She said that a

section of HMCC is being remodeled to expand its mental health unit to ensure that DOC's most vulnerable population has as much access to support as possible. She emphasized the training opportunities for staff: mental health first aid; trauma informed care; and crisis intervention models.

MS. BROOKS continued by saying that offenders struggle to get substance abuse assessment in custody and after release. The department has moved to a standardized software which is a gold standard for addictions, entitled "Continuum Software"; staff have been trained and the software is being implemented; DOC is considering it for its treatment providers. She reviewed the benefits of the different agencies using the same assessment tool.

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MS. BROOKS referred to the medication assisted treatment (MAT) within DOC and DHSS's new pilot program in Anchorage. It is focused on increasing the number of people receiving MAT services and expanding the treatment provider availability to that population. She offered that access to MAT in rural communities is still very limited.

MS. BROOKS stated that the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) is another partner of DOC for funding, programs, and education supports for the offender population.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked for an explanation of "Increased Access Through 1115 Waiver," shown on slide 18.

MS. BROOKS explained that it is a DHSS program in which the [1115] Medicaid waiver would allow greater access to substance abuse treatment and behavioral health treatment. She added that the waiver is anticipated to have a significant impact and make it much easier for the DOC population to access that critical treatment.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked for confirmation that the 1115 waiver would allow Alaska to tap additional federal resources to provide substance abuse treatment to more people.

MS. BROOKS answered, "once they get out in the community, so not in custody." She said that the programs offered in facilities are state-funded; in the community, access is limited; the waiver will increase benefits and access to both mental health and substance abuse treatments.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked for the percentage of inmates with mental health [illness] and brain injury, and the training that staff receive to work with people with mental illness.

MS. BROOKS responded that DOC has mental health clinicians in every facility and psychiatrists on staff. Offenders are screened as soon as they enter the facilities. About 65 percent of the inmate population are AMHTA beneficiaries, that is, individuals with a diagnosable mental health disorder, cognitive disability, or developmental delay; about 80 percent of the population have substance use disorders; about 20-22 percent of the population have a serious and persistent mental illness, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. She stated that it is very difficult to determine the percentage with traumatic brain injury (TBI); nationally the percentage is anywhere from 15 to 87 percent. She said that TBI is often self-reported, and the events causing TBI vary greatly; however, DOC looks at an individual's ability to function to determine the presence of a TBI.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether all staff have training on managing people with mental illness.

MS. BROOKS replied that DOC has mental health clinicians, psychiatric nurses, and the medical staff. She added that the correctional officers (COs) receive mental health training and suicide prevention training in the academy; AMHTA funds additional trainings for mental health, such as mental health first aid, trauma informed care, and a train-the-trainers for crisis intervention training (CIT). Through community law enforcement, there is now a model for correctional crisis intervention teams.

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REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked how DOC could let inmates know about therapeutic courts while they are in jail and offer them that opportunity.

MS. BROOKS acknowledged that she was unaware of the difficulty in accessing the program. She stated that the public defender's office and the judges often recommend the program and are the primary conduits. She mentioned that she passed her business cards to the testifiers and is open to posting information in the facilities. She opined that there are opportunities through DOC substance abuse treatment programs, institutional POs, and

mental health clinicians for making people aware. She maintained that DOC works very closely with the mental health courts and regularly refers individuals.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked for follow-up in the form of a plan for implementing those suggestions.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked about the role of local police departments in identifying people who are stealing to "feed" an addiction and filling out the police report in such a way that the person can access the therapeutic court.

MS. BROOKS moved on to slide 19, entitled "Needs Assessment for Continued & Enhanced Services," to review the feedback from the other agencies involved in reentry, to identify gaps [in service] that still exist. She said that the reentry unit will work on the items listed on the slide.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked for the delta between housing that reentrants are finding and housing that reentrants need. He asked whether the state has tried to meet housing needs for reentrants through the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) supported housing options. He maintained that doing so would be much less expensive than reincarcerating someone when the person fails to find housing.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked for follow-up on possible statutory changes to facilitate obtaining a REAL ID Act identification (ID) for a reentrant.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS stated that he is interested in knowing which facilities can issue state-recognized IDs upon release of an inmate, as opposed to having to get one at a Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office.

MS. BROOKS responded that DOC gives the inmate a DOC ID; it is a voucher with the individual's picture and verifies his/her identification. The DMV does accept that document; however, the person still needs to go to DMV. About 12 percent of the released population are requesting assistance with getting an ID.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether DMV could bring ID services into a facility - perhaps on an itinerant basis - so that everyone leaving a facility who needs a driver's license could get one without having to visit DMV.

MR. BROOKS maintained that there have been discussions regarding that issue, and she will provide an update.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at [5:04] p.m.