

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE

April 23, 2025

1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Matt Claman, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Löki Tobin
Senator Robert Myers

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Jesse Kiehl, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 90

"An Act relating to the examination and treatment of minors; relating to consent for behavioral and mental health treatment for minors 16 years of age or older; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SB 90 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PRESENTATION(S) : RECIDIVISM EFFORTS IN ALASKA

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 90

SHORT TITLE: MINOR MENTAL HEALTH: AGE OF CONSENT

SPONSOR(S) : SENATOR(S) GIESSEL

02/10/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/10/25	(S)	HSS, FIN
03/04/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/04/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/04/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
03/20/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/20/25	(S)	Moved SB 90 Out of Committee
03/20/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
03/24/25	(S)	FIN REFERRAL REMOVED
03/24/25	(S)	JUD REFERRAL ADDED

03/26/25 (S) HSS RPT 4DP
03/26/25 (S) DP: DUNBAR, CLAMAN, TOBIN, GIESSEL
04/02/25 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/02/25 (S) Heard & Held
04/02/25 (S) MINUTE (JUD)
04/23/25 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR CATHY GIESSEL, District E
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 90.

SUSANNE DIPIETRO, Executive Director
Alaska Judicial Council
Alaska Court System
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-delivered a presentation on Recidivism Efforts in Alaska, which focused on data analysis.

TRAVIS WELCH, Director
Health and Rehabilitation Services
Department of Corrections
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-delivered a presentation on Recidivism Efforts in Alaska.

DUSTY DUMONT, Director
Division of Pretrial, Probation and Parole
Department of Corrections
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-delivered a presentation on Recidivism Efforts in Alaska.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:30:55 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Myers, Tobin, Stevens, and Chair Claman.

SB 90-MINOR MENTAL HEALTH: AGE OF CONSENT

[1:31:33 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 90 "An Act relating to the examination and treatment of minors;

relating to consent for behavioral and mental health treatment for minors 16 years of age or older; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR CLAMAN said this is the second hearing of SB 90 in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The intention is look to the will of the committee on this bill. He invited the bill sponsor to share closing comments.

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SENATOR CATHY GIESSEL, District E, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 90, expressed appreciation to the committee for hearing SB 90. She said the testimony heard in the committee regarding the bill's potential to help teen mental health was impactful and could help prevent teen suicide, substance abuse, and other challenges that teens face.

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CHAIR CLAMAN solicited the will of the committee.

[1:32:35 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN moved to report SB 90, work order 34-LS0275\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[1:32:48 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN found no objection and SB 90 was reported from the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee.

[1:32:53 PM](#)

At ease.

PRESENTATION(S) : RECIDIVISM EFFORTS IN ALASKA

[1:34:14 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN reconvened the meeting and announced a presentation on recidivism efforts in Alaska presented by the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission and the Department of Corrections.

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SUSANNE DIPIETRO, Executive Director, Alaska Judicial Council, Alaska Court System, Anchorage, Alaska, co-delivered a presentation on recidivism efforts in Alaska, which focus on data analysis. She explained that the Alaska Judicial Council serves as staff to the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis

Commission. She said her intention was to present criminal recidivism data that was analyzed by the Commission.

[1:35:22 PM](#)

MS. DIPIETRO moved to slide 2, Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission.

[Original punctuation provided.]

Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission

- Established in AS 44.19.641
- Sixteen members (judicial, executive, and legislative branches)
- Annual report submitted each November must include "a description of recidivism rates" among other things.

MS. DIPIETRO explained that the slide showed the composition of the Commission, which has 16 members drawn from the judicial, executive, and legislative branches. She noted that Senator Claman serves as chair of the Commission. She said the Commission has numerous duties and responsibilities in statute, but for purposes of the presentation, her focus is on one of those duties: submitting an annual report each November that includes, among other information, a description of recidivism rates. She said the presentation would discuss the recidivism data published in the Commission's 2024 annual report.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to slide 3, Understanding "Recidivism":

[Original punctuation provided.]

Understanding "Recidivism"

The rate at which individuals who previously have been convicted of a crime commit new criminal acts.

Under AS 44.19.649(2): Recidivism means the percentage of convicted defendants who are booked into, or who return to, a correctional facility within three years after release or the date of conviction, whichever is later.

MS. DIPIETRO stated slide 3 addresses the meaning of recidivism. She explained that criminal recidivism is generally understood as the rate at which individuals who have previously been convicted of a crime commit new criminal acts. She said that once a person has been convicted, whether or not the individual serves a prison sentence, the key question is whether the person continues life as a law-abiding citizen or returns to the criminal justice system.

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MS. DIPIETRO said recidivism is an important concept when evaluating how resources are allocated within the criminal justice system. It is particularly significant for the Department of Corrections, which must house individuals who return to custody, and for organizations that operate reentry programs aimed at helping formerly convicted individuals avoid committing new crimes and become productive members of society.

MS. DIPIETRO stated that the presentation would primarily use the definition of recidivism contained in the Commission's statute, which was referenced on the slide. She explained that the statute defines recidivism as the percentage of convicted defendants who are booked into or return to a correctional facility within three years after release or at the date of conviction, whichever occurs later. She said she would further explain the definition.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to slide 4, Three Components to Calculate Recidivism:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Three Components to Calculate Recidivism

The Group

- Who is being assessed?
- Individuals convicted of a crime (misdemeanors and felonies)

The Event

- What counts as recidivism?
- Being booked into a correctional facility

The Timeframe

- Over what period is recidivism being measured?
- Three years after conviction or release if incarcerated

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MS. DIPIETRO explained that the statutory definition of recidivism used by the Commission has three basic components:

- **The population being studied.**

She said the Commission studies individuals who have been convicted of a crime, including both misdemeanor and felony crimes. She noted that some states limit recidivism studies to only felonies or only misdemeanors, but Alaska's approach includes everyone convicted of a crime.

- **The recidivism event.**

Under the statute, the event is defined as being booked into a correctional facility. She explained that being booked into a correctional facility does not necessarily mean the individual was convicted of a new crime. Individuals may be booked after being arrested by an officer or for a probation violation, which may or may not involve a crime. However, the statutory definition focuses on the individual returning to the physical custody of a correctional facility.

- **The timeframe measured.**

She said that the follow-up period for the study is three years. The three-year period begins either after the date of conviction or after the individual is released from incarceration.

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MS. DIPIETRO further explained the timeframe for measuring recidivism. Depending on the crime a person is convicted of, they may or may not receive a sentence of incarceration. If the person is convicted, they may receive a short sentence or a long sentence, such as 10 or 20 years. The important concept to consider is the "at-risk period." She described how to measure recidivism. Assume that a person convicted of a serious offense receives a 10-year sentence of incarceration. In this circumstance, the Commission would not begin measuring recidivism during the period of incarceration. The rationale is that the individual is not in the community; therefore, not considered at risk of reoffending during that time. She said, instead, the three-year follow-up period begins upon release from custody. On the other end of the spectrum, individuals who receive a probationary sentence or a completely suspended sentence may never serve time in a correctional facility, for those individuals, the at-risk period begins immediately upon conviction.

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SENATOR MYERS asked the presenter to elaborate on "booked into a correctional facility," questioning whether that recidivism-measurement event could miss some individuals specifically, undercounting those who commit new crimes and go on probation or a suspended sentence, while potentially overcounting others booked but not ultimately charged.

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MS. DIPIETRO replied exactly, explaining that she agreed there are other ways to measure recidivism that may also be useful. She stated that later in the presentation, she would discuss additional approaches for analyzing recidivism that may provide a more complete picture.

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CHAIR CLAMAN further replied that the question illustrates longstanding imperfections of the definition. He said the Criminal Justice Commission, which was the predecessor to the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission, discussed this extensively. He said that during his service on both commissions, members frequently debated how to define recidivism. Although there were many hours of discussion and various alternative proposals, the Commission never reached consensus on a different definition. As a result, the definition used by the former Criminal Justice Commission remains in statute and is still in use. He said there was broad recognition that every proposed definition of recidivism had limitations.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to slide 5, What Behaviors are not Measured?

[Original punctuation provided.]

What Behaviors are not Measured?

Whether the previously convicted individual engaged in behavior that would constitute a crime but there was no criminal justice system response;

The date the individual engaged in the criminal behavior may be different than the date that the system responded;

Victim's decision not to report a crime;

Law enforcement & prosecutor behaviors and policies;
Crime rates in a particular community.

MS. DIPIETRO cautioned that there are important limitations on the Commission's analyses. She highlighted that a better way to think about recidivism is: "it measures the criminal justice system's response to the behaviors of people who have been convicted of a crime." She said that if an individual engaged in conduct that constituted a crime, but the incident did not result in a criminal justice system response, recidivism data would not capture that behavior. She said an example of this is a victim who chooses not to report a crime. The Commission would like to count that person in the data to see whether they desisted their criminal behavior. Conversely, even for reported crimes, a response may not occur due to law enforcement, prosecutorial resource limitations, or policy considerations. These considerations affect the Commission's ability to collect and measure what is happening. She further remarked that overall crime rates in particular communities can also affect the likelihood that conduct will come to the attention of the criminal justice system.

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MS. DIPIETRO said another factor to consider is that the date an individual engaged in criminal behavior may differ from the date when the criminal justice system responded. She explained that a person may be charged with an offense several years after the conduct occurred, meaning the system's response does not necessarily coincide with the timing of the behavior itself. She emphasized that while recidivism data provides useful information, it has limitations in fully capturing whether individuals desist from criminal behavior or continue to engage in it.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to slide 6, Recidivism of One Group (2,989 Individuals):

[Original punctuation provided.]

Recidivism of One Group (2,989 individuals)

The Group (Cohort):

Individuals convicted of a misdemeanor or felony and released to the community (if incarcerated) between January 1 and March 31, 2020.

The Rate:

By year three, 56.9% had been booked into a correctional facility at least once - they "recidivated."

MS. DIPIETRO drew attention to the chart, which illustrated the recidivism curve for a specific cohort. She explained that the cohort included approximately 3,000 individuals who became "at risk" after being convicted of a crime during a three-month period from January 1 through March 31, 2020. She said the analysis followed those individuals from the date they became at risk for criminal behavior, somewhere within those three months. The analysis tracked them for three years to determine whether they were booked into a correctional facility at least once. She stated that 66.9 percent of individuals in that cohort were booked into a correctional facility within the three-year period.

MS. DIPIETRO noted that the chart shows recidivism events occurring relatively soon after individuals become at risk. She explained that many of the bookings occurred within approximately the first 300 days, after which the curve begins to flatten out. She said that 74 percent of those who recidivated within the three-year period had already done so within the first year. This trend appears consistently in the data and was observed by the Criminal Justice Commission. She remarked that although one might expect individuals recently released from prison or recently convicted of a crime to be highly motivated to avoid reoffending, the opposite occurs. The data shows that recidivism is more common during the first year and then it levels off. The pattern presents an issue the criminal justice system must grapple with.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to slide 7, Recidivism of Multiple Groups:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Recidivism of Multiple Groups

The Cohorts: All individuals convicted of a misdemeanor or felony during a certain quarter based on their conviction/release date.

The Rates: Between 2015 and 2020, the average recidivism rate among cohorts was 59.5%.

MS. DIPIETRO explained that the previous slide illustrated only one cohort. She said the analysis creates multiple cohorts over time. The Commission does not put everyone into one big group and analyze them; it analyzes them in groups of individuals who become "at risk" every three months. She said the database includes approximately 10 years of individuals who have been convicted, and those individuals are grouped by the at risk date into 3-year cohorts. She explained that this approach allows analysts to compare criminal justice system responses across time.

MS. DIPIETRO explained that the chart on slide 7 reflects all cohorts between 2015 and 2020, and that the individuals in each cohort were: convicted of a crime; became at risk during that quarter; and had a three-year follow-up period.

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MS. DIPIETRO reported that the average recidivism rate among those cohorts was 59.5 percent. She noted that this broader analysis shows a similar overall pattern to the cohort discussed on the previous slide, which had a recidivism rate of 66.9 percent. She pointed out that the chart shows some variation among the cohorts, although the recidivism rates remain relatively close to one another.

MS. DIPIETRO further noted that cohorts beginning in 2019 had three-year follow-up periods that included the COVID-19 pandemic. She indicated that pandemic-era restrictions affected data; the next slide provides additional detail.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to slides 8 and 9, Recidivism of Groups Over Time:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Recidivism of Groups Over Time

Beginning April 2020:

Cohorts were smaller than previous cohorts;

Initial convictions were more serious than previous cohorts.

MS. DIPIETRO directed attention to the portion of the chart highlighted in red, beginning around April 2020. She said the chart shows a noticeable increase during that period. She noted that the immediate question is whether the change reflects a shift in individuals' behavior; the Commission does not know the answer. She said what she does know is that the cohorts beginning in 2020 were smaller than earlier cohorts. She said each of those cohorts included approximately 2,000 individuals, whereas earlier cohorts had roughly 3,000. She stated that the smaller cohort sizes indicate that fewer individuals became "at risk" during that period. Meaning: fewer individuals were convicted of crimes, fewer were subsequently released, and fewer became at risk during that period.

MS. DIPIETRO further explained that another interesting piece of data about the cohorts represented in the jump is that their initial convictions were more serious than those of earlier cohorts. She said the data does not establish whether individuals were committing more serious crimes during that period. Rather, the data indicate that the criminal justice system processed a greater proportion of more serious offenses than before April 2020.

MS. DIPIETRO stated that she circled the jump on the chart because it is visually noticeable and raises questions about which factors contributed to the change. She emphasized that recidivism rates are influenced not only by the behavior of those individuals studied but also by the policies, procedures, and resource decisions within the criminal justice system that affect how offenses are processed and responded to.

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SENATOR TOBIN asked about the period between mid-2016 and mid-2017 shown on the chart. She noted two small declines during that time and observed that the 2017 data points do not appear to reach the 60 percent line. She asked whether there was an explanation for those variations.

MS. DIPIETRO responded that she did not have a specific explanation for those fluctuations. She said her initial thought is that they may reflect natural variability in the data. She noted that while it can be tempting to associate small increases or decreases with particular events or policy changes, some variation may simply occur by chance.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to two charts on slide 9, Recidivism of Groups Over Time (continued):

MS. DIPIETRO explained that the slide illustrates the change that occurred around April 2020. She said the chart on the left shows the size of the cohorts declining beginning in 2019, with cohort sizes dropping to approximately 2,000 individuals compared with larger numbers in earlier periods. The chart on the right examines the severity of the initial conviction among individuals within these cohorts. She said the data shows a shift in the composition of the cohorts, with a higher proportion of individuals convicted of felonies and fewer individuals convicted of misdemeanors.

MS. DIPIETRO explained that many individuals convicted of felonies serve time in prison and are typically placed under probation supervision upon release. She said keep in mind, that generally, individuals who are closely supervised are more likely to have criminal activity detected or reported than individuals who are unsupervised in the community. As a result, individuals convicted of felonies who are under supervision may be more likely to return to a correctional facility than individuals convicted of misdemeanors who are not under supervision. She described the pattern as an interesting puzzle.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to slide 10, Additional Ways of Thinking about Criminal Re-Offending:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Additional Ways of Thinking About Criminal Re-offending

- Different levels of re -offending;
- Timing of re - offending;
- Relative severity of recidivism event.

MS. DIPIETRO said she has used a binary baseline when considering recidivism, meaning, an individual reoffends or does not reoffend. The binary baseline provides an important starting point for analysis. She said that while the binary measure is useful as a baseline, additional insight can be gained by examining how individuals reoffend, when the reoffending occurs, and the nature of the conduct involved. She illustrated the

point with an example. An individual who had been convicted of a felony, was released, did their at-risk period, and later failed to comply with a probation condition, such as missing a required drug test. In other words, the individual did something that caused their probation officer to return them to incarceration on a petition to revoke probation based on a technical violation rather than a new crime. She noted that such a case may differ in important ways from a situation in which an individual commits a new criminal offense in the community, such as an assault.

MS. DIPIETRO stated that those two situations may reasonably be viewed differently when evaluating recidivism. She said that to present a fuller picture of criminal reoffending, it is useful to take those types of differences into account. The next few slides examine those differences.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to three charts on slide 11, Different Levels of Involvement with the System, Recidivism by Cohort and Event Type. The three charts are titled Incarceration, Arrest, and Conviction. Each of those categories show the three-year recidivism rates between 2015 and 2020. She explained that the slide illustrates different levels of involvement with the criminal system in recidivating behavior. She pointed out that the highest recidivism rates occur when the recidivism event is defined as reincarceration. She stated that the lowest recidivism rates occur when recidivism is measured by reconviction. The reason these rates are the lowest occurs because many individuals who are rearrested, recharged, or reincarcerated are not ultimately reconvicted of a crime. She noted that some states measure recidivism by reconviction rather than reincarceration, pointing out that using different definitions can produce substantially different recidivism rates.

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SENATOR MYERS sought confirmation that comparing recidivism rates with other states may not represent an accurate apples-to-apples comparison.

MS. DIPIETRO answered in the affirmative. She stated that when comparing recidivism rates between jurisdictions, it is important to ensure that the same definition of a recidivism event is used. She explained that if Alaska measures recidivism using incarceration while another state measures recidivism

using reconviction, the resulting rates are not directly comparable as the data show on the charts.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to charts on slide 12, Timing of Recidivism Event. The charts on slide 12 show the number of days to 50 percent recidivism by cohort and event type. The chart categories are incarceration, arrest, and conviction; the timeframe is from 2015 to 2020.

MS. DIPIETRO explained that the timing of a recidivism event can provide insight into the persistence of criminal behavior. She said an individual who recidivates shortly after release from prison may have more challenges than someone who remains law-abiding for several years before reoffending. She stated that although both individuals would be counted as having recidivated, the individual who reoffends immediately after release may require more resources and attention than someone who remained law-abiding for a longer period. Individuals who maintain law-abiding behavior for a period of time may be more able to build on that success in the future.

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MS. DIPIETRO said recidivism most often occurs during the first year. The average time to reincarceration is 136 days. The average time to rearrest is 213 days, and the average time to reconviction is 394 days. She said the data shows that the speed at which a recidivism event occurs varies over time.

MS. DIPIETRO noted that the chart indicates the pace of recidivism events slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said it took longer for the criminal justice system to respond to criminal behavior during that period. She explained that it is difficult to determine whether the change reflected differences in individual behavior or constraints within the criminal justice system that affected how cases were processed during the pandemic.

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MS. DIPIETRO moved to a chart on slide 13, Relative Severity of Recidivism Event:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Relative Severity of Recidivism Event

Relative Severity of Recidivism Conviction by
Original Conviction Severity

Recidivism Conviction

Original Conviction	Unclassified Felony Percent	Felony A Percent	Felony B Percent	Felony C Percent	Misdemeanor A Percent	Misdemeanor B Percent
Unclassified Felony	0	0	0	75.0	0	25.0
Felony A	0	0	10.9	18.8	51.6	18.8
Felony B	0	1.1	8.1	22.6	51.4	16.8
Felony C	0.1	0.4	4.3	23.0	55.3	16.8
Misdemeanor A	<.1	0.3	2.3	12.9	63.8	20.6
Misdemeanor B	<.1	0.3	1.7	9.7	52.5	35.8

MS. DIPIETRO explained that although all individuals shown on the chart recidivated, the slide examines how the severity of the recidivating offense compares with the severity of the original conviction. She said one possible hopeful sign of improvement would be if an individual originally convicted of a felony later recidivated with a less serious offense, such as a misdemeanor. She reported that the chart suggests there is a slight probability that the recidivating offense may be less serious than the original conviction offense. The difference is small and may partly reflect statistical factors, noting that most convictions are for misdemeanor offenses. She stated that the chart nonetheless provides insight into whether individuals who initially committed more serious offenses later recidivate with less serious conduct.

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CHAIR CLAMAN found no further questions and expressed appreciation for the illuminating presentation.

[2:06:14 PM](#)

At ease.

[2:07:07 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN reconvened the meeting. He introduced staff from the Department of Correction (DOC) and invited the presenters to begin sharing DOC's recidivism efforts in Alaska.

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TRAVIS WELCH, Director, Health and Rehabilitation Services, Department of Corrections, Anchorage, Alaska, co-delivered a presentation on Recidivism Efforts in Alaska.

[2:08:48 PM](#)

MR. WELCH moved to slide 2, DOC Population Size and Capacity:

[Original punctuation provided.]

DOC POPULATION SIZE AND CAPACITY

- 26,998 bookings in FY2024
 - 16,868 unique individuals
- 853 Title 47 non-criminal holds
- 4,279 Individuals in custody as of 4/16/2025
- 3,293 Individuals on probation or parole as of 4/16/2025
- 2 acute, 5 subacute - 306 psychiatric treatment beds

MR. WELCH explained that the department operates within a unified correctional system. He said Alaska is responsible for housing both the pretrial population, who are unsentenced, and the sentenced population. He noted that many states operate systems with municipal correctional facilities and jails, or county jails, and state prison systems house individuals convicted of more serious crimes. He said Alaska is unique in that DOC houses both of those populations within a single system.

MR. WELCH stated that in fiscal year 2024 DOC recorded just under 27,000 bookings, which averages approximately 74 bookings per day. He explained that individuals may enter the system for a variety of reasons, including non-criminal holds, but that most bookings involve individuals who have allegedly committed a crime and are brought to a correctional facility.

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MR. WELCH noted that the total number of bookings during the year is significantly larger than the April 16, 2025, population count, which totaled nearly 4,300 in DOC's custody. He explained that the difference reflects the large number of individuals who enter and leave the system each day. Releases occur for a variety of reasons, including dropped charges, individuals released on their own recognizance, individuals placed in a pretrial supervision program, and individuals who have completed their sentences and are returning to their communities.

MR. WELCH said nearly 3,300 individuals were under probation and parole supervision in Alaska communities as of April 16, 2025. The department also serves a population with behavioral health needs and is the state's largest mental health provider. He reported that approximately 80 percent of the incarcerated population lives with a substance use disorder and that

approximately 60 percent live with a mental health issue. The department has just over 300 psychiatric inpatient beds to meet Alaska's needs, along with two acute units: one at the Alaska correctional complex in Anchorage, which is for the male population, and one at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center, which is for the female population. These centers provide inpatient care comparable to that at Alaska Psychiatric Institute. He said these are individuals who are a threat to themselves or others. They might be off their medications, or DOC is trying to get them back on their medications. Either way, they are at an acuity level that requires the highest level of care that DOC can provide in the system. He said DOC has five subacute units located throughout Alaska, including Anchorage, Hiland Mountain, the Valley, and Seward. Subacute units provide care to people who can engage in programming, who are on their medications for the most part, and who are stable. The department's goal is to house people in a low-restrictive environment so they can engage in programming and the services DOC provides for a rehabilitative experience.

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MR. WELCH moved to slide 3, Recidivism's Downward Trend:

[Original punctuation provided.]

RECIDIVISM'S DOWNWARD TREND

- DOC recidivism data is sourced from the Alaska Corrections Offender Management System (ACOMS). For the sake of consistency, we are utilizing the previous Departmental definition of recidivism. This definition accounts for the reincarceration of convicted felons due to a new sentence, including parole or probation adjudications, within three years of their release.
- FY2013 67.10 percent
- FY2017 60.61 percent
- FY2019 58.49 percent
- FY2021 54.59 percent

MR. WELCH expressed appreciation to the previous presenter for effectively illustrating the complexity of measuring recidivism. He explained that when DOC discusses recidivism, the department is examining its own data rather than comparing Alaska's rates with those of other states or jurisdictions. He noted that such comparisons are difficult because definitions and measurement

methods vary across jurisdictions, which does not necessarily make them apples-to-apples comparisons.

MR. WELCH stated that the department's analysis focuses on individuals who have previously been convicted of a felony and who are later reincarcerated due to a new sentence. A new sentence includes outcomes related to parole or probation adjudications. He directed attention to the graph shown on slide 3 and said it indicates that recidivism rates have trended downward over approximately the past decade. He described that trend as positive but emphasized it reflects extensive work by many parties, including the legislature, the executive branch, and community partners. The department witnessed a lot of work on crisis stabilization and made efforts to divert individuals away from the criminal justice system when appropriate.

MR. WELCH noted that legislation which enabled individuals who were released from correctional facilities to obtain state identification cards was a big win for the reentry community. Individuals returning to their communities often face difficulty accessing services without proper identification, and having a state ID allows them to obtain services and take necessary steps toward reintegration. The legislature also provided funding for reentry housing, which is another key factor supporting successful reintegration. Stable housing is essential for individuals to successfully return to their communities after incarceration.

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SENATOR TOBIN drew attention to the slide 2. She requested an offline follow-up for information regarding parole and probation adjudications, which she assumed were for technical violations. She asked whether that data could be broken out to show how many individuals were reincarcerated based on one of those components.

MR. WELCH replied that the department would provide the information.

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SENATOR MYERS referred to the graph on slide 3. He noted that the graph shows recidivism rates declining by roughly a dozen percent over the past decade. He contrasted that with the previous presentation, which showed recidivism rates remaining relatively flat or possibly increasing slightly. He asked for an explanation about those differences.

[2:16:15 PM](#)

MR. WELCH responded that the characterization is accurate. He explained that DOC examines its population through its internal data systems. The recidivism figures may differ from those reported by the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission or other states.

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SENATOR MYERS stated that he would like to follow up later to examine the differences between the two presentations in greater detail.

MR. WELCH responded that the previous presentation analyzed a broader population that included misdemeanors. He said that he is happy to follow up with the committee.

[2:17:05 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN stated that DOC's recidivism data would include only individuals who have been in the correctional system. An individual who receives a probationary sentence without serving jail time would not appear in the department's dataset because that person was never incarcerated. Further, DOC begins its count only after the individual's release from jail.

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MR. WELCH replied that the department relies on data from the Alaska Corrections Offender Management System (ACOMS). He confirmed that DOC's dataset reflects a narrower population than the broader population in the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission.

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CHAIR CLAMAN asked whether DOC looks at the same three-year window.

[2:17:49 PM](#)

MR. WELCH answered in the affirmative, stating DOC uses a three-year lookback.

[2:17:55 PM](#)

MR. WELCH moved to slides 4 and 5, Services Provided by Health and Rehabilitation:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SERVICES PROVIDED BY HEALTH AND REHABILITATION

Reentry Services

Education Programs

Vocational Programs

Offender Management Plans	Education Coordinators	Plumbing, Electrical & Carpentry
Risk/Needs Assessment	Placement Testing	CDL Training
Halfway Houses (CRCs)	Computer Literacy	Culinary Arts
Community In-Reach	GED Testing, Tutoring & Certification	Food Handler & Serve Safe
Mental Health Release Programs	Job Readiness Skills	Small Engine Repair
Reentry Coalitions	English as a Second Language (ESL)	Barista Training
DOLWD & DEED Partnerships	Parenting	Welding
Peer Support	Correspondence Courses	Building Maintenance
Medical Social Work		Barber School
		Forming New Partnerships
		Prison Education Program

[2:18:00 PM](#)

MR. WELCH stated that one of the guiding principles the commissioner emphasizes is that individuals should leave the correctional system better than when they entered. He said that principle is central to the department's efforts to address recidivism. DOC cannot accomplish the work alone; it requires partnerships with community programs and other organizations. DOC works with a number of partners, including the University of Alaska system to provide educational programming in correctional facilities, including automotive mechanics.

MR. WELCH said DOC recently entered into a memorandum of agreement with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) - Community and Technical College (CTC). It is establishing a position called the director of correctional education. He explained that the director will work with DOC to expand educational programming in correctional facilities through UAF-CTC programs. That partnership also includes participation in the Prison Education Program (PEP) to support and sustain educational programming within correctional facilities.

MR. WELCH further noted that CTC has locations in Bethel and Nome, which expands opportunities for educational programming in those regions.

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SENATOR TOBIN expressed that federal dollars might be available through Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Federal Pell Grants, to name a few. Some of these applications require online access and knowledge of an individual's family tax history and other information. She expressed interest in how DOC supports an individual's ability to access those federal dollars and whether UAF will provide technical assistance.

MR. WELCH replied that CTC would apply for grant funds on behalf of the student.

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SENATOR TOBIN stated that she was aware that Johnson-O'Malley funds and other tribal resources may also be available for communities such as Bethel and Nome. She said she would be interested in following up offline regarding whether those funding sources might also support the programming discussed.

MR. Welch responded that expanding access to additional funding opportunities is one of the reasons DOC is excited about the partnership.

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MR. WELCH said that along with the university, DOC also partners with several tribal organizations. Such partnerships include Southcentral Foundation, the Tanana Chiefs Conference, the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, and the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, among others.

MR. WELCH said Southcentral Foundation operates culturally relevant programming at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center and is open to all incarcerated individuals, not solely Alaska Native participants. Incarcerated individuals report strong interest in participating in the program. He noted that the program focuses on behavioral health and providing support systems. He stated that DOC is working to expand similar programming to Palmer Correctional Center so that comparable services will be available for the male population.

MR. WELCH stated that DOC partnered with the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) to bring Native art and dance into correctional facilities. He said that, though this particular grant was expended, he seeks ways to bring ANHC back into correctional facilities to offer new programming.

MR. WELCH further stated that DOC has partners with several community organizations that provide services within facilities and support reentry efforts. He said those partners include organizations such as Juneau Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Health and Wellness, Alaska Addiction and Recovery Services, True North Recovery, the Salvation Army, Norton Sound Health Corporation, and members of the state's reentry coalition, to name a few.

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MR. WELCH continued with slide 4 to discuss educational services, stating the emphasis is on adult basic education. He explained that when an individual enters DOC's care and custody, educational and vocational instructors receive notice of the arrival. He said staff review the individual's paperwork and reach out to determine whether the person is interested in educational opportunities. Institutional probation officers also inform individuals about available programming, and DOC advertises programs through posters and other outreach within the facilities.

MR. WELCH stated that when an individual expresses interest, the educational coordinator assesses the person's current educational level. He said individuals who do not have a GED or high school diploma are first encouraged to work toward completing a GED. Individuals may also participate in classes to strengthen technical skills such as math, reading, and writing so they can meet the educational requirements needed to participate in vocational training offered in the facilities.

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MR. WELCH said DOC works closely with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Department of Education and Early Development to evaluate Alaska's workforce needs and identify relevant vocational training opportunities. He mentioned that Alaska has a shortage of truck drivers. He highlighted that DOC launched a pilot commercial driver's license (CDL) program at Wildwood Correctional Center that prepares participants through all training except the road test. The program uses virtual reality and a driving simulator to allow participants to practice tasks such as vehicle inspections and operational procedures. He said individuals complete the program at a point where, upon release, they are prepared to take the CDL driving test. Only one cohort has completed the program so far, as it is a new project, but expressed enthusiasm about its potential to address workforce needs and to provide strong employment opportunities for individuals upon release.

MR. WELCH highlighted a program developed in partnership with the Carpenters Union. He explained that the union provides a curriculum originally designed for high school-level training, which vocational instructors use to teach skills within the facilities. Participants complete four instructional books and receive a certificate for each one. He said individuals may present those certificates to the Carpenters Union after release to help them enter the union's apprenticeship program. He said DOC is working to establish a similar agreement with the electrical union of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

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MR. WELCH stated that DOC has a longstanding relationship with Alaska's Ironworkers Union. He explained that the organization operates a mobile welding trailer that travels to various correctional facilities to teach welding and ironworking skills. DOC recently provided the organization with a letter of support for a federal funding application intended to expand the program. He expressed hope that additional funding would allow DOC and its partners to increase the number of classes.

MR. WELCH emphasized that when DOC develops vocational programming, it seeks to align training opportunities with workforce needs in Alaska. He said the goal is to ensure that individuals leaving the department's custody possess skills that can lead to well-paying employment and allow them to contribute to Alaska's economy.

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SENATOR MYERS stated that slide 4 lists several vocational programs and asked how programs such as welding or barber training are conducted in a correctional setting, noting that the tools used in those trades could be potentially dangerous.

MR. WELCH responded that DOC takes significant precautions when offering vocational programming involving tools. He explained that security measures include conducting tool counts before and after each class to ensure no tools are missing. The department carefully evaluates which individuals are permitted to participate in particular programs. Individuals are screened to determine whether they are appropriate candidates for programs that involve equipment or tools. He explained that the department exercises caution in assigning participants to classes such as carpentry and assesses potential risks before allowing individuals to enroll. The department instituted

security measures to ensure tools remain within the program area and cannot later be used as a weapon.

[2:29:11 PM](#)

MR. WELCH moved to slide 5, Services Provided by Health and Rehabilitation (continued):

[Original punctuation provided.]

SERVICES PROVIDED BY HEALTH AND REHABILITATION

Mental Health Services	Substance Use Disorder Treatment	Sex Offender Management
Group & Individual Counseling	Screening	Institutional Sex Offender Treatment
In-Patient Treatment Units	Assessment	Community Sex Offender Treatment
Intensive Reentry Planning	Intensive Outpatient Treatment (IOPSAT)	Rural Telehealth Treatment
Suicide Prevention	Residential Treatment (RSAT)	Containment Model
Dual Diagnosis Treatment	Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)	Safety Nets
Title 47 Management	AA/NA	Specially Trained Probation Officers
Medication Management	Prevention Services	
Trauma Informed Care	CRC Direct Access to Treatment	
Mental Health First Aid		

MR. WELCH said a number of individuals entering DOC's care and custody are living with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, or co-occurring disorders. The department offers group and individual counseling services as well as inpatient and outpatient substance use disorder treatment programming. He explained that the department works with community partners to support behavioral health programming and supplement services provided by department clinicians. He noted that organizations such as the Salvation Army assist in delivering behavioral health services.

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MR. WELCH stated that DOC is excited about expanding its use of furlough as a means of supporting treatment and reentry. He

explained that individuals who meet certain criteria, including being within three years of release, may be allowed to finish their sentence in the community. He said DOC may furlough individuals to inpatient substance use disorder treatment providers such as Alaska Addiction and Recovery Services, formerly known as Nugen's Ranch. He reported that five individuals are participating in the furlough program and receive inpatient substance use disorder treatment at the 3.5 level of care. He explained that the program may last several months and can extend up to approximately 18 months. He said that while individuals participate in treatment through furlough, Medicaid covers the cost of that programming.

MR. WELCH emphasized that the program supports continuity of care by allowing individuals to receive treatment and develop relationships with community-based providers prior to release. He said this approach helps ensure individuals can continue receiving care from the same providers and case managers after returning to the community rather than relying solely on services within DOC. The department is working with Alaska Addiction and [Rehabilitation] Services as well as True North Recovery and the Salvation Army to support these treatment opportunities.

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SENATOR TOBIN asked, in general terms, how many incarcerated individuals receive mental health or substance use disorder treatment services. She noted that if approximately 80 percent of the roughly 4,200 individuals incarcerated are living with a substance use disorder, that number exceeds 3,400 individuals. She stated that she assumed DOC does not have 3,000 individuals who take advantage of substance use treatment programs. She asked for an approximate number of individuals receiving services within those programs.

MR. WELCH responded that he would provide that information.

[2:32:06 PM](#)

DUSTY DUMONT, Director, Division of Pretrial, Probation and Parole (DP3), Department of Corrections, Juneau, Alaska, co-delivered a presentation on Recidivism Efforts in Alaska.

MS. DUMONT moved to slide 6, Services Provided by Probation and Parole:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SERVICES PROVIDED BY PROBATION AND PAROLE

- Structured environment with accountability while living in the community
- Collaboration with community partners
- Access to supports and services
- Ensuring public safety in accordance with court and/or parole board orders

MS. DUMONT said the division aims to balance accountability with the goal of rehabilitation by supporting individuals as they reintegrate into society while minimizing the risk of reoffending.

MS. DUMONT stated that she has worked in corrections for more than 27 years in a variety of roles. She served for the past 22 years primarily as a field probation officer, although she also worked in institutional settings and with the Alaska Board of Parole. She described herself as passionate about the work, despite the challenges of the field.

MS. DUMONT said she views probation and parole officers as "change agents" whose role is to encourage individuals under supervision to pursue positive change. Individuals are not always ready to change, but officers seek opportunities to support them when they are. She added that a deputy director in the division describes officers as working with individuals in the "pre-contemplation" stage, helping them recognize the need for change and move toward future success.

MS. DUMONT stated that officers perform many roles in supervising individuals in the community. She said officers connect individuals with services such as mental health treatment, substance use disorder treatment, and community reentry resources. She noted that officers encourage individuals throughout their journey and help them recover when setbacks occur. She said officers play the role of strict parents, which sometimes leads to discipline and consequences.

MS. DUMONT emphasized that the work requires maintaining a complex balance between rehabilitation and public safety. She said the division is motivated by success stories of individuals who return to their communities, remain clean and sober, maintain employment, and raise their families. She stated that those outcomes represent the goals the division strives to achieve.

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SENATOR TOBIN said that she asked officers and community members at the Bethel facility how the system supports individuals returning to very small villages, particularly when the crime was very terrible. She said that, though the individual paid their debt, she asked about the process of supporting reentry in those circumstances where communities still need to heal. She asked how to facilitate reintegration in these circumstances. She expressed interest in learning more about collaboration with community partners and about potential approaches to help individuals return to their communities without causing further harm.

MS. DUMONT responded that she would welcome that conversation.

[2:35:57 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked for a short preview.

MS. DUMONT replied that Bethel is one of the areas that is hard to staff. She noted that returning individuals to small communities can present complex challenges, particularly in cases involving serious offenses such as sex offenses. She said communities often face a difficult balance between accepting individuals who have served their sentences and addressing the harm they caused the community. She stated that in those situations, DOC seeks to proceed carefully, erring on the side of public safety while also protecting victims.

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CHAIR CLAMAN expressed appreciation to the presenters.

[2:37:33 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Claman adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 2:37 p.m.