

Alaska Reentry Simulation

The Alaska Experience

The United States Attorney's Office, District of Alaska prioritizes and supports local reentry efforts as part of the Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative. The Reentry Simulation is an educational outreach event which highlights the struggles and challenges faced by individuals who are transitioning from incarceration back into their communities. The Reentry Simulation provided an opportunity for participants to gain an understanding of the significant obstacles and barriers faced by men and women upon their release from incarceration and return to their communities.

Each participant assumes the identity of a reentrant and receives a packet of materials, including a "Life Card." The "Life Card" explains the reentrant's criminal background, current living situation, current job situation, and the specific weekly tasks that must be accomplished in order to avoid the risk of being sent back to jail for non-compliance with the requirements of his or her supervised release. The simulation begins with an explanation and instructions from the facilitator. The "Reentrants" then set out to navigate the challenges of reentry.

The room is set up with approximately 15 stations. Each of the stations represents the many places a returning citizen must navigate when they are first released. Each table has random elements which produce real life uncertainty when dealing with each of these agencies and organizations. Some of the stations include Identification, Probation, Court, Education, Bank, Employer, Social Services, Church, Pawn Shop, Landlord/Rent, Transportation, Health Clinic, and Substance Abuse Treatment.

Over the course of about an hour, participants experience the first month of post-release life. Each week takes place in a 15 minute segment. In between each of these segments, Reentrants are required to complete a probation check in, and depending on how successful they were in satisfying the conditions of their release and accomplishing their assigned tasks, the Reentrants are either remanded to jail, or returned to their assigned housing. Successful Reentry into the community is something which is difficult. It is a complex process. Since each person has different individual needs, resources, and histories, each person's life path is different. Successful Reentry is not something that happens automatically upon release from prison, but is something which has a greater chance of occurring if planned for accordingly.

The Reentry Simulation provides visibility into the perspectives of the returning citizens who those in the field are tasked to help. The District's aim is to represent a realistic landscape of what individuals face when coming home. By experiencing these complex obstacles and barriers which reentrants must navigate, we not only gain visibility into their individual perspective but also discover innovative ways to help them succeed.

As part of National Second Chance Month activities, the United States Attorney's Office, District of Alaska, in collaboration with the Anchorage Reentry Coalition debuted a Reentry Simulation at Neighborworks, Alaska in Anchorage on April 19, 2019. The event was well received, and second reentry event is scheduled for June 24, 2019 at the BP Energy Center.

Alaska Reentry Simulation

Special Thank You

After attending the USAO, Southern District of Florida's Second Annual Reentry Simulation in West Palm Beach, Florida in March 2019 (<https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdfl/pr/us-attorney-s-office-hosts-second-annual-reentry-simulation>), The USAO, District of Alaska was inspired to bring this event to life in Alaska.

Special thanks to Ariana Fajardo Orshan, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Adam McMichael, Assistant U.S. Attorney and J.D. Smith, Law Enforcement Coordinator for the Southern District of Florida for all their training and technical assistance.

Alaska Contact Information

For additional information about the Alaska model, contact:
Yulonda Candelario
Law Enforcement, Reentry and Community Outreach Coordinator
United States Attorney's Office
District of Alaska
yulonda.candelario@usdoj.gov