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Alaska Receives Grant to Reduce Recidivism by Delivering Job Services in Correctional Centers

JUNEAU, Alaska— The U.S. Department of Labor has awarded Alaska a \$500,000 grant to expand employment services offered to incarcerated individuals. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development will operate Job Centers within Hiland Mountain Correctional Center and Goose Creek Correctional Center. Hundreds of inmates will have access to career services inside to prepare them for post-release employment. Individuals will receive assistance with employability skills and be linked to education, training, job placement and supportive services.

“One of the most effective and proven ways to prevent a return to a life of crime, is a job,” said Labor Commissioner Heidi Drygas. “We are glad to partner with the Department of Corrections to help these individuals obtain the skills and training they need to be successfully employed after their release.”

“We can reduce state spending by making smart investments that reduce recidivism,” said Corrections Commissioner Dean Williams. “Having Job Centers in our correctional centers will help ensure released inmates have a training plan or job waiting for them.”

The Walker Administration, in partnership with the Criminal Justice Commission and the Alaska Legislature, is pursuing ambitious structural reforms to reduce recidivism and crime, which is expected to reduce state spending. Based on successful crime reduction strategies employed in other states, Alaska’s reforms are focused on reintegrating returning citizens into the community to reduce the recidivism rate and associated costs.

Prior to receiving this grant, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development has supported recidivism reduction efforts through participation in community reentry coalitions, by partnering with employers on work release programs and employment of returning citizens, and by partnering with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to establish an employment coordinator for returning citizens. The Department’s long term goal, consistent with the Alaska Prisoner Reentry Initiative, is that every single returning citizen have a job placement or training plan identified by the time he or she is released, and that there is a “warm handoff” from staff inside the institution to employment case management support in the community.

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