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State money spent on adult criminal justice programs showing positive returns according to study

ANCHORAGE, AK – Most of Alaska’s evidence-based adult criminal justice programs are showing positive return on state investment of money, according to a new report from the Alaska Justice Information Center (AJIC). Notably, all but one of those programs are shown to measurably reduce recidivism (the likelihood that an inmate will re-offend when released), which not only improves public safety, but saves the state the costs associated with criminal activity.

The State annually invests in Alaska’s adult criminal justice system to provide services and programs to eligible offenders, including domestic violence treatment, vocational and general education, and re-entry services. The study estimates that approximately \$20.58 million in state funds were invested annually to the 19 evidence-based adult criminal justice programs that are shown – by academic studies and rigorous reviews – to yield results.

“Alaskans know all too well that the state is going through tough budgetary times,” said Greg Razo, chair of the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission. “Policy makers will be faced with critical and difficult decisions on which programs and services to invest State funds that will increase public safety, improve the lives of Alaskans, and make our communities healthier and stronger. This report and subsequent reports in the future are essential to making informed, data driven decisions,” he added.

The report includes a wealth of information about the justice programs in the state, including the results of a statewide program inventory, cost-benefit analysis, and an assessment of the evidence supporting the justice programs. Also included are breakdowns of the different kinds of programs that are offered (therapeutic courts, sex offender programs, education programs) and the costs associated with both treatment and criminality.

“It is a tool that policymakers can use to make informed, thoughtful decisions about programs in the state’s adult criminal justice system,” Steve Williams, acting CEO of the Alaska Mental Health Trust. “The report demonstrates that many programs and services currently funded by the State do reduce criminal recidivism. It outlines the positive outcomes that so many state officials, legislators and community members have been working diligently on for the last several years. Reducing criminal recidivism is a complex issue, requiring more than a jail cell to achieve better results and increased public safety.”

The report, “Alaska Results First Initiative: Adult Criminal Justice Program Benefit Cost Analysis,” was submitted to the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission on Friday, Sept. 29, 2017. The report is the result of a multi-year project, with support and participation of all three branches of Alaska state government, and in partnership with the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative.

For more information or a copy of the report, please go to <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/justice/>.

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