

Alaska Results First Initiative: Key Takeaways

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Study shows Alaska investment in adult criminal justice programs is money well spent

Alaska has a problem of recidivism with many who are released from jail returning to the criminal justice system convicted of new crimes. A recent study by the Alaska Justice Information Center (AJiC) at the UAA Justice Center estimated the costs of recidivism in Alaska and analyzed the effectiveness of programs designed to reduce recidivism. It found that the state invests about \$25 million a year in programs designed to reduce recidivism. The report shows that most of Alaska's evidence-based adult criminal justice programs are showing a positive return on state investment, although some programs' cost structure could be improved to make them more cost effective.

The study is the Alaska Results First (RF) Initiative, part of Alaska's participation in the Pew-MacArthur RF Initiative. Until now, there has not been a way to measure the cost of recidivism in Alaska or the benefit of programs designed to reduce recidivism. The Alaska RF Initiative collected Alaska-specific information as well as national information about the costs and effectiveness of programs and used an innovative modeling tool to provide benefit cost ratios for 19 Alaska adult criminal justice programs. The information can be used by policy makers to improve existing programs, assess gaps in programming, and evaluate programs that are successful elsewhere for how they may be adapted to Alaska cost effectively.

AJiC adapted the RF model to Alaska using a three-phase compile-cost-compare process: compiling a program inventory of the state's investment in adult criminal justice programs and identifying the evidence-based programs to be included in Alaska's RF model; monetizing the costs and benefits of each program included in the model; and using the RF model to compare the ratio of programmatic benefits and programmatic costs.

This benefit cost ratio is a monetary measure of return on investment. Benefits of programs are measured in two ways: (1) avoided future criminal justice system administration costs, and (2) avoided future victimization costs.

The RF process is *not* a direct evaluation of Alaska's adult criminal justice programs. Rather, it is an economic model that estimates the benefits and the costs of Alaska adult criminal justice programs using a combination of national and state-specific data.

AJiC worked in collaboration with representatives from Alaska's adult criminal justice programs to collect the most accurate Alaska-specific data possible. With the assistance of these stakeholders, AJiC

was able to compute Alaska-specific costs of programs and an analysis of Alaska recidivism patterns over an eight- year period.

Some key findings:

The State of Alaska directly invests approximately \$25 million each year in adult criminal justice programs.

The benefit cost ratios for a total of 19 adult criminal justice programs were calculated, which accounted for 82.3% of the State of Alaska's total direct investment in these programs.

The State of Alaska offers adult criminal justice programs with impressive recidivism reduction effects, but the cost structure of some of these programs keeps them from achieving equally impressive benefit cost ratios.

All but one of the programs modeled were found to produce positive returns with tangible monetary benefits, and a majority (14 of 19 programs modeled) produced monetary benefits exceeding programmatic costs.

The Alaska RF model results are intended to be used as a decision making TOOL, not a decision making rule. Because reducing recidivism is a strategic policy objective for the state, a program's expected impact on recidivism must be considered alongside the benefit cost ratio, as well as other state criminal justice mandates.

Model estimates could be improved at the program level by collecting and compiling data with research and evaluation in mind, and at the policy level by establishing a program and culture of rigorous program evaluation and assessment, and institutionalizing a paradigm of continual process improvement.

Alaska adult criminal justice program benefit cost ratios

- The benefit cost ratios for Alaska's 19 RF model programs ranged from \$23.80 for PsychEd to (\$0.13) for Community BIPs. (See table.)
- Fourteen programs had benefit cost ratios ranging from \$1.08 to \$23.80. A ratio of greater than \$1 means that programs generated monetary benefits exceeding costs.
- Four programs had benefit cost ratios ranging from \$0.34 to \$0.80.
- A ratio greater than zero but less than \$1 means the program generated positive return with tangible monetary benefits, but the return was not equal to the amount invested. All programs in this range were highly effective with respect to recidivism reduction, but they were costly to deliver.
- One program, had a benefit cost ratio of -\$0.13. A ratio less than zero indicates a negative return.

Key Findings: Programs in Alaska's Results First Model, by Department

Report ID	Program name	Benefit cost ratio	Average recidivism reduction
Alaska Court System (Therapeutic Courts)			
TC-1	Anchorage Municipal DUI Wellness Court	\$0.34	20.2%
TC-2	Felony DUI Wellness Courts	\$0.60	20.0%
TC-3A	Hybrid Therapeutic Courts (modeled as DUI Courts)	\$0.69	20.0%
TC-3B	Hybrid Therapeutic Courts (modeled as Drug Courts)	\$0.80	26.3%
TC-4	Anchorage Felony Drug Wellness Court	\$1.22	26.3%
TC-5	Coordinated Resources Project/Mental Health Courts	\$1.16	20.6%
Department of Public Safety via Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault			
DV-1	Community Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs)	(\$0.13)	-0.7%
Department of Corrections			
SAC-1B	Community Intensive Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment (IOPSAT)	\$1.32	2.5%
SAC-2	Probation Accountability with Certain Enforcement (PACE)	\$3.07	21.8%
SAP-1	Psycho-educational Substance Abuse Services (PsychEd)	\$23.80	15.2%
SAP-2	Intensive Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment Services (IOPSAT-Prison)	\$4.87	17.4%
SAP-3	Intensive Outpatient Dual Diagnosis Substance Abuse Treatment Services (IOPSAT-DD)	\$4.89	17.4%
SAP-4	Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT)	\$1.97	11.9%
SX-1B	Community Outpatient Sex Offender Treatment	\$6.33	32.4%
SX-2	Outpatient Sex Offender Treatment (incarcerated males)	\$2.38	17.7%
SX-3	Residential Sex Offender Treatment (prison therapeutic community)	\$0.72	17.7%
TA-1	Electronic Monitoring (sentenced, post-prison)	\$3.03	3.2%
VGE-1	General Education	\$10.58	23.4%
VGE-2	Vocational Education	\$7.11	21.9%
Department of Health and Social Services			
SAC-3	Alcohol Safety Action Program (ASAP)	\$1.51	8.9%

Note: The report identifier begins with two or three letters denoting the programmatic grouping for the program: domestic violence program (DV); substance abuse treatment delivered in the community (SAC); substance abuse treatment delivered in prison (SAP); technology assisted supervision (TA); therapeutic court program (TC); and vocational and general education (VGE).