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For immediate release: July 14, 2008
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New Jersey Judiciary Celebrates Probation Week

This week, during National Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week, the New Jersey Judiciary recognizes the contributions of the approximately 1,800 New Jersey probation professionals who make a difference in the lives of thousands of New Jersey citizens every day.

"We have a truly committed corps of probation officers whose work is critical to the successful rehabilitation of adult and juvenile offenders, to the collection of child support and to the safety of our communities," said Robert Sebastian, assistant director of Probation Services. "We take this opportunity to recognize their contributions and to commend their untiring efforts to serve their clients and the public."

Probation professionals fill a wide variety of roles in the New Jersey Judiciary. Many of them supervise adult or juvenile offenders and ensure their compliance with court-ordered conditions such as finding and keeping jobs, attending school, adhering to curfews, attending substance abuse treatment programs, and paying fines and restitution. In addition, probation officers play a critical role in the rehabilitation of non-violent offenders who have been accepted into the drug court program.

Other probation officers work in the criminal courts, conducting investigations on convicted offenders and providing information to judges before sentencing. Family courts also rely on probation officers, who research domestic violence cases and make risk assessments of alleged batterers; conduct investigations in child custody disputes; and devise rehabilitation plans for juvenile offenders. Child support collections also are overseen by the Office of Probation. In all of these roles, probation professionals are responsible for resolving conflicts and helping clients while at the same time protecting the community.

Probation officers work with many organizations in the community to provide assistance to probationers in need of education, job training, counseling, addiction recovery services, and both physical and emotional health. They work in the field and outside of regular hours to ensure that probationers are complying with the conditions of supervision and receiving the services they need to rehabilitate their lives. They are mentors, role models, and, in some cases, teachers.

"A good probation officer has exceptional investigative skills," said Sebastian. "Probation officers must observe and listen closely, gather and analyze information, and involve themselves in all aspects of their clients' lives. They offer guidance, motivation, inspiration and concrete advice, and they demonstrate a firm belief in their clients' ability to change for the better. It is not an easy career, but it is a rewarding one," he added.

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