



News Release

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Judiciary Celebrates Probation Week

The New Jersey Judiciary recognizes the important role that probation professionals serve in assisting people who need court services, Chief Justice Stuart Rabner said at the start of National Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week, which is July 15-21.

“Probation officers play a critical role in rehabilitating thousands of offenders each year, while helping to maintain community safety and keep the courts running smoothly,” he said. “We want to thank publicly the 1,800 dedicated probation professionals who help serve offenders, the courts and communities in so many important ways.”

Kevin M. Brown, assistant director of probation services, said, “Probation officers fill many roles: from supervising offenders to mentoring juveniles to making recommendations on sentencing and other court outcomes, each critical to the service of the clients and the community.”

Probation officers who supervise adult and juvenile offenders ensure that offenders meet court-ordered obligations such as finding or keeping a job, doing community service, paying fines and restitution, attending school and substance abuse treatment programs, and adhering to curfews.

Offenders with mental health issues that might affect their ability to comply successfully with court orders are supervised by a unique group of probation officers trained in counseling and psychology. Those offenders assigned to the mental health program benefit from smaller caseloads, more individualized attention and the special training of their probation officers.

New Jersey’s statewide drug court program relies on probation officers to help non-violent drug-dependent offenders break the cycle of drug abuse and crimes. With intensive treatment, close supervision and a system of rewards and sanctions to encourage compliance, the drug court program has become a national model for therapeutic justice.

Probation officers also assist the criminal courts by conducting detailed investigations and producing comprehensive sentencing reports that help judges decide on appropriate sentences. In the family courts, probation officers research domestic violence cases and perform risk assessments of alleged batterers. They also conduct investigations in child custody disputes and develop and implement rehabilitation plans for juvenile offenders.

Probation services helps children and their families by collecting \$1.3 billion annually in court-ordered child support payments. In addition, \$31.1 million in restitution, fines, fees and penalties was collected. Through the efforts of probation officers, 1.4 million community service hours were enforced, which has an estimated value of \$10 million in services back to the communities.

Probation officers maintain close ties to their clients and to the community, helping clients obtain job training, counseling, addiction treatment and mental health treatment. They often work weekends and after business hours to follow up with clients and make sure they are obeying court orders. To their clients, they offer discipline, guidance, expertise and compassion. To the community, they offer the assurance that court orders are enforced fairly and conscientiously to maintain the rule of law.

“The job of the probation officer is challenging,” Chief Justice Rabner said. “Yet it is also a very rewarding career for those who want to make a difference in the lives of others. During Probation Week 2012, we salute the many fine individuals who choose to serve their communities as probation officers.”

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