



# News Release

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For more information:  
Winnie Comfort  
Tammy Kendig  
609-292-9580

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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 21-27.

“We are very proud of the vital service that probation officers provide,” said Chief Justice Rabner. “Day in and day out, they are hard at work rehabilitating offenders, rebuilding families, and strengthening our communities. We are grateful for their dedication, their professionalism, and their expertise.”

Elizabeth Domingo, assistant director of probation services, said, “Our 1,800 probation officers perform a wide variety of services, including supervising offenders, mentoring juveniles, performing interviews and gathering information in order to make informed sentencing recommendations to our judges. Their work in these and other critical roles keeps the Judiciary running smoothly.”

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 in the Intensive Supervision Program (ISP) carry smaller caseloads in order to provide the highest level of supervision to a carefully selected group of non-violent offenders who have been approved by a three-judge panel for release from prison into the program. ISP officers oversee every facet of their client’s lives, enforcing standards for their living arrangements, employment, curfews, budget and, if necessary, completing their GED, receiving treatment for addictions or mental health issues. Their work enables a significant reduction in incarceration costs and helps those offenders reenter the community with strong support to help ensure their success.

Probation officers assist the criminal courts by conducting detailed investigations and producing comprehensive sentencing reports that help judges decide 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 staff are also charged with enforcing the payment of court-ordered child support. During the past year, more than \$1.3 billion was collected and distributed, helping children and families receive needed financial support to help defray living and educational expenses. Child support payments are a critical source of income for many families.

Probation staff also collect court ordered restitution, fines, fees and penalties. During the past year approximately \$14.6 million in restitution was distributed directly to compensate victims for their losses. In addition, \$15.3 million was collected in fine, fee and penalty obligations. These monies are also used to assist victims as well as to provide for law enforcement training, treatment and educational activities. Through the efforts of probation officers, 1.3 million community service hours were enforced. These services that are provided to local communities are estimated to save \$9.6 million.

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.

“Probation officers have answered the call to serve their communities in a very direct way,” Chief Justice Rabner said. “During Probation Week 2013, we want to acknowledge and thank those who have chosen this challenging, yet rewarding career path.”

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