

Cumberland County

# Adult Probation Newsletter

## WELCOME!!

It has been officially two years since Adult Probation has been distributing our quarterly Newsletter with everyone to share updates about staff and other initiatives in our office. Like most years, 2022 went by quickly but we wanted to make sure we let others know what happened in Probation at the end of 2022.



## Training for Probation Officers By Will Gilfus



Will

Conducting unannounced home or employer visits as well as arrests of non-compliant probationers or parolees is a part of the daily duties conducted by Probation officers throughout the state, and Cumberland County is no exception. I've been asked to outline the tools available, and the training provided to our officers for these occasions.

All officers are issued OC Spray (commonly referred to as Pepper Spray), Baton and have the option to carry a firearm in performance of their duties. These tools are designed to protect the Officers and have strict policy and training requirements associated with them.

New officers are made familiar with these policies, as well as others pertaining to use of force, and relevant departmental policy and procedure. This information is reviewed regularly during the officer's new hire period, where they work directly with appointed departmental training officers, as well as with their supervisor.

Yearly refresher training is conducted on defensive tactics, OC spray, and baton. These training include policy review, current events relevant to these topics, a written test, and practical exams. Our department has recently added two of our officers, Brad Stubbs and Nate Fazenbaker as instructors on these topics, with two more officers to be certified in 2023.

If an officer decides to carry a firearm, they are sent to the Basic Firearms Academy, consisting of both classroom and range portions. This academy is overseen by the Firearms Education and Training group, which is now overseen by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. The instructors are comprised of Certified Firearms Instructors who are Probation officers from throughout the state. The lead instructor for each class is a Certified Master Instructor who has met additional requirements to obtain this title. Students in the classroom learn a wide range of topics including law and statutory topics, firearms safety, use of force policy and procedure, firearms safety, cleaning and care. They are given a written test, and upon passing it, can proceed to the range portion of the course.

Once on the range, their education continues in the safe operation and handling of their firearms, and the instructors work very closely with each Probation Officer to ensure the safety of everyone involved and to ensure that the material is being learned effectively. At the end of range week, a qualifying course is given, with a score of 225 out of 300 being required to be certified. The top shooter in each class is given a certificate and challenge coin in recognition of the achievement



Once an officer is certified, they are then required to attend one continuing education course for firearms per year. There are currently 7 course topics available to meet this requirement, including report writing, weapon retention, and advanced fundamentals of marksmanship among others. These courses can be attended in house, as well as at other training sites in the local area.

Along with this continuing education component, our department holds two qualification courses per year (fall and spring), that also have additional training time built in for night shooting and a dynamic shooting portion designed to help officers develop their skills under stress.

One of the newer components to our training program has been our yearly “Scenario Training”. This training is designed by Adult Probation’s in house instructors and is based on real life scenarios encountered by Probation Officers throughout the country. This training is done in small groups and involves role players who interact with the Probation Officers until an outcome is reached. At the conclusion of each scenario, the officers, trainers, and department administration all debrief the scenario, and discuss positives and negatives of each scenario. This has proven to be an extremely productive exercise and has received great feedback from everyone involved.

All these trainings have been designed to minimize the number of incidents involving force that our officers engage in, while maintaining their safety while working. This process is a collaborative effort within our agency and is ongoing. [Note: The author of this article, Will Gilfus, is a Master Instructor. Supervisor Nicole Warren and PO Becky Coe are also Firearm Instructors for Adult Probation.]



## Staff Changes/Accomplishments



- Heather Cornman, our long time Administrative Technician, transferred from Adult Probation to work in the CASA Office on the 3rd floor of the Courthouse. Heather kept our computer programs running smoothly for many years. She will be missed by Adult Probation, but we wish her success with CASA.
- Ashley Fluss, an Administrative Clerk at Adult Probation, has taken Heather Cornman’s position as the Administrative Technician. Ashley has been doing a great job so far with all the departmental computer issues and working on various computer projects in the Probation Office.
- With the two changes mentioned above, Adult Probation has had the opportunity to welcome Marlyn Chevere-Santiago as our new Administrative Clerk. Marlyn (pronounced Marlene) previously worked at Smile Plus Dentistry in Enola. Marlyn has made her name easy for everyone since she prefers to be called LoLa.

## EBP Initiative

### How Communities Can Impact the Justice System

“Community” is made up of many different groups, including people who live and work in a neighborhood, business leaders, individuals and agencies that support people who are justice-involved, people who have been directly or indirectly impacted by crime, those who were previously or are currently under community supervision, and their families.

All community members are responsible for ensuring the health and well-being of a neighborhood; the justice system cannot do it alone. All perspectives are needed to understand issues, generate ideas, and make action plans. The following are some ways that communities can engage in the justice system:

1. **Learn About Evidence-Based Practices:** Explained simply, evidence-based practice (EBP) involves using scientific evidence to guide decision making, with the goal of achieving successful outcomes for people involved in the justice system. The field now has years of research showing what strategies are and are not effective in helping people stay law-abiding. Community members should attend community meetings, follow justice system agencies on social media, browse their websites, and ask questions to learn what evidence-based practices they are implementing, why, and how.
2. **Support People in the Justice System:** Family and community members can positively influence a person’s life, for example, by helping them practice new skills, reinforcing their positive behavior, and working with them to address barriers to their participation in programming and treatment. They can also volunteer as mentors, provide employment opportunities, and share success stories as a way of encouraging others to give people a second chance.
3. **Address Stigma:** Many people in the justice system experience shame and embarrassment as a result of their past and are defined—by themselves and/or others—by their illegal activity. To broaden people’s perspective, those who were or are under community supervision may wish to share their stories and educate others about their pathways to being arrested, barriers to success, and struggles within the justice system. Other community

members can listen, show compassion, acknowledge that people are more than their past behavior (e.g., by avoiding terms such as “criminal” or “offender”), and empower people rather than shame them.

4. **Give Feedback:** People who were or are under community supervision, as well as their families, have valuable information about what services have or have not been effective for them, unintentional harms caused by the system (e.g., loss of employment and housing), and community supports and services that might prevent illegal behavior. People impacted by crime can offer feedback on services and supports that were or were not helpful for them. Other community members can discuss successes or challenges that they see people who are justice-involved experiencing.
5. **Support Agencies that Work with People Who Are Justice-Involved:** There are numerous ways that community members can support agencies working with people who were or are on community supervision:
  - Volunteer with, advocate on behalf of, or donate to agencies addressing issues such as homelessness, food insecurity, and mental health.
  - Serve on policy teams and on boards and task forces such as reentry coalitions, criminal justice advisory boards, and opiate task forces.
  - Encourage government officials and funders to finance programs, treatment, and services for people impacted by the justice system.

[Source: Pennsylvania Partnership for Criminal Justice Improvement EBP Briefs, Series F, No. 32]

## Department Statistics

(October 1 - December 31, 2022)

- 195 ORAS/CST Assessments Completed
- 268 Pre-Sentence Investigations Completed
- 808 Successful Field Visits Made
- 165 Additional Attempted Field Visits
- 75 Pre-Parole Investigations



## Key Ideas Behind Evidence-Based Practices

### *Focus on the Right People*

People assessed as medium or high risk to reoffend are the ones most likely to benefit from correctional intervention.

### *Target the Correct Areas*

Focus treatment and other interventions on the areas that will most likely reduce a person's likelihood of engaging in future illegal behavior (e.g., thoughts and beliefs, coping/self-control skills, friends, family/relationships).

### *Motivate Change*

Acknowledge that change is difficult and use targeted communication skills to increase a person's motivation to change.

### *Build on People's Strengths*

Identify, affirm, and help people build on their strengths. Make it clear that you want to help them succeed.

### *Help People Learn New Skills*

Model, practice, and give feedback on new skills. Encourage people to use those skills.

### *Increase Positive Reinforcements*

Reinforce positive behavior while also responding to noncompliant behavior. Rewards should outnumber responses to noncompliance by a ratio of at least 4:1.

### *Engage Family and Community Support*

Family and community members can positively influence a person's life.

### *Use Quality Assurance*

Quality assurance practices, such as training, booster sessions, and coaching, can help ensure that EBP is implemented correctly and consistently across an agency.

### *Use Data as a Guide*

Collecting, analyzing, and sharing data are key to assessing outcomes and identifying where improvements are needed.