

# Phase I Staff Safety

## Participant Manual



A safety curricula for the staff of  
Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System

Developed through the collaboration of the  
PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers  
Juvenile Court Judges' Commission  
Center for Juvenile Justice Training & Research

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This 2009 version of the Phase I Safety Program is built on the foundation of the curriculum devised by the nationally recognized consultant and trainer, William V. Griffin, of Independent Living Resources, Inc., Durham, NC. He originally developed this training for use in Children & Youth agencies across the country. He first introduced this model to us in 1993 and worked with us to adapt this curriculum to the specific needs of probation departments in Pennsylvania. For about ten years, certified trainers presented workshops for CJJT&R and for individual counties. Over that period of time two modest modifications were made to the original curriculum.

In 2004 this curriculum was extensively revised to address the evolving needs of Pennsylvania probation departments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, we wish to acknowledge the work of Bill Griffin, Brendan Associates, and ILR, Inc., the foundation upon which our training program was built. Portions of his safety curriculum are utilized within this workbook with his permission. Most of the video segments interspersed throughout this program were also developed under his direction as a part of his *working Safe working Smart* training. The original videos were produced through a U.S. Department of Labor, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health Grant and copyrighted by ILR, Inc. These video segments are also used with their permission. We are grateful for his guidance, support, and collaboration.

In 2009 another effort was launched to revise the curriculum with the intent to incorporate the curriculum into the Juvenile Justice Academy training for new officers.

This most recent curriculum design is the result of the collaborative efforts of the following veteran juvenile justice system professionals. Senior trainers and curriculum committee co-chairs:

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## Disclaimer

The PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research, and the authors of this publication make no warranties, expressed or implied, with respect to this manual and neither assumes any responsibility for any legal complaint or action occasioned by any following of its guidelines. The user assumes all risk and liability whatsoever in connection with the use of or reliance upon the materials contained herein and there are no oral agreements of understandings or warranties collateral to or affecting the understanding implicit in the use of this training.

The manual is intended as only a general guide to managing personal safety, is not to be construed as written in accordance with existing laws, and is not intended to serve as a substitute for legal advice. The practices of the user organization should be tailored to accommodate the particular need. In case of uncertainty with respect to any specific organization policy, competent legal counsel should be sought. The individuals portrayed in this publication are completely fictional. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

This text portrays culture and ethnicity as a vital part of personal safety. Understanding individual and group differences is important to the accurate interpretation of behavior. The same behaviors across cultural lines might have very different interpretations, just as different behaviors might have the same interpretation. Some terms used in this manual may be unfamiliar to the reader. In most instances the term can be understood from the context in which it appears, but it is important to realize that the analysis of culture is an experimental science in search of rules and an interpretive study in search of meaning.

# Introduction

This *Probation Officer Safety-Participant Manual* is a workbook that we hope you will keep and refer to beyond the scope of the Phase I seminar that you are attending. The design of this training and this manual is intended to heighten awareness and better prepare juvenile probation staff around personal safety issues. This model is based upon the following fundamental assumptions:

1. Awareness and being pro-active about safety issues must be a primary concern of all juvenile probation staff – managers, supervisors, line and support staff.
2. There needs to be consistency and a common understanding in the application of safety procedures and emergency protocols at all levels in an agency.
3. Adequate staff safety preparedness is not a once-and –done training event. It requires ongoing communication between all levels of staff, and a periodic revisiting of the issues such as the re-planning of safety protocols, crisis response processes, attention to physical plan issues, and ongoing/refresher training plans.

We all too often forget the impact our agency’s involvement has on the juvenile and their families. The intrusion of the court and probation officials into the normally private lives of individuals has serious emotionally charged ramifications. Our work is often viewed as an implicit accusation of poor parental control and is perceived as demeaning. Of course, there is also the risk of the juvenile being taken into custody for short or longer –term period of time, which leads to the risk of uniquely intense confrontations with the juveniles, parents, or other involved individuals. Their anger and frustration over their perceived loss of control may result in either a verbal or physical outburst-potentially even involving the use of weapons.

Good communication and training is essential to prepare staff for the range of possible interpersonal reactions. We also need to be cognizant that our juvenile probationers, who do at times become volatile, often do not pose the greatest threat to our safety. Upset family members, or complete strangers in the office parking lot or the neighborhoods we visit, who might be encountered at night-or in broad daylight-might well pose a much greater threat. Sometimes in an effort to avoid creating an atmosphere of fear, there is a misconception among managers to deal with safety through avoidance of these issues or heightened alertness and a pro-active approach to safety through planning, developing procedures, training, and on-going communication contribute to a much safer environment.

We recognize that the level of risk or potential threat varies from county to county across the Commonwealth based on the numerous factors. Issues of the volume of juvenile offenders visiting the probation offices, the number of offenders prone to violence, the design of the office physical plant, the proportion of the probation work done in the field-especially in non-traditional hours, or in high-crime neighborhoods, all impact upon the level of risk. These are but a few of the more obvious variables. However, these risks exist in even the smallest, most rural county, with the lowest per capita crime rate.

To foster safety and enhance effectiveness, it is imperative that staff who engage with potentially confrontational individuals (whether as the front-desk receptionist or as an officer) have a “real” sense of control over their situation. This sense of control-grounded in the knowledge that appropriate support systems are in place for offenders and staff alike-starts with a safety training program like this one. This program will begin to deal with many issues which include but are not limited to dealing with a drug or alcohol affected individual, a hostile or potentially violent neighborhood, taking juveniles into custody, safe transportation factors, communicable disease universal precautions, critical response and cultural issues and the safety issues therein.

(Adapted and expanded from *Probation Officer Safety – Early Warning Desk Reference Manual*  
Brendan Associates & ILR, Inc. Copyright 1987, Third Edition, 1996)

## Evolution of Safety Training in the Juvenile Probation System

Mirroring the growth of all of the social service delivery systems, since the 1970's juvenile probation departments across the Commonwealth have dramatically expanded to meet the increasing demands to intervene in juvenile delinquency. Throughout the last 30+ years, funding increases have allowed for the specialization of professional positions within the probation departments including expanded and enhanced intake, aftercare, intensive, and more recently school-based and community-based probation officers. Probation staff were recruited to run community service programs, specialize in working with drug and alcohol abusing probationers, or to work with juvenile sex offenders. Over time a general consensus developed throughout probation departments Statewide that the work of juvenile probation officers was becoming increasingly dangerous. Generally, the reality matched this perception. Based on a variety of factors—increasing prevalence of firearms and other weapons, seemingly high rates of violent crime—not always by our juveniles but in the communities where we were required to work, and an increasing number of offenders who are diagnosed with serious, potentially volatile, mental health disorders, officers began to express their concerns and fear for their safety.

In response to the growing chorus of safety concerns being voiced throughout the Commonwealth's various juvenile probation departments, in 1992, there began to develop a strategy by collecting actual data on the problem. An extensive, statewide **Staff Safety Survey** was conducted by the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, with the assistance of the Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC) and the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research (CJJT&R). The survey results led to the convening of a statewide **Safety Forum** that was held in State College in February of 1993. Later that year, a statewide Safety Committee was formed. The committee recommended that a two-tiered training system be developed to enhance juvenile probation officer safety skills. Phase I of the training would be a conceptual, preventative, skill building training program to teach staff how to recognize, avoid and minimize the threat posed by potentially dangerous and unsafe situations. Phase II of the training was intended to teach physical management/defensive tactics and skills to meet the dangers facing probation officers due to the increasing exposure to violence and weapons in the community. This training, similar to law enforcement training and consistent with relevant statute and/or regulation, teaches officers to utilize appropriate levels of force in response to the level of threat posed for their own protection.

# Probation Officer Safety—Phase I

## AGENDA AND SCHEDULE

### Day 1

- 8:45 - 9:30 a.m. - Introduction, Agenda and Schedule, History, Training Objectives
- 9:30 -10:15 a.m. - Developing a Safety Mindset: Personal Preparation and Safety Concerns
- 10:15 -10:30 a.m. - Break
- 10:30 -11:00 a.m. - Developing a Safety Mindset - part 2
- 11:00 -11:45 a.m. - Office Safety – part 1
- 11:45 - 1:00 p.m. - Lunch
- 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. - Office Safety –part 2
- 2:00 - 2:15 p.m. - Break
- 2:15 - 4:00 p.m. - Field Safety
- 4:00 p.m. - Day 1 concludes

### Day 2

- 8:45 - 9:05 a.m. - Personal Safety-Liability
- 9:05 - 9:45 a.m. - Critical Incident Response
- 9:45 - 10:05 a.m. - Universal Precautions
- 10:05 - 10:20 a.m. - Break
- 10:20 - 11:15 a.m. - School-based probation and other community-based settings
- 11:15 - 11:45 a.m. - Action planning and wrap-up
- 11:45 - Workshop concludes

## **Phase I Overview and Goals of the Training**

This program will utilize segments of lecture, short video clips, realistic experiential scenarios, small group discussions, and other exercises over one and one-half days of training. The primary goal for the session is simply to make juvenile probation staff safer. It is the objective of this training to heighten awareness of potential threats to your safety, and share prevention strategies for a variety of situations that have real-life application for probation staff.

Probation department operations across the commonwealth will continue to vary greatly from county to county, as will their approach to the issue of probation officer safety because of ethnic, cultural, geographical, and economic circumstances, as well as differences in each department's physical plant. This training is intended to provide a generic approach that will have application, with little or no modification, to effectively train new and less experienced staff across every county in the Commonwealth.

It is also the goal of the training to assist probation staff to develop the skills of risk assessment—helping them to identify, prevent and avoid potentially dangerous situations and injury that could occur in the office or in the field.

While this training provides the participant with information and experiences that will assist in avoiding many dangerous situations, human behavior cannot always be accurately interpreted to guarantee the complete safety of the officer. Care must always be taken to plan for and be ready to respond to offenders, their family members, and to those individuals whose presence cannot always be anticipated, controlled and managed.

It is the clear intention of the Statewide Safety Committee and the recommendation of the PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers as well as JCJC and CJJT&R, that all probation staff regardless of duty or assignment, participate in this training experience

# Developing a Safety Mindset

Personal safety should not be limited to your actual work hours. You are employed within a profession that by its nature may carry a higher probability of risk for unpleasant human interaction or even danger and we are all part of a greater community where there always exists a certain risk to our personal safety. Preparation and caution can help to manage these risks whether on or off “duty”.

## **Preparations for a safe workday begin with your routine pre-work activities.**

- The proper choice of clothing and footwear can enhance your chances of having a safe workday. Many departments have adopted a dress code that prescribes the types of allowable clothing and accessories including jewelry.
- Consider having extra clothing in the office for court and arrest situations.
- Outerwear should not only be chosen for climate control but for freedom of movement and access to your equipment.
- A checklist (mental or written) should be utilized to ensure that your equipment is available and in working condition.
- The ultimate responsibility for the maintenance of your equipment lies with the PO.
- The proper storage of equipment is necessary for their maintenance, accessibility and everyone’s safety.
- Equipment must be concealed properly when worn.

## **We must always be cognizant that what we “carry” inside ourselves may be the most critical tool to ensure our own and others’ safety.**

- Mental and emotional preparedness are key to our wellbeing.
- Getting into the right frame of mind begins before you report “on the job.”
- We must consciously project a professional presence—this means carrying an appropriate air of authority (not to be confused with authoritarian).
- How others view and perceive us as people as well as an officer is crucial to the safe completion of our mission.
- A person’s emotional balance can influence the presence and authority projected to others.

## **We can condition ourselves to be more mentally prepared for the job with the following techniques:**

- Mental conditioning can assist a person in establishing an appropriate mental and emotional balance.
- The “color codes of awareness” is a way to mentally condition yourself for what may be encountered at work.
- Tactical breathing can help you through stressful situations that may occur during the workday.
- Muscle memory can help you prepare for the unexpected and respond appropriately.
- Mental rehearsal, practice and situational evaluation help promote muscle memory.



**Each of us has a reliance on our personal skills and/or abilities as well those of our co-workers.**

- Safety can depend on physical attributes including our size and physical fitness.
- We should also consider our limitations and disabilities.
- Work with partners who complement your strengths and can help build on your limitations.
- Use contact/cover.

**Recognize that the job can be stressful and that certain factors can diminish your capacity to deal with this stress.**

- Cumulative stress is the result of daily job difficulties and stressors in our personal lives. Cumulative stress can lead to severe difficulties, if not addressed, including diminished work performance, the feeling of being overwhelmed, depression and drug and alcohol abuse.
- People tend to discount the power of cumulative stress. They think it is just part of the job.
- Traumatic stress is from a single serious incident. This can affect our well being and will be discussed more fully later.

# Authority/Professional Presence

It is inherent in the nature of our work that probation staff will interact with offenders, their families and the general public. Although some of this contact may be viewed as “routine” or non-threatening by staff and officers, those with whom we come in contact may not share this perception. Particularly in situations where a probation officer intervenes/interviews, there can be unexpected confrontations with juveniles and/or their families, who view the process as threatening.

- Probation Officers inherently possess a dramatic level of official (legal) authority  
61P.S.309 – declares in part that Probation Officers are “Peace Officers”.
- As a “Peace Officer”, you have the legal power to arrest and detain certain individuals
- Probation Officers are “Officers of the Court”  
As an Officer of the Court, you must strive to act in a judicious manner. As such, you must be above reproach and your actions should be consistent with high ethical standards. An officer should always ask themselves is the image I project congruent with my position?
- Assessment of each contact should include: Reason for the contact, offender’s history of violence, family history, geographic location of the contact and your previous encounters with the individual and their family.
- Staff safety versus individual rights – Is there conflict?  
Officers must understand the constructive use of authority:  
Control of a situation is established by utilizing the force continuum.  
Force is not necessarily synonymous with “physical” and includes presence, verbal skills, and various control modes.
- Officers should be aware of the dynamic nature of communicating with individuals and the need to change the amount of authority or influence necessary. You must be able to determine the level of authority necessary to control a situation. Officers must act decisively and effectively with a minimum of hesitation
- Always expect the unexpected. Guard against complacency resulting from repetitive and seemingly routine case contacts.
- Always reassess the possible risk of a situation before each contact
- Continually re-evaluate the situation, the juvenile, and the surrounding environment during contact
- After the contact ask yourself: Could this have been handled differently?

**Remember: You must react to the offender’s actions! Preparation and training can help you bridge that gap.**

## Authority versus Intimidation

By definition, the word “authority” implies the presence or use of a restraining influence. The word “influence” is used in preference to the more direct word “force”. In the context of juvenile probation, authority refers to the means by which officers enhance their abilities to carry out the Balanced and Restorative Justice principles when working with their juvenile offenders.

- In probation, the level of authority refers to a specific type and amount of influence; psychological, physical, or some combination thereof that is used to control the actions of others in a confrontational situation
- An officer’s appearance, attitude and demeanor are all indispensable parts of projecting the desired level of authority

- The effective use of authority can and should be visualized on a continuum
- An officer's use of authority can range from authoritative to intimidating
- Although appearance makes the first impression, attitude and demeanor help solidify a perceived image
- Continuing to exert authority after control has been established moves the officer from an authoritative posture to one of intimidation
- The image of authority being projected should be tempered with positive verbal and non-verbal techniques
- Learn to talk with people and make sure they understand what it is you want.
- The ability to diffuse situations prevents physical altercations.

# Office Environment

We often mistakenly believe that because we are in the office, we will be safe. This is far from the truth. According to the US Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) “some 2 million American workers are victims of workplace violence each year. Additionally, some workers are at increased risk including ... social services workers such as visiting nurses, psychiatric evaluators and probation officers.” Although being on our “home ground” does provide some comfort, failure to attend to safety in the office can result in serious incidents. (New Approaches to Staff Safety) The role of the Probation officer and probation staff is vital in the daily operation of the office. Support staff and probation officers must understand their level of authority and act accordingly in the event a situation arises that needs immediate attention. According to OSHA employees should:

- Learn to recognize, avoid or diffuse potentially violent situations by attending personal safety training programs.
- Alert supervisors to any concerns about safety or security and report all incidents immediately in writing.

Working with individuals and families who are emotionally unstable, abusive, neglectful, and/or in the middle of crisis, is not an easy task. Staff must be trained to deal with a variety of situations. Staff response could range from verbal control to actual physical restraint. Staff must practice the techniques involved so that they can make proper decisions in order to act effectively and with minimal hesitation.

Do's

- Train all staff members including support staff.
- Keep training up to date so that new staff is included.
- Remember that staff must react to the subject(s) actions so it is important to rehearse various situations so that they are able to respond to real life confrontations.
- Understand that these decisions could very well be the difference between a positive outcome and one where the staff could be subjected to devastating trauma.
- Create a secure environment for support staff and probation officers

Safety should begin in the office where most workers spend a significant amount of time. In surveys of officers who had experienced trauma in the office, workers felt their agencies could have avoided many victimization events had preventive measures been taken. These could include controlling client traffic, setting up offices with safety in mind and training staff to physically defend themselves and to defuse aggressive behavior.

Further, it is evident that office safety includes not only the probation department but also safety entering and exiting the building whether it is a courthouse or other building. In February 1998 a probation officer in a small county in the Midwest worked late and was the last person to leave the office. With arms full she left the building and was locking the door when she was struck in the head with a bat. Two males took her keys, handcuffed her and placed her in the back of the car. She was then taken to a remote part of town and violently assaulted for more than 5 hours. She was then thrown out of the car. She was later found by some passersby and rushed for treatment. She lived but has undergone extensive treatment and therapy. (New Approaches to Staff Safety)

Workers should be aware of the dangers of working alone in the office and try to avoid situations where they are vulnerable. Safety should become a regular part of the job and should be regularly discussed within the office. All members of the office should be encouraged to raise concerns and be a part of the solution to office safety. Often times, the safe way is not the “easy way” but in the long run it is the best way!

## Office Safety

Your office is an extension of yourself. It should be comfortable but don't sacrifice safety for convenience. Ideally, your personal office should have a minimum of furniture and clutter. Also, you should position yourself closest to the door in case you need to leave quickly. Privacy is a necessity at times but make sure fellow staff can access your office in the event things get out of hand and you are unable to get to the door.

### Things to Consider:

1. If you know in advance that an encounter may occur, consider the use of a risk room if your department has one. The risk room is for a violent or potentially dangerous situation. The room has a minimum of furniture and is easily accessible by staff. Also the area is visible to staff outside. There is a minimum of furniture and is of the type that if an arrest or physical confrontation occurs and someone falls injuries are minimized.
2. Pens and pencils can be used as weapons if a situation is escalating.
3. Loose chair parts and light furniture can be used as weapons as well.
4. Personal photographs of family members and loved ones should not be able to be viewed by offenders. They could be imaged and used inappropriately.
5. Are picture frames secured to the walls?
6. Outside your personal office space, give consideration to all hallways, stairwells, staff and public elevators, parking and storage areas, and the reception area.
7. If your department authorizes the use of weapons of any kind make sure that they are in a locked cabinet or drawer when not in use.

## Best Practices for collecting and disposing of contraband

- **Hypodermic Needles** Your department should have a sharps container where needles can be disposed of safely. All bio-hazard materials should have a separate disposal container with a red bag indicating it is bio-hazardous material.
- **Drugs/Paraphernalia** They can be turned over to the appropriate police department and charges may be filed for possession of drugs/ paraphernalia. Another option is to ask the court to have the paraphernalia destroyed. Follow the directives of your department's policies and procedures on disposing of these materials
- **Weapons** If you seize a firearm in the course of your duty. It is important to know how to clear the weapon making it safe, secure and stow the weapon. It should be stored in a secure holding area upon returning to your office. Ideally each department should have a gun safe for this purpose.

## Problem Solving: Office Scenarios

1. Probation Officer Thompson is in his office and hears the sound of raised voices and an argument in the next office. There is a steady escalation over the next few minutes. What should he do?
2. In the reception area two people are arguing. Probation Officer Klein does not know either of them. What should she do?
3. Probation Officer Lang is meeting with his probationer Jimmy Jones and the interview is not going well. Jimmy is agitated and every question brings added resistance. Finally Lang terminates the interview with the statement "Jimmy your attitude sucks, and if it doesn't improve you are going to see the judge." Jimmy, very angry now stands up and says, "You people don't care about me! If anyone tries taking me to lockup they won't make it through my front door 'cause I'll blow them away! He then turns to walk out. What should Probation Officer Lang do?
4. Mrs. Avery calls regarding an upcoming appointment. During the conversation she becomes very upset and screams obscenities at Probation Officer Walmer. What should he do?
5. It is Friday afternoon and many employees are taking flextime. Probation Officer Klein is the only person working in that area of the office and a probationer comes to see him. What potential problems exist? What if the juvenile is a female? Should Klein consider other alternatives if the receptionist said the probationer is very upset?
6. Prior to a search of an offender in the office he/she tells Probation Officer Barber that they have a knife in their pocket. What potential risks are involved here and what should Barber do? What if the weapon is a gun?
7. During an interview in a closed office a probationer becomes very agitated and strikes Probation Officer Allen. Probation Officer Phillips is in the next office and hears the commotion. What are the potential risks? What should he do?
8. At a dispositional hearing a probationer is ordered into a Youth Development Center. He is a rather large individual and begins to resist when personnel try to handcuff him stating, "No one is taking me anywhere!" His parents try to help settle him down but they are in the way. What should Probation Officer Simmons do?

# Field Safety

Many times juvenile probation officers endanger themselves when working in the community by not using their common sense. It is essential that you be prepared and aware of their surroundings while working in the field. Through a deliberate review of this material, we hope to increase your awareness of the many issues related to field safety.

Read through each of the following field safety scenarios and answer the questions that are attached to each scenario. When examining these scenarios you should concentrate on issues related to your safety in the field and the safety of others.

## Field Safety Scenarios (Small Group Exercise)

1. Juvenile Probation Officer Foster is visiting one of his juvenile offenders at 11:00am in a high crime area of town. As he pulls up to the house, he observes approximately 8-10 teenagers in front of the house he is scheduled to visit. What should he do?
2. Juvenile Probation Officer Price has just received a call from a mother of one of his juvenile offender's telling him that her son is home sleeping. JPO Price has issued a warrant for the juvenile's arrest for violating the conditions of his probation. What steps should JPO Price take before he leaves the office?
3. Juvenile Probation Officers White and Libby are checking the curfews of several of their offenders one evening. When they attempt to check Johnny Smith's curfew, Mrs. Smith tells the officers that Johnny is down the street at a local pool hall with a group of his friends shooting pool. What should the juvenile probation officers do?
4. Juvenile Probation Officers Ocker and Christman are transporting a juvenile offender from the local detention center to a secure youth development center. What actions should they take to ensure that this transportation is conducted safely? What equipment should they utilize?
5. Juvenile Probation Officer Malone is visiting one of her offenders at his home. She has visited this offender at his home on at least six prior occasions and has gotten to know the offender and his parents very well over the past four months. When JPO Malone enters the house she notices empty beer cans strewn throughout the living room and 3-4 people who she has never seen before sitting in the living room. What should she do? What questions should she ask? Is JPO Malone's safety at risk? If so, why?
6. Juvenile Probation Officer Ricks is visiting a very large juvenile offender and his frail grandmother at home. The juvenile was recently discharged from placement, has severe mental health issues and has a long history of aggressive behavior. While conducting a routine meeting in the living room, the frail grandmother complains to JPO Ricks about the juvenile's recent behavior and foul mouth. It appears that the juvenile is upset about his grandmother's complaints. The juvenile starts breathing heavy, is clenching his teeth and fists and is on the edge of his seat as he stares directly at his grandmother. What actions should JPO Ricks take to de-escalate the situation?
7. Juvenile Probation Officer Daly is driving through center city in a caged county vehicle when he spots a juvenile offender on his caseload. The juvenile has been missing for the last month as his whereabouts have been unknown. It is really important for JPO Daly to arrest this juvenile due to his runaway status and other serious violations. What actions should JPO Daly take to execute a safe arrest?

8. After knocking on the door of a juvenile offender's home, Juvenile Probation Officer Puller hears a dog bark from inside the home. The juvenile's mother greets JPO Puller at the door. What safety precautions should JPO Puller take?

## **General Prevention Guidelines for Working in the Field**

### **A. Field Safety**

Field Safety requires global awareness.

Neighborhood  
Transportation  
Schools  
Time of Day  
Use Common Sense

### **B. Turf Issues**

1. Juvenile probation officers must be aware of the turf they are on when they are visiting different neighborhoods.
2. People can and will act differently when they are secure in their own homes and around their friends and relatives.
3. It must be understood that law enforcement personnel including juvenile probation officers are not always welcome and accepted in different neighborhoods and by some people.
4. It is vitally important that you always act professionally when you are visiting a juvenile offender in the community or in a school.

### **C. Do's and Don'ts When Working in the Field**

#### Do's

- When formulating your schedule of field work anticipate that the unexpected may happen and decide a tentative plan of action.
- Let other people know your schedule of field visits. This could include using a sign-out board, notifying your local emergency management agency by radio or fax, or giving your supervisor an itinerary of your visits.
- Be exceptionally alert when the subjects you are visiting are unknown, especially if they live in a high-crime area, where there are indications of a dispute, or where there is an indication of physical violence.
- Be aware of "out of normal" conditions. Lots of little things out of place may indicate one big problem.
- Park your vehicle at a tactically appropriate distance to the house you are visiting.



- Lock and secure your vehicle when it is unattended at all times.
- Be friendly. Say hello and talk to people.
- When you work, be aware of who is around you and what they are doing.
- If you feel the situation is not safe to make your visit, leave the area and return when the atmosphere is better.
- Act assertive, confident. Try to know where you are going so you look sure of yourself.
- Wear sensible clothing if you will be in a potentially dangerous situation. In other words, wear clothing you could escape in.
- Avoid provocative comments or behaviors. Keep your arms free.
- Carry your keys separately, not in your purse. (i.e., in a pocket, in your hand).
- If you can avoid it, do not carry a purse. If you do, cradle it in your arms as you walk. Lock it in your car trunk before you start your trip.
- Watch for signs indicating imminent violence. Non-verbal indications include: flaring nostrils, dilated pupils, pulsing veins, teeth grinding, torso crouching, and fist clenching.
- If a situation escalates, leave and call for help.
- Carry a flashlight even during daytime visits..

#### Don'ts

- Do not portray a “tough guy” image. This can hurt your relationship with people in the community.
- Do not leave valuables such as a wallet, checkbook, or money visible in your unattended vehicle.
- Do not look vulnerable.
- Do not wear excessive jewelry or carry large amounts of cash, it could invite a robbery attempt.
- If you can help it, do not go into questionable (potentially unsafe) situations alone.
- Do not get into elevators with people who make you uncomfortable.
- Do not walk alone near places where someone could hide.
- Do not turn your back on a disturbed offender or allow him to walk behind you.

#### **D. Working in the Field at Night**

1. Utilize street lighting when parking your vehicle.
2. Neighborhoods can change their appearance at night. Streets that are very quiet and unsuspecting in the daytime can be very dangerous and serve as “hangouts” at night.
3. Try to avoid congested areas such as bars, pool halls, and popular street corners where people congregate.
4. Have a flashlight available and accessible in case it is needed to see things more clearly.

#### **E. Non-Physical Intervention Techniques that Should be Utilized in the Field**

What image do you project to others? Often the first impression is the most important to establish a good working relationship with the people you deal with. Do you appear relaxed and professional? The image we project will inherently provide a certain level of control over our offenders and sets the tone for future interactions as well. A common mistake that new officers often make is to create a crisis for themselves by unintentionally escalating an encounter by unnecessarily exerting or overusing their authority.

One of the best defensive tactics a probation officer possesses is their verbal skill. When our brains are fully engaged, our mouths become powerful weapons! What we say and how we say it can determine how an encounter will proceed. Good communication is as much a matter of good listening as it is speaking and it requires practice. Often though, effective communication begins not so much with what you say but your demeanor. Try to present a calm, confident look. Be aware of your surroundings and your body positioning. Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. Remain alert and make sure that you are clearly stating what it is you want to communicate.

#### **Do's**

- Appear calm, relaxed and confident.
- Identify yourself and your agency. Don't assume that people who you haven't yet met know who you are.
- Explain your reason for being there.
- Feel secure in your right to be there.
- Explain your responsibility to inquire about a visitor's identify.
- Leave if you fear for your safety.
- Keep the pitch and volume of your voice down. You are often able to deescalate a confrontation that is “brewing” by modeling a calmer demeanor.
- Ensure to convey that you are listening by clarifying and/or reflecting what the person is saying. Nothing is more likely to escalate a situation like making a person feel that they aren't being heard. Validate what is said and validate the person. If you reach an agreement, summarize it.
- Feel comfortable with the fact that you are in control. If you control yourself, you control the situation.

- Talk with the distraught person. Don't just make demands. Set appropriate limits if necessary. Keep an appropriate distance and attend to the offender.
- Learn how to relax your muscles and keep them under control.
- Stand to the side of the person (off center).

Officers should always avoid:

- power struggles;
- negative non-verbal signals such as rolling the eyes, etc.;
- prejudicial treatment;
- not providing explanations for actions;
- overuse of authority;
- not allowing time for the offenders to process the information and express themselves (when safety is not compromised);
- personalizing the conflict;
- leading with rules and consequences;
- giving advice on issues that you do not understand or don't know the answer;
- pointing; touching; staring; deceiving the offender and/or family; and
- intimidation.

Don'ts

- Don't appear afraid or unsure of yourself.
- Don't appear bossy, arrogant, or assume an "I don't give a damn about you" attitude.
- Don't become defensive.
- Don't argue. Don't pretend to agree with everything a person is saying just to placate him.
- Don't conduct a visit if you feel threatened; at least without requesting assistance.

## **F. Equipment**

**(This is a complete list of safety items that might be used by juvenile probation. Most counties have access to some but not all of this equipment. These items may only be utilized with the approval of the Administrative Juvenile Court Judge and only after receiving the appropriate training.)**

- Firearms – If approved and authorized by the county President Judge and if the officer has been certified by the Firearms Commission.
- Bullet Resistant Vest – Can help save your life if used when working in the field.
- Portable Radios and Cellular Telephones – This type of equipment can keep you in constant communication with other law enforcement officers, other juvenile probation officers, and emergency personnel.

- Handcuffs/Shackles/Cuffing belts – These devices will help you make arrests and transport juveniles safely.
- Hobble – This implement is used when an offender is handcuffed but continues to kick and poses a risk to him/herself and others during the transport. The hobble should never be used to hogtie an offender.
- Extendable Batons – This instrument will help you fend off an attacker, help reduce your risk of injury if attacked, and can also assist in conducting a safe search.
- Flashlight – This will help you see better at night or in dark places such as a closet or in a dimly lit room or area.
- O.C. (Mace) – This will help you to control an individual who is acting out and is posing a distinct threat to you.
- Tazer – This weapon which administers a disabling high voltage shock of direct current is used to control an offender who is resisting arrest and who poses a threat to others.
- Badge/Identification – These will help you to properly identify yourself as a juvenile probation officer so people will “officially” know who you are.
- Duty Belt – This can help you to keep your equipment accessible and easy to get to when you need it, particularly in a crisis situation.
- Kevlar Gloves – These can help keep you from being injured when you must perform a search of a person or place by helping to deflect sharp objects.
- Caged Vehicles – This will help you to transport a juvenile safely and also help you to be safe during the transportation.
- Latex Gloves – These should be worn whenever there is a chance of coming into contact with any sort of bodily fluid.
- Spit Shield – In taking an offender into custody who may try to spit in an officer’s face this will minimize the risk.

## **G. Making a Safe and Lawful Arrest**

1. Always assume that every arrest you will make will be a difficult one.
2. Proper planning in making a safe and lawful arrest/detention is the most important factor.
3. Make the arrest/detention in your office or other location of your choosing whenever possible. People do not usually feel as secure and confident when they are away from their own “turf”.
4. Determine what manpower you need to safely execute the arrest. It is recommended that you always utilize one or more additional officers when you are taking someone into custody. Your local police should also be utilized if the offender you are arresting has a history of absconding and or becoming violent.

5. Utilize all appropriate safety equipment assigned to you to help you execute the arrest safely.
6. Always search the person you are arresting for contraband and weapons. This is for your safety as well as the offender's. The search should be executed before the offender is placed in your vehicle and should be a same sex search whenever possible.
7. Avoid physical confrontations whenever possible.
  - Don't feel you must make the arrest /take the youth into custody at all costs.
  - If a physical confrontation erupts that you cannot immediately control or contain,
  - leave the scene if possible, and return later with the proper assistance to safely execute the arrest.
  - Remember, your safety and that of the offender are the two most important factors.
8. If you have a court order authorizing the arrest, have it in your possession and display it if appropriate.
9. When making an arrest, always identify yourself as a probation officer. Don't assume people know who you are.
10. Advise the offender why he/she is being arrested.
11. Give the offender his/her Miranda warnings if appropriate.

## **H. Transporting Offenders**

1. The offender and the vehicle should be thoroughly searched before every transport.
2. The offender should be appropriately restrained by the use of handcuffs, restraining belt, and shackles/hobble.
3. Utilize a caged county owned vehicle whenever one is available to you.
4. Always drive in the safest manner possible and obey all traffic laws.
5. Always utilize seat belts and door locks.
6. Consider the risk when transporting.
7. Keep your car free of excess debris.
8. Be careful of objects that could be used as weapons:
  - a. Ice scrapers;
  - b. Athletic equipment;
  - c. Pencils/pens;
  - d. Umbrellas;
  - e. Fishing equipment; and,
  - f. Briefcases, clipboards, or other office materials.
9. Make sure your offender remains seated in your car and keeps his/her arms and legs inside the windows.

10. Whenever possible, ensure that the sex of the juvenile offender is the same as one of the juvenile probation officers who is providing the transportation.
11. Utilize portable radios or cellular telephones to communicate the essential information concerning the transport to a third party before you begin and when you complete the transport, i.e. odometer readings, gender of those present, location and destination.
12. Proceed directly to your destination without any stops along the way.
13. Be aware that as you near your destination, while you might typically become more relaxed, most probationers are becoming more agitated.

# Personal Safety/ Liability

As an officer of the court it is important to understand that how you conduct your personal life could well reflect on and impact your professional life. We are court appointed professionals charged with the responsibility of supervising delinquents for committing crimes and holding them accountable for their behavior. With this duty comes the responsibility to ensure that our behavior is beyond reproach 24/7. In these days of cell phone cameras and nearly universal internet access your behavior, even on your own time, could quickly become very public. Be very careful! You do not want to be the next YouTube sensation.

- Use discretion in sharing personal details with your clients. Sharing your address, phone numbers, or information about family members is probably inadvisable.
- Do not form personal relationships with clients or their family members.
- Limit what information is available on the Internet.
- Keep your phone number unlisted, which will keep your address unlisted. Also advise any local family members to do the same thing. If a client is angry they can easily obtain this information and potentially harm you or a family member. Advise your family members to limit what they say about you and your job to other people.

Know what your County's policy is on transporting and supervising the opposite sex. It is best to err on the side of caution and avoid a questionable situation. Use common sense. Seemingly innocuous circumstances such as conducting an interview in a closed room, or in a car with a client of the opposite sex, etc. can be misconstrued by the wrong person, or result in an allegation of inappropriate behavior that is difficult or impossible to disprove.

As technology advances new ways of communicating are being developed. However, in the judgment of most managers, it is not appropriate to exchange text messages with clients or parents. This lowers the level of professionalism and puts you on a "friend" level with them. You are not their friend, you are their Probation Officer and you need to maintain an appropriate relationship with them as your client.

The use of social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, etc. that share descriptions or photos of wild party behavior or coarse language that might have been harmless during college days could turn into a career-derailing train wreck as a probation officer.

Anything that you post on the Internet—updates, pictures, etc. are, and will always be accessible. You can keep your pages private, but make sure that you are aware of who you are adding and communicating with and ask them to be discreet. If you feel you must have a picture make sure it is appropriate.

Make sure emails that are sent through your work email are appropriate and professional. They can be used against you if there are questions or problems about the case. Anything relating to that specific client can be subpoenaed to be used as evidence.

## **Pennsylvania's Right to Know Law**

Act 3 of 2008, as signed by Gov. Edward G. Rendell on February 14, 2008

Effective January 1, 2009

*Providing for access to public information, for a designated open-records officer in each Commonwealth agency, local agency, judicial agency and legislative agency, for procedure, for appeal of agency determination, for judicial review and for the Office of Open Records; imposing penalties; providing for reporting by State-related institutions; requiring the posting of certain State contract information on the Internet; and making related repeals.*

# Critical Incident Response

A critical incident is defined as any situation that forces a person to face vulnerability and mortality or that potentially overwhelms their ability to cope and pushes them beyond normal ability to deal with stress.

Critical incidents are usually sudden and unexpected. They can jeopardize one's sense of self-control and disrupt one's beliefs and values. They can affect a person physically and/or emotionally. Critical incidents can involve violence, threats of violence, intimidation, extortion, theft of property, damage to one's reputation, or any other act that inflicts damage, instills fear or threatens one's sensibilities.

Small Group Exercise--Each group should write down three situations which the group believes would be a critical incident.

A critical incident could be defined differently by each person experiencing it. People react differently to stressful situations. For example, an individual may need to have a critical response team activated because of a car accident while other individuals would not.

On a daily basis, probation officers work with individuals who have broken the law. By the very nature of this work, a critical incident could arise – anywhere – any time!

Preparing and planning for a critical incident should be done in advance. Thought should be given to forming a team to respond to critical incidents. The participants of this team could include the chief juvenile probation officer, the deputy chief, supervisors, and line staff. Depending upon the size of the probation department, other county agency employees such as adult probation and emergency dispatch could be utilized. When preparing for a critical incident, consideration must be given to the following: Where would the critical response team meet? Who would be responsible for reporting to the scene of the critical incident? Who would report to the hospital? Who would be responsible for talking with the media? Who would be responsible for meeting with the probation officer's family to notify them of the critical incident? Who would notify the next of kin? Should this be the responsibility of one person or should two people do this? Who would be responsible for contacting the head of your county such as your county commissioners, or county council? Who would be the person assigned to notify the President Judge or Juvenile Court Judge?

Having access to each employee's personal information such as home addresses, telephone numbers, and family information is pertinent should the probation officer become involved in a critical incident. An emergency contact/medical information sheet could mean the difference between quick, active treatment or notification or a long waiting process until someone from the immediate family can be contacted. The emergency/medical contact information should be reviewed at least once per year and changes/corrections/made when necessary.

A change of clothing should be kept within the department due to the officer's clothing being torn or damaged, blood stained or soiled. The probation officer involved in a critical incident could be asked to provide his clothing as evidence. A gun powder residue analysis would be performed if necessary. A probation officer may be asked to participate in forensic testing. These tests could include providing a blood sample for determination of legal or illegal substances in the probation officer's blood system and hand swabbing analysis for gun powder residue.

A critical incident is sudden and unexpected; however, advance planning and preparation can make a difficult stressful event tolerable utilizing a team work approach.



# Universal Precautions

As a probation officer you are sometimes confronted with situations where you can be exposed to infectious diseases whenever you have direct contact with probationers. The officer can come in contact with blood or other bodily fluids from the juvenile or family members. The purpose of this chapter is to heighten your awareness of the dangers connected with direct contact with blood or other body fluids and what steps you can take to protect yourself from infection. Three diseases of most concern are hepatitis B, tuberculosis, and AIDS.

- The offenders we are working with are at a much greater risk of having these diseases that the general population so you must do everything you can to prevent transmission.
- We tend to have very close contact with juveniles and their families, as a result of electronic monitoring, urinalysis, body searches, collecting DNA samples for testing. These actions bring us closer to the risk of transmission than just the regular population.
- Statistically, the chances of contracting an infectious disease from an occupational exposure are low. But it goes without saying that any chance brings with it the mental stress of receiving treatment and wondering if you have the disease. Also, the upset at having been exposed to bodily fluids such as spit or blood is serious in itself.

## Things to Consider

Universal precautions involve the use of protective barriers such as gloves which can reduce the risk of exposure of the probation officer's skin or mucous membranes to potentially infective materials. In addition, under universal precautions, it is recommended that all probation officers take precautions to prevent injuries caused by needles, and other sharp instruments or devices.

Blood-borne pathogens means pathogenic microorganisms that are present in human blood and can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The most effective infection control involves interrupting the transmission of the pathogen by preventing exposure to blood using barrier devices and by providing immunity through Hepatitis B immunizations. General prevention includes:

1. Wear disposable plastic or latex gloves when in contact (or if there is a chance there may be contact) with bodily fluids. Properly dispose of gloves after each use.
2. Cover any open wounds you may have until a scab has formed.
3. Wash your hands after contact with probationers or their family.
4. Avoid handling hypodermic needles, razors, glass tubes and other sharp devices. If you must handle them, do not bend them or try to remove the needle.

5. Treat all sharp objects as if they are infected. Dispose of them properly.

If you are exposed to blood, immediately:

- Wash the area with soap and water. Focus on needle sticks or cuts.
- Flush mucus membranes (nose, mouth and skin) with copious amounts of water.
- Irrigate eyes with clean water, saline or sterile solutions, for several minutes.
- No scientific evidence shows that using antiseptics or squeezing the wound will reduce the risk of transmission of blood borne pathogens.

**Important:**

**Report It Immediately,** As soon as you finish washing, report the incident to your department and the local health department responsible for managing exposures.

- How, when, and where the accident happened.
- Whose blood or body fluids came into contact with you? If you're not sure, just describe exactly what happened.

**Seek Medical Attention**

If you've been involved in an exposure incident, seek immediate medical attention.

- A healthcare professional will provide you with the correct testing, treatment, or education. You can decide if you want your blood tested for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. If you want to be tested, your employer will provide for testing and, if needed, medical referrals.
- In the end, whether or not you get tested and treated is up to you. Do what you think is best for your health and future.
- Vaccinations may help keep you from becoming infected by certain germs. The vaccinations must be given right away after exposure. Ask a healthcare professional about them.

The risk of infection from urine, saliva and other bodily fluids (unless blood is present) is very low to non-existent. However exposure to these can be very alarming. Wash the exposed part with soap and water soon after exposure and consider using a spit shield for someone who is a “spitter”.

## Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) almost vanished once. But it is back. In fact, researchers are worried because new drug-resistant strains are developing. The pathogen that causes TB is found in the lungs and other tissues of the infected person. You can be infected from droplets in a person's cough or from infected sputum.

- TB is spread through the air from one person to another.
- The bacteria are put in the air when a person with the disease of the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes.
- People with latent TB do not feel sick and do not have any symptoms, but may later develop TB.
- People with TB can be treated and cured if they seek medical help.
- You should be tested for TB if you have spent time with a person known or suspected of having TB.
- A TB skin test is the only way to find out if you have latent TB.
- A positive skin test will result in further testing from your doctor and if necessary, a course of treatment.
- It may take 10 to 12 weeks for a test to come back positive if you have recently been in contact with a person who has TB. Therefore more than one test may be necessary.
- Those who are at high risk to develop TB are:
  - people with HIV infection
  - people who became infected with TB Bacteria in the past two years
  - babies and young children
  - people who are sick with other diseases that weaken the immune system
  - elderly people
  - people not treated correctly for TB in the past

## Staph Infection

Staphylococcus Aureus is bacteria that can be carried on people's skin or in the nose. Staph bacteria commonly cause skin infections and can be treated without antibiotics. However, staph bacteria can cause infections in the blood, bones or lungs. Most serious staph infections are treated with an antibiotic related to penicillin. Over the years some staph bacteria have become immune to antibiotics.

[MRSA](#), or [methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus](#), is a [bacterium](#) that can cause serious infections. It is resistant to numerous antibiotics of the beta-lactam family, including [methicillin](#) and penicillin. MRSA belongs to the large group of bacteria known as Staphylococci, often referred to as Staph. About 25%-30% of all people have Staph within the nose, but it normally does not cause an infection. In contrast, only about 1% of the population has MRSA. Infections with MRSA are most common in hospitals and other institutional health-care settings, such as nursing homes, where they tend to strike older people, those who are very ill, and people with a weakened immune system. In health-care settings, MRSA is a frequent cause of surgical wound infections, urinary tract infections, bloodstream infections (sepsis), and pneumonia. MRSA outbreaks, however, are appearing increasingly in the community. Infections can occur in people who have not been hospitalized or had a medical procedure performed in the past year, and who do not have immune deficiency. These infections are termed community-associated MRSA infections (CA-MRSA).

The following good hygiene helps to prevent staph infections:

1. Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water.
2. Keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with a proper dressing until healed.
3. Avoid contact with other people's wounds and material contaminated from wounds.

### Lice

Pediculus humanus capitis, commonly known as head lice, are parasitic insects found on the heads of people. Head lice are common and can be spread through any close contact with someone who is already contaminated or their clothing or other belongings are contaminated. Head lice are generally found on the scalp behind the ears and at the back of the neck near the neckline. There are three forms of lice: the nit, the nymph and the adult louse. Nits are head lice eggs. They are hard to see and are often confused with dandruff. Nits take about one week to hatch into a nymph. Nymphs mature to an adult in about 7 days. The adult louse can live up to 30 days on a person's head. To live, adult louse need to feed on blood. If the louse falls off a person it dies within 2 days. Usually, over-the-counter medications will clear the infestation. Also there are cleaning solutions that will disinfect your car or office should it become necessary.

Again, due to the lifestyle of many of our probationers we are a higher risk to come in contact with these diseases and we should do all we can to protect ourselves from contracting them in the first place.

### Animal Bites

Pets are the most common cause of bites, with dog bites occurring most often. Cat bites may have a higher chance of infection (due to their longer, sharper teeth, which can produce deeper puncture wounds). Stray animals and wild animals, such as skunks, raccoons, and bats, also bite thousands of people each year.

If you are bitten by a wild animal or an unknown pet, try to keep it in view while you notify animal control authorities for help in capturing it. They will determine if the animal needs to be impounded and checked for [rabies](#). Any animal whose rabies vaccination status is unknown should be captured and quarantined. If an animal bites you, follow these guidelines:

1. Remain calm; wash your hands thoroughly before attending to the wound. Wash hands afterwards, too.
2. If the bite is not bleeding severely, wash the wound thoroughly with mild soap and running water for 3 to 5 minutes. Then, cover the bite with antibiotic ointment and a clean dressing.
3. If the bite is actively bleeding, apply direct pressure with a clean, dry cloth until the bleeding stops. Raise the area of the bite.
4. If the bite is on the hand or fingers, call the doctor right away.
5. Over the next 24 to 48 hours, watch the area of the bite for signs of infection (increasing skin redness, swelling, and pain).
6. If the bite becomes infected, call the doctor or take the person to an emergency medical center.

**The information in this chapter is from the US Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration web site ([www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)) and the Center for Disease Control web site ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)).**

# School-based/Community-based Probation Related Safety Issues

With the advent of the implementation of school and community-based probation services in Pennsylvania, juvenile probation officers who are assigned as school and or community-based probation officers are faced with new and different safety concerns that are different from traditional juvenile probation officers. The majority of work that a school/community-based probation officer does is either at their assigned school or at a satellite office within the community. Some of these satellite offices and schools are lacking in the advanced security measures that probation officers are accustomed to in their offices.

Prior to starting work in a school-based probation setting, it is recommended that juvenile probation departments and their assigned officers do the following. The juvenile probation department should:

- 1) As required by the JCJC School-based Probation Standards a written agreement must be in place with the school district which spells out the expectations, duties and responsibilities the school-based officer will have in the school. Include in this agreement any safety related concerns the juvenile probation department may have and how they may be handled in the school.
- 2) Before the school-based probation officer begins working in the school, all school operating policies and procedures including all school safety procedures and emergency response plans must be read and reviewed.
- 3) School-based probation officers must always remember that they are guests in the school setting where they are assigned, and must always conduct themselves appropriately and professionally.

If a community-based probation officer is assigned to a satellite office within the community it is recommended that juvenile probation departments and their assigned officers do the following: The juvenile probation office should:

- 1) If the office does not have security, a safety plan should be developed that would address the personal safety of the juvenile probation officer as well as their clients. This should include a direct line of communication between the satellite office and the juvenile probation office.
- 2) Staff at the main office should be aware of when juvenile probation officers will be at their satellite office.

School violence has become a particularly important issue in recent years and has placed school-based probation officers at a high risk of personal danger. Due to school-based probation officers interacting not only with students who are being supervised on probation, but also with non-probation students, awareness and identification of negative behavior risk factors have become very important for helping to control and reduce school violence. School-based probation officers are part of the “school community”, they are often called upon to intervene in student fights, assaults, and other types of negative behavior. It is imperative that a school-based probation officer fully understands their role as an officer of the Court and in turn that the school fully understands that role and does not attempt to have the juvenile probation officer perform duties outside of that role.

## **School-based Probation Related Scenarios**

- 1) You are the school-based probation officer assigned to the Nittany Lion Area School. One day you are in the school cafeteria at lunchtime talking to several of your probationers. During this conversation, a fight breaks out between two students who are not under your supervision. Within 30 seconds, a large group of students (approximately 50) gather around the two students who are fighting. They start to yell at each other and the situation becomes very tense. What should you do? What action, if any, should you take? What safety issues should you be concerned with?
- 2) You are in your school-based probation office meeting with one of your probationers about several school related violations he has received. During the meeting, the probationer becomes very agitated and upset and tells you “If you don’t get off my back, I’m going to mess you up”. How should you handle this situation? Should you take his threat seriously?
- 3) You are in your school-based office doing case notes when a student sticks his head in the door and yells that “Frank has gone crazy and he has a gun in classroom 102.” What should you do?
- 4) You are walking down a hallway during a class period and smell what you believe to be burning marijuana emanating from the ladies room. What should you do??
- 5) The principal of the Nittany Lion Area High School comes into your office at the school and informs you that he believes that an unauthorized intruder has entered the school. It is also a possibility that the intruder may be armed. What should you do?
- 6) You are in your school based probation office typing case notes. A teacher from the school enters your office and requests that you watch her classroom for fifteen minutes while she assists another teacher in a separate part of the building. Should you assist? If you do assist are there any liability issues?
- 7) A student at the school wants to speak with you regarding one of your clients. She tells the receptionist that she wants to speak with you and tell you “all the ways that your client is violating”. What should you do, should you speak with the student?
- 8) You are in your school based office meeting with a client’s father. He appears to be under the influence of alcohol and is angry telling you that you are not doing your job and his son is continuing to violate his probation rules. His mood continues to escalate to the point that he threatens to physically harm his son. What action should you take? Should you take his threat seriously?

## **Student's Personality Traits and Behavior**

The F.B.I. and the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention have published potential risk factors and early warning signs that school personnel and school-based probation officers should be aware of when working with students. They are:

- Has feelings, thoughts, or fantasies that may lead to violence;
- Has low tolerance to frustration;
- Has poor coping skills;
- Has an inability to bounce back from a frustrating experience;
- Has a failed love relationship;
- Is resistant over real or perceived injustices;
- Has inappropriate humor, and lack of trust;
- Has negative role models, such as Hitler or Satan;
- Associates with just one group of people;
- Has casual interest in sensational violence;
- Is drawn to inappropriate role models associated with violence and destruction;
- Has uncontrolled anger;
- Has a history of discipline problems;
- Has a history of drug and alcohol use;
- Is affiliated with gangs;
- Has inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms; and,
- Has detailed thoughts of lethal violence.

### **School Dysfunction**

- Student is detached from school, students and teachers;
- Tolerates disrespectful behavior;
- Behavior is unyielding and insensitive towards others;
- Has a code of silence; and,
- Has unsupervised access to a computer.

The National School Safety and Security Services recommends that school personnel including school-based probation officers do the following when dealing with violence in school.

- Treat all threats seriously;
- Investigate the incident promptly and officially;
- Utilize support staff and extend resources to evaluate the threat;
- Take appropriate disciplinary and criminal enforcement steps;
- Document the threats and actions taken; and
- Enhance security measures to ensure the safety of students and staff.

### **The School-based Probation Office Safety (Physical Plant) \***

1. School-based probation officers should be aware of where their office is located in the school as it pertains to the location of other staff that may be needed to help in an emergency.
- 2) School-based probation officers should arrange their desk and chair so that they can see who is entering their office at all times.
- 3) Personal items kept in an office should be closely scrutinized and potential weapons should not be displayed or visible.
- 4) School-based probation officers must know how to immediately access help or assistance within the school. This would include knowing the school's emergency response plan and being able to access emergency medical personnel.
- 5) School-based probation officers should become very familiar with the entire layout of the school and know where large groups of students may congregate and where potentially dangerous locations could be.
- 6) All probation-officer related equipment (radio, handcuffs, O.C., vest, etc.) must be kept locked at all times with the key secured on the school-based probation officer.

**\* Each of these elements also applies to community-based satellite offices.**



# Action Planning and Wrap Up

It's important to know where you came from, where you're at and where you're heading. At the beginning of this training you were introduced to the History and Evolution of Safety Training for Juvenile Probation Officers in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Throughout the length of this training we have explored the current makeup of Phase I Safety Training and what a good Safety Mindset should look like. We have reached the final portion of this training, but the task does not end here. A training experience that does not translate into action back on the job has not met its fullest potential. However, the responsibility to apply what you have learned primarily rests with you, the participant.

In order to review and begin to formulate a strategy to put to use what you have learned in the past day and a half we will conclude the workshop with an activity. The simple purpose of the activity is to promote the transfer of learning by beginning to identify and prioritize specific safety related projects, a **“Wish List”**, that you could help to mobilize in your own jurisdictions. Ultimately our goal should be to make your workplace, and your work in the field, safer.

We will conduct this activity by breaking into small groups with your colleagues. Each group should:

- 1) Construct a “Wish List” and develop action steps that would need to be completed in order for the “Wish List” to come true.
- 2) Appoint a spokesperson and record on a flip chart sheet in a step-by-step fashion how they would propose to implement the idea(s);
- 3) Be prepared to report back to the large group using their flip chart sheet as a guide for discussion.

Positive changes to make your work safer can happen, especially if you have a well thought out plan. Breaking large tasks into smaller ones and creating more manageable steps, helps to facilitate positive change.

## **The ten commandments of safety**

- 1. Safety at work begins at home**
- 2. Make sure you are always in the safe “yellow” zone**
- 3. Safety requires global awareness**
- 4. Remember who you are and what you represent**
- 5. Always expect the unexpected**
- 6. Project a professional presence**
- 7. Trust your instincts—use common sense**
- 8. Be proactive not just reactive**
- 9. Know your limitations**
- 10. Secure your office environment**