

Probation Department – Adult Probation

Background

The Probation Department is the second largest law enforcement agency in the county. While the Board of Supervisors controls the department's budget, organizationally the department is answerable to both the Juvenile Justice Commission and the Superior Court. The department is responsible for supervising juvenile and adult probationers. Offenders may be granted probation status immediately upon conviction or after a confinement period. Probation may be granted to those convicted of felony or misdemeanor violations. Probation officers are assigned to supervise these individuals. This report will address adult felony probation issues.

Findings

1. Due to a lack of detention facilities, the present probation system, as an alternative method of offender control, lacks ample personnel to supervise probationers. Approximately 70 percent of all convicted felons are placed on probation. Fifty-two percent complete the terms of probation. Statewide the rate is in the 65-80 percent range.
2. There are more than 10,800 individuals on probation within the jurisdiction of the Riverside County Probation Department; 80 percent have no face-to-face supervision. Of these, 6,700 legally classified as dangerous felons have been convicted of crimes against persons, i.e., sexual battery, child molestation, armed robbery, burglary, car jacking and domestic violence.
3. There are approximately thirty-seven probation officers assigned to the adult division. These officers are often assigned more cases than can be effectively supervised, and cannot adequately manage more than 100 cases at any time. Individual caseloads are as high as 840. Presently, caseworkers do not have time to provide meaningful supervision.
4. Probation supervision includes paperwork management and occasional telephone communication. Personal contact is minimal due to large caseload restraints. Seasoned offenders are aware of this limitation and often ignore their probation orders, potentially increasing danger to the public.
5. As of January 25, 1999, the number of convicted dangerous adult felons throughout Riverside County without effective supervision is summarized, by supervisorial district:

District 1 1,368

District 2 1,203

District 3 1,447

District 4 1,108

District 5 1,585

Recommendation

To Board of Supervisors:

Establish a time-phased plan to employ a sufficient number of officers for the Adult Probation Department to effectively contact and supervise released felons to ensure community safety and enforce court orders. Provide more supervision to reinforce positive behavior, reform probationers' lives and help them become law-abiding citizens.