



As California celebrates Probation Services Week this week, July 17 – July 21, 2017 as the Chief Probation Officer in Alameda County, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the critical work probation does in our criminal justice system and say thank you to all the men and women of my department who work tirelessly to protect our communities, reduce recidivism, restore victims and promote healthy families.

Even though probation is the most frequently used sanction in the criminal justice system, and the role and importance of probation in California has increased significantly in the past few years, probation sometimes can have a singular meaning that does not accurately represent the multifaceted mission and work of probation departments across California.

Probation is committed to a research-based approach to public safety that promotes positive behavior change. In other words, research has proven that communities are safer when we give offenders the tools to succeed in life after incarceration all the while holding them accountable for their actions. These tools can be anything from appropriate counseling, to addiction recovery or job skill training. This is a proven way to lower recidivism – when a convicted criminal reoffends – and rehabilitate our clients with evidence-informed strategies that change their behavior.

Our multi-dimensional approach to community safety includes holding people accountable through community supervision. Investment in services and evidence based rehabilitation is critical to lowering recidivism, but equally important is ensuring those we supervise are accountable for their choices and behavior.

A critical part of people understanding their choices, how those choices impact their lives and those around them including victims, is providing the tools to change criminal thinking. *Thinking for a Change* is one kind of evidence based program that is an integrated cognitive behavioral change program delivered through our probation departments to assist individuals in better understanding the process of their decision making and how to change cognitive decision-making norms that have led to past criminal justice involvement.

This approach and the work probation does helps restore victims and prevent future victimization. The best thing we can do as law enforcement is prevent a future crime from being committed and prevent future victims. Research and evidence shows us that these strategies and practices do just that by lowering recidivism.

Consistent with probation's role as an evidence based and data driven decision maker, we also have a lesser known but critical function to investigate and draft sentencing reports for the court following a conviction of a felony. We investigate the facts of the case and the offender's

background and recommend an appropriate sentence by objectively assessing the law and facts of the case.

Additionally, probation runs the county Juvenile Hall, a locked detention facility, at the Juvenile Justice Center and Camp Wilmont Sweeney, our minimum security residential program for adolescent males ranging in age from 15 through 19. Our staff in our facilities are intensely trained and steeped in the latest scientific research about what works to change behavior. Our staff work tirelessly to safely supervise these youth, to prevent them from hurting themselves or each other, and to provide comfort and resources for them when the youth are confronted with the realities of the trauma they have experienced. Probation prepares these youth for transition back into their communities as they either return home or are placed in foster care in the community for a limited period of time, continuing to supervise and rehabilitate the youth during their term on probation.

No other law enforcement entity touches so many aspects of the criminal justice system and no other has the unique, innovative and multidimensional approach to community safety. When we are successful, the payoff is immeasurable. From the prevention of future victims and making our communities safer, to the value of saving a life and helping regenerate a contributing member of our community. Beyond the personal and public safety impact probation makes, there are enormous and obvious cost savings for the entire criminal justice system when we succeed in our mission.

Through recognition by local county and state leaders, Alameda County Probation continues to enhance our ability to be a force for positive change.

It is with great honor that myself and all probation department employees take such pride in our work. We protect the community, support the court, assist victims and help rehabilitate offenders to reduce recidivism.

This is why probation is so critical to our county and state and will continue to be the linchpin of the criminal justice system. The enhanced and continued investment in probation will be critical to the future of California and the societal approach to public safety Californians want to see.