

Genesee County Probation Department



SERVICE DURING A PANDEMIC



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Photo credit: Ove Overmyer, CSEA



Global Pandemic Spurs Change in Probation Practice

Jeremy Barber
Senior Probation Officer

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The beginning of every New Year starts the same “out with the old, in with the new” and 2020 proved to be no different. However, the “new” for 2020 would be adapting to the unknown. On March 7, 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo issued an Executive Order declaring a disaster emergency for the State of New York, related to COVID-19. The weeks to follow brought uncertainty and the community to a virtual standstill.

With the suspension of all in-person reporting, I began contacting all the probationers I work with. Some were more receptive to my phone calls but all were appreciative of my contact and provided thanks for reaching out to them at such an uncertain time. This to me spoke volumes, reinforcing the importance of relationships, active listening and continuous rapport building. I experienced the importance of continuous rapport building during the Easter holiday. An individual that was discharged immediately prior to the COVID pandemic called and left a message checking to make sure that I was healthy and wished me a Happy Easter. Upon returning his call, during our conversation you could hear the sincerity and sense of pride in his voice. Just prior to ending our conversation, he made a simple statement that continues to resonate with me, “Thank you for not giving up on me”.

Moving forward, hurdles became opportunity and electronic reporting began filtering in as the new norm. The implementation of Ce Check-in provided the ability to gather real-time re-

porting data and reporting trends. Court appearances were conducted virtually which allowed Probation Officers to remain in the field and connect to a virtual meeting application. This allowed officers the ability to communicate with the Court from any location.

In addition to routine supervision, our Department assisted the Health Department to help ensure the safety and well-being of our community members. Remaining committed to the community, Probation Officers also participated in “Stuff The Cruiser” to help ensure a brighter holiday season for local families.

Without a doubt 2020, has been a challenging year with unforeseen obstacles. However, these obstacles were not barriers. They revealed paths to opportunity. The use of technology is more widespread, allowing for more

flexible supervision and enhance the relationship with the community we serve. With brighter days on the horizon, I wish everyone a safe New Year.



Probation Officers participated in annual community events when possible, despite the pandemic.

Genesee County Probation Department

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Staff Directory 2021



Timothy Michalak
Probation Director
Ext. 2270



Kevin Wright
Probation Supervisor
Ext. 2271



Rachel Sanfratello
Probation Supervisor
Ext. 2252



Michele Tucci
Senior Probation Officer
Ext. 2262



Jeremy Barber
Senior Probation Officer
Ext. 2259



Traci Russo
Senior Probation Officer
Ext. 2265



William Bogan II
Probation Officer
Ext. 2309



Carly Luttrell
Probation Officer
Ext. 2272



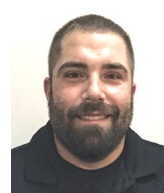
Jason Mindler
Probation Officer
Ext. 2254



Terri Buchholz
Probation Officer
Ext. 2216



Benjamin Heale
Probation Officer
Ext. 2263



Jeffrey Hyde
Probation Officer
Ext. 2266



Bryan Pike
Probation Officer
Ext. 2283



Beatriz Mateos
Probation Officer
Ext. 2274



Jessica Turman
Probation Officer
Ext. 2273



Vicki Athoe
Principal Clerk
Ext. 2257



Jessica O'Neil
Principal Financial Clerk
Ext. 2255

Genesee County Probation Department Newsletter



Saying Goodbye To Mr. Clark

Vicki Athoe, Principal Clerk

Recently, members of the Genesee County Probation Department had a

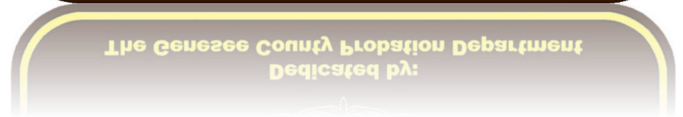
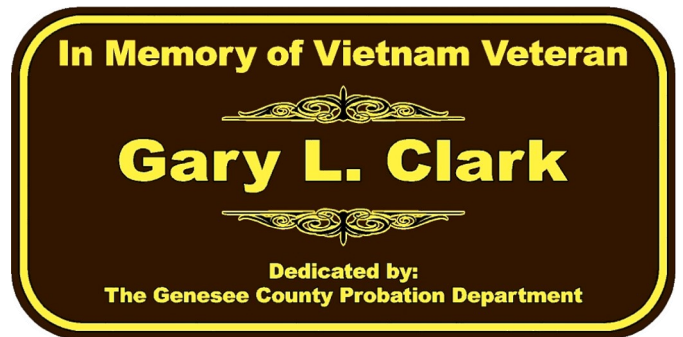


White Oak Fire Department and Council of Probation Administrators of Western New York. A plaque which reads, "In Memory of Vietnam Veteran Gary L. Clark, Dedicated by: The Genesee County Probation Department" rests at the base of the tree.

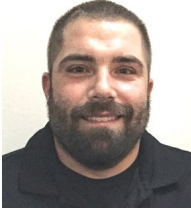
Gary lived a life of service to his community and country. A decorated Vietnam Veteran who served as a helicopter pilot, he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star, Soldiers Medal for Heroism, Air Medal V Device and Air Medal 39 Award for Heroic and Meritorious

Achievement in aerial flight. Following his return from overseas, he served in the New York State National Guard where he was awarded his Master Aviator Wings. In the community he served in the Kiwanis Club, Boy Scouts, Stafford Fire Department and Council of Probation Administrators of Western New York.

At the Probation Department, we knew little about his awards and medals. He insisted on the highest of standards for the Probation Department and those standards remain today. To those in the Department that knew him, he was a stern taskmaster, mentor and friend.



Genesee County Probation Department Newsletter



Pre-Sentence Investigations During A Global Pandemic

Jeffrey Hyde
Probation Officer

most accurate and useful information related to the defendant so that it can be relayed to the Court prior to the defend-

As part of the judicial process, the Court may order a Pre-Sentence Investigation. A Pre-Sentence Investigation or PSI, is a document that is meant to assist the Court at the time of sentencing. In Genesee County, the PSI is written by a Probation Officer.

For those unfamiliar with the process, the Order for Investigation is received from the Court and the defendant is contacted by phone or mail, sometimes both, and a PSI interview is scheduled. The interview process takes place in person as often as possible. The defendant is directed to bring in certain information including a Birth Certificate, ID, Social Security Card, proof of income, proof of military service if applicable, and education records. The defendant is given the opportunity to make a written statement describing themselves, their crime, and/or their thoughts on their victim.

A key factor in the Pre-Sentence Investigation, or PSI, is the

“An effective interviewer uses active listening skills, reads facial expressions, and carefully structures follow up questions to evoke insightful responses.”

face-to-face interview. The defendants are informed of the purpose of the PSI and the importance of honesty during the investigation. This is so the sentencing Judge has an accurate understanding of who the defendant is, what they have going on in their lives, and prior experiences that may have shaped who they are. Probation Officers utilize interviewing skills and techniques in an attempt to obtain the

ant’s sentencing.

However, with the arrival of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the normal process has been challenged, and some adjustments had to be made in order to ensure this process could be completed, and done safely.

During the pandemic, social distancing protocols are followed to allow in-person interviews when possible. At times, face-to-face interviews have been impossible to complete safely. As a result, telephone and video conferencing have been used to successfully complete this process. An effective interviewer uses active listening skills, reads facial expressions, and carefully structures follow up questions to evoke insightful responses from the defendant.

Another crucial component of a PSI is collecting collateral information, such as treatment history, victim information, and educational documents. Again, this process went through changes during the pandemic. Utilization of our electronic file management system, email correspondence, and scanning has facilitated rapid transmission and organization of documents so that we can continue to function effectively.

The PSI process allows the Probation Department to collect and organize many details of a defendant’s life in order to provide the Courts with appropriate sentencing recommendations and, if necessary, conditions of probation specifically tailored to the defendant’s rehabilitation. Making some adjustments to our workflow has allowed us to continue providing these important reports in a timely manner to the Court System during this pandemic.

Giving Back

- Probation Officers participated in the annual “Stuff the Cruiser” event along with other community and law enforcement agencies, collecting gifts for 330 Genesee County children!
- The Probation Department collected money for a donation to the Genesee County Holiday Tote project, this year benefitting senior citizens in Genesee County.

Genesee County Probation Department Newsletter



Director's Corner

By Timothy Michalak
Probation Director

Calendar year 2020 proved to be a challenging one for probation professionals during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Early on during the outbreak in mid-March, at the direction of Governor Cuomo, we reduced our in-office workforce by 50%. We also temporarily suspended all in-person contacts including home contacts. We immediately transitioned to contacting probationers through electronic means, including telephonic reporting. During this time we began using "Ce Check-In" which is a web-based reporting system that interfaces with our offender management system, Caseload Explorer. This allowed us to enhance our supervision capabilities during this time.

At the end of May, the 50% staffing mandate was lifted and all our employees returned to work full-time, with the exception of two furloughed employees that remained out of work for the next three months. In early June we resumed conducting home contacts on a modified basis, while wearing facial coverings, using hand sanitizer and adhering to social distancing protocols. By the end of June we restarted face-to-face contacts in the office with our high risk offenders and juveniles. In-person investigation interviews and initial interviews resumed as well. Our officers also began utilizing polycarbonate barriers and wiping down offices between contacts to help minimize the spread of the virus. Throughout most of the year we have only conducted periodic toxicology testing while adhering to NYS OASAS guidance.

As we pushed through into the summer, we continued following our Department's re-opening plan in conjunction with our County plan. Work and life in general felt like it was slowly returning to a "new normal". However, as scientists forecasted, we saw a surge in virus infection rates beginning in the fall which has forced us all to take a step back.

As we continue to adjust and focus on the most efficient way to fulfill our Department mission, it is equally important for each of us to help out anyway or anywhere we can. I am very proud of our staff, as most have volunteered to assist the Genesee County Health Department with quarantine checks, working testing clinics, and now vaccination clinics.

Although this extraordinary time period has certainly been frustrating for most and devastating for some, if we continue to work together, discover new ways of doing things, while focusing on being good neighbors, we can emerge stronger and hopefully better as people, as a community and as a country.

Welcome!

Probation Officer Jessica Turman joins us with experience from Genesee County Dispatch Center and the Federal Detention Center in Batavia!



Welcome!

Jessica O'Neil, Principal Financial Clerk, joins us from Genesee County Human Resources



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The Mission of the Genesee County Probation Department is to enhance the safety of victims and communities through the fair and effective supervision of community-based offenders, community partnerships, and results-driven management practices.

