

**UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM
POSITION DESCRIPTION**

COURT SERVICES OFFICER

CLASS CODE: 99-61-21

POSITION PURPOSE

Supervises adults and juveniles on or anticipating probation by preparing presentence investigations and social histories; interviewing victims; assessing offenders' risks and needs; making recommendations to the court for sentences and dispositions; developing treatment plans and linking offenders with appropriate community-based services; and investigating, supervising, and counseling individuals to facilitate their personal, social, and economic adjustment in their communities.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURE

This position is distinguished by accurately evaluating offenders and their crimes so that Judges may fashion appropriate sentences that will most likely provide successful outcomes; by proficiently determining whether probation is appropriate so offenders will most likely comply with probation components; and by monitoring and supporting offenders during their probation. Successful outcomes include rehabilitated offenders, lower recidivism, personal and public safety, restitution to victims, and Department of Corrections' adult and juvenile programs.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Note: The duties listed are typical examples of work performed by positions in this job classification. Not all duties are included, nor is the list exclusive.

1. Assists Judges in forming sentences and dispositions for offenders that provide accountability and punishment and encourage rehabilitation; and at the same time provide community safety.
 - a. Collects case files from State's Attorneys to review criminal offenses and initiates development of case management files.
 - b. Schedules and records interviews with individuals, their relatives, and peripheral contacts to determine the nature of their environmental, employment, financial, and relationship issues; and collects background information from other states and medical providers.
 - c. Meets with victims to learn about their needs and points of view, and determines the extent of information to be included in presentence reports.
 - d. Formulates presentence investigation and predisposition reports to provide factual center points from which decisions can be made.
 - e. Makes recommendations that best fit the offenders' and victims' needs and justifies them to the court.
 - f. Attends adult and juvenile court hearings to testify as needed, record proceedings, provide recommendations to the court for sentencing and sanctions, and accept new cases.

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2. Refers offenders to services considering court orders, family dynamics, and individual difficulties and skills to facilitate their personal, social, and economic adjustment in their communities.
 - a. Selects services and lifestyle guidance for individuals that encompass all areas of court orders.
 - b. Assists offenders in scheduling treatment and training programs as ordered or needed to improve their skills and lifestyles.
 - c. Encourages compliance with program and probation components through motivation and cooperative identification of solutions to roadblocks to their success.
 - d. Answers questions and resolves issues with offenders and their families, often at atypical times.
 - e. Assists offenders with repayment plans for imposed fines, costs, restitution, prosecution costs, and court-appointed attorney fees.
 - f. Keeps accurate records of work, functions, activities, and daily communications in case management files.

3. Supervises probationers and diversion program participants by conducting visits at homes, work, schools, or elsewhere in their communities and by telephone; keeps precise records of all meetings; and obtains verification for completion of services to check on their progress and ensure compliance with court orders.
 - a. Schedules and reschedules meetings to stay in compliance with contact requirements; or conducts random checks when needed.
 - b. Ensures personal safety by assessing environments, requesting law enforcement presence if necessary, taking coworkers when available, and departing the situation if needed.
 - c. Maintains the chain of evidence when conducting searches.
 - d. Meets as a member of teams involved with supervision to exchange information on progress, problems, home status, and other pertinent issues; and to develop recommendations when needed.
 - i. Meets with school staff to evaluate juveniles' attendance, grades, disciplinary issues, and basic needs.
 - ii. Works with juvenile detention centers, home detention staff, attorneys, placement coordinators, etc., regarding individuals' custody status, detention, supervision, case status, or other concerns.
 - iii. Meets with staff from Department of Corrections (DOC), State's Attorneys, school resources officers, etc., regarding juveniles who may be potential referrals to DOC.
 - e. Meets with families, employers, chemical dependency counselors, mental health counselors, and other service providers as needed to aid the progress of adults under supervision.
 - f. Maintains knowledge of innovative ways that individuals manufacture and use drugs and other controlled substances.
 - g. Counsels probationers by assisting them in understanding the effects of their choices and behaviors; educating them in appropriate behavioral skills; and proactively resolving other problems as they arise.
 - h. Develops plans and sets consequences for noncompliance with plans.
 - i. Determines whether to prepare violation reports or impose intermediate sanctions.
 - j. Conducts drug testing according to established procedures and submits reports with recommended actions.
 - k. Reviews records and analyzes probationers' progress, and makes recommendations to the court for sentence modifications as requested.

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- I. Prepares Interstate/Intrastate Compact transfers of probationers.
4. Performs court duty and attends offenders' hearings routinely to expedite court processes and assist individuals and agencies involved.
 - a. Ushers offenders and families in and out of courtrooms.
 - b. Acts as liaison among others attending hearings, e.g., victims and their families, interpreters, law enforcement officers, defense attorneys, school staff, therapists, etc.
 - c. Acts as an advocate for the needs of clients and supports them as they appear in court.
 - d. Gathers information from families if Judges order case studies.
 - e. Provides the court with information about adjustments while being supervised on probation.
 - f. Provides information as needed about the purpose, capacities, and procedures of court services.
 - g. Explains expectations of informal probation to probationers and their families.
 - h. Communicates Judges' orders between courtrooms and support staff.
 - i. Prepares comprehensive reports regarding under supervision prior to hearings to provide information for Judges along with recommendations for future action.
 - j. Pays attention to details during hearings to understand what is ordered, takes notes, and transfers information to probation agreements.
5. Performs other work as assigned.

SUPERVISORY FUNCTIONS

This position supervises an assigned caseload of offenders on court-ordered probation and diversion programs.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS REQUIRE

Travel to meet with probationers, families, victims, school staff, service providers, employers, and other peripheral contacts; in-state travel for training; ordinary physical activities such as sitting, standing, and lifting; frequent work outside typical schedules; on call 24/7; proficiency in technical systems used by the court; flexibility to change with challenges that occur in any day as situations arise and work schedules must change to meet new priorities; dealing with people with mental health problems or who are under the influence of controlled substances; and fight or flight if situations warrant. Incumbents must understand and implement UJS procedures; stay calm, patient, compassionate, and firm when working with probationers; and make decisions and solve problems daily.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Challenges include ensuring presentence investigation and predisposition reports include the best information available, assessing individuals' barriers and preparing successful probation plans, availability of services in communities, lack of funding for services that are available, clients and families who are unwilling to change and accept responsibility for themselves, getting probationers motivated to attend court-ordered classes/services, working with issues that are not part of the court order but are life factors that impact the court order, and ensuring public and personal safety are an integral part of probationers' plans.

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Problems encountered include individual challenges of supervision of each case, ensuring all paperwork is completed on time and accurately, remaining objective in emotionally charged situations, facilitating as well as directing plans of action, diverse family dynamics which may have to change for referrals to be successful, and differences in communities' views of how the justice system should work.

DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

Decisions include content of reports; individuals' needs and risks; victims' input; whether or not offenders are suitable candidates for supervised probation and special programs; which referrals to programs are appropriate; when to impose informal sanctions, take into custody, or terminate from programs; when to report noncompliance to Judges; and recommendations for sentencing and supervision.

Decisions referred include those that require diagnosis by qualified professionals; those that are made by a team of caregivers and providers; those that cannot be resolved through communication; those that need interpretation of laws, policies, and procedures; levels of treatments; length of counseling; and sentencing and plea agreements.

CONTACT WITH OTHERS AND PURPOSE

Daily contact with offenders, their families and friends, services providers including chemical dependency, mental health, job search, and vocational rehabilitation; and with employers, schools, clergy, court staff, law enforcement staff, and victims initially to collect information for comprehensive reports and then to facilitate supervision and monitor compliance with courts' orders; and routine contact with State's Attorneys and Judges to provide information and opinions regarding probationers.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The incumbent investigates offenders to gather information that affects their lives; travels routinely to people's homes, social agencies, schools, jails, and treatment facilities; works with individuals who may be combative and uncooperative or under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or unknown synthetics; handles urine, blood, and other biological materials; risks exposure to disease; is exposed to unsanitary and unsafe conditions; works outside normal working hours; and is on call 24/7.

COMPETENCIES/QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- community service agencies and the services they provide;
- human behavior including dysfunctional behavior;
- interviewing techniques;
- de-escalation techniques;
- addiction and issues that contribute to its cause;
- physical evidence that points to drug use;

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- data collection and research techniques;
- court processes;
- counseling.

Skill in:

- organization and prioritization;
- time management;
- problem-solving;
- motivation;
- creativity;
- self-defense techniques;
- conflict resolution.

Ability to:

- read and interpret non-verbal cues;
- manage a caseload effectively;
- think independently, formulate plans of action, and remain flexible;
- communicate effectively both orally and in writing with a wide variety of people;
- establish and maintain professional boundaries;
- be a role model through truth and respect given and expected in return;
- be compassionate, sympathetic, empathetic, and caring as well as stern, persistent, and resilient;
- teach probationers about boundaries and hold them accountable for their actions;
- remain calm in stressful and volatile situations;
- prioritize court matters with deadlines and sentencing dates;
- use computer technology proficiently.

Education:

Bachelor's degree in social science, criminal justice, or a related field; or an equivalent combination of related education and experience.

Experience:

Work experience in social services, corrections, domestic violence, disability services, drug and alcohol centers, treatment centers, group homes, or a related field is preferred.