

X

STANDARDS FOR SELECTION



OF

PROBATION AND PAROLE

PERSONNEL



15354

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

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STANDARDS FOR SELECTION
OF
PROBATION AND PAROLE PERSONNEL

Revised June 1968 by an ad hoc committee of the Professional Council
of NCCD

The revision of the "Standards for Selection of Probation and Parole Personnel" was approved by the Professional Council of NCCD at its annual business meeting on June 15, 1968 in Dallas, Texas. The committee which worked on the revision does not see the "Standards" as a finished product since the entire area of correctional manpower and training is undergoing intensive study and new concepts are being tested and developed. The work of the Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training will undoubtedly affect existing standards. The committee will continue to work on the "Standards" and submit additional revisions in the future.

STANDARDS FOR SELECTION OF PROBATION
AND PAROLE PERSONNEL

1. DEFINITIONS

Probation is a method under which a delinquent or criminal offender, adjudicated or found guilty of a crime upon a finding, verdict or plea of guilty, is released by the court without commitment to an institution or prison, subject to conditions imposed by the court and subject to the supervision of a probation service.

Parole is a procedure for the release of an individual from an institution or prison to the community by a paroling authority and to its supervision through supporting parole services.

Both of these procedures contemplate the treatment in the community of juvenile and adult offenders, taking into consideration the protection of the community, the individual's characteristics, circumstances, needs, potentialities, as revealed by a case study and that such individuals or persons shall be dealt with in the community by a uniformly organized system of constructive rehabilitation instead of in a correctional institution.

This document attempts to set certain standards and qualifications for personnel working in the supporting probation and parole services, who implement the goals of these procedures. Both of these community-centered treatment services involve the general field of social work, the process of which is common to both.

The titles by which the personnel of the probation and parole services are to be known take on certain significance and there is a difference of opinion among practitioners of parole and probation as to what such designation should be.

The problem of the appropriate title for personnel working with juvenile or adult offenders on probation or parole - i.e., whether "agent," "officer," "counselor" or "caseworker" - lies in the implications these words convey concerning the particular emphasis on the use of authority in each. For work with juveniles there is a preference for the less explicit title "probation or parole counselor." For work with adults, where authority is unmistakably an essential element, the titles "probation or parole officer or agent" are preferred by many.

Whatever title is used, social work in probation and parole, by definition, occurs in an authoritative setting. Social work contemplates the reality of limits and authority in every life setting. The problem in its construction in a process, the techniques of which emphasize guidance, counseling, therapy (individual and group), and utilization of a variety of community resources and supportive services. In common usage, "counselor" and "officer" have distinct meaning to many relative to the use of authority. Whatever title is used, the important thing to be impressed upon those who select such personnel is that those who engage in the field of social work in probation and parole should be persons of knowledge, training and experience in the reality of the setting and its techniques.

II. FUNCTIONS

Probation and parole personnel are advisors or consultants to and agents of the court or parole authority. They are not only investigators, they are also counselors using the individualized personal approach in the study and treatment of offenders. Their work is conducted in an authoritative setting and derives its legal basis from the mandate received from the court and paroling authority.

a) Investigation:

The probation and parole personnel make investigations and submit written reports containing data which they must interpret and evaluate for the court, institution or parole authority to be used as a guide to the disposition in each case.

b) Supervision:

The probation and parole personnel, through the process of supervision, assist probationers and parolees, on an individual basis, to modify attitudes and conduct so as to become responsible, productive members of the community. They maintain regular personal contacts, which may involve office visits or visits to the homes of probationers and parolees in order to give assistance through regular interviews and direct services and to keep informed concerning the conduct and environment of the probationer or parolee. It may include solving such problems as employment by interviewing prospective employers. Also, there must be, of course, concern for obedience to the law and the conditions of probation or parole. Those who violate the terms of their probation or parole in a substantial manner must be reported to the court or parole authority for review or rehearing and disposition.

In carrying out their supervisory function, probation and parole personnel try to enlist the cooperation of the probationer or parolee and to secure a positive relationship with him through which the probationer or parolee may be influenced and guided in the task of reestablishing himself. The authority of the probation or parole representative is generally used most constructively when it gives support, direction, and encouragement to the efforts of the probationer or parolee to help himself rather than when it is used to implement punitive and coercive measures. Such authority is used only when the protection of society or treatment goals indicate.

These representatives carry responsibility for supervision of the conduct of probationers and parolees and for compliance with orders of the court or parole authority. The decisions they must make as to invoking the power of the court or parole authority when the behavior of a probationer or parolee constitutes a violation, require that they have the ability to evaluate many personal and social factors in each individual case.

c) Community Resources:

They must be able to use with intelligence and discrimination the various public and private resources which have been created for the aid of individuals in the community. These include schools, employment services, health agencies, churches, recreation centers, and personal counseling services.

d) Public Relations:

The probation and parole personnel are leaders in interpreting to the community the work of probation or parole services, and they cooperate with others in the development of programs related to the work.

Much popular misconception exists in all communities as to the nature of probation and parole. The most effective probation and parole work can be done in a community which understands and accepts the objectives and methods of sound probation and parole work. Probation and parole personnel must be able to interpret their work to the public through intelligent reports, press releases, talks before various organizations, radio, and other media. This phase of activity must be done under proper regulations from the head of the department, and care must be taken not to substitute talk for action. Also, there is constant need for interpretation to public officials with whom the departments may have contact but who are not directly concerned with these services. Under the regulation referred to above, it may fall upon the probation and parole representatives to carry on some of this task, and their skill in meeting it may materially affect the standard of services supported by the community.

III. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR ENTERING PROBATION AND PAROLE WORK

a) Personality:

The following are basic and irreplaceable requirements for work in the probation and parole field: emotional maturity; integrity; ability to establish effective interpersonal relationships; a firm conviction of the dignity and value of an individual; belief in the intellectual depth; mature judgment; wide experience and ability to learn from it; continuing interest in improving professionally; and a basic respect for the legal base upon which our society rests.

b) Education and Experience:

Preferred: A bachelor's degree with a major in the social or behavioral sciences and courses in delinquency and crime, plus a master's degree from a recognized school of social work, or a master's degree in the social or behavioral sciences. Such training is deemed to be full professional training.

Minimum: A bachelor's degree with a major in the social or behavioral sciences and one of the following: (a) one year of graduate study in social work or in a related field, such as guidance or counseling; or (b) one year of paid experience under professional supervision in a correctional program or recognized social agency.

IV. ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERVISORS

The qualifications for chief of administrative personnel of probation and parole services include:

a) Personality:

Administrative ability to plan, organize and direct is imperative. They must have a desire and talent for participation in community activity, and with related agencies, and ability to interpret the program to the public and governing bodies. They must understand social work processes - casework, group work, community organization - research and clinical services. They must have the quality of leadership that inspires and maintains good staff morale; they must have the courage to make decisions; and their mental and emotional health must be sound.

b) Skills:

For supervisors, personality qualities are the same as for line personnel, plus: (a) ability to develop social skills in others in an authoritative setting, and to interpret departmental policies and procedures to staff; (b) demonstrated administrative and organizing abilities; (c) ability to write and speak effectively; and (d) demonstrated ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with individuals and groups.

c) Education and Experience:

The following are the qualifications:

Preferred: In the order listed, a master's degree in social work, or a master's degree in the social or behavioral sciences, concerned with the treatment processes in a probation or parole setting, and a minimum of three years' successful supervisory experience in a recognized social work agency, preferably in an authoritative setting.

For supervisors, the minimum educational qualifications are a master's degree in social work, or a master's degree in the social or behavioral sciences, and three years of full time social work experience in an agency maintaining acceptable standards. To perform his supervisory and educational function successfully, the supervisor must have the ability to teach and lead the fully trained as well as the partially trained staff.

V. METHOD OF SELECTION

1. Selection of all probation and parole personnel should be based upon merit or in the classified civil service in those jurisdictions having an organized civil service system. Such selection should be based upon fitness as determined by a thorough evaluation of education, experience and personal qualifications.

2. Appointment should be based upon merit examinations open to all who meet qualifications, without regard to residence.

3. Evaluation or examination content should be related to basic knowledge and skills required for effective performance, not content which can and should be learned on the job. Examination or evaluation procedure should utilize modern testing methods to select those most likely to be successful in probation and parole services. A written examination (may or should) be part of the testing procedure.

4. Reasonable tenure should be provided to all appointees.

VI. SALARY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recognized that salaries necessary to procure the service outlined above may vary in different parts of the country. However, salary scales should be planned in relation to standards set by the professional organization of social work. Salary plans should include periodic increases in order to provide incentive.

Professional growth through education should be recognized through increased pay incentives.

Salaries for administrators and supervisors should be higher than those of field workers, with corresponding periodic increases, depending upon the size of staff and degree of responsibility.

There should be provision for the payment of necessary actual expenses.

VII. RETIREMENT

An adequate retirement or pension plan should be provided for all personnel - field workers, supervisors and administrators.

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