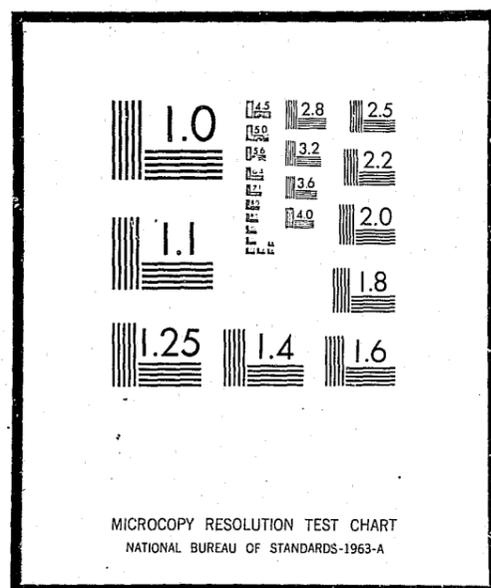


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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20531

Date filmed,

12/23/75

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SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION
DIVISION OF TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A COMPENDIUM OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In order for our courts to continue to reduce the number of offenders committed to local and state correctional facilities, more extensive use will be made of other dispositional alternatives, including probation. Although probation departments in New York State already receive more sentenced offenders than all the reformatories and prisons in this state combined, the percentage of offenders sentenced to probation will increase if present trends continue. Moreover, as probation continues to accept greater responsibility for various types of delinquency prevention programs such as the intake diversion and community outreach programs now in progress, professional personnel must expand their horizons of knowledge and skill levels. Therefore, it is imperative that all levels of personnel be adequately trained to insure that the probation department can deliver the kinds of crucial services that are so necessary in the community today.

To insure that all members of the Suffolk County Probation Department would be equipped with appropriate skills and attitudes for their work, the Division of Training and Staff Development was established in June 1973. Based on the philosophy that paraprofessionals, probation officers, administrative personnel, and clerical staff must function together as a team in order to maintain an effective and efficient probation delivery system, the Division developed programs which were designed to promote cooperative working relationships among all employees within the department. To accomplish such a "team concept," we utilized the experience and skills of supportive, line and administrative members of our staff to implement our courses and services. This multi-instructor approach enables the trainee to profit from the diverse backgrounds of highly qualified instructional teams. Further, it permits the probation department to make the most effective use of valuable human resources.

The Division of Training and Staff Development of the Suffolk County Department of Probation is located at our main office in Yaphank, New York, and it is currently equipped to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide a mechanism through which all training and related activities can be conducted
2. To provide the means to conduct in-service training programs at strategic times
3. To "tailor" the curricula to the individual needs of Suffolk County personnel

4. To meet the minimum in-service training requirements of the Suffolk County Probation Officer Traineeship program
5. To promote cooperative working relationships among departmental personnel.

The Suffolk County Probation Department presently offers and conducts the following programs for the benefit of its staff:

Basic Theory and Practice of Probation

Of primary concern to the Division of Training and Staff Development is the 218 1/2 hour in-service training program for new probation officer trainees. Under our present operational procedures, trainees are assigned to "training status" for their first twenty-seven days of service with the department. During this time, they undergo an intensive in-service training program which combines classroom work with supervised field placements in the various investigation, supervision and intake units of the department. Classroom work includes all facets of the probation process, and the supervised placements afford the trainee an opportunity to relate theory to the field of practice. Evaluation is another vital component of this program, and all trainees are required to complete a comprehensive examination prior to assignment to a permanent unit. Moreover, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the new employee's aptitudes and preferences, field placement instructors submit detailed analytical reports of the trainee's performance while in placement. These field evaluation reports, when combined with the examination results and classroom evaluations, are of considerable value to the administration in making assignments to the various units in the department.

Practicum on Deviant Behavior

Once the trainee satisfactorily completes the above program, he (she) is assigned to a unit to conduct investigations or manage a caseload. Although the trainee has actually entered the field of practice at this point, supervisory personnel continue to provide on-the-job training via regularly scheduled conferences and meetings. In addition, three months after his (her) assignment to a permanent unit, the trainee returns to our training facilities in Yaphank to complete the Practicum on Deviant Behavior. This 27 1/2 hour block of training is designed to equip the trainee with a theoretical frame of reference which can be used to interpret the behavior of offenders placed under supervision. The program is conducted on a one-day-a-week basis for a period of five weeks in order to permit the trainee to keep pace with the demands of the job.

Utilization of Counseling Techniques

To complete the trainee's formal instruction, a 27 1/2 hour course, Utilization of Counseling Techniques, is conducted during the latter part of his (her) traineeship. This program, like the behavior course previously described, is conducted on a one-day-a-week basis by our training staff. It is designed to equip the new officer with particular counseling skills which may be utilized in the performance of his (her) duties.

Relevant Theory and Practice for the Paraprofessional

In addition to the programs already discussed, the Suffolk County Probation Department sponsors an eighteen-day entry level in-service training course for new paraprofessional personnel (probation assistants). Although this course is not required by either the State Division of Probation or the local Civil Service Department, we have recognized the need to provide paraprofessional personnel with a full measure of training upon their entrance to the field of probation. Unlike our entry level programs for professional probation staff, the paraprofessional program is designed to thoroughly familiarize the paraprofessional with his unique role as an assistant to the professional probation officer. Therefore, the individual classroom sessions underscore the paraprofessional's crucial role in the community as a vital member of the local criminal justice system. We were quite pleased to complete this curriculum and implement our first cycle of training in June 1974 since it currently represents the only program of its kind in New York State.

To highlight some of the special features of our new in-service training course for paraprofessionals, a few additional observations seem to be in order. First, a number of specially designed workshop sessions are included in this program in order that probation assistants can concentrate on the role of community resources in all areas of probation work. Acting as resource consultants and workshop moderators, our instructional personnel help the trainees to identify and examine some of the major community resources that they will be in contact with in the Suffolk County community. In short, our mission for these workshops is to clearly define the importance of the paraprofessional's work in the community in terms of both advocacy and outreach. The focus, of course, is on reintegration and community organization, and the recent National Advisory Commission Report on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals is used as a basic text.

Group Methods in Probation

Recognizing the critical need for the development of experimental treatment programs in probation, the Division of Training and Staff Development offers an intensive in-service training course entitled, Group Methods in Probation, for personnel with aptitude in this area. This program entails 40 hours of classroom training,

and instructional methods include lecture, role-play techniques and experimentation with various types of group methods. As part of the learning experience, trainees are organized into a laboratory group of their own, and they are required to record group process. Without a doubt, group techniques add a vital dynamic to the probation process, and it is felt that a significant number of our officers will be trained in this area.

Legal Issues, Process of Arrest and Defensive Tactics

In conjunction with their normal activities, probation officers in the department execute probation violation warrants when deemed appropriate. Although the formal process of arrest is only used as a correctional mechanism of last resort, it is, nevertheless, a crucial action. In fact, since research findings in this area reveal that the selective and constructive use of this enforcement measure can actually enrich the probation treatment process where such action is necessary, the Division of Training and Staff Development constructed a specialized training program entitled, Legal Issues, Process of Arrest and Defensive Tactics. Further, a staff member of this department was enrolled in a specialized training school sponsored by the federal government and he has been certified as a qualified instructor. As a result, we now offer a 22 1/2 hour block of instruction for line level personnel and the program is conducted on an "as needed" basis. Feedback from the three programs already conducted reveal that the training has filled a "void" which existed for quite some time.

Preparatory In-Service Training Program for Probation Office Personnel

Since we regard secretarial, clerical and other office personnel as essential members of our probation team, the Division of Training and Staff Development provides a full week of entry level training for all new probation office personnel. The program, which includes a full day of field placements, enables our clerical and secretarial staff to better understand the total probation process. Further, this program enables clerical personnel to better understand the relationship of their work to the total probation product. The program, like our basic entry level programs for professional and paraprofessional personnel, has been registered with, and certified by, the State Department of Civil Service. Consequently, the graduates receive certificates of achievement shortly after completing the full training cycle.

Middle Management Training Sponsored at the State Training Academy

This department has worked out an agreement with the State Division of Probation in order to provide appropriate training for supervisory and administrative personnel. Specifically, we are currently sending our supervisors to the New York State Correctional Services

Training Academy for middle management training. While at this facility, our supervisors undergo and intensive thirty-five hour block of training entitled, "Effective Middle Management Techniques." In addition to a number of management concepts, the program is designed to equip supervisors with management skills applicable to the probation setting.

Training Resources

In conducting our various training programs, a variety of resources are used. In addition to three excellent classrooms at our Yaphank office, the training staff utilizes the facilities of our branch offices when appropriate. Moreover, the Suffolk County community serves as a training laboratory for both trainees and experienced probation officers, and many of our activities take place in the field.

The Division of Training and Staff Development has been fortunate to secure a number of special audio-visual aids which are used to supplement the classroom presentations. Included in these resources are a number of excellent films dealing with probation and the correctional system. Further, special efforts have been made to develop appropriate reading materials, digests and reference booklets which are used to enhance classroom experiences. Many of these materials are also used as "desk references" by probation officers already assigned to permanent units. To date, over seventy training handouts have been prepared, and they have been numbered in accordance with the provision of our forms control system. In compliance with state and local regulations, our curricula have been filed with the Division of Probation, the State Department of Civil Service and the Suffolk County Civil Service Department.

Student Internship Program

Although the sponsorship, development and implementation of in-service training programs for Suffolk County Probation personnel are primary responsibilities of the Division, we also recognize the need to work closely with colleges, universities and allied agencies. In 1974, Division personnel were able to provide advice and services to a number of local colleges. By the same token, the academic community has taken a number of measures to "bridge the gap" between the university and the field of practice, principally through scholarship awards.

Aside from our technical services to the academic community, the Suffolk County Probation Department sponsors a student internship program for the benefit of criminal justice students at various institutions of higher learning throughout the state. The need for correctional agencies to work closely with institutions of higher learning is well documented in the reports of the Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training. Moreover, the

Commission makes the following recommendation regarding student placements:

The undergraduate degree should become the standard education requirement for entry-level work in probation and parole agencies and for comparable counselor and classification positions in institutions. Preferred areas of specialization should be psychology, sociology, social work, criminology/corrections, criminal justice, education, and public administration. Correctional agencies must join actively with institutions of higher learning in furthering the development of these programs and should provide suitable field placements for their undergraduate students.¹

In keeping with the above recommendation, the Division of Training and Staff Development maintains an ongoing internship program which is structured to permit the educational institution and probation department to "tailor" each internship experience to the individual needs of the student. In summary, the internship program includes formal classroom training geared to the individual needs of the student, field placements in all service areas of the probation department, and evaluative procedures designed to measure the relative effectiveness of the entire program. To date, we are quite pleased with our ability to provide this service to various colleges and universities in the State of New York, and the program was recently the subject of a special commendation from the Criminal Justice Educators' Association of New York State.

Accreditation Program with Local School of Criminal Justice

To supplement the in-service training programs administered by the Division of Training and Staff Development, the Director of Probation, with the assistance of his training staff, encourages employees of this department to pursue graduate education programs at local colleges and universities. Among others, numerous members of our staff are matriculated in the master's degree program in criminal justice at C. W. Post College, since such educational courses have proven to be of substantial value for the field of probation. Further, since this department enjoys a close working relationship with the College, the chairman of the criminal justice program has been able to provide a number of unique services for our agency. Recently, for example, the Graduate Council of C. W. Post College accredited the Suffolk County Probation Department's entry level training program for new probation officer trainees. Consequently, probation employees, who are matriculated in the master's degree program in criminal

justice at the College, are granted three graduate credits once they have satisfactorily completed their basic training. This award was extended to both the Suffolk and Nassau County Probation Departments after the C. W. Post Graduate Council evaluated the academic worth of the in-service training curricula currently in use by these two agencies.

The awarding of three graduate credits to Suffolk County and Nassau County probation personnel enrolled in the graduate criminal justice program at C. W. Post College represents the first such accreditation program for the field of probation in New York State. Since the police have been able to develop accreditation arrangements of this type in the past, it is indeed gratifying to establish such a program for local probation personnel in the Long Island community.

¹Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training, A Time to Act (Washington, D.C.: By The Commission, 1969), p. 77.

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