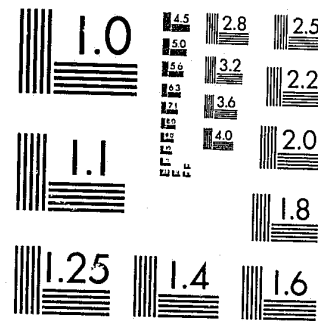


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National Institute of Justice  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20531

6-17-82

# PROBATION AND AFTERCARE SERVICE

## COMMUNITY PROBATION SERVICE

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK 1977

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PROBATION AND AFTERCARE  
SERVICE

COMMUNITY PROBATION SERVICE

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK FOR  
TRAINEE VOLUNTEER PROBATION OFFICERS

JANUARY, 1977.

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ACQUISITIONS

COMMUNITY PROBATION  
SERVICE

REACH OUT

BE  
A VOLUNTEER PROBATION OFFICER

Probation and Aftercare Service  
Pearl's Hill, Upper Barracks  
Ministry of Social Affairs  
Singapore 3.

COMMUNITY PROBATION SERVICE

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

The Community Probation Service was introduced in 1971. Its objective is to evoke greater public interest and involvement in correctional work as well as to tap the considerable reservoir of volunteer talents and assistance for the Probation and Aftercare Service.

Heavy investigative and supervisory responsibilities have long placed a heavy burden on the professional staff. By utilising the collective abilities of concerned citizens, a corps of Volunteer Probation Officers has been organised to improve the educational, vocational, social and employment achievements of those placed on probation. Through this cooperative and unified effort with the professional, the Volunteer Probation Officer makes a precious contribution to the prevention of crime and delinquency and the treatment of offenders.

This Volunteer Handbook is designed to orient you to the task ahead. It offers some practical suggestions to implement the 'term approach' in dealing with the offenders placed on probation. It is not intended to stifle your initiative. As you review and apply the material, do not hesitate to ask questions or make suggestions for its improvement.

K V VELOO  
CHIEF PROBATION & AFTERCARE OFFICER

JANUARY 1977

### THOSE WHO CAN HELP

Citizens from all walks of life who have a little time at their disposal can provide valuable service to the Community as Volunteer Probation Officers in the Community Probation Service. The basic ingredients of the Volunteer Probation Officer are sensitivity, warmth, dedication, concern and the desire to help others. Education is of little concern. The average citizen, when given some training, can be an effective agent in helping young offenders to find their own meaningful solutions to their unique problems and needs.

The average citizen has the accumulated experiences of having faced and resolved many day-to-day problems. They can share with these experiences with the young offenders, who in the face of stress of difficulty, have not been able to meet the demands of society. The conduct of offenders can best be changed by the personal contact and influence of the average citizen.

### TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

We do not over-emphasise the training aspects in the Community Probation Service. The basic ingredients of a good Volunteer Probation Officer are sensitivity, warmth, dedication, concern and the desire to help others. The training is basic and consists of nine classroom lectures, seminars and discussions. These are designed to stimulate thinking and reading on crime and delinquency. These lectures are supplemented with visits to the Courts and correctional agencies, such as probation hostels, approved schools, reform institutions, prisons and voluntary organisations concerned with the rehabilitation of offenders.

A short attachment to the Probation and Aftercare Service is arranged for the trainees. This provides an actual field-work experience. Trainees are placed under the guidance and supervision of experienced Probation and Aftercare Officers during their orientation course.

The trainee after successfully completing the basic training and orientation will be assigned a case for a trial period of six months. During this period, the trainee will receive further guidance and support from the Probation and Aftercare Officer. His progress and particularly his suitability to take on the role of a Volunteer Probation Officer will be continually assessed. At the end of the trial period, the trainee will be confirmed as a Volunteer Probation Officer, if he is found suitable.

Case conferences and discussions will be held periodically during the course of the Volunteer Probation Officer's service in the Community Probation Service. These help develop his knowledge and enhances his skills in dealing with the personal and family problems of the offender on probation.

### THE OFFENDER, YOUR CLIENT

Every person is a mixture of good and bad, weak and strong, conformity and non-conformity. Crime and delinquency is sometimes a by-product of our modern, urban and industrialised society with its demands, status symbols and material emphasis.

Some persons because of their innate ability, strong family ties, religious convictions or other strengths in character never seriously break the law. Others, who are less endowed with these strengths and social disadvantages, are more rebellious and possess scars of maladjustment. They break the laws because of their inability to cope with their personal problems.

You will deal with young offenders who are between 12 and 21 years of age. Among these group of offenders who are placed on probation you may find that there is a distinction between those who are out of control, whose delinquency may be the result of emotional or educational difficulties or a reaction to authority or simply of boredom and those whose delinquency is a symptom of deep-rooted maladjustment and personality disorder. You will also find that there is a difference between a single delinquent act committed by the young offender and the mere persistent type of anti-social behaviour which assumes a repetitive pattern to resemble a career of youthful delinquency and adult criminality. Many of the young offenders who commit minor delinquent acts once or twice grew out of them as they move to adult maturity with some guidance and assistance from you and the Probation Officer. It is much more difficult to deal with the persistent type of young offenders, but it is challenging and tests your imagination and skills in rehabilitative work. Often in planning the treatment of such offenders, the Probation Officer may take into account the fact that his maladapted behaviour and misdeeds are often the result of a failure in the functioning of their families or a lack of adjustment to their social environment.

### PROBATION AND AFTERCARE SERVICE

#### HISTORY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Probation and Aftercare Service became a division of the Ministry of Social Affairs in January, 1967. It was originally initiated as a section within the Social Welfare Department with the limited objective of providing supervision for juvenile and young persons placed on probation under the provisions of the Children and Young Persons Ordinance.

As a separate department, the Probation and Aftercare Service is now responsible for the following services :-

#### Statutory Services

##### Probation

Supervision and personal care of :

juvenile and adult offenders under the Probation of Offenders Act, Chapter 117.

##### Aftercare

Supervision and personal care of :

- (a) reformatory trainees released on licence under Schedule D to the Criminal Procedure Code, Chapter 113; and
- (b) corrective trainees and preventive detainees released on licence either under the second Schedule to the Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) Act, Chapter 112, or under Schedule C to the Criminal Procedure Code, Chapter 113.
- (c) drug addicts released on licence from the Drug Rehabilitation Centre under the Misuse of Drugs.

#### Non-Statutory Services

##### Youth Guidance Services

Advice, guidance and supervision of young adults between the ages of 16 and 21 years who are creating difficulties both for themselves and their parents by their refractory behaviour.

## THE PROBATION SYSTEM

### Evolution of Probation

In a Boston police court almost 130 years ago, a volunteer, John Augustus, a bootmaker, stood bail for a man charged with being a common drunkard. The court ordered the man to appear before it again in three weeks for sentencing. John Augustus worked with the offender and by the time he appeared before the court for sentencing, he seemed so reformed. The court was so impressed with the offender and by the efforts of John Augustus that the offender was fined one cent and ordered to pay all costs, instead of the usual penalty of imprisonment in a House of Corrections. John Augustus was so encouraged that he continued to stand bail for offenders, undertaking the task of supervising and guiding their behaviour during the weeks before sentencing. Augustus opened his home to many of the offenders, while others returned to their own homes. He fed and clothed the needy, but required all able bodied men to work for eighteen years, until his death in 1859. Augustus bailed out nearly 2,000 people, achieving a high proportion of success. As he said, "The object of the law is to reform criminals and prevent crime, and not to punish maliciously, or from a spirit of revenge".

Many characteristics features of the probation system as we know to-day were developed by John Augustus. He selected men who were first offenders, "whose hearts were not wholly depraved, but gave promise of better things". He made a thorough examination of each individual's history. He sent his offenders to school or supplied them with honest work. He also made impartial reports to the court and maintained a careful register of all his cases. Although it is evident that the investigations were necessarily meagre, reports were short and there was very little close supervision or treatment plans. John Augustus opened the door to a new concept of helping offenders rather than merely punishing them through the probation system.

### What is Probation?

Probation is a method of treatment of selected offenders in the community under the supervision and personal care of the Probation Officer. Probation is not a gesture of leniency. It is not a pardon or an act of leniency or a 'let-off'.

The Probation of Offenders Act provides the courts with an alternative method of dealing with an offender who might otherwise have to be committed to an institution. It involves the conditional suspension of sentence while he is released under the supervision of a Probation Officer. The offender who is placed on probation must observe the conditions that are imposed by the court. Failure to comply with any of the conditions specified in his Probation Order constitutes a 'Breach of the Probation Order' and renders him to be brought back to the Court to receive sentence on the offence for which he was placed on probation.

A person may be placed on probation for almost any type of offence, except such offences like murder and treason where the sentences are fixed by law. There are no limitations to age, sex or the number of times an offender may be placed on probation. However as the system is essentially based on a favourable prognosis as well as on the offender's willingness to co-operate with the Probation Officer, the courts of necessity exercise a certain degree of selectiveness when considering probation for offenders. For this, the courts rely on the Probation Officers to furnish them with Probation or Pre-sentence Reports on offenders.

The Probation Report provides information on the nature of and the circumstances leading to the offence; and the family and personal background of the offender. Such information helps the court to identify the factors relating to the offender's behaviour, his attitude towards others and feelings about his crime.

### The Advantages of Probation

Probation has over the years proved to be an effective method in dealing with selected offenders. It has advantage over other methods. In probation there is opportunity for the whole community to take part in the rehabilitation process. This is an important fact of rehabilitation for when the offender is released under probation, he returns to the community from which he came under certain restrictive conditions. He can live with his family. He can continue his schooling or employment. He can participate in his normal day-to-day activities. Probation gives opportunity for greater community contact and work with the social environment from which he came: his family, his school, his employment, his recreational activities and his associates. It provides the Probation Officer with much leeway to conduct his own measures and results in dealing with the offender. The Probation Officer can vary the intensity of his treatment. He can have close supervision, if there is a need.



In probation, the offender is allowed to live in that community from which he came. He does not move into the abnormal society of the corrective or penal institution. In an institution, whatever precaution is taken, there is always the danger of the unwholesome influence of the weaker by the more forceful types of offenders. Probation helps to avoid the offenders from coming into contact with the more callous offenders in an institution. It is also less costly to deal with offenders under probation than within an institution.

#### Principles and Methods of Probation

The effectiveness of probation not only depends on careful selection of offenders for such treatment in the community, but also on the quality of supervision and personal care that are afforded to the offenders whilst they are on probation. The aim of supervision is not merely to keep the offenders from further trouble during probation but also to ensure their good conduct and adjustment after the termination of their probation periods. The methods employed in supervision play an important part in helping the offender to develop adequate controls, stability and maturity to adjust more effectively to various demands in life.

In probation treatment, there is inherent a concept of sequence of cause and effect, based on the knowledge of human growth and development and criminal behaviour. Suppose our probationer is a young married man who has committed theft, the Probation Officer who deals with the offender will not label the problem as 'theft'. Instead he will see it as being a combination of several mere basic problems. The young man for instance may have come from a depressed and dislocated family background; he could have a health problem like chronic asthma that causes emotional depression or incapacity on the job; he may be severely burdened with debts because of poor management; he and his wife may have marital problems arising from sexual incompatibility; his children may be low-achievers in school or he may have any of various long-standing problems. So here we have a cause and effect sequence which looks like this in the mind of the Probation Officer: the young man has problems, a combination of health, financial, marital and emotional difficulties. It is possible that because of these problems or some portion of them, he might have committed theft.

Let us look at an actual case study. A boy aged 14 years was placed on probation for a year for the offence of theft of bicycle. The Probation Officer in the course of his social investigation into the personal and family background of the offender found that :

- a. The boy's father died when the boy was about 12 years old. After the father's death, considerable deterioration took place within the family situation. The boy's mother who was completely dependant on the boy's father found herself inadequate to meet the changed circumstances. She left too much to fate. The children were all young and there was no one to fall back on for support. The situation was aggravated by the mental retardation of one of his sister. Another sister had undergone a major operation and two other sisters were at home. The mother was illiterate and had not sent her daughters to school. She was on public assistance. The children were undernourished and in need of medical care.
- b. The boy who was the eldest, was an intelligent student, but had not made use of his capabilities fully. He had an excellent record in his primary school. In his secondary school (he was in Sec II when he committed his offence), his progress had deteriorated. His form teacher who had no knowledge of the boy's home background, observed that the boy was quiet in class, indifferent to his work and irregular in his attendance. He was always in arrears in his supplementary fees.
- c. The boy's version of his offence was that he needed a bicycle. His school was about eight miles away from his home. Sometimes he did not have bus fares for school. Often he felt envious when other boys in school had their own bicycles. He said he stole the bicycle on a sudden impulse.
- d. The Probation Officer in diagnosing the problems observed that much of the problems of the boy arose from the depressed conditions of his family.

It became clear to the Probation Officer that unless he helped the family to alleviate its problems, any amount of good work with the boy would be futile. The offender was not an isolated person living in a vacuum, even though he had offended and was on probation. His problems could rarely be those seen outside his family environment.

In this particular case, the Probation Officer initiated the following actions and with the involvement of the boy and his family saw them through.

- a. The immediate action taken was to get the boy back at school. Instead of sending him to the old school, which was eight miles away, a school in his neighbourhood was found for him. The Probation Officer enlisted the services of a school teacher to help the boy with his lessons. The Probation Officer kept regular contact with the boy's form teacher and principal. His conduct, progress and attendance were checked every month.

- b. The family was on public assistance. Obviously, it was not enough to manage the household budget. The Probation Officer obtained the assistance of a voluntary agency which provided the family with monthly rations and clothing. The voluntary agency even went a step further and donated a bicycle to the boy.

The Probation Officer then proceeded to deal with the boy's four younger sisters.

- i. The Probation Officer realised that the sister who was mentally retarded was a source of irritant at home. He arranged for her to be examined by a psychologist. It was found she was trainable. He got the help of a voluntary association for retarded children to train the girl. The association agreed and also provided for the girl's transport.
- ii. The girl with a major operation was referred to the Paediatric Unit to find out her fitness for school. It was found that she had undergone heart surgery. She was certified fit for school but would not be able to participate in games or physical exercises. She was helped to enter a school in the neighbourhood.
- iii. The youngest daughter, aged five, who was problematic in a sense that she was demanding and broke into traumatic fits was helped to enter a kindergarten. She liked it and her behavioural problems became much less.
- iv. The eldest daughter, aged nine years, was averaged for school. The mother wanted the girl to help her with the household chores. The mother herself was diagnosed as having hypertension. She was receiving medication. The Probation Officer impressed upon her the need for her daughter to get some form of rudimentary education. She agreed to send her daughter to the children's centre.

The unresolved problem at that state was to find proper accommodation for the family which was living in a make-shift shack within the compounds of a firm dealing with iron-scrap. Fortunately for the family, the firm was ordered to shift its business elsewhere as the place was required for urban redevelopment. The Probation Officer sought the sympathy of the firm which agreed to provide accommodation for the family in its new premises on the understanding that the mother would act as a 'watchman' for the firm. The mother agreed and the problem of suitable accommodation was resolved.

It is not possible to quantify or qualify the content and extent of the rehabilitative work of the Probation & Aftercare Officer. For example, interviews by themselves can have therapeutic value. Suffice to note that in this case, the boy completed his probation period satisfactorily. The family was helped to resolve its problems and was in a better state to meet ensuing difficulties. The boy developed adequate controls, stability and maturity to adjust more effectively to various demands in life.

## THE ROLES OF THE TRAINEE VOLUNTEER PROBATION OFFICER AND THE PROBATION OFFICER

The Trainee Volunteer Probation Officer works on a one-to-one basis with the offender on probation together with the Probation Officer (his Supervisor) in a special 'team approach'. The roles are separate but integrated and compatible for supervision effectiveness. Increased frequency of contacts with offenders at their home, place of work and elsewhere enhances their chances of success. Regular contacts depict personal interest and may assist in the family relationship, vocational and educational pursuits, personal problems and identify problem areas and increase trust.

### The Role of the Probation Officer (Supervisor)

The Probation Officer (the Trainee Volunteer Probation Officer's Supervisor) using his professional expertise, experience, knowledge of criminal behaviour and investigative findings diagnoses the case and plans a comprehensive plan of treatment. He outlines goals and objectives; provides counselling in problem areas and establishes guidelines for the Trainee Volunteer Probation Officer. He is ultimately responsible for the successful statutory supervision and adjustment of the offender on probation. He reports to the Court if the offender fails to comply with the conditions of his Probation Order.

### The Role of the Trainee Volunteer Probation Officer

The Trainee Volunteer Probation Officer develops a meaningful friendship with the offender based on confidence and trust. He serves as an inspirational personality and motivating catalyst. The Trainee Volunteer Probation Officer is non-authoritarian and is not hampered by the stigma which sometimes surrounds the professional Probation Officer. Lay counselling and supervision is provided, intermediate goals and objectives are established. The Trainee Volunteer Probation Officer operates within the framework of the overall plan of treatment drawn up by the Probation Officer.

THE TRAINEE VOLUNTEER PROBATION OFFICER IS A FRIEND,  
COUNSELLOR AND HELPMATE TO THE OFFENDER ON PROBATION.



# RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VOLUNTEER PROBATION OFFICER

Respect confidentiality at all times. Anything you learn or do in relation to the offender or his family is not under any circumstances to be divulged to anyone except to persons duly authorised by the Probation and Aftercare Service.

Whenever you have the slightest doubt as to what your obligations are, you should check with your Supervisor. Do this immediately before taking any action which might be seriously wrong or even illegal.

It is essential that the offender fully understands and complies with the Requirements of his Probation Order. Most of us fully appreciate the counselling and rehabilitation aspects of your work and there is no intent to minimise them. On the other hand, it must be understood that in probation work, this counselling and rehabilitative work must take place within the necessary framework of the offender's compliance with the Requirement of law and his Probation Order. The following are the basic rules to be upheld by the offender on probation :

- a He is not to change residence, employment or leave the country without prior permission of his Probation Officer;
- b He must be of good behaviour and keep the peace; and
- c He must follow instructions given to him by his Probation Officer.

The Court may include other conditions in his Probation Order and these must be respected by the offender. The rules imposed by the Court are utilised by the Probation Officer to encourage planning, thought and stability with regard to employment and residential changes. You should not hesitate to inform your Supervisor if the offender breaks any of the Rules. You should report all violations. If you do not, it is possible that the offender may think that he can always get away with them and you, by sacrificing everything to win his friendship, may end up by losing his respect by being a 'tool' he can do anything with. We are counting on you to spend one or two hours a week with the offender and his family. The offender is expected to meet you at designated times which are convenient to you. If he fails to show up for appointment, you should visit him at his home. If he fails in his subsequent appointment with you, you should contact your Supervisor and advise accordingly.

If for any reason you are not able to continue with the case assignment, please contact your Supervisor immediately. We depend on you to maintain regular contacts and we do not want to neglect the offender.

Make a minimum of weekly contacts with the offender and sufficient collateral contacts with family, friends, employer, teacher and others to reinforce and strengthen your lay-supervision and personal care. Do not visit him at school. If you require to know his progress, conduct and behaviour at school, consult the principal. Do not visit him at his place of work unless you had found him the employment and you are acquainted with his employer and the employer knows his background.

Although you are not an authority figure and do not have the statutory powers of supervision (your supervisor fulfills this role) we are confident that you will be able to reach the offender through your role as a friend, counsellor and helpmate. (When reprieve, reprimand or the authoritative approach is necessary) inform your Supervisor. Do not exercise authority upon your own. Do not sign his Reporting Card. This may associate you with authority and hamper your relationship.

### SOME SPECIFIC AREAS OF ASSISTANCE

Ways to assist the offender are only limited by the combined efforts and imagination of the Volunteer Probation Officer and his Supervisor, the Probation Officer. It may be just doing what you would do for a friend. Sometimes all it takes to redirect the life of an offender is a timely suggestion, a little encouragement or some practical assistance. Below are some ways in which you can help the offender. These suggestions are not all inclusive and are intended to point out a few areas of concentration. You may be involved in any combination of these areas and in a host of other areas as well.

#### Employment

You can help generate interest and motivate the offender to participate in vocational training. Upgrade his under-employment by obtaining a marketable skill. Identify his vocational interest and aptitude through discussions and testing through community resources. Assist in the actual enrollment and follow up of the offender. Make contacts with the training school or firm, family and others to encourage course completion.

Find him a suitable job, if he is unemployed. Encourage job stability, punctuality and regular attendance, proper notice for job changes and other responsibilities connected with maintenance of regular employment.

#### Education

You can help him to maintain class attendance, good conduct and consistent progress in his work. Where necessary, you can provide tuition to the offender. You can help him to complete his schooling. For instance, if the offender has dropped out at Sec III, your immediate goal will be to help him complete his Sec IV probably by encouraging him to enrol in the Adult Education Board.

#### Spiritual Guidance

Religious and spiritual growth can provide the ingredients for rehabilitation. Character guidance and moral values which are grounded in religious beliefs can help strengthen the offender's ability to withstand temptations, strain and stress. You can encourage regular attendance and activities in various places of worship within the offender's religious upbringing and persuasions.

#### Hobbies, Arts and Crafts

You can help direct his youthful energies into useful preoccupations or leisure pursuits. You can broaden the scope of his interest in hobbies, arts and crafts. You may, for instance, have an interest in rebuilding old cars and the offender may have a similar or parallel interest. You can work together on such projects.

#### Personal

One of the foremost qualities of a good Volunteer Probation Officer is the ability to be an interested listener. There is much therapeutic value in merely allowing an offender to talk out his problems and needs. You can point out his strengths and weaknesses. The offender needs to experience success to bolster his ego, instill pride and inspire greater achievement.

Good influences change attitudes. You can encourage personal hygiene, improvement in physical appearance and good grooming, in particular the need to keep short hair. You can help him with his residential arrangements, budgeting and finance. Encourage him to be thrifty and to save part of his earnings. Much of the problems of the offender lie in his inability to budget his expenses.

Discuss the health hazards of smoking, alcohol, drug abuse and promiscuous association with prostitutes. Help him to stop smoking, if he smokes or to give up drugs, if he is on them. Help him to plan his family, if he is married.

#### Sporting and Cultural Activities

You can develop the interest of the offender in sporting, cultural and social activities by associating him with youth clubs, community centres and sports associations. It is good to develop other areas such as art and music. Many have not the advantages of exposure to fine arts. You may wish to bring him along with you to the library, museum or an exhibition of art display, etc. You may wish to take him along for a picnic with your family or to a show. Such matters as the offender visiting your home, meeting members of your family or friends or having dinner with you will have to be decided by you on an individual basis.

#### Family Relationships

You can improve family structure and relationships. Always secure family assistance and involvement in all your plans for the offender.

Changing habits, outlooks and attitudes is a long arduous task. It takes extreme patience. Progress may be slight in some cases, while other individuals have the capacity for greater reform. In all cases you may meet with some frustration, discouragement and disappointment. But if you continue to give your goodwill, understanding and opportunity to the offender, you would soon find that your efforts are manifested in the form of delayed action.

## BASIC COUNSELLING CONCEPTS

Experience has shown that respect is the key to success in working with offenders. The offender will not be open to effective counselling, advice or help until he respects and trusts you as a person.

Given the goal of establishing a suitable relationship with the offender, how may this be achieved? The matter is not one of hard and fast rules. Every case has much that is unique in it, and cannot be handled according to set rules alone. Your own imagination, judgement and initiative are also involved.

Discussed below are some basic counselling concepts to provide the basis on which you may organise your personal experience of working with offenders.

### Empathy

Simply putting yourself 'in his shoes'.

### Simple Language

For effective communication, use simple language. Discuss matters on a level the offender can understand.

### Example

Set a good example. Be careful of your mannerisms. If you are gaining his respect, he will emulate you.

### Advice

Most offenders have received much advice from parents, relatives, teachers, friends, police officers, magistrates and others. Thus do not be in a hurry to offer more advice. You may be lumped together with others who advise, and resented. Advice will only be accepted after a relationship of trust has been established. If premature, it will hinder such a relationship and become self-defeating. Never give advice which the offender's circumstances make it impossible for him to follow. To do so reveals that you lack empathy and do not really understand his position.

### Listening

A basic requirement in counselling is the ability to be an interested listener. It may be difficult, but genuine listening is a way of showing concern. Remember that listening is not just keeping quiet when the other person speaks, it is making a genuine effort to take in what is said. Do not concentrate only on what you are going to say next.

At the same time, do not be a naive and over-credulous listener. Check the facts when you can. Many offenders can take you for a ride, and may habitually lie as a matter of habit. However, to a careful listener the truth will emerge. However do not put the offender off with excessive disbelief.

Exaggerating or lying can also be a way in which offenders let off steam, and get things off their chest. Within limits this is good for them. Be ready for such set-backs. Be human. You can show your feelings with control if you hear an obvious lie or bad behaviour. But do not lose your temper with an offender. If you do, he will believe that he has made you reveal your true self and that your professed desire to help is phoney.

### Respect the offender

Respect the worth and dignity of the offender. There is no room for narrow prejudices. Basically, you must like the person in order to help him. What the offender may tell you may shock you. He may have a different set of values and have been exposed to an environment foreign to you in many respects. Try therefore to think of them objectively without either judging or condoning. If you dislike the offender or have personality conflicts which cannot be resolved, do not hesitate to request that you be taken off the case. This is far more honourable than struggling under irremovable pressures and prejudices. Remember that the welfare of the offender should come before your own pride in the matter.

Do not expect explicit thanks either from the offender or his family. Even if the offender feels gratitude, he may not know how to express and communicate it. Though your work may not be rewarded by open thanks, it is in the long run appreciated, probably more than you or we shall ever know.

### Actions not words

The offender readily recognises your sincerity or lack of it. It is not so important what you say, but how you say it. You must be honest. Never make a promise or a threat that you cannot back up. Do not let him down even in apparently small things like showing up for appointments and being on time.

### Inspirational

Be enthusiastic and show your leadership. Think positively regardless of the shortcomings of the offender. Exploit his strengths and strengthen his weaknesses. Do not expect overnight miracles. When things have been wrong for years with the offender, they do not get corrected in a few weeks. It takes time. Even if progress is visible, there will be frequent setbacks.

Persistence

Persistence is an important part of counselling. It shows the offender that you will not give up on him. He himself may expect disappointment. When he realises that you are genuinely interested in helping, this well may serve as a turning point for him.

Know the offender

Get all the information you can from him either from his probation records or by direct contact. At some point you may want to take advantage of the information. Keep an open mind on the offender especially before meeting him and getting to know him. Avoid forming fixed and premature opinions, until you have done much discerning listening and gathered all the background information on him.

Respect Confidentiality

Whatever you know about an offender must not be divulged or discussed with anyone except a person or agency authorised by the department to receive such information. Violations of this is not only highly unethical but it will destroy the relationship with the offender, if discovered. Confidentiality, however, does not include keeping known infringements of the Probation Order a secret from his Probation Officer. However easy it may seem to do so, in the long run sweeping such things under the carpet does the offender a disservice. He may learn to think that he can always get away with a violation. You may by sacrificing everything to win his friendship will end up losing his respect. You must report all breaches of the Requirements of his Probation Order immediately to his supervising Probation Officer. You must be sure to tell the offender if there is anything you feel you must report to your supervisor. If the offender feels you have gone behind his back unfairly, he will naturally resent it. In discussing with the offender possible or unproven breaches, be honest and firm when you disapprove. This is not inconsistent with being helpful and friendly. Afterall, if you do not stand for something in his eyes, there are very few others who will.

Relationship with Parents

While your relationship with the offender is obviously foremost in your mind, you must also realise that he has other important relationships as well, with his parents, peers, teachers, employers, etc. Give some careful thought and attention to these, too. It is often found that much of the problems of the offender can be traced back to poor family conditions. Your work may thus involve helping the family to alleviate some of its problems. Move with care when you are dealing with the family. Discuss your plans with your supervisor before you take any action in family problems and relationships.

Spiritual

Most offenders have some concept of good and the effect of the spiritual realm upon their lives. Use these concepts in character building in suitable cases. Do not force your own denomination or beliefs upon them. Do not expect all offenders to show an interest in spiritual matters.

DOs AND DON'Ts

DO ... Establish friendly working relationship with the person with whom you are working.

DON'T ... Exercise or use authority - this is vested in the Probation Officer.

DO ... Accept the individual "as he is".

DON'T ... Compare his values with yours.

DO ... Talk on his level.

DON'T ... Talk above the probationer's ability to comprehend and effectively communicate with you.

DO ... Help solve financial problems.

DON'T ... Loan money.

DO ... Notify Probation Officer of any pending court appearances of probationer.

DON'T ... Appear in court on behalf of probationer without knowledge and consent of Probation Officer.

DO ... Provide empathy.

DON'T ... Provide sympathy.

DO ... Exercise patience, wisdom, and understanding. Sometimes positive results do not appear on the surface until a much later time.

DON'T ... Become discouraged.

MY EXPERIENCES AS A TRAINEE  
VOLUNTEER PROBATION OFFICER

Mr. S R Bala - Volunteer Probation Officer

I am a volunteer in the Community Probation Service. Before I was selected for this programme, I had to undergo a period of training and orientation in Probation and Aftercare Service. I found this training useful not only from the point of having obtained a better understanding of the problems and needs of the delinquents and their families but also an appreciation of the efforts of the Probation and Aftercare Service in its attempt to correct the wayward children and young persons from committing further crime and delinquency. It has also helped me to clear my own doubts and anxieties about criminals and delinquents. I must confess that though I volunteered my service to the Community Probation Service out of sincerity and altruistic motives, I had initial doubts that criminals and delinquents are capable of change and growth. It was not until that I was given a case to work, that I began to realise the truism in this concept. I have now come to subscribe increasingly to the proposition that given the opportunity, the understanding and goodwill, criminals and delinquents can respond to rehabilitative measures.

What I propose to do to-day is to talk to you about my personal experiences as a volunteer engaged in direct services. To illustrate this work, I have obtained permission from the Probation and Aftercare Service to present a case-study of a juvenile offender who is currently on Probation and under my lay-supervision.

Before I proceed to present my case-study, I wish to describe my role in the Community Probation Service. My role does not involve statutory supervision of the probationer. I am not vested with the power of bringing the probationer back to the Court, if he fails to abide by the conditions of his probation. These are functions of the Probation Officer. My primary task as a volunteer is to befriend, advise and assist the probationer and his family in their day to day problems. I am concerned with his progress at work, his leisure activities, his moral and religious feelings and his habits. I try to inculcate in him a sense of responsibility both to himself and to his family. I also make it a point to discuss my plans with the probationer and his family for I believe that their involvement is necessary for rehabilitation. Throughout these activities, I am guided by Probation Officer who is responsible for him.

The Case

The case concerns an Indian boy aged 16 years who lives with his widowed mother and six other siblings in a three-room Housing and Development Board flat. His father died when the boy was 12 years old. The father was employed as a watchman before his death. The boy's mother is a hospital amah. Two of his elder brothers are employed as contract labourers.



The boy had only six years of primary education. He was described in school as being a nuisance, quarrelsome and disinterested in his studies. He often traunted from school and was beyond control of his mother. He committed theft of a bicycle and was placed on probation for a period of eighteen months.

When this case was referred to me, the boy had absconded from his home and failed to report to the Probation Officer for more than a month. My primary task was to locate the boy who was said to be wandering in my neighbourhood. After two weeks of search, I found the boy playing with his peer group. I approached him and introduced myself. He was a bit suspicious at first but after some persuasion, he agreed to return to his home with me. While we were walking to his home, he told me about his activities and of his abscondence. He informed that he had been working as a contract labourer and residing at his place of work.

When we arrived at his home, his mother was pleased to see him. We discussed about the consequences of his breach of probation. As he had failed to abide by the conditions of his Probation Order, he was brought before the Juvenile Court and subsequently remanded in Singapore Boys' Home for a week while the Probation Officer was asked to conduct investigations into the boy's activities during his period of abscondence.

I visited the boy while he was remanded at Singapore Boys' Home so that I could gain his confidence and trust. After a week's remand, he was brought before the Court. His probation was extended for another year. The Probation Officer discussed his plans of treatment with me. It was seen by us that it was necessary to get the boy a job, involve him in recreational activities and also to work with his peer group.

I visited the boy regularly once a week at his home. During these visits I tried to interest him in books. I loaned him some magazines. I brought him to the National Library to get him interested in books.

I had opportunities to work with his mother who was a religious person. She was interested that her son took 'Kavadi'. She felt that it would change his waywardness. The boy agreed to do so. I was able to support him in his attempt to fast for a week before taking 'Kavadi'. During this period we discussed Hindu religion and in particular the purpose of carrying 'Kavadi'. On Thaipusan Day, he succeeded in accomplishing this task. I saw there was a change in him. He became more obedient to his parent and was co-operative.

In March this year I invited him for a picnic organised by Volunteer Probation Officers. He was unable to attend. He had injured his hand. He sent a friend of his instead. I accepted this, as I felt it was a good gesture on his part. It gave me a chance to know one of his peer group members. I developed a rapport with his friend who confessed to me that he had been involved in many delinquent activities. I was able to refer this friend of his to the Probation Officer for help.

Employment appeared to be important for the boy as this, I felt, will improve his self-image. I tried several potential employers and finally managed to get him a job at Public Utilities Board as a juvenile labourer. His salary was \$4.05 a day. The boy was happy with the prospects of getting permanent employment. Following his employment, I was able to discuss with him about his work and the importance of good working habits.

In dealing with the development of the case I was constantly guided by the Probation Officer as to the plans in dealing with him. Through such discussions we were able to plan a course of action. I was finally able to motivate the boy to participate in many meaningful activities that helped him to improve his personality. He got into the habit of reading story-books and above all he became a member of a football team which practised regularly at Farrer Park. The first personal effect he bought when he got his first-pay-packet, was a pair of football boots. This was approved by his Probation Officer and his mother. He was encouraged to open a Post Office Savings Account. He deposited \$5 for a start.

I am still continuing to see him, though not as frequently as it was before. I have learnt from this experience that boys with similar problems like his could be helped by volunteers who are in turn guided by professional workers.



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**END**