

2006 Showcase in Excellence Awards Recipient

Adult Probation – Maricopa County “Financial Compliance Program”



Financial Compliance Unit

Company Information:

Highest Ranking Official:

Barbara A. Broderick
Chief Probation Officer

Contact Person:

Tom O’Connell
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Financial Compliance Program
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Type of work:

The Maricopa County Adult Probation Department conducts investigations and prepares reports to assist judges with release and sentencing decisions. The Department also supervises unsentenced offenders on pretrial supervision and sentenced offenders on probation. Over 17,000 presentence reports are completed annually and the Department supervises approximately 31,000 probationers.

Workforce: 1,208

Testimonial of Value of the AZ State Quality Awards Program

“The Adult Probation Department appreciates this public recognition of our efforts to achieve performance excellence. Completing the application provided a dynamic learning experience that sparked new ideas for improvement and future direction. In addition, the external examiners provided an objective critique and their own recommendations for improving the process, compiled in a professional written report.”

-- Barbara Broderick, Chief Probation Officer, Maricopa County Adult Probation Department

Highlights of Organizational Process:

Process results:

- Collections of court-ordered restitution payments and probation service fees consistently improved over a 10-year period. Victims are restored, to some degree, by receiving their financial remuneration for criminal actions against them. The revenue generated through the collection of probation service fees reduces the need for tax dollars to support probation services.
- From 1995 to 2005, collections of restitution and probation service fees increased at average annual rates of 15% and 14%, while during the same period, the probation population grew by an average 5% annually.
- Probationers’ compliance in the payment of restitution has exceeded the department’s goal of 80% compliance for the past three years.
- The increased collections achieved by the financial compliance unit have outpaced the cost to run the program and have helped offset expenses for other services and salaries.
- By holding offenders accountable, the department improves the public’s confidence in the integrity of the court.

The Process:

The Arizona Supreme Court assessed the need to increase the public's trust in Arizona courts and identified holding offenders accountable through the collection of court-ordered payments as one method. Victim surveys conducted by the Maricopa County Adult Probation Department (MCAPD) revealed that victims did not believe their needs were being met. The department was doing a poor job of collecting the restitution, fees, and fines ordered by the court.

After researching public and private sector collections models, the MCAPD adopted elements of a private collections model and developed an innovative approach to collections. A consistently applied system of payment monitoring and follow-up was established. The department incorporated the collections intervals generally used by business, with which most people are familiar. In addition, the department implemented training of probation officers for the enforcement of financial conditions and hired professional collectors to address the delinquent cases. The collectors introduced multiple new methods for achieving higher collection rates.

Based on good case management practices and a desire to assist probationers in completing their probation successfully, MCAPD developed a financial compliance system that included assistance and rewards, as well as progressive sanctions for noncompliance with payment requirements. A thorough assessment of the probationer's payment ability is conducted. Probationers who lack the skill to manage personal finances and/or the ability to sustain employment are provided assistance. For example, referral to budget class is one of the early sanctions for payment delinquency. Probationers are allowed to "buy" their way out of the class by catching up their payments. The probationers who attend the class benefit from a focused curriculum that has been continuously improved.

Ongoing delinquency and willful noncompliance by the probationer is met with a number of higher level sanctions including referral to a collector, interception of tax refunds, assignment to a deadbeat caseload, and a meeting with a compliance facilitator. Ultimately, the probationer is returned to court for probation violation if payments are not made. The court, after reviewing the probationer's continued noncompliance with multiple collection efforts, may revoke probation and send the offender to prison.

A Financial Compliance Committee, consisting of probation officers and collectors, meets on a monthly basis to share collections information and techniques. Probation officers return to their respective units and share the information and ideas at their next unit meeting. The Committee helps keep the subject of collections as an ongoing priority in the department and works as a peer education system.

A team approach between the probation officers and collectors is essential and has been achieved through location in the same regional offices, sharing of information in a common case management information system, and participation on the Financial Compliance Committee.

Ongoing evaluation includes regular reporting of key collections and compliance measures, which are incorporated into the department's management plan and the county's Managing for Results system.

The process benefits crime victims and the public and contributes to the department's mission and the court's goals.