

# Court of Common Pleas

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT PROBATION

LAKE COUNTY, OHIO

104 E. Erie Street  
P.O. Box 490  
PAINESVILLE, OHIO 44077-0490

(440) 350-5570



## JUDGES

Hon Eugene A. Lucci  
Hon Richard L. Collins, Jr.  
Hon Vincent A. Culotta  
Hon John P. O'Donnell

## CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER

Craig A. Berry

**DATE:** December 4, 2018

**TO:** Judge Richard L. Collins, Jr.  
Judge Vincent A. Culotta  
Judge Eugene A. Lucci  
Judge John P. O'Donnell

**RE:** Salary Compensation

Your Honors:

As you know, the Adult Probation Department has undergone significant personnel changes in the last eight (8) months. During that time, six (6) of our eleven (11) officers have resigned. The only anticipated change was the retirement of Tim Luciani. While turnover in the department occurs with some regularity, the loss of over 50% of our supervisory staff within such a short time is unprecedented. Here are some factors which I believe contribute significantly to this development.

Officers in our department are asked to perform duties that in other jurisdictions are performed by hired specialists or are "farmed out" to other organizations. For example, Cuyahoga County has a urine lab technician on staff; supervisory officers there request the tests and are provided the results. In Geauga County, urine samples are sent out to a private laboratory contracted to provide the service, whereas in Lake County, officers are asked to devote part of their office time to the operation of our internal drug screening process in addition to their day-to-day routine of seeing probationers. Along with the supervision of offenders they write pre-sentence reports and attend Court hearings, just to list a few of their responsibilities. In addition, several officers run records reports via L.E.A.D.S., whereas most agencies have hired record clerks to take on this assignment or have contracted with local police agencies to provide the service. This is all done as a cost saving measure to help keep expenses low, not only for the County budget but for our State Grants as well.

Another contributing factor is the increase in the workload of officers. For example, Court-ordered pre-sentence reports have increased from 38.67 per month in 2008 to 45.12 in 2018, a 17% increase for that period. Given that one pre-sentence report typically takes an average of eight (8) hours to produce, this represents an increase in more than an entire work week (50-plus hours) that the department is asked to deliver. Needless to say, the stress of this additional workload is compounded when veteran, well-trained staff members are being replaced by inexperienced new officers who need to be trained themselves to perform these duties. Of course, this training is also being provided by the remaining staff, yet another additional expectation on their time and attention. It should be noted that it takes almost twelve (12) months to train an officer in order for them to become effective at their job. When our probation department has an average experience time of three (3) years as probation officers it becomes concerning when a typical probationer's sentence is three (3) years.



I think it goes without saying the quality of our pre-sentence reports are beyond any other investigative report of comparable departments. This can also be said about the level of supervision that officers provide to probationers. This is evident when the Courts have said on multiple occasions that they will not transfer supervision to the adjacent counties, as their quality of supervision does not compare to what Lake County Probation Department offers.

Understandably, inexperienced officers tend to make more mistakes; these typically cost the County time and expense, which often result in additional time and expense to correct the errors leading the Court down the path to continue the case. This is not only an expense on the Court to continue a case, but also leads to additional days in jail which, is probably the highest expense on the County.

Officers with more experience tend to reduce recidivism of future crimes, ultimately enhancing public safety as well as being fiscally responsible to tax payers, as it cost \$68.00 per day to incarcerate, in comparison, it typically cost under \$2.00 per day to supervise a probationer. The role of a probation officer is to change an offender's behavior; an officer who is less experienced has a harder time identifying which behaviors to change, let alone changing the behavior.

Not only have the duties and responsibilities of the officers increased, but as Chief Probation Officer, my duties have dramatically increased as well. Over the past few years I have tried to lessen the burden on the staff by increasing the volume of my work. This has come at a cost. Instead of performing the duties of the Chief Probation Officer, I have had to set time aside to supervise 82 offenders who are on bond supervision and 57 Interstate Compact offenders. I am also involved in arresting offenders whose bonds are revoked, as well as those on probation to our department who are found to be in violation. With less experienced Officers, I have increased staffing time with officers as well as conducting review board hearings with our probation violators in order to resolve these situations before there is a necessity for formal court intervention. These are only a couple of examples of my increased responsibilities and the responsibilities of the entire department, which arose without additional compensation.

I am respectfully requesting a pay increase for the entire staff, as we are losing experienced staff to other agencies. The question has been asked by many, "why stay here when I can go elsewhere for more compensation and less work?" This goes to show that those who have stayed are dedicated, loyal and desire to do their jobs well.

In my proposal, I respectfully request that we increase the starting salaries, as well as the salaries of the current staff. I'm also suggesting that we incentivize longevity in order to encourage staff to stay by rewarding their continued service. Finally, I would like to compensate those staff members who perform duties above and beyond their job description, such as working in the urine testing lab, run L.E.A.D.S and those who manage State Funded Grants.

Respectfully,



Craig A. Berry, Chief Probation Officer

Starting Salary for Probation Officer:

Current Starting Salary                      \$35,500.00

Current yearly cost for Officers:    \$477,235.20

Clerical:

Current Starting Salary:                      \$29,000.00

Current yearly cost for clerical:    \$173,056.00

Proposal to pay for extra assignments: (to paid out of supervision fees)

Lab Tech:    \$1,300.00 annually

Leads Operator:                                      \$650.00 annually

Municipal Jail Diversion                      \$600.00 annually

Our County Budget on salaries from:

2005 = \$570,598.19

2010 = \$525,873.63

2015 = \$560,007.52

2017 = \$549,636.72

2018 = \$550,000.00 appropriated