

Sonoma County Juvenile Probation

Youth & Family Handbook



COUNTY OF SONOMA
PROBATION

Changing Lives, Reducing Crime, Restoring Community

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Important Contact Information

Juvenile Justice Center

7425 Rancho Los Guilicos Rd
Department B
Santa Rosa, CA 95409
Phone: 707-565-2149

Probation Officer's Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

A Letter from the Chief

Dear Families,

The Sonoma County Probation Department has developed this handbook as a resource to help guide you and your family through Juvenile Probation. We understand that the Juvenile Justice System is complex, so I hope you will find this handbook to be helpful in answering some commonly asked questions about Juvenile Probation and the court process. It includes information on what you and your family can expect, as well as some tips on how to support your child while they are on probation.

The goal of probation is to serve the needs of youth and families, by holding youth accountable for their actions and enforcing court orders, while assisting them with developing new skills to lead productive, healthy and successful lives. We believe we can be most successful when working together with parents and families. Our staff are here to support you and your child and help youth succeed. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Probation Department staff with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

David Koch, Chief Probation Officer

What Does the Probation Department Do?

The Probation Department is committed to *Changing Lives, Reducing Crime, and Restoring Community*. We do this by:

- Reviewing reports from law enforcement and determining whether a case will be sent to the District Attorney.
- Providing information to the court to help judges make decisions.
- Connecting clients and their families with services and resources in the community, which may include: family and individual therapy, parent education, mentoring, substance abuse treatment, mental health resources, and other available county resources.
- Helping clients learn skills to overcome obstacles, change thinking and behavior patterns, and improve their quality of life.
- Holding individuals accountable for their actions and enforcing court orders.

Summary of the Court Process

If the District Attorney files charges against your child, a series of court hearings will take place.

The Judge may ask the Probation Department to prepare a written report, called a **disposition report**, which provides the Court with a full picture of your child's background, as well as their strengths and needs. A probation officer from the Investigations Unit will meet with your child and family to gather information about the offense, as well as details about your family history. They will ask questions about your child's upbringing, any history of substance use, mental/emotional health challenges, abuse, education, and/or any gang involvement. Information from any victims will also be collected. The report will include recommendations that the Probation Department believes will best help your child and family, while also ensuring the safety of the community. It is important to be honest so we can do our best to meet your child's needs.

At the **disposition hearing**, the Judge will consider the probation report and the recommendations. All parties will have a chance to comment on the report and share their own recommendations. The Court will then decide on the appropriate probation terms and conditions for the youth.

What is Probation?

Probation is a decision made by the Judge who orders a youth to remain in the community under the supervision of a probation officer for a period of time. While on supervision, the Court will require the youth to follow a set of terms and conditions that describe responsibilities and expectations. This may include participation in treatment and counseling, and community service.

There are four different types of community supervision: Informal Probation, Formal Probation, Deferred Entry of Judgement, and Wardship. They vary in length and may have different conditions associated with each. Youth may also be assigned to a specialized caseload that include participation in additional services delivered by community-based organizations.

Under certain circumstances, the Probation Department may recommend the youth be placed outside of the home. Their progress will continue to be monitored by an assigned Probation Officer. This could include youth who are suffering from severe mental health difficulties, or if there is concern that the youth is a continued risk to themselves, their family, or the community. Placement could include a short-term residential facility that will provide specialized and intensive care and supervision for youth. Youth may also be ordered to serve time in Juvenile Hall, in a Probation Camp, or committed to a state run treatment facility (Division of Juvenile Justice). More information about out of home services can be found on Probation's website: <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Probation/Juvenile-Division/>.

What to Expect on Probation

Youth on supervision are expected to abide by the set of terms and conditions ordered by the juvenile court, as well as by the reasonable orders of their parents/caregivers. All participants are expected to be honest with the Probation Department staff throughout the entire process in order to properly serve them.

Contact with Probation Officer

Youth are assigned to probation officers based on their level of needs. The probation officer will ensure that the youth abides by the set of terms and conditions imposed by the Court. They will also work with the youth and their family/caregiver to create a case plan that includes personal goals to be successful, and help a youth develop skills that will prevent them from engaging in illegal activity in the future.

The probation officer will meet with the youth and their family/caregiver in different settings, including at your home, school, or at the office, located at the Juvenile Justice Center. If youth are referred to participate in programs at community-based organizations, meetings may also take place there in order to monitor youth's progress in those services.

Chemical Testing

Youth are not allowed to consume intoxicating substances under state law. Youth on probation may be required to participate in chemical testing to monitor their sobriety while on probation.

What to Expect on Probation (continued)

Community Agencies

Youth on probation (and their parents/caregivers) may be required to attend counseling or other programs. We encourage families to take advantage of these resources, as programs are designed to help build skills and address challenges a family may be experiencing. Services could include: substance abuse treatment, anger management, individual and/or family therapy, restorative justice programs, and others. Programs are low or no cost to the family.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Talk to your Probation Officer for more information about different programs and services in the community that are available. They can refer you to places that can help you and your family with housing, employment, drug and alcohol treatment, mental health services, and more.

2-1-1 Sonoma connects Sonoma County residents to resources in the community, such as food, health services, housing, employment, disaster relief, and more. Call “2-1-1” by phone 24 hours a day, or visit www.211.org.

Restitution

Youth may be required by the Court to provide restitution, or financial compensation to a victim, for any damages that occurred as a result of delinquent behavior. A fine (\$50 for misdemeanors and \$100 for felonies) will be added to the restitution, as required by the state. Restitution payments can be made through GovPayNet phone at:

1-888-216-7888 or online at:

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Probation/Probation-Payments/>

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL YOUTH AND FAMILIES

1. Be open and honest.

The probation officer, service providers, and other community partners are here to help youth and families succeed. Staying in contact with the probation officer, while being open and honest, will better allow them to help young people succeed and overcome any barriers.

2. Review all conditions of probation and get an early start.

Make sure you understand what is expected of you and what you can and cannot do while on probation. Get an early start on any programs or requirements so unexpected life events do not get in the way. Youth will be more successful if their family and/or support network hold them accountable for changing their behavior and making the positive decisions necessary to successfully complete probation. Always remember to check in with your probation officer if you are unclear about any expectations.

3. Be an active participant in achieving your goals.

The Probation Department wants every youth and family to be successful; however, it is very important that youth and families define what success means to them. Become an active participant in creating goals for yourself and work towards meeting them. If your goals address issues that may have contributed to your involvement with the juvenile justice system, you will be more likely to successfully complete probation, and ensure you do not return.

4. Build a positive support network.

It takes a village! Look closely at your relationships and spend time with friends and family who can help you make positive changes in your life. Your probation officer can also help you build your support network if you are feeling alone and/or in need of additional support.

Frequently Asked Questions

Confidentiality: Will my PO share information about my case with my parents? Community based organizations? School? Job? Friends?

With the exception of certain serious offenses, juvenile court processes are confidential, so the probation officer will only discuss your case with you and your parents/caregivers. At times, the officer may also provide a limited amount of information to community based organizations that work with the Probation Department, so these agencies can know what services you and/or your family may benefit from. The Probation Department also works with schools in the county to verify that you are complying with your educational requirements. However, the probation officer will not disclose any information about your case with the schools, with your workplace, or with your friends.

Do I have to report that I have been convicted of a crime on a job application?

You do not have to report juvenile matters on a job application. There are no “convictions” in Juvenile Court as all charges that are found true are sustained, and juvenile records are confidential. If you are already employed, you do not have to inform your employer of your probation status unless the Court orders you to do so.

What happens when I turn 18?

If you turn 18 while on supervision, you are still expected to comply with all your terms and conditions of probation. However, should you receive new charges that lead to detention in custody, you would be housed in the County Jail, rather than Juvenile Hall, and be processed as an adult.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Can I travel while I am on Probation?

While on supervision, permissions from parents/caregivers and your probation officer are required to leave Sonoma County. Please notify your probation officer of any planned travel as soon as possible. A trip outside of the state may require travel permits.

What happens if I violate the terms of probation?

All juveniles on probation are expected to abide by the terms and conditions imposed by the Court. Violations may be addressed in a variety of ways. Informal consequences could consist of additional community service work, apology letters, or working on a weekend “work crew.” Other violations may require the youth to go before the Court to address the violation of probation. Depending on the severity of the violation, youth may be detained in Juvenile Hall or placed on Electronic Monitoring and confined in their home.

What happens once I complete Probation?

Once you complete probation successfully, your record may be automatically sealed. Speak with your attorney for confirmation that your record was sealed, or how to have it sealed in the future, and to learn about the benefits of having a sealed record. If your case is unsuccessfully dismissed, you may still be eligible to have your record sealed after reaching the age of 18 by petitioning the Juvenile Court. Talk to your attorney for more information.

For more information and a complete list of Frequently Asked Questions, visit our website at:

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Probation/Frequently-Asked-Questions/>

Additional referrals or contact information:

Notes: