

TRADITIONAL VS. EFFECTIVE PROBATION

Probation should focus on the right youth and partner with families and communities to promote behavior change and long-term success.

	TRADITIONAL PROBATION	EFFECTIVE PROBATION
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No consensus around mission and goals • Approach varies widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and from officer to officer • Priority often placed on compliance and/or punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear agreement that the mission is to promote long-term personal growth and foster positive behavior change
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Default disposition for youth at all risk levels • 63% of all adjudicated youth get probation • Imposed on many youth not adjudicated delinquent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No youth assessed as low risk for rearrest on probation • No youth with low-level offenses • Diverting a far greater share of youth allows for officers to oversee much smaller caseloads (8–12)
Role of Juvenile Probation Officer (PO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PO focused on surveillance and compliance, monitoring adherence to long lists of conditions/rules • Case plans often developed without input from youth and family • Required activities focus on accountability and treatment • Sanctions/incarceration for noncompliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PO as coach and broker, focused on progress, growth and connections • Relationship-based intervention • Individualized family-engaged case planing • Focus on achievable goals • Incentives to motivate behavior change • No court-ordered conditions • No confinement to punish rule violations
Families and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family members minimally engaged • Lack of family involvement viewed as family's fault • Families seen as part of the problem • Few partnerships with community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families seen as partners • Family members treated as experts and involved in all key decisions • Extensive partnerships with community organizations, especially those rooted in neighborhoods where large populations of court-involved young people reside
Racial/Ethnic Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial/ethnic equity not a high-priority, everyday concern for many probation administrators • PO's rarely discuss data on disparities or explore underlying reasons and potential solutions • Assumption that "rising tide lifts all boats" (no special focus needed to address needs/barriers facing youth of color or to root out "implicit bias" in officers' responses to youth of color) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reversing racial/ethnic inequities viewed as core responsibility for probation and other system leaders • Issues of racial and ethnic equity freely and openly discussed • Extensive data analysis and geo-mapping to identify points of disparity • Ongoing efforts to pinpoint problematic practices and to brainstorm and experiment with new approaches
Results Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal attention to youth development outcomes • Focus on contact hours, compliance with conditions • Inconsistent measurement of rearrest • Placements stemming from rule violations represent failure by youth not probation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and measurable goals for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – limiting the probation population – shifting diversion to non-court partners – eliminating placements for technical violations and minimizing placements generally – taking aggressive action to redress disparities – providing youth development opportunities – forging community partnerships – earning high marks from youth, families, victims – addressing youths' delinquency-related risk factors – achieving realistic goals for reducing reoffending

To learn more about the Casey Foundation's vision for transforming juvenile probation, please visit www.aecf.org.

