



PROBATION OFFICER

JOB DESCRIPTION

Probation officers work with criminal offenders before, during, and after they are sentenced by the courts. In this job, you ensure that offenders carry out their sentences and help them return to the community, monitoring them carefully, and working toward their rehabilitation. You may work with courts, prison and police services, and social and community organizations on initiatives to prevent reoffending.



SALARY

Probation services officer ★★★★★

Probation officer ★★★★★

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Political factors determine the resources available to probation services • Intense scrutiny of the profession by media and government

CAREER PATHS

Probation officers work for a regional or national probation service, or for a private company that specializes in the rehabilitation of offenders. Routes into the career vary greatly country by country, but a relevant degree and vocational qualifications are expected. Once qualified, you can choose to move into managing the work of other officers, or specialize in one area of offender rehabilitation.

TRAINEE You can join a state or federal government training program once you have completed vocational qualifications. Experience of working with prisoners or providing support to victims of crime is helpful. Many permanent positions require you to be a trainee for one year first.

GRADUATE If you hold a degree in criminology, police studies, or criminal justice, you can combine working for a probation service with studying for a qualification in community justice, which will qualify you to work as a probation officer.



REHABILITATION

OFFICER Helps people addicted to drugs, alcohol, or other substances, or those with behavioral issues, to lead active, independent lives.



PROBATION OFFICER You supervise offenders on parole or assess the risks they may pose to the community, and write reports for the courts and prison authorities. You may specialize in areas including high-risk offenders, people with addiction problems, or hostel management.

SKILLS GUIDE



The ability to work with people from all walks of life, and to understand their individual needs.



Good team-working skills for collaborating with the agencies involved in offender care.



The ability to listen, negotiate, and remain calm when dealing with challenging behavior.



An organized approach and the ability to prioritize work for handling several cases at once.



The ability to make objective and analytical assessments of behavior and circumstances.



TREATMENT PROGRAM DIRECTOR Oversees the running of a program and/or facility that provides treatment for offenders who have recently left prison, or inmates who are undergoing treatment for addiction.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER Advises and guides ex-offenders through the options available to them regarding education, training, and work, and helps them integrate into society following a prison term.

RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **POLICE OFFICER** *see pp. 240–241*
- ▶ **CORRECTIONS OFFICER** *see pp. 242–243*
- ▶ **COUNSELOR** *see pp. 256–257*
- ▶ **SOCIAL WORKER** *see pp. 258–259*
- ▶ **FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST** Works with offenders in prisons and in the community to devise and deliver treatment programs that will counter antisocial behavior. They also carry out research to profile and understand criminal behavior, and may give expert testimony in court and advise parole boards and police forces.

AT A GLANCE



YOUR INTERESTS Sociology and social work • Law • Psychology • Politics • Counseling • English • Mathematics • Information Technology (IT)



ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS Entry requirements vary, but a degree and vocational training in probation work are usually required.



LIFESTYLE Office hours are regular, but probation officers may need to work late or on weekends to deal with heavy caseloads or when on call.



LOCATION The work of a probation officer is mainly office-based, but they may need to travel frequently to courts, police stations, and prisons.



THE REALITIES Making positive changes to people's lives is satisfying, but dealing with offenders and victims of crime can be distressing.