

During my internship for the Northern District of Florida United States Probation Office, I received the opportunity to work with a diversity of officers and how they handle themselves on a daily basis. I was exposed to every aspect involving the federal probation profession without any hesitation. The officers (U.S.P.O.) I worked with made sure to take time out of their busy schedules to teach me something new or what they felt was important for me to understand and know. By the end of internship I was fully confident to be able to perform tasks and assignments with very little guidance from other officers. To give one an understanding of how federal probation is organized here in Pensacola the office is divided in three stages, pretrial services investigation (PSI), presentence report (PSR) and supervision of offenders.

The first stage a federal defendant will be contacted by a pretrial services investigation officer that investigates the defendant's charges and then presents a report to the court of recommendation whether to release or detain the defendant. The officers supervise the defendants who are released to the community while they await their day in court.

The second stage begins after defendants enter into a plea in court. Once a plea has been entered, officers known as presenting writers will initiate a detailed investigation of that defendant's background records including, financial records, criminal history transcripts, probation/parole/pretrial services, birth/marriage/divorce, school history, employment, military service, medical records, and counseling and treatment records. The officer will then verify the information gathered, evaluate it, and presents it to the court in an organized, objective report called the presentence report (PSR).

The presentence report is very crucial to the sentencing process. The PSR must be as accurate as possible with all the facts (mentioned above) verified by a family member, friend or an agency with the knowledge of that defendant. The presentence report will also have the

supervision recommendations to the court at the time of sentencing. The PSR not only helps the court choose an appropriate sentence, but provides important information to help the Federal Bureau of Prisons accurately place an offender in the right programs so the individual receives adequate treatment.

The third stage of the office, involves supervision of offenders when those offenders are released from prison or just simple placed on supervision only. The U.S.P.O. will be responsible of making contacts with that individual until that person has been terminated from probation completely. The main focus of supervised release of offenders in the community is to make sure they comply with court ordered conditions of release and to transition offenders into productive members of their communities.

When supervising offenders, officers use risk control techniques designed to detect and deter criminal behavior. Some techniques include verifying employment, verifying income sources, monitoring offender's associates, requiring offenders to undergo drug testing, and restricting offender's travel. Also, if necessary, officers ask the court to modify the supervision conditions to provide for home confinement, financial disclosure, or other conditions to reduce risk.

This brief introduction of the US probation office is just the foundation of how the officers normally operate on a daily basis. Each stage has its own responsibilities and a different approach of how the federal court system works to allocate offenders quickly as possible and efficiently. I had the opportunity to learn each position the U.S. Probation Office had to offer, which became very beneficial for me in the long run. When I first started my internship I had some knowledge about federal probation. I had some working experience supervising my own case load working for Advance Aftercare Services. When I became aware of the officer's

involvement and guidance with the federal judges and how much judges rely on the PSI and PSR reports during sentencing was stunning at first, then it became obvious that judges would have difficult time performing their jobs without the support of the probation officers presentence reports. On numerous occasions I had the opportunity to accompany an officer to meet with the judge in their chambers before a sentence hearing to discuss any questions they may have about the guideline application or to discuss relevant case laws to see how other district judges have sentenced offenders on related charges. This became an advantage for me to be able to observe how each judge conducted themselves differently and how each judge asked specific questions pertaining to the PSR.

I have acquired many skills and knowledge throughout my internship. The work ethic at this office was highly organized and you kept yourself motivated and goal orientated from one assignment to the next. I was always highly motivated and ready to learn something different due to the fact this is the career I want to be doing later down the road. A bit of advice for students who maybe looking for careers involving law enforcement positions were on a daily basis your adrenalin is pumping, then U.S. Probation is not the right career choice for you. U.S. Probation Officers are trained to pay attention to the details and take their time when investigating defendants for the court or offenders on supervision.

When helping other officer's with writing presentence reports, there is a lot of paperwork that needs to be organized and put into the report as accurately as possible without any mistakes. It was important for the information to be proof read so it is accurately documented in the PSR report. This can become very overwhelming at times. For the most part, the officers were very helpful teaching their techniques and shortcuts to me that made the job easier. This is the same for supervision officers, they taught me the importance about safety precautions when going out

into the field and visiting offender's residencies. When in the field, it became apparent at times why the officer needed to know his or her surroundings and maintain control of any situation at all times.

This experience has been absolutely a huge advantage point for me since I will be pursuing a federal probation profession after completing my criminal justice degree and some state level experience. I have had a great opportunity to get acquainted with the Probation Automated Case Tracking System (PACTS); this is the main database that is used nationally for all federal probation officers. I also was received training on other database commonly used such as, NCIC, FCIC and DAVID to investigate criminal backgrounds and driving license statuses. Other training that I found enjoyable was firearm's training that was carried out at Escambia's Sheriff's Departments shooting range. The officers practiced their safety techniques and some had to qualify in order keep their firearm privileges as a U.S.P.O.

I would highly recommend anyone interested in the probation profession or legal studies to intern with federal probation. For instance, federal probation case loads are typically much lower in capacity compared to state probation level. This, in the long run, seemed to create an improved working environment. For legal students, I personally have had the chance to work with many U.S. attorneys while investigating presentence reports and discuss rebuttals, or any other rejections they found in the PSR. This was resolved usually by researching through relevant case laws.

A great benefit of this internship was the multiple agencies that I was exposed to during investigating or supervising offenders. Above all, the contacts that I have made during this internship have been overwhelming. The impact of this internship not only was favorable at an educational level, but ending up being extremely favorable when a lot of the people I have met

told me that they would write me a letter of recommendation or help in anyway that they could in the future. After completing this internship I am fully confident that this is what I want to be doing later as a career.