

Survey to Chief APOs

Issue: Mentor Program

Question (from Chester County)

Our department is interested in creating a Mentor Program for new staff.

Chester County has a significant number of new employees and we are looking for a way to give our new probation officers the opportunity to receive mentorship from a senior officer. Leadership has been approached by senior probation officers expressing their interest to be a mentor. We are hoping that having a mentor program will increase talent retention and employee satisfaction for mentors and mentees.

Do any counties have a mentor program implemented or something similar that may be helpful for guidance?

Adams County

Adams County has an orientation program for new employees that we review and tweak every year.

We have checklists for each position that we work off of to be sure the new employee is receiving all the things needed to have a successful start.

Part of that orientation program involves the assignment of a "Lead Probation Officer", who acts as a mentor for that new employee throughout the onboarding, orientation, and truly throughout the length of the employees first years.

Directors in Adams County initially drive the recruitment efforts for the open Lead PO positions in early November each year sending notice to their respective units that these positions are coming open for application.

We provide Directors and Officers a list of bulleted traits displayed by individuals with good leadership skills and ask both the PO's expressing interest and their Directors to reflect on how those traits are displayed by that individual.

Directors review the letters of interest they receive from interested POs within their respective units.

The Director then selects the Officer they feel is worthy of filling the open Lead PO position within their respective unit.

Directors then provide a written letter of recommendation to Deputy Chiefs and the Chief for the Officer they support in filling the position within their unit.

Lead Officers are currently contracted to receive a modest \$500 for the year, but that does not stop us from receiving letters of interest.

Below is some of the information shared with Officers about the position:

The Lead Probation Officer (Lead PO) positions are viewed as an opportunity for development of skills that would make the individual in the position an attractive candidate for future Managerial positions. As such, Lead Staff are expected to work closely with the Management Team and be open and available to training opportunities related to managerial duties, when applicable.

The Lead PO position maintains a standard workload and receives additional compensation (as determined by the Collective Bargaining Agreement) for performing the following duties:

- a) Assisting in training/ orientation of new Officers and providing ongoing mentorship of new Officers, as well as all other Officers
- b) Completing special projects as assigned
- c) Approving Court work in the absence of Management
- d) Actively participating in Department Committees

Lead POs are also entrusted to assist in key decision-making related to operational matters, including:

- a) Approve arrest or detention of individuals subject to Probation supervision;
- b) Provide guidance to Probation Officers to properly develop and prepare revocation and other court filings.

Happy to provide anything more that can be of help.

Allegheny County

Currently we do not have a mentor program. However, I know the PPB has one and it is excellent.

Dauphin County

In Dauphin, we have a month orientation program facilitated by management and senior POs. Once orientation is over, the new POs partner with seasoned POs. This has been a valuable program for our new hires. We started this kind of program in 2017.

Erie County

Erie County has had a mentor program since before I started. Last year, our former chief asked me to formalize the process. Currently there are 4 separate stages, orientation, court, "normal PO duties, field. There are some basic written tests for the orientation and court stages. A written test and a hands-on test for the 3rd stage. The field stage has a hours requirement. We have used this for the past year and I am about to meet with my mentors and the new people who have gone through it to see what needs tweaked or eliminated or added. Basically, we just standardized and put some formality to what we have done for quite a while. If you have any questions or would like to see any of the things we have put together, I would be happy to share.

Lancaster County

We have a three-week mentor program that is led by a supervisor and several seasoned officers. We implemented this in the mid-2000s and it has been of the best things we've ever done.

Somerset County

Somerset does not have a mentor program for new staff

York County

York County has a mentor program. It was developed by our Readiness Committee. They are in the process of revamping it. When complete, I will send it to you.