

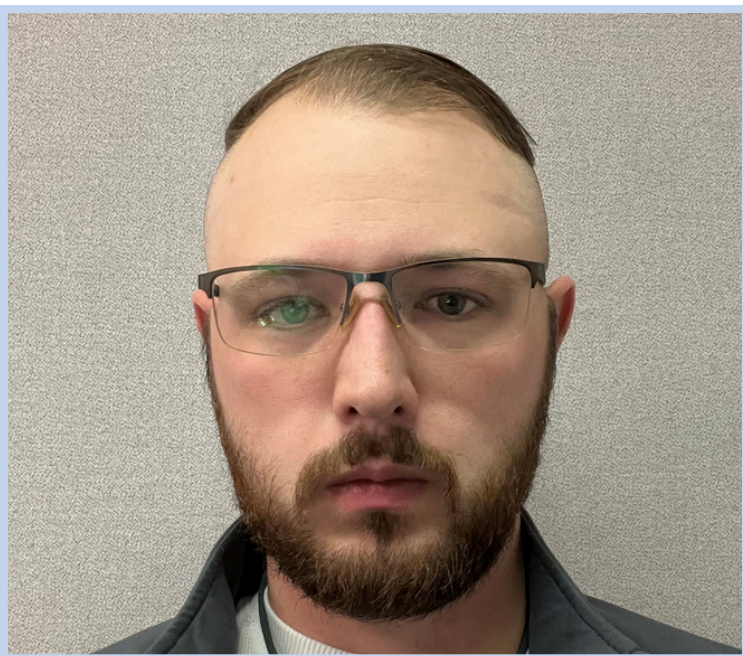
## WHY EBP: A PROBATION OFFICER'S PERSPECTIVE

### Meet the Officers



#### **Samantha Fazenbaker**

Samantha Fazenbaker is a probation officer with Cumberland County Adult Probation. She has been a part of the department for more than 12 years, and before that, she worked at Adams County Probation for over 6 years. She had held various roles throughout her career, including field officer, DUI, and institutional parole. Her interest in probation was sparked during her college days when she took criminal justice classes and was inspired by one of her professors, who was a chief in Pennsylvania. She also interned at a work-release center.



#### **Tyler Scott**

Tyler Scott is a DUI Probation/Parole Officer III at Franklin County Adult Probation, and he has been with the department for over five years. Tyler loves sharing his knowledge with his colleagues and has even created a course on drug recognition. He is a certified OC trainer and recently became a trainer in Four Core Competencies. Tyler's family has a long history in law enforcement, with both of his parents working in jails and his brother working in pretrial services in DC. Tyler always knew he would pursue a career in the corrections field.

### What drew you to evidence-based practices (EBP)?



Samantha: Before truly understanding EBP, I was asked to become an instructor in a Breaking Barriers program. I found the program to be effective, and I saw change in the people I was working with in jail. As I was introduced to the various concepts of EBP, they aligned with my previous experiences.



Tyler: As I started implementing various concepts of EBP, I realized that its application was making my job more efficient and effective. Even though it often means more work on the front end, in the long run, I started seeing results and less work on the back end. I also began to see that I was developing professional relationships with the people on my caseloads.

### What has been the most rewarding since you implemented EBP?



Samantha: I enjoy the dialogue and conversations with the people on my caseload. I am no longer just checking off the boxes. I am now working with people to identify their individualized goals and needs, and I am seeing positive change. They are excited to share their achievements.



Tyler: I appreciate seeing the little wins along the way, from getting a new job to the "a-ha" moment when they saw the connection between something and their past behaviors. I have seen a change where they start to become intrinsically motivated and want to share what they are doing along the way.

## What has been the most challenging along the way?



Samantha: The most challenging part is getting to know the person, both working so hard, and they still “mess up” or, even worse, die. In addition, I know I struggle with the fact that I am a “fixer.” I want to give advice instead of helping them develop their self-awareness and goals. It is also sometimes difficult to balance your time due to workload demands. I am actively working on finding the right balance.



Tyler: It can be challenging to individualize the work that we do and to tailor it to the person. This becomes even more of a challenge when the person does not want to work with us. It can be a struggle to find any mutual goals. I try to identify anything we can agree to work on, even if it is small, and I start by focusing on the small wins.

## What have you done to increase your understanding of EBP and to improve your skills?



Samantha: I try to be open and engaged in all the trainings I have taken. It is important to continue to practice and evaluate our own skills. I continue to stay open-minded to learning and using EBP. I incorporate motivational interviewing into most conversations and have volunteered to be an MI instructor for the department.



Tyler: I actively work on developing a professional alliance with people. I use motivational interviewing skills when I talk to them and try to understand what motivates them. I am a straight shooter, and I establish clear expectations and make sure that they understand the consequences. Through my actions, they learn that I am consistent and that they can trust me. I also spend time identifying the barriers and skills they need to build.

## How have you helped your peers buy into or understand EBP?



Samantha: I am currently one of the department’s field training officers. This allows me to discuss and model EBP to new staff during the early stages of their careers. I am also available to assist officers in developing case plans and other activities.



Tyler: I have become very active within the department and assisting with the implementation of EBP. I am on a workgroup and have assisted the management team in communicating EBP to staff. EBP utilizes terminology that can be confusing and overcomplicated. I try to simplify and streamline EBP, using personalized language and scenarios while focusing on the skills and strategies that we are already doing.

## Why is EBP implementation important to you?



Samantha: My brother struggled with a substance use disorder and was on supervision. I had a front-row seat to his experience with the criminal justice system; therefore, I gained a better understanding of why EBP is crucial if we are to achieve the goals of long-term behavioral change.



Tyler: As we implement the recent probation reform legislation, it will be an opportunity to grow our skills in EBP. I envision that some staff that may not buy-in to EBP will leave the field and there will be opportunities to shift the focus of probation.