

Survey to Chief APOs

Issue: Probation Administrative Fees

Question: (from Warren County)

I know from prior Chief's Association emails that everyone is battling the same fight with regards to retention, recruiting, pay discrepancy, low starting rates, etc. Warren County Probation Officers are unionized and the County Commissioners decided to take the last contract negotiations to arbitration. Unfortunately, the Arbitrator "sided" with the County and our officers only saw an annual increase of 3% and no increase to the starting rate.

Warren County has a new board of Commissioners as of January 2024 and they are open to discussion on better pay. We have been down 4 Probation Officers out of 10 positions for over a year now. The PJ and I recognize the added workload taken on by all staff. As such, the President Judge and I are attempting to give out a salary incentive or "bonus" to our staff.

The money paid out to staff would come from the Probation Administrative Fees account in Warren County which was established in 2002 by the PJ at that time. These funds are accounted for monthly and discretion to use these funds is handled by the President Judge. This fund does not receive supervision fees as those are turned over to the County when they are received. As such, I am not referencing the Supervision Fund discussed in Board of Commissioners of Bedford County v Ling. There are no Act 35 of 1991 or Act 77 of 2002 supervision fees in the Probation Administrative Fees account.

- 1) Have any Counties, with the PJ's authority, successfully given out a salary incentive or bonus to Probation Staff?
- 2) If so, did the PJ seek the permission of the Commissioners?
- 3) If they did seek permission of the Commissioners was there any pushback?

Allegheny County

We do not give out financial bonuses or salary incentives

Beaver County

- 1) No
- 2) n/a
- 3) n/a

Berks County

- 1) No
- 2) n/a
- 3) n/a

Bradford County

No

Carbon County

No

Clarion County

No

Columbia & Montour Counties

No

Dauphin County

- 1) no
- 2) n/a
- 3) n/a

Delaware County

Delaware is similar to Lancaster County as our unionized officers recently received a generous contract, albeit through negotiation not arbitration. Our management team has had a compression issue for approximately two years now. We are beginning conversation now to address this issue. Part of our request, besides a significant increase in salary, is a one-time retention bonus based on years of service ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000 as our POs received this same bonus in their new contract. This will involve conversation with our County Council and Executive Director. We do not have an Administrative Fee, but maybe we should consider implementing that. Our supervision fees have always been released to the County and the general fund, but I do plan on using that as an argument if we receive some pushback about increases as we generate quite a bit of money.

Erie County

- 1) No
- 2) n/a
- 3) n/a

Lancaster County

Lancaster recently had (almost) the opposite problem. Our unionized officers received an extremely large arbitration award (approx. 30% increases) which created a huge compression problem in that 80% of our officers were making more than supervisors.

Lead by the PJ, we worked with our commissioners to provide increases to first level supervisors which amounted to 15% increases retroactive to January 1, 2024. We (Adult Probation) ended up having to pay for these increases but were able to do so by freezing numerous vacant positions for either 3, 6, or 9 months.

We did not have to tap into our Administrative Fees but that was “on the table” as an option if we couldn’t come up with the dollar amount to cover these increases.

And you are correct, like Supervision Fees, Administrative Fees under the authority and discretion of the PJ. Commissioners may not like it, but the PJ has that discretion per the statute (42 C.S. §9728 (g)).

Lebanon County

- 1) I have requested salary increases for management to address the discrepancies in pay increases between union/non-union employees. I have also requested the creation of a new title for one of our Collections Officers (non-union) that would be similar to an APO II position (CO II). I have a CO who has been with us for years who assists with training new staff and has excellent work ethic/performance. To me, it was a way to acknowledge her dedication and work in excess of her duties and a good pre-management position similar to how our APO II and JPO II positions are.
- 2) The PJ always seeks permission of the Commissioners. If permission is not granted, he usually advises them that he plans on moving forward and will utilize supervision fees to pay the difference/cover costs to the county.
- 3) There has been grumbling and disagreements, but nothing long-standing. The Commissioners were “creative” in how they handled the CO II new title request so that it would not be noticeable to other departments, leading to similar requests. They denied the request for a title, but gave the individual who would have assumed that role a step increase on the salary chart which resulted in a raise without title.

Lehigh County

- 1) no
- 2) n/a
- 3) n/a

Luzerne County

- 1) No
- 2) n/a
- 3) n/a

Northampton County

- 1) No, our fees go into the general fund to support salaries
- 2) n/a
- 3) n/a

Somerset County

Somerset has not, yet we are in the same situation Lancaster finds themselves in.

I am waiting for county AFSCME union clerical staff to settle a contract, then address my non-union secretarial staff. Salary issues, as they are likely to see the same increases. Afterwards, I

will address the probation management, Staff members, as I don't want to cause back biting with management and my secretarial staff. Our PJ is willing to utilize the funds but would first rather try having the Commissioners "fix" the salary compression issue they created over the years.

Susquehanna County

- 4) No
- 5) n/a
- 6) n/a

Westmoreland County

We have not taken a position to provide for or suggest any bonus or salary increase for staff.