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# COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LANCASTER COUNTY

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## OFFICE OF SPECIAL OFFENDERS SERVICES

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Lancaster, Pennsylvania

### JUVENILE DIVISION

### ANNUAL REPORT 1986 - 1987

Don Acker  
PROBATION OFFICER

Cindy Sides  
CASE MANAGER, SPECIALIST

**NCJRS**

MAR 1988

**ACQUISITIONS**

The Office of Special Offenders Services Juvenile Division was created in September of 1985, as a result of grants from the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges Commission, and the Office of Mental Retardation, Department of Public Welfare.

The Special Offenders Services is a joint systems program combining the expertise of a Lancaster County Juvenile Probation Officer and a Case Manager from the Lancaster County Guidance Center, the Base Service Unit of the County Mental Health and Mental Retardation Program. Donald Acker serves as the Juvenile Probation Officer and Cindy Sides serves as the Case Manager, Specialist.

The special needs of the mentally retarded offender cover the span of his/her involvement with the criminal justice system -- arrest, informal probation, probation, placement or parole. The community mental health/mental retardation (MH/MR) system has often been unaware of, or uninterested in, the special needs of mentally retarded offenders. Once a mentally retarded citizen becomes an offender, the advocate system tends to look for the criminal justice system to assume responsibility for the client and his actions. Conversely, the criminal justice system expects MR "experts" to provide more services or interventions to the offender. Workers in both the criminal justice system and the community mental health and mental retardation system often do not know how to deal with the reciprocal systems, or do not have time to deal with each other's systems. This results in the mentally retarded offender falling through cracks in each system, and eventually receiving less than adequate services from either.

The Special Offenders Services of Lancaster County is designed to prevent mentally retarded offenders from falling through the cracks at the point in the criminal justice system when they are on probation or parole. In the normal probation and parole system, caseload numbers are high and professionals are not trained to work with clients having special disabilities. Complicating these problems is the common view that the mentally retarded offender is a nonachiever

and is difficult to manage in traditional probation and parole settings. These factors create lower expectations which enable the retarded offender to become irresponsible and unaccountable for his actions and which directly contributes to a high recidivism rate.

The Office of Special Offenders Services focuses on four major goals:

1. successful completion of probation or parole
2. to reduce recidivism
3. to provide an alternative to placement
4. to produce an independent, law abiding and productive citizen who can function in our community.

The overall goals are accomplished by working with the client in the following areas:

1. through understanding of local and state laws
2. through understanding of his/her probation rules
3. daily living skills
4. family counseling
5. academic training
6. individual counseling
7. vocational training
8. job placement
9. employment training
10. coordination of services for the mentally retarded offender

The program approach to the juvenile client is a holistic approach. Upon receiving a new client, an assessment of needs, strengths, weaknesses and abilities is performed and intervention is provided in as many aspects of the clients life as is appropriate. Throughout the term of probation or parole, extensive effort is made to assist in the development of a positive self-esteem. Strategies are also developed to eliminate inappropriate behaviors.

Most clients are actively involved in intensive supervision. If there are major presenting problems at intake, daily contact is maintained until the client is stabilized, otherwise a client will report one or two times per week.

Appointments are assigned for each client on the same day and time each week (to avoid client confusion). Clients may be seen by both the Probation Officer and Case Manager, Probation Officer only or Case Manager only, depending upon the desired goal of the counseling appointment.

#### Direct Client Involvement

Counseling and direction are provided for clients in all aspects of their lives: home, school, community, employment, daily living skills, budgeting, hygiene, vocational assessment, vocational training and employment skills.

1) Home: Efforts are made to involve the family as part of the treatment team. This allows for consistent reinforcement of desired goals and behaviors. Counseling is provided to assist the parent(s) in dealing with the juvenile's behavior. Working with the offender's parent(s) is important because they assist in monitoring the client's behavior and progress.

2) School: Contact is made with the client at school. Contact is maintained with the client's teacher and school administrators. Meeting with the client at school allows the coordinating of school behavior with probation rules and regulations.

3) Community: Program staff become familiar with the clients' daily environment, activities and peer associations. This enables the staff to understand and work more closely with the client.

4) Vocational Assessment and Training: The client is encouraged to continue in an educational program. However, at the point of completion or termination of schooling, program staff work with the client in determining vocational awareness, interest, and assist in developing vocational training as appropriate. Training agencies such as: Office of Vocational Rehabilitation,

Association for the Habilitation and Employment of the Developmentally Disabled (A.H.E.D.D.), Goodwill Industries, Lancaster Employment and Training Agency (L.E.T.A.), and the local Vocational Technical schools may be utilized.

The following assessment tools are used to determine client's interest and abilities: Becker Reading Free Vocational Interest Inventory, Wide Range Interest-Opinion Picture Test, and the Toni.

5) Other Areas of Direct Client Involvement:

- civil and legal rights and responsibilities
- decision making/problem solving
- positive peer association
- leisure time activities
- drug and alcohol education
- social skills training
- human sexuality
- personal hygiene
- budget preparation/money management
- child care and rearing
- community resources

Indirect Client Involvement

Indirect client involvement with the Special Offenders Services is an important aspect of the program. This includes the recreation program, criminal justice training and the prevention program.

1) Recreation Program: The Special Offenders Services employs a part-time recreational aide. The purpose is to provide recreational activities and make the client aware of community resources. The goal is to familiarize the client with positive community resource activities. The client must fulfill the Probation rules and specific goals in order to have the privilege of participating in the recreational program.

2) Training: Training is provided to criminal justice personnel, school teachers, social service agencies and college students preparing to enter the field. This training includes identifying and appropriately working with juvenile mentally retarded offenders, appropriate use of Miranda rights for potential mentally retarded suspects, common misconceptions about mentally retarded persons, differences between mental illness and mental retardation, and the

program philosophy that mentally retarded citizens should be held accountable for their behavior and have the right to be arrested.

3) Prevention Program: The prevention program is conducted in special education classes to teach retarded juveniles about laws and a citizens responsibility as a member of their community. Examples are given that describe situations that could lead them to be arrested. A step by step description of the juvenile justice system is provided.

Conclusion:

The recidivism rate for mentally retarded offenders in Lancaster County has ranged from 3 to 5 percent, compared to a national average of 60 percent. This reduction in recidivism indicates a decrease in the number of crimes this population would have committed. Clients who complete supervision under this program have learned that they will be held accountable for their actions in the future and that there are consequences for illegal activities.

To the criminal justice system, the Special Offenders Services is a cost effective program that is successful. The average cost of placement per juvenile from Lancaster County is \$21,000.00 (per nine month placement), whereas the cost of a client participating in this specialized service is approximately \$1,560.00 per year.

The Special Offenders Services has proven that with special intervention, probation and parole is an effective means of providing habilitation to mentally retarded offenders.

Questions concerning this program can be directed to:

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JUVENILE  
SPECIAL OFFENDERS PROFILE  
LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

	<u>September 1986</u>	<u>September 1987</u>
Male	86%	83%
Race: Caucasion	48%	57%
Black	24%	23%
Hispanic	25%	20%
Average Age	16	16
Average I.Q.	67	66
Living with Parents/Family	76%	77%
Clients in Placement	19%	11%
Average Grade Level	8	9
Average Highest Grade Completed	9	11
Previous contact with Base Service Unit	43%	31%
Dually Diagnosed	14%	20%
First Offenders	62%	69%
Informal Probation	43%	46%
Formal Probation	57%	54%
Felony Offenses	28.5%	29%
Misdemeanor Offenses	71.5%	71%
Most Common Offense	THEFT	THEFT
Recidivism Rate:		
a.) Short Term	4.5%	0%
b.) Long Term	0%	3%
Court Costs paid while in S.O.S.	38%	47%
Court Appearance prior to S.O.S.	15	19
Court Appearance after S.O.S.	1	1
Community Services Completed	90%	90%
Average Length of Community Service	55 hrs.	55 hrs.