

# **Employees' Suggestions**

**from the**

## **FY 2008 Employee Satisfaction Survey Forums**

**Maricopa County Adult Probation Department  
Planning and Research Division**

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**Maricopa County Adult Probation Department  
Employees' Suggestions from the FY 2008 Employee Satisfaction Survey Forums**

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## **Employees' Suggestions from the FY 2008 Employee Satisfaction Survey Forums**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

In November and December 2007, County Research and Reporting administered an employee satisfaction survey of Adult Probation Department employees, then analyzed and reported the survey results in early 2008. Ninety-six percent of Adult Probation staff took the survey. The results were notably positive. First, employees' overall satisfaction score (5.87) was higher than in previous surveys (5.18 in FY 2004 and 5.47 in FY 2006). Second, the overall satisfaction score of Adult Probation employees was higher than the overall employee satisfaction scores of Court employees (5.69) and, for the first time, county employees as a whole (5.84). Third, department-wide scores on every single one of the 83 scaled items on the survey revealed a satisfied rating by Adult Probation employees (5.0 or higher). The results of the survey, which Adult Probation employees take every two years, demonstrated significant and steady gains in employee satisfaction over the past two surveys.

Chief Probation Officer Barbara A. Broderick held 13 Employee Satisfaction Survey forums between March 4 and May 7, 2008, at 10 Adult Probation offices, in order to present the results of the survey, talk with staff, and ask for employees' suggestions for improvement in key areas. The forums provide a unique opportunity to clarify issues and gain a better understanding of survey results. Nearly 40 percent of employees attended the forums.

After Chief Broderick presented the survey results, attendees of the forums split into breakout groups. Each group was assigned one or more of the following topics, which had been identified as opportunities for improvement because the items were among those receiving the lowest scores on the employee satisfaction survey (although they still scored in the positive range):

1. Communication between departments (5.08)
2. Amount of interest court expresses in your welfare (5.32)
3. The way promotions are earned in your department (5.36)
4. Number of employees in unit vs. amount of work (5.37)

Breakout group facilitators asked participants for suggestions on how the department could improve in the topic area with prompts such as: "What do you want the department to do in this area over the next two years?" "What tangible solutions do you suggest?" "How can we improve in this area?" "What would work better?" Employees' suggestions were written on flipchart pads. Each breakout group shared their ideas with all of the participants at that forum.

From the thoughtful and enthusiastic participation of employees at these forums came hundreds of comments and suggestions for improvement, representing the perspectives of employees in varied positions and from numerous assignments and locations. The suggestions from all of the breakout groups were typed up and reviewed to identify the main issues brought up by employees and to organize the suggestions into topical categories. Employees e-mailed additional suggestions to the Chief Probation Officer after the forums and these have been included in the indexing and summation of suggestions brought up at the forums.

What are the main issues that employees want to see addressed? The frequency with which specific concerns or topics were brought up at the forums provides a strong indicator of employees' priorities. The four areas identified as opportunities for improvement could be

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condensed into three priority areas. The employees who participated in breakout groups that discussed “Amount of Interest the Court Expresses in Your Welfare” were encouraged to think about what that phrase brings to mind for them. A large number of the comments and suggestions from these breakout groups addressed Communication between Departments or fit well with the topic of Workload. Therefore, the priorities of staff regarding the opportunities for improvement are:

1. Communication between departments
2. Number of employees in unit vs. amount of work (e.g. Workload)
3. The way promotions are earned in your department

Employees' s comments and suggestions in each of these areas are summarized in the pages that follow. A full listing of the suggestions is available from the Planning and Research Division. In September 2008, the MCAPD Executive Team will consider employees' input as they establish priorities and determine the next steps to tackle the issues identified.

### ***COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS***

This topic is divided into three sections: 1) Internal Communication, 2) Communication with the Bench, and 3) Communication with Other Entities. Interestingly, the most significant, highly debated area discussed at the forums was communication between the department and the bench. This was clearly identified as the top issue to be tackled.

### **INTERNAL DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATION**

#### Main issues and suggestions:

- Contact people for various programs and services and their phone numbers.  
Staff suggested making information readily accessible, possibly on the web, to identify and contact screeners and other key people, such as those with program information, those with access to protected databases, etc.
- Improved methods of communication  
Suggestions were varied, but included blogs, electronic question and answer forum, and sharing procedural updates and other information on the intranet. Comments included a desire for information on quickie cases, communication updates from management and programs, as well as more or better ways to get information out.
- Consistency  
Staff indicated that expectations need to be known and policies need to be applied consistently between special caseloads, APD offices, and divisions.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH THE BENCH**

Employees brought up various aspects of Communication with the Bench at all 13 forums, overwhelmingly identifying this as the most significant and top issue on employees' minds. Staff comments primarily addressed two procedural areas – Initial Appearance Court and Probation Violation Court – as well as one over-arching issue, staff development.

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### Main issues and suggestions:

1. **Safety related to Releases:** Court decisions to release probationers viewed by officers as a threat to officer and/or public safety are a significant concern. Staff brought up this concern at nine out of the ten forums held at APD field offices. What information do commissioners need to keep a probationer in custody? Do commissioners understand the risks when the APO recommended no bond and intends to recommend prison and now the probationer is back in the community under the APO's supervision?

**IA Court:** Suggestions include ask the court what information APOs need to provide to keep someone in custody, use expanded Form 4 or a probation addendum to Form 4, have a tickler for Pretrial to read APETS entries, have a supplemental to PTR to include Form 4, make use of the comments section when a hold is placed, and develop a recommended bail matrix for probation violators.

**PV Court:** Suggestions include keep violent offenders in custody, accelerate the court process or suspend required contacts during the PV process, use electronic monitoring as an alternative to supervision during the PV process, and provide immediate notification of release.

**Staff Development:** Suggestions include provide training for IA Court and APOs regarding communication; develop training on writing effective Form 4; implement issuance of summons (to help Court recognize that warrants are being used on more serious cases); and have open communication with police, Fugitive Apprehension Unit, and Court.

2. **Alignment:** Frustration and a lack of understanding were expressed regarding Court decisions that are contrary to the APO recommendation or viewpoint. There is a perception that 1) the Court may not be getting all of the information needed, 2) the Court does not appreciate/understand what the APO has already done to work the case; and/or 3) the Court is not knowledgeable regarding the ramifications of the release, disposition, or sentence ordered. Comments and suggestions regarding alignment were brought up at eight out of 13 forums.

**PV Court:** Comments include "Commissioners are not considering department's efforts to use intermediate sanctions (too many reinstatements to Standard Probation)" and "Commissioner needs to be cognizant of message to defendant when reinstated without additional sanctions, even saying 'time served' when probationer has been in custody gives a message." Suggestions include have more officer involvement in the disposition process, such as being present in court; increase Court Liaison involvement; and improve the information flow from PV judges to APOs. Specific items included inform judges about giving credit for time served – sometimes all available jail time is used up and there is nothing left to hold probationers accountable; and on reinstatements, judges sometimes fail to reinstate previously ordered monies, especially if the APO recommended DOC.

**Staff Development:** Suggestions include educate judges on probation processes and safety of the community, perhaps more involvement from court personnel sitting in on office days, ride-alongs, etc.; also have APD staff sit in on more court procedures and have mandatory PO training from the Bench.

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- 3. Method of Communication:** There are mixed messages regarding allowable communication methods between APD staff and judges. Some JAs are less than helpful. Errors could be reduced and work processes smoother if judges were more aware of APD procedures. Comments and suggestions regarding methods of communication came up at 11 of the 13 forums. Comments included, "There is confusion because the bench says, 'we want to hear from you,' and APD management says, 'don't e-mail judges.'" Some judges want to hear from POs and hold status hearings on cases, and other judges don't. Field POs with several years experience do not have a relationship with a single judge. "

Suggestions included provide clarification regarding communication methods with judges; have a more timely response from the court, especially on warrants; have a designated JA liaison at each court location; and provide more positive direct feedback from judges.

***Staff development:*** Suggestions included provide probation training and be represented at AOC judicial conferences; have a judge orientation that includes a cheat sheet of FYIs, such as rationale for PSF, and timelines and procedures for preparing a presentence report; provide judge training from APD staff in various assignments – Presentence, Court Liaison, etc.; and have more training for judges on Indirect Services and specialized caseloads.

## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES

Many of the breakout groups suggested improving communication with multiple departments and agencies with which MCAPD regularly conducts business through cross-training, designated points of contact, and liaisons. There were three agencies that were each individually named and discussed at three different forums: MCSO, ICE, and the Clerk's Office.

### Main issues and suggestions regarding MCSO, ICE and the Clerk's Office:

- **MCSO:** Comments included "communication with the jail needs to be improved at every level." Suggestions included cross training between MCSO and PSI, liaison with MCSO, participation in their new hire orientation, and periodic meetings with Lieutenants and detention officers at jails to explain our needs.
- **ICE:** Comments included "want to receive call-backs/follow-up information." Suggestions included notify APD when an arrest is made, have a liaison, have a consistent point of contact, streamline the process, and possibly provide a website with information.
- **Clerk's Office:** Suggestions included make sure the Clerk of Court is providing uniform information, quickly and efficiently; (education on) procedures for various applications in RFR; and accountability regarding entering modifications in RFR.

***NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN UNIT VS. AMOUNT OF WORK***

Employees see numerous opportunities to reduce workload through multiple approaches, including streamlining processes, utilizing technology, eliminating requirements of questionable value, and reducing the number of cases under active supervision. Furthermore, staff suggested various staffing and operational strategies to provide relief.

Some of the suggestions to improve workload involve internal changes under APD's control, while many other suggestions require working with others to achieve desired changes. Numerous recommendations involved eliminating specific requirements and/or reducing the number of cases under active supervision -- decisions that often are ultimately made by judges or other external decision-makers. The underlying theme of alignment with the criminal bench and AOC was evident in the high number of suggestions having to do with what cases belong on probation, for how long, under what conditions, and with what supervisory standards and requirements. Furthermore, employees want continued technological development, which hinges on the Court's readiness, resources, and support.

Main issues and suggestions:

1. **Volume of work** – There is too much work and too many requirements. Employees want some relief. At over half of the forums, staff questioned various requirements and mandates. They want mandates to be reviewed with AOC and some requirements to be reduced or eliminated. At half of the forums, staff suggested methods for reducing the number of cases under active supervision. In addition, at over half of the forums, staff offered staffing and structural strategies that would provide relief in accomplishing the work.

***Reduce requirements.*** Staff suggested discussing guidelines with AOC and looking at mandates in terms of requirements and costs. Specific suggestions included reducing the FROST on minimum cases to once a year; decreasing case plans on minimums; removing some requirements, like contacts, on simple possession cases; changing some IPS requirements related to contacts and team delivery of employment letters; doing away with discharge summaries on designated offenses; and eliminating case transfer summaries. Staff also suggested reducing the number of conditions ordered, reducing the number of community restitution hours ordered, and eliminating deferred jail.

***Reduce the number of cases on active supervision.*** Suggestions included not putting misdemeanors, or cases that don't need to be, on probation; putting misdemeanor cases on unsupervised probation (or giving them a terminal disposition or fine); placing all minimum cases on MARS or unsupervised probation; and putting all first time, nonviolent offenders on unsupervised. Additional suggestions included sentencing offenders to shorter terms of probation, submitting cases for early termination sooner, and increasing early terminations.

***Staffing and structural strategies.*** Assigning SO's to assist standard field was a popular idea, which was suggested at five forums. Other ideas for relief staff included having a PO or group of POs that could help out where needed and assigning staff at key transition points like the homeless shelter. Staff suggested reinforcing or emphasizing teamwork and using cross training so that staff can help out when needed. At two forums, staff suggested

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revisiting the team supervision concept. At almost half of the forums, staff made suggestions about specialized caseloads, including the creation of new specialized caseloads, expanding specialized caseloads, making adequate use of specialized caseloads and making it easier to get cases onto a specialized caseload. New caseloads suggested by staff were DUI caseloads, DOC releases, maximum cases, minimum cases, and \$\$ cases.

2. **Process improvement** –Staff see a variety of opportunities to streamline and improve processes. At 10 out of 13 forums, employees expressed a desire for more technological solutions. Staff expressed dissatisfaction with how quickies and random assignments are handled. Staff mentioned opportunities related to CMU. Each of these three areas (quickies, random assignments, and CMU) was discussed at three separate forums.

**Technological solutions.** E-filing with the Court was suggested at three different forums, especially for reports and as an alternative to walking through warrants. There were several specific suggestions regarding APETS, including wireless access, linking it with macros, incorporating PTRs and out of custody supplements, and adding some user-friendly features. Additional technological suggestions included automating stats, setting up forms that are routinely used so that fields are automatically populated, automating assignments, putting PTR worksheets on macros, putting JWI on laptops, sharing data systems, and expanding the use of the intranet for accessing forms and communicating.

**Quickies.** Staff stated that Quickies create lots of extra work for field officers, who find it time-consuming to gather information as well as to find probationers without enough information. At some offices, support staff put Quickie case files together for the officers, a process that would be helpful in additional offices. Staff also noted liability issues when Quickie cases abscond and safety concerns when looking for these probationers.

**Random assignments.** Employees indicated that a better method is needed for assigning/managing transient cases. It was suggested that random assignments stay closest to the appropriate office or perhaps, that cases be assigned with an east side/west side split and/or an option be provided to “trade it back.”

**Custody Management Unit.** Staff at one forum stated that CMU could have process improvements overall. Other employees offered specific suggestions, such as helping with DNA, start date letters, verification of addresses, and inputting addresses into APETS.

3. **Equity** – At three forums, staff suggested correcting inequities in the distribution of workload. A better balance was suggested in the number of cases assigned to caseloads, units and offices. Also, differences in workload were noted for various functional areas and special units. The inequities in workload affected both line staff and supervisors.



## ***THE WAY PROMOTIONS ARE EARNED***

The topic “The way promotions are earned in the department” was discussed at 12 of the 13 forums. Common themes that emerged across the department were adjustments to the promotional process for PO IV and a desire for more career development information and opportunities.

### Main issues and suggestions:

1. **Effectiveness of the structured promotional process.** At 11 of the 12 forums that discussed promotions, staff questioned the current promotional process for PO IV, indicating that prior experience and people skills should be considered.

***Experience.*** Length of experience in the department, different assignments worked, prior management or acting supervisor experience, committee work, project work, and mentorship experience were all mentioned as types of experience that should be recognized. Some employees believe that more than 3 years of experience is needed to be a well-rounded supervisor. Staff suggested incentives to encourage more senior POs to apply. Incentives suggested were consideration of preferred location, higher pay, and more flexibility in the daily schedule.

***Interpersonal skills.*** Employees suggested considering promotional candidates' prior work evaluations and achievements and observing candidates' current work with peers and clients for evidence of people skills and use of EBP. Communication skills, leadership skills, dependability, and interest in the department were suggested as important factors.

***Structured process.*** Feedback about the structured promotional process included:

- Would like more information about what knowledge and abilities are being evaluated
- Would like a less intimidating hiring process, e.g. B-PAD
- Candidates should complete entire process, not be eliminated after 1 subpar performance
- Make feedback available regarding results/scores, regardless of outcome

2. **Career development information and opportunities.** At seven forums, staff recommended more information on career paths and promotional processes (for all classifications). Employees at seven forums suggested increasing the opportunities to train and otherwise prepare for advancement. At four forums, staff suggested the creation of new promotional opportunities. At two forums, staff commented that promotion from SO to PO should be easier and that the County process does not seem cost-effective.

***Career track information.*** Starting with the new hire class, staff suggested that more information be shared about career paths for all classifications. Employees would like more information about the expectations and requirements to advance, the steps in the promotional process, an accurate view of supervisor responsibilities, and what the financial benefit of advancement may be. Staff would also like more information and consistency regarding lateral transfer processes.

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***Career development.*** The need to develop supervisory and leadership skills was well recognized and training opportunities were suggested both prior to and after promotion. Training classes, individualized supervisor training plans, mentoring relationships, shadowing opportunities, more formal mentor/shadow programs, and acting or trial supervisor periods were suggested.

***New opportunities.*** New promotional opportunities suggested by staff were a nonbadged supervisor for screeners, lead SO, position between PO and supervisor such as lead PO in a building or field officer trainer, and more support staff promotional opportunities.

### ***AMOUNT OF INTEREST THE COURT EXPRESSES IN YOUR WELFARE***

The breakout groups that discussed “Amount of interest the court expresses in your welfare” had numerous comments and suggestions related to communication and workload; their input on these topics was summarized with the suggestions from other breakout groups on these topics. This section summarizes their comments and suggestions on other topics and includes miscellaneous topics that were discussed in any of the forum breakout groups.

## **EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES**

At two forums, one at PSC and one at WRC, staff suggested secured parking for employees. The remaining suggestions about equipment and facilities were each brought up one time. They included improved response time on ergonomic problems, improved response time on facilities problems, more office space (PSC), safely designed interview rooms (PSC), access to PV Court, assign county vehicles to offices (for officers for security issues, etc.), more comfortable, fitted body armor, Tasers for field officers, and more breathalyzers for field officers.

## **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND MORALE**

The comments and suggestions in this section were each offered at just one forum. Regarding performance evaluations, it was noted that the support staff evaluations need an overhaul (which is in process); there needs to be an accurate view of supervisor responsibilities and some way to measure it; personnel shouldn't be evaluated on just the negatives; and that personal characteristics/ability are being left out of the evaluation.

Regarding morale and well being, it was recommended that we have more MI conversations among ourselves, mentor new employees, attempt to reduce anxiety, and provide support in reality of workload. It was suggested that senior staff are not appreciated and there should be a balance between merit and seniority (regarding the pay cap). Employees would like more say in the type of caseload they have and more timely transfers. Staff was encouraged to consider and take advantage of the opportunities that are offered, related to health, leadership training, etc.

## **FINANCIAL SANCTIONS**

Four suggestions were made related to financial sanctions. They are:

1. Allow credit cards, PayPal for payments.
2. Have the defendants who want to leave the state, pay their full PSF before they can be given the special grant of being on probation for term 1 only.
3. Automatic payments for white-collar cases, like IPS.
4. Charges for public defenders should be higher in Superior Court and appropriate charges should be charged in other areas, too. (Justice courts charge \$300 for public defender; Superior Court is charging \$100).

The Executive Team is scheduled to discuss the results of the Employee Satisfaction Survey forums in September 2008. The Executive Team will be working to establish priorities and to determine the next steps to tackle the issues identified.