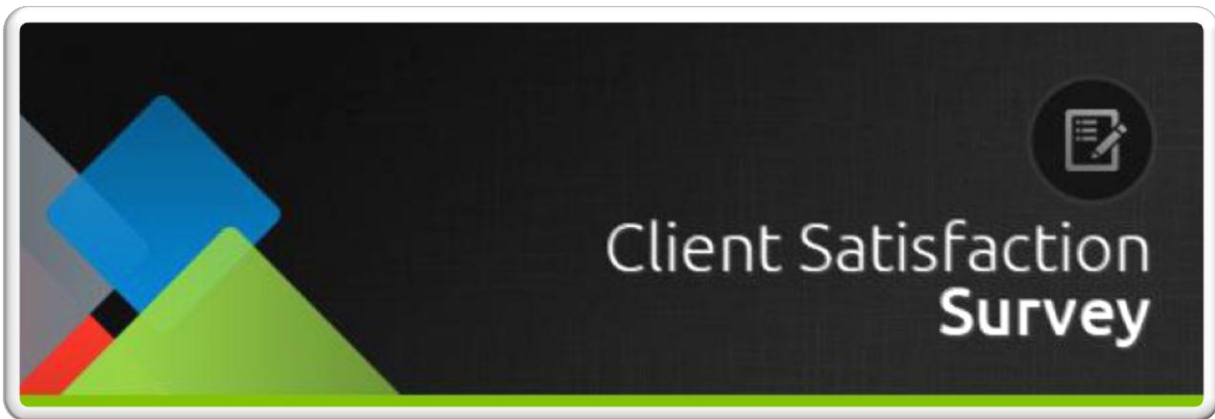


# 2015 Client Services Survey



**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF LAKE COUNTY, IL**  
**DIVISION OF ADULT PROBATION SERVICES**  
**DIVISION OF JUVENILE PROBATION & DETENTION SERVICES**  
**CLIENT SERVICES SURVEY**

**Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Circuit Court of Lake County is to serve the public. It accomplishes this mission by providing a fair and responsive system of justice, committed to excellence, and fostering public trust, understanding and confidence.

The Administrative Office of the Circuit Court supports the mission of the Court by providing programs and services that are accessible to Court users, are delivered fairly and expeditiously, and enhance the independence and accountability of the judicial system. Each of the six divisions of the Administrative Office include among their operational goals provisions for better serving the public<sup>1</sup>; of these, several divisions provide regular supervision of and services to those members of the community charged with or convicted of a criminal offense: the Divisions of Adult Probation Services and Juvenile Probation & Detention Services.

**Survey Purpose:**

Criminal defendants and sentenced offenders hold a unique role in the delivery of programs and services within the justice system. These persons are usually not considered *clients* or *customers* in the traditional sense because their entry into the court system is not purely voluntary, nor are the services provided to them initially perceived to be in their own self interests. Programs, services, and supervision provided to them are not anything sought, but rather conditions placed upon them by the Court. Despite this distinction, however, because organizational resources are expended on this group in an effort to achieve a particular outcome, they are considered to be Court clients in a broader sense and use of the term. The court takes appropriate responsibility to assure that these clients understand and are compliant with the conditions placed upon them; Court resources, in terms of staff time, effort, and interventions, are directed towards enforcing these conditions; and the anticipated outcomes associated with these services are that offenders follow the orders of the court and remain crime-free. These outcomes are directly related to increased community safety and, therefore, advance public trust and confidence in the judicial system.

In order to maximize the effective and efficient use of court resources, as a means towards increasing offender compliance with the conditions of supervision (both at the pre-trial and post-adjudication stages) and reducing recidivism, the Circuit has embraced evidence-based practices (EBP) as the basis for offender management. EBP is not a specific program or technique, but refers to those principles that have been proven to best reduce offender recidivism (Bogue et al, 2004). Current research indicates that the most effective

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete list of Division Supporting Statements of the Court's Mission and Divisional Goals, please go to the court's website:  
[http://www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/Organization/Pages/mission\\_support.aspx#admin](http://www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/Organization/Pages/mission_support.aspx#admin)

interventions with offenders share similar characteristics in terms of targeting offender risk, needs and responsivity. A number of research studies over the past two decades have demonstrated that matching higher-risk offenders with more intense services (e.g., risk principle) and specifically addressing dynamic criminogenic needs (e.g., needs principle) can significantly reduce recidivism.

Opportunities to address responsivity factors exist at each stage of offenders' experience with the justice system. Stakeholders and justice partners throughout this process, including judges (Warren, 2007), prosecutors and defense attorneys (Birgden, 2004), and other non-judicial staff (Applegate, Smith, Sitren, & Springer, 2009), are strongly encouraged to respond appropriately and adequately to address an offender's individual issues. Probation officers, in particular, are identified as being uniquely situated within the criminal justice system to function as change agents in order to prepare offenders motivationally to comply with the conditions of probation, engagement with treatment providers and programming, and to invest in other positive life changes (Alexander, VanBenschoten, & Walters, 2008). Such actions closely adhere with the performance standards established for the Court (Circuit Court of Lake County, IL Strategic Plan, 2009):

- *The Court shall give individual attention to cases, deciding them without undue disparity among like cases and upon legally relevant factors.*
- *Decisions of the court shall unambiguously address the issues presented to it and make clear how compliance can be achieved.*
- *The Court shall take appropriate responsibility for the enforcement of its orders.*

### **Survey Description:**

The primary goal of offender supervision is to facilitate a reduction in recidivism. Former Lake County Court Services Director, Robert Bingham (1994) believed that offender change was, in part, influenced by the quality of the relationship that exists between probationers and probation staff. Despite this assertion, little professional literature has directly examined probationers' attitudes and perceptions about their experiences with supervision (Applegate et al, 2009). Effective administrators in the private sector have long recognized the value of soliciting feedback from consumers in order to improve the practices and inform management decisions regarding their businesses. Well-developed customer surveys can help to identify potential problem areas in the delivery of services, the responsiveness of staff, and the ability to address the needs of special populations. Feedback can also be used to validate the effectiveness of existing business practices. Only recently have the correctional and justice communities begun to seriously consider the role of probationers as clients in the delivery of services and to solicit client feedback in order to improve those interventions that are designed to reduce recidivism among this population.

Client surveys in the area of corrections, when such measures are employed, typically examine only specific areas related to offenders' experience with treatment interventions (e.g., substance abuse or mental health treatment) or attitudes regarding the meaningfulness of their sentence compared to other offender groups (e.g., jailed or imprisoned offenders). To date, only a handful of published survey results have reported to

utilize correctional client feedback within the context of performance management and improvement efforts. The Walker County (TX) Office of the Judicial District Community Supervision and Corrections Department, for example, developed a questionnaire to survey probationers about their perceptions of the Department, its staff, and the services provided (Henningsen, Beto, Ross, & Bachrach, 1996). The results of that survey were considered to hold practical uses in planning for future probation service delivery, agency staffing practices, and staff training. An updated and much more comprehensive version (60 items) of this survey was employed by the Nueces County (TX) Community Supervision and Corrections Department (Rhoades and Venegas, 2006). This survey solicited probationers' opinions concerning: secretarial assistance for probationers, availability of office hours, transportation, the provision of services (specifically, employment, GED training, and alcohol and drug counseling), and the probation officer (e.g., the provision of information, the quality of the relationship, and problem-solving and help offered). Several survey questions, in particular, demonstrated good discriminant validity, significant response variability, and were strongly correlated with overall probationer satisfaction:

- *When you were first put on probation, did the Probation Officer clearly explain the rules of probation to you?*
- *When you were first put on probation, did the Probation Officer clearly answer all of your questions?*
- *Do you think you have a good relationship with your Probation Officer?*
- *Do you think that your Probation Officer treats you fairly?*
- *Do you think your Probation Officer treats you with respect?*
- *Do you think your Probation Officer wants to help you with your problems?*
- *Do you think your Probation Officer has helped you to succeed on Probation?*
- *When you have a question, does your Probation Officer answer it clearly and honestly?*

Based on the findings generated by Rhoades and Venegas (2006), the Senior Management Team of the Circuit Court of Lake County developed a set of ten questions related to the quality of the relationship between supervised court clients and supervising staff members. Extensive pilot testing of the instrument was conducted throughout the organization with slightly varying versions of the survey being applied during January and May/June 2009. The results of the latter pilot survey were released to Court managers and stakeholders in July 2009 and to court staff and the general public on the Court's website in September 2009. Feedback received throughout this process resulted in the development of several final versions of the survey in January 2010: a set of 10 general questions tailored to the specific population served by the division. Questionnaires were written to accommodate both English- and Spanish-speaking clients in the divisions. (Copies of the English versions of all surveys are attached following this report.) In addition, an initial six-month survey cycle was decided upon by the Senior Management Team in order to track changes in the perceptions of court clients and to evaluate the impact of court improvement initiatives. In 2010, the survey was administered to clients in affected divisions for four weeks during February and one week during September. Due to scheduling of specific services during those months, surveys were distributed to Group Reporting participants from Adult Probation Services during April and October. The court divisions and units identified in the client survey include:

- **Adult Probation Services:** The Division of Adult Probation Services is responsible for investigating, interviewing and managing adult criminal defendants and sentenced offenders released to community supervision. Direct client services are facilitated, as directed by the Court, throughout the criminal justice process:
  - General Probation
  - Group Reporting
  - Pretrial Supervision Unit
  - Therapeutic and Intensive Monitoring (TIM) Court
  
- **Juvenile Services:** The Division of Juvenile Probation and Detention Services is comprised of four primary functional components and supporting units – Juvenile Intake, Secure Detention, Juvenile Probation and the FACE-IT Program. Collectively they represent a continuum of services from informal diversionary-level interventions, to structured supervision in the community, to residential care and intensive treatment.
  - The Probation Unit
  - Juvenile Detention & Residential Services.

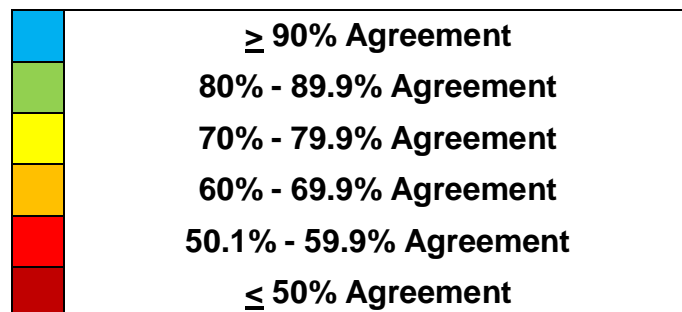
Questionnaires are distributed to all clients who meet with Court staff during the course of normal business. Assurances are made by staff that clients complete surveys only once during that time. In Adult Probation Services, surveys are distributed to clients when reporting to meet in the office with their assigned probation officer by front desk receptionists; pretrial services officers distribute the surveys to defendants at face-to-face meetings at the office or in the field; and surveys are distributed to group reporting offenders at the beginning of scheduled group meetings. In Juvenile Probation Services, surveys are distributed to juvenile probationers and their parent(s)/guardian(s) during scheduled office or home visits. In secure detention, juvenile offenders are given the survey at the time of release; FACE-IT participants are given the survey on a single day; parent(s)/guardian(s) of detention and FACE-IT youth are distributed the survey during visitation periods.

### **Survey Results:**

Table 1 examines the response rates of all surveys completed within the organization and each of the divisions, as well as the unit-level break-downs for the Division of Adult Probation Services (General Probation, Group Reporting, Pretrial Services, and TIM Court) and the Division of Juvenile Probation & Detention Services (Juvenile Probation – Youth & Parents and Juvenile Detention & Residential Services – Youth & Parents), during the respective survey cycles.

<b>Table 1</b>					
<b>Client Survey – Response Rate Analysis</b>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>All Divisions</b>	961	898	1084	1015	897
<b>Adult Probation Services</b>	713	666	860	694	587
<b>General Probation</b>	282	179	466	240	259
<b>Group Reporting</b>	154	297	152	201	96
<b>Pretrial Supervision</b>	261	152	226	246	223
<b>Therapeutic &amp; Intensive Monitoring (TIM) Court</b>	n/a	38	16	7	9
<b>Juvenile Probation &amp; Detention Services</b>	248	232	224	321	310
<b>Juvenile Probation</b>	173	178	164	240	212
<b>Juvenile Probation - Youth</b>	75	80	80	132	114
<b>Juvenile Probation - Parents</b>	98	98	84	108	98
<b>Juvenile Detention &amp; Residential Services</b>	75	54	60	81	64
<b>Juvenile Detention &amp; Residential Services - Youth</b>	53	32	37	36	35
<b>Juvenile Detention &amp; Residential Services - Parents</b>	22	22	23	45	29

The survey results are noted below. The Senior Management Team of the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit established a **performance goal of 80 percent agreement for each of the items noted below**. This benchmark has been recommended as an appropriate starting point for other performance measurement initiatives, such as the National Center for State Courts' (NCSC, 2005) CourTools measures, and has been successfully integrated within the context of additional customer-improvement efforts in other areas throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit. Using this score as a performance standard allows for better comparisons among the various divisions, as well as making some general observations about the data results. The following tables provide data for the *rate of agreement* to each of the 10 Likert scale items contained on the *Client Survey*. The rate of agreement is determined by the percent of valid responses (i.e., all numerical responses) to an item that were answered as either "Agree" (4) or "Strongly Agree" (5). Responses that were answered as either "Don't Know" (N/A) or are missing were excluded from the analysis of that particular item. Color-coding allows division directors and unit managers to prioritize those items which require corrective action. The percentage for the current survey cycle is color-coded using the following scheme:



**CIRCUIT COURT OF LAKE COUNTY**

Item	Survey Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1. Overall, I was satisfied with the services I ( <i>my child</i> ) received as a client.	74.9%	75.8%	77.5%	81.9%	78.3%
2. When I ( <i>my child</i> ) first reported, a staff person clearly explained the rules and what was expected of me.	83.9%	83.7%	87.4%	89.4%	86.3%
3. When I ( <i>my child</i> ) first reported, a staff person clearly answered all of my questions.	84.4%	83.3%	86.0%	89.5%	86.0%
4. I believe that I have a good relationship with this staff person.	77.5%	78.9%	81.5%	84.0%	81.2%
5. I believe that this staff person treats me fairly.	83.0%	84.5%	85.5%	89.9%	86.1%
6. I believe that this staff person treats me with respect.	84.6%	85.2%	87.8%	91.6%	88.0%
7. I believe that this staff person wants to help me ( <i>my child</i> ) with my ( <i>his/her</i> ) problems.	77.6%	80.6%	81.5%	84.3%	80.9%
8. I believe that this staff person wants to help me ( <i>my child</i> ) to succeed on supervision?	81.9%	84.3%	85.4%	88.4%	84.4%
9. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it clearly.	84.4%	84.0%	87.3%	90.3%	87.3%
10. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it honestly.	84.4%	84.6%	86.8%	90.8%	88.0%

**DIVISION OF ADULT PROBATION SERVICES**

Item	Survey Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1. Overall, I was satisfied with the services I received as a client.	78.7%	80.7%	78.0%	80.3%	75.5%
2. When I first reported, a staff person clearly explained the rules and what was expected of me.	85.3%	86.7%	88.3%	88.7%	84.6%
3. When I first reported, a staff person clearly answered all of my questions.	86.0%	86.5%	87.1%	88.4%	85.7%
4. I believe that I have a good relationship with this staff person.	80.8%	83.2%	82.5%	81.8%	79.9%
5. I believe that this staff person treats me fairly.	86.5%	87.1%	86.6%	89.3%	84.7%
6. I believe that this staff person treats me with respect.	87.9%	87.9%	88.2%	90.1%	86.2%
7. I believe that this staff person wants to help me with my problems.	80.3%	83.3%	82.2%	81.6%	77.2%
8. I believe that this staff person wants to help me to succeed on supervision?	84.5%	86.2%	86.3%	86.1%	81.6%
9. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it clearly.	86.9%	87.1%	88.2%	89.6%	85.4%
10. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it honestly.	87.1%	87.6%	87.8%	89.5%	86.1%

**DIVISION OF JUVENILE PROBATION & DETENTION SERVICES**

Item	Survey Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1. Overall, I was satisfied with the services I ( <i>my child</i> ) received as a client.	62.7%	60.9%	75.9%	85.4%	84.4%
2. When I ( <i>my child</i> ) first reported, a staff person clearly explained the rules and what was expected of me.	79.4%	74.8%	83.7%	90.9%	89.7%
3. When I ( <i>my child</i> ) first reported, a staff person clearly answered all of my questions.	79.2%	73.6%	81.4%	91.7%	86.6%
4. I believe that I have a good relationship with this staff person.	66.7%	65.6%	77.8%	88.6%	84.3%
5. I believe that this staff person treats me fairly.	71.5%	76.4%	81.3%	91.1%	89.1%
6. I believe that this staff person treats me with respect.	73.9%	77.0%	86.4%	94.9%	92.1%
7. I believe that this staff person wants to help me ( <i>my child</i> ) with my ( <i>his/her</i> ) problems.	68.7%	72.2%	79.0%	90.2%	89.1%
8. I believe that this staff person wants to help me ( <i>my child</i> ) to succeed on supervision?	73.1%	78.4%	81.6%	93.3%	90.6%
9. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it clearly.	75.7%	74.2%	83.5%	91.8%	90.9%
10. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it honestly.	75.1%	75.2%	82.6%	93.7%	92.1%

**Conclusions:**

Overall, the results obtained from this survey are considered impressive and very positive. Comparative benchmarking in the area of offender-client satisfaction is limited at this time due to the sparse and idiosyncratic use of client surveys within the larger correctional community. Despite this lack of standardization, however, some general conclusions can be drawn and internal efforts for improvement can be made.

The results of the current survey were reviewed by the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit’s Senior Management Team. The directors then share the results with their respective management teams and employees; the results can be drilled down to individual employees in cases where monitoring or to address problems are necessary. The staff have been proactive in addressing the initial shortcomings that characterized earlier cycles of the survey, such as proactively addressing expectations, rules and questions early in the process rather than reacting to problems later, and integrating Motivational Interviewing and Solution-Focused Therapy techniques in order to reduce client resistance, reluctance, reactance, and ambivalence.

The managers and staff have further offered several suggestions in order to improve the existing perceptions of the client-staff relationship within divisions and throughout the organization, for example:



- Managers provide assistance and support to staff in their efforts to be more personable with correctional clients – especially more difficult clients.
- Provide opportunities for staff to spend more quality time to interact with clients.
- Facilitate regular, on-site Motivational Interviewing refresher trainings – currently there are several Motivational Interviewing Expert Facilitators who are available to assist staff and provide training at both Juvenile and Adult facilities.
- Coordinate to provide in-service trainings in the areas of cognitive change and cognitive restructuring strategies – in addition to COG facilitators, staff from Psychological Services are available to assist juvenile and adult probation staff with training and to offer suggestion to deal with difficult clients.

The current survey offers only an indicator of the complex probation officer – correctional client relationship. Although some of the principles are considered basic, it takes a great deal of effort to turn around long-standing attitudes and behaviors regarding the work with probationers. Staff must learn to accept their role as change agents in order for this to be successful. Through continuing to monitor staff behaviors in this area, we can assure that the court organization is making efforts at providing the highest quality of services and interested in continuous organizational improvement.

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