

**Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers  
Safety Committee**

***“Statewide Committee focusing its efforts to provide “Best Practices” to enhance officer safety”***

*(By Chad Libby)*

Since the turn of the century the realities of a juvenile probation officer’s safety has become more prevalent and somewhat commonplace, nationally and in the Commonwealth. So understandably, probation officer safety has become a growing concern nationally in many jurisdictions. As per the National Center for Juvenile Justice, one-third of juvenile probation officers have reported an assault by someone on their caseload. Nearly half have stated that they are "concerned" about personal safety on the job. Therefore, a probation officer must be in tune with their surroundings and be especially aware of officer safety issues, both in the field and at the office. Consideration like the placement of desks in an office, whether to work with a partner in the field, the time of day that field visits are conducted, what safety equipment officers should possess and what force would a reasonable officer at the scene have used under the circumstances, are all strategic when officer safety is a priority. These are some of the many questions that juvenile probation departments are seeking answers to.

In January 2010, the Safety Committee of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers took the leadership to address some of these questions and the growing concerns of juvenile probation officer safety in Pennsylvania. In doing so, the committee first convened with a new chairperson, Chad Libby, Assistant Director with Dauphin County and several other new committee members who not only have extensive experience as probation officers, but are highly regarded as experts in officer safety throughout the Commonwealth. Collectively, the 9 committee members have over 100 + years experience in the juvenile justice system and officer safety. Moreover, these members are certified instructors in one or many of the officer safety training disciplines, such as: use of force continuum, firearms, office safety practices, defensive tactics, search and seizure, de-escalation skills, gangs and CPR and first aid. Not only were these 9 members honored to be a part of this very important committee, but they were eager to get started and provide the leadership in fulfilling the task at hand.

At the conclusion of the committee’s first meeting in March 2010, the members were charged with collectively evaluating current statewide juvenile probation officers safety practices. A survey questionnaire was developed and sent to all 67 county juvenile probation departments. Over the course of several meetings the committee reviewed the survey data and brainstormed several ideas on the development and sharing of consistent statewide officer safety “Best Practices”. The committee’s efforts resulted in the creation of a comprehensive and user friendly statewide “Best Practices” officer safety resource and informational guide called the Juvenile Probation Officer Safety Program Resource and Informational Guide (JOSPRIG).

The purpose of the JOSPRIG is to provide juvenile probation departments throughout the Commonwealth a “Best Practices” guide for the implementation of an effective officer safety program. The JOSPRIG can serve as a valuable tool for departments seeking to develop an officer safety program or enhance and/or update their existing program.

The JPOSPRIG will contain best practice topics such as safety equipment currently being utilized throughout the Commonwealth, custody report writing, use of force continuum models and training, search and seizure, safety equipment policies and procedures, arrests and transports, gang awareness, the impact of social media, etc. The JPOSPRIG will be an ongoing working guide that will be updated frequently and be made accessible on the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers website (summer of 2011). More importantly, counties will have access to a regional officer safety advisor for guidance and support relative to the contents of the JPOSPRIG or any officer safety related questions they may have. A bulletin on how to access a regional officer safety advisor will be published on the Council's website in March.

The juvenile probation officers of Pennsylvania should feel honored and proud to have quality representation of experienced probation officers and safety instructors on the statewide Safety Committee. These 9 committee members are truly dedicated in providing their fellow probation officers throughout the Commonwealth a resource of information regarding officer safety "Best Practices". The respective committee members are as follows:

Eric Burkholder	Berks County
John Yarnell	Sullivan County
Greg Willig	Allegheny County
Dave Mink	Allegheny County
Dave Gianoni	Erie County
Becky Coe	Adams County
Joe Reichard	Lehigh County
Keith Graybill	Juvenile Court Judges' Commission
Chad Libby	Dauphin County

In conclusion, the Safety Committee will do its best to serve their fellow probation officers. In doing so, the committee strongly encourages officers to bookmark the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers website ([www.pachiefprobationofficers.org](http://www.pachiefprobationofficers.org)) as one of your web browser's favorites. The website will start publishing officer safety "Best Practices" of the JPOSPRIG starting March 2011 (Regional Safety Officer Advisors Bulletin), followed by the actual JPOSPRIG user guide that will be accessible only by probation officers. More importantly, the website is a great resource for probation officers to access other valuable and pertinent information (like the JPOSPRIG) on what is happening throughout the state's juvenile justice system.