

# Lehigh County Juvenile Justice System Community Report

Community Protection Edition ■ Summer 2004

## Community Protection, an essential component of the Juvenile Justice System

### Youth Crime and Violence Task Force

The Juvenile Probation Department of Lehigh County has developed a county-wide collaborative approach to combat juvenile crime. The Lehigh County Youth Crime and Violence Task Force, currently under the leadership of the Director of Human Services Grayson McNair, has been meeting monthly since 1996 to address issues related to juvenile crime in our community. The task force was formed following the completion of a week-long conference, attended by county and civic officials, provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention. During the conference, methods and tactics were presented to effectively address gang-related issues and work with youth categorized as serious habitual offenders. The task force has representation from the judiciary, local police departments, county and federal probation, schools, Office of Children and Youth, community members, detention, prosecutors, medical professionals, and many others. ■

### Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Plan

In Jan 2001, the Juvenile Probation Department, with the assistance of the Youth Crime and Violence Task Force, developed the Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Plan (SHOCAP) initiative, the first in the state of Pennsylvania. This initiative identifies "serious habitual offenders" (SHO'S) most in need of supervision, through a grading selection process based on offenses and adjudications of delinquency. SHOCAP is a comprehensive and

cooperative information-sharing and case management program, specifically for those clients identified as serious offenders. These youth are often at risk for placement in a state secure facility, or are preparing for re-entry into the community from residential facilities. This program is designed to enable youth-related agencies to share information about serious or habitual offenders in order that comprehensive and coordinated services can be provided to protect the community.



*Grayson McNair, Lehigh County Director of Human Services and Elizabeth Fritz, Supervisor Juvenile Probation, reviewing map indicating locations of serious habitual offenders and neighborhood community agencies and resources.*

A seasoned juvenile probation officer was chosen to work with the majority of this clientele. The probation officer, Patrick Best, adheres to the standards designed specifically for this position and he utilizes an expedient court process for violations of probation and new offenses. SHOCAP clients are seen by the probation officer on a more intensive basis, most of which are during non-traditional work hours including weekends. All youth must be enrolled in an academic setting or employed. The youth and the family also must be involved in community based treatment services. Initial research and evaluation on this project shows a recidivism rate of 14-18%, significantly less than the state and national norm which is usually 40% or greater for this population. ■

## The Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department

serves under the direction of the Lehigh County Juvenile Court to provide services to all children within the Court's jurisdiction regardless of race, religion, gender, age, national origin, medical conditions, or disability.

The Juvenile Justice System provides for children committing delinquent acts: programs of supervision, care, and rehabilitation, which provide balanced attention to the protection of the community, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed and the development of competencies to enable children to become responsible and productive members of society.

— Paul J. Werrell  
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer



## Operation Night Light

In January 2002, the department established Operation Night Light. This program is modeled after Boston's nationally recognized Night Light Program, which includes probation and police teams making client contacts in the community, as well as arranging for counseling and other treatment services through community agencies. Our Operation Night Light was originally designed to work with the SHOCAP population to provide intensive supervision, surveillance and intervention services in the community to help reduce recidivism.



Juvenile Probation Officer Melody Stocker, Allentown Police Officer Louie Maiorano and Juvenile P.O. Manny Gomez preparing for evening patrol.

Within a short period of time, the community began to notice the increased presence of probation in their neighborhoods. In addition, this team approach allowed for increased communication between probation officers and police officers. As a result, behavior of many of the SHO youth in the community improved. The department subsequently expanded this program to work with other probationers who needed this level of intervention and supervision. While the contacts were not as intensive as those for youth identified as SHO's, our clients never knew quite when to expect a visit from their probation officer. We also saw a significant increase in family contacts and police officers became familiar with the issues of our clients. They had the opportunity to see a different aspect of the client's life and, often, the youth and family had the opportunity to view the police officer in a different perspective.



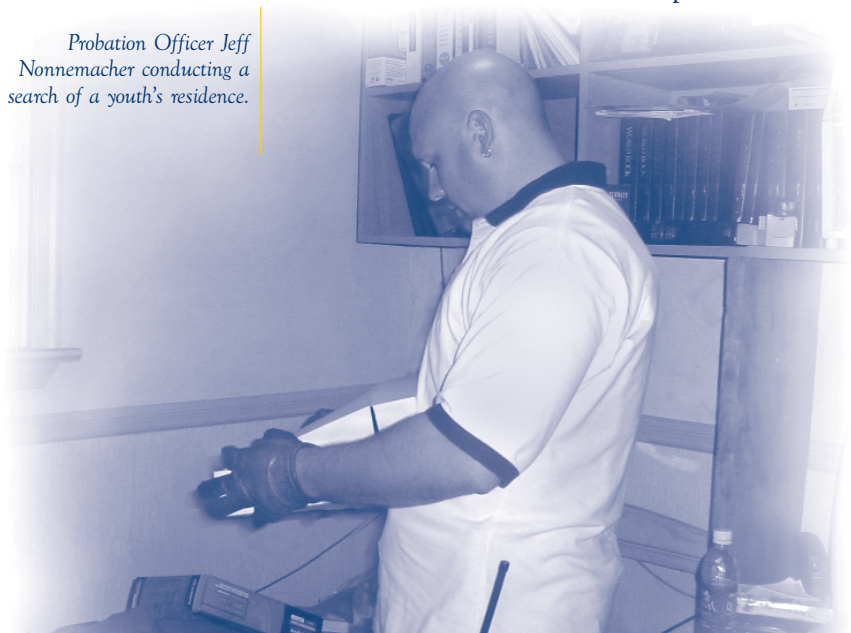
Juvenile Probation Officers Jeff Nonnemacher, Jeff Murphy and Whitehall Police Officer Ken Stephens, Jr., home visit of juvenile probationer.

This partnership has also encouraged involvement with other community services and events. Probation officers have been highly visible at playgrounds, fairs, school activities, crime watch meetings, etc. The objective of this enhanced interaction, communication and contact is to reduce crime and crime-related costs for the community. ■

## Project Safe Neighborhood

In October, 2003, the Juvenile Probation Department was chosen by federal officials to participate in an expansion of Operation Night Light. Project Safe Neighborhood is a federally funded program that allows for the federal prosecution of individuals involved with weapon offenses or other offenses in which a weapon was present.

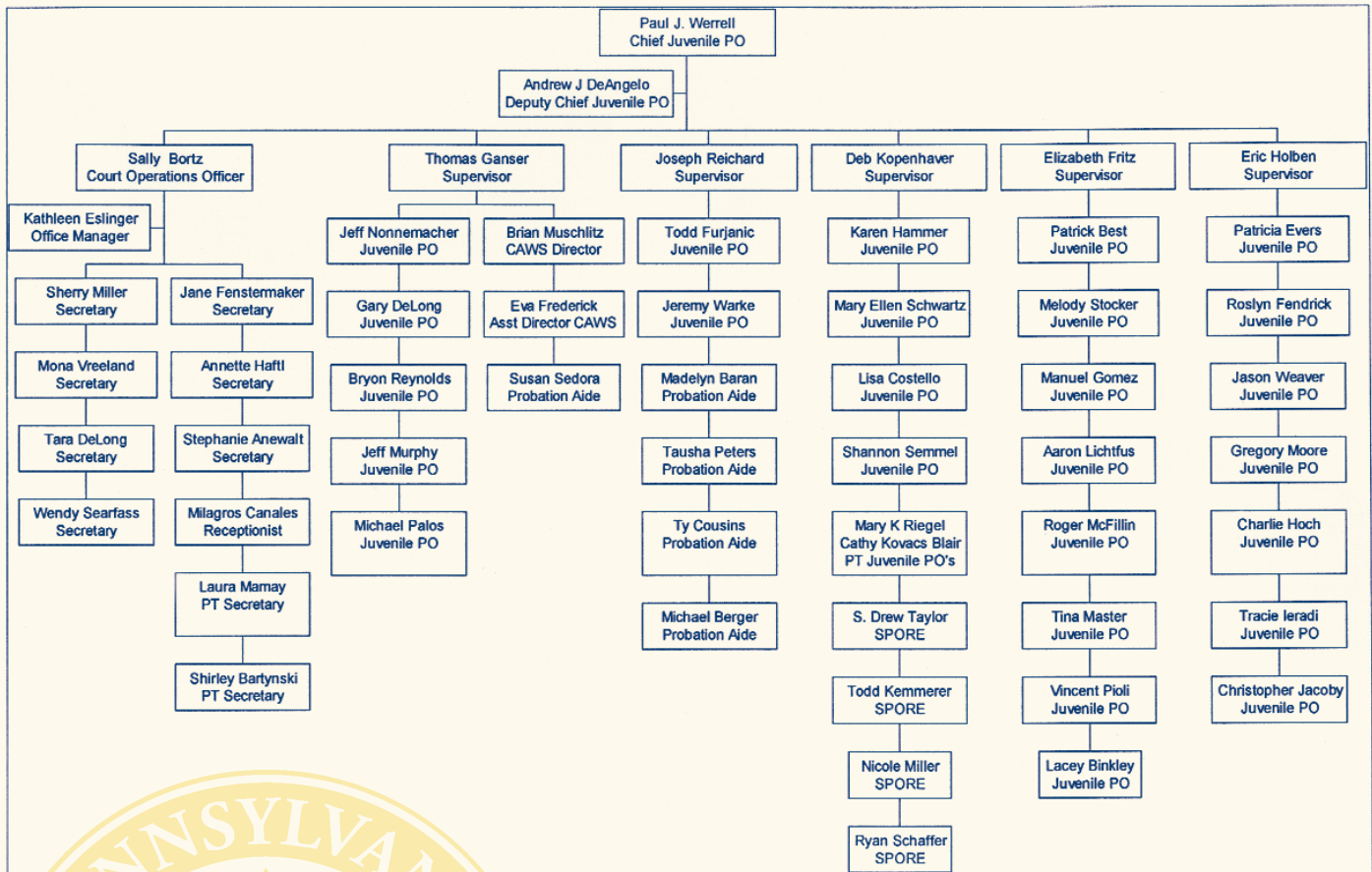
Probation Officer Jeff Nonnemacher conducting a search of a youth's residence.



The Project Safe Neighborhood initiative also provided funding to address juvenile issues with the aid of local law enforcement. With the support of the Lehigh County District Attorney, Project Safe Neighborhood was designated to target other high-risk clients such as drug dealers, those charged with weapon offenses, and those affiliated with gangs. This initiative mandates that these identified clients be seen more frequently, much like the SHOCAP clients.

Since January 2004, the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department has teamed with the police departments from Allentown, Bethlehem, Emmaus, South Whitehall, Whitehall, Catasauqua, Upper Saucon and Salisbury to provide increased supervision of those targeted as high risk clients. While Operation Night Light was utilized more as a curfew-checking initiative, with Project Safe Neighborhood, probation officers are mandated to increase supervision and services. The police and probation officers work closely to enforce accountability as well as addressing the need for community safety. This partnership is designed to establish the necessary linkages between the police and probation departments in order to achieve a reduction in criminal activity in high crime areas by increasing the supervision of offenders and compliance with conditions of probation. ■

# Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department



## Mission of the Juvenile Justice System

*"Juvenile Justice: Community Protection,  
Victim Restoration, Youth Redemption."*

**Community Protection** refers to the right of all Pennsylvania citizens to be and feel safe from crime.

**Victim Restoration** emphasizes that, in Pennsylvania, a juvenile who commits a crime harms the victim of the crime and the community, and thereby incurs an obligation to repair that harm to the greatest extent possible.

**Youth Redemption** embodies the belief that juvenile offenders in Pennsylvania have strengths, are capable of change, can earn redemption, and can become responsible and productive members of their community.

Furthermore, all of the services designed and implemented to achieve this mission and all hearings and decisions under the Juvenile Act – indeed all aspects of the juvenile justice system – must be provided in a fair and unbiased manner. The United States and Pennsylvania Constitutions guarantee rights and privileges to all citizens, regardless of race, color, creed, gender, national origin or handicap.

## From the Editor...

### Community Involvement is Welcome!

If you are interested in volunteering to work with our youth as a mentor or tutor, or to provide a community service work site, please contact:

The Lehigh County  
Juvenile Probation Department  
610-782-3143  
Andrew J. DeAngelo  
Deputy Chief Probation Officer



**Lehigh County  
Juvenile Probation Department**  
455 W. Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101

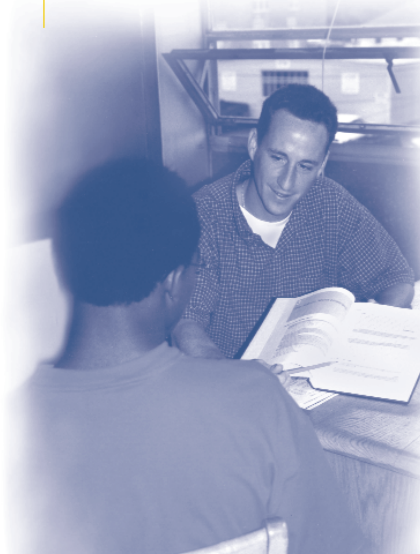
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# Community Report

## Project Safe Neighborhood Prevention Initiatives

An innovative component has been recently added to this program. The Juvenile Probation Department is currently in the early stages of developing community prevention services for probation youth, which will be initiated and maintained by juvenile probation and police officers. Some of the early program development has included an after school tutoring program, the development of the Commitment to Change Program, a curriculum designed to address the criminal personality for targeted youth, a mentoring program with local colleges, fund raising events with neighborhood centers such as spaghetti

*Probation Officer Charles Hoch  
tutoring youth on probation.*



dinners and youth dances, a truancy reduction initiative, victim awareness classes and, most recently, a boxing clinic with reduced costs designed to specifically meet the needs of high risk clients. We anticipate further prevention activities to include healthy living groups, hiking and physical fitness groups. With probation and police working as a team to develop prevention activities and services, we anticipate increased pro-social activities and decreased criminal activity.

Recently, multi-disciplinary team meetings were initiated to address prevention and intervention concerns. This is a pro-active approach for the siblings and families of those identified as SHO's. Still in its early phases, agencies such as probation, children and youth, mental health, drug and alcohol, education, etc. meet to address issues and develop treatment plans for SHOCAP clients and their siblings at risk to enter the system. This is certainly a unique approach for a population of high risk youth who are often overlooked until they enter the system. ❑



*Probation Officers Manny Gomez and  
Vince Pioli instructing victim awareness classes.*

## RESULTS

The following briefly outlines some of the results for the SHOCAP, Operation Night Light, and Project Safe Neighborhood initiatives.

### SHOCAP – Jan. 2001 - May 2004

- Number of community based contacts with clients: 1,721 of which 1,511 were in non-traditional hours.
- Contacts with parents: 351, which average about 3 times a week.
- During this time period only 9 juveniles were re-arrested for new charges.



*Probation Officers Patrick Best and  
Aaron Lichtfus, Community Bike Patrol.*

### Operation Night Light And Project Safe Neighborhood – Jan. 2002 - May 2004

- Number of non-traditional hours PO's made contacts: 4,874
- Non-Traditional Contacts made with client: 6,538
- Contacts with parent/guardian: 3,707
- Project Safe Neighborhood client contacts since January 2004: 451
- Project Safe Neighborhood intervention hours since January 2004: 67
- Number of drug tests administered: 920
- Special Projects completed by probation officers and police: 111
- Attempts to locate missing juveniles: 152
- Club sweeps to locate/check for probationers: 13 ❑

*Newsletter articles written by Elizabeth Fritz.*