# Department of Human Resources & Civil Service

Open Competitive Exam Announcement
Please Post Conspicuously

Maggie Brooks
County Executive

Brayton M. Connard
Director

# OC-64760 Probation Officer/Probation Officer Trainee

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|---|---|
| Application Fee: | **$15.00** |
| Examination Date: | **February 9, 2008** |
| Closing Date for Filing: | **January 2, 2008 –** Applications must be filed in our office or postmarked by this date |
| Salary: | **$32,585 - $41,918 annually (Monroe County)** |
| Employment Opportunities: | **The results of this exam may be used to fill vacancies, which may occur during the life of the eligible list.** |

A Promotional exam is also being offered for qualified employees of the Monroe County Department of Public Safety.

**Minimum Qualifications:**
Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State college or university with a Bachelor's degree, including a minimum of thirty (30) credit hours in the social or behavioral sciences.

**Proposed Special Requirements:**
1. Applicants may be required to pass a medical examination to determine fitness to perform job duties prior to appointment.
2. Possession of a valid Class *D* motor vehicle operator's license issued by New York State at time of appointment.
3. Successful completion of basic course for peace officers as certified by the Municipal Police Training Council during the probationary period.
4. Successful completion of 47 hour Firearms/Weapons Training Course within six months of appointment.
5. Applicants will be subject to an extensive background investigation and psychological evaluation.
6. Depending on position duties, candidates for employment with Monroe County Government will be required to pass a pre-employment drug test.

**Residency Requirement:**
Applicants must be residents of Monroe County for at least four (4) months at the time of examination.

**Fees:**
A $15.00 **non-refundable** Application Fee for each examination for which you apply is to be paid with your application, unless the fee is waived for that examination.

Make check or money order payable to: Monroe County Director of Finance

Write your SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER AND EXAM NUMBER(S) ON YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER.

Be sure to compare your qualifications carefully with the requirements listed and file only for those examinations for which you clearly qualify and intend to take. We cannot prescreen applications submitted without the fee. No refunds will be made if your application is disapproved or you fail to appear for the test. There is a $15.00 charge for returned checks. We do not accept cash.

**Exception to Fee Requirement:**
An exception to the application fee will be made only for persons receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments or public assistance, or certified as Workforce Investment Act (WIA) eligible through a state or local social service agency,

and for those who are unemployed and primarily responsible for the support of a household. Employees of Monroe County who are represented by the Federation of Social Workers, Local 381, are eligible for this waiver for all exams if they are in salary group 52 and below; employees in a salary group above 52 are eligible for the fee waiver, if the examination is for a title in their career field. Employees of Monroe County who are represented by C.S.E.A., Local 828, are eligible for this waiver, if they are in salary group 10 or below. The fee is waived for all Monroe County employees taking promotional exams. Individuals wishing to claim this waiver of fee must complete an application fee waiver request located on the last page of the application. Such claims are subject to later verification and, if not supported by appropriate documentation are grounds for barring appointment.

**Description of Duties:**
This is a trainee level Probation Officer position for college graduates with a career interest in probation. Trainees receive on-the-job training while performing duties of a limited professional nature under close and continuing supervision. Trainee appointments are for a period of two (2) years, following which incumbents receiving satisfactory ratings will be advanced to the title of Probation Officer without further examination.

**Scope of Examination:**
A multiple-choice written test will cover knowledge, skills and /or abilities in such areas as:

1. Establishing and maintaining working relationships with defendants/respondents and probationers

Questions present descriptions of situations typically encountered in working with clients in such areas as obtaining information from clients and exploring clients' social, psychological or legal problems. Candidates will be required to choose the best analysis of, solution to, or approach for handling the problem described. In addition, some questions may test for understanding of correct reasons, arguments or factors regarding typical concepts encountered in working with clients.

2. Preparing Written Material

These questions test for the ability to write the kinds of reports and correspondence required in criminal justice settings such as probation and parole. Some questions test for the ability to present information clearly and accurately. Others test for the ability to organize paragraphs logically and comprehensibly.

A **"Guide to Taking the Examination for Probation Officer/Probation Officer Trainee"** is attached. It is also available in the Monroe County Civil Service Office in Room 210, County Office Building, 39 West Main Street, Rochester, NY 14614. The guide is also available on the Monroe County Web Site listed at the bottom of this page or by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope with fifty-seven (57) cents postage to the above address. This guide is intended for candidate preparation use for this particular examination and contains important test-related information as well as sample test questions similar to the questions that will be used in this written test.

**Calculators and Reference Materials:**
Most civil service written tests do not require the use of a calculator or slide rule. However, the use of calculators is **ALLOWED** for this exam. Candidates have the option of bringing a hand-held, quiet, battery or solar-powered arithmetic calculator or a slide rule to the test room. Candidates will not be permitted to use calculators containing spell check, dictionary, language translator, address or telephone book, personal digital assistants, or typewriter keyboard features, or any similar devices. You may not bring books or other reference materials.

This written examination is being prepared and rated in accordance with Section 23(2) of the Civil Service Law. The provisions of the New York State Civil Service Law, Rules and Regulations dealing with the preparation and rating of examinations, as well as establishment and certification of eligible lists for positions in the classified service will apply to this examination.

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**Applications:**
If you are applying for more than one exam, a separate application is required for each exam. Applications may be obtained at the address or web-site indicated at the bottom of the first page of this announcement.

**Candidates must record the Exam Number and Title on the Application.**

**Note:**
Submission of a resume does not relieve you of the responsibility for completing all sections of the official application. The resume is a supplement to the application, and not a substitute for it. To receive credit for a job, basic employment information such as address,

name and title of supervisor, average number of hours in the workweek, final salary, reason for leaving, specific job duties, your job title, etc. must be shown.

**Certifications and Appointments:**
The eligible list resulting from this examination will be established in accordance with the final earned numerical rating of passing candidates regardless of residence. A municipality or district may exercise its right under Section 23 of the Civil Service Law to request an initial certification of eligibles who have been residents of that municipality or district for at least one (1) month on the date of certification and who are also legal residents of the appointing jurisdiction at the time of appointment, in accordance with their numerical rating. After the names of residents have been exhausted the Commission must then certify in regular rank order the names of non-residents on the list.

**Background Investigation:**
Applicants may be required to undergo a State and national criminal history background investigation, which will include a fingerprint check, to determine suitability for appointment. Failure to meet the standards for the background investigation may result in disqualification.

**Special Requirement for Appointment in School Districts and BOCES:**
Per Chapter 180 of the Laws of 2000, and by Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, to be employed in a position designated by a school district or BOCES as involving direct contact with students, a clearance for employment from the State Education Department is required.

**Veteran's Credits:**
Veterans entitled to and wishing to claim additional points must file in the Monroe County Department of Human Resources an Application for Veteran's Credits (VC-1) form, and a copy of their military discharge papers (DD-214). Disabled veterans must also file two (2) copies of an Authorization for Veteran's Disability Record (VC-4) with the Veteran's Administration. These forms are available at the Monroe County Department of Human Resources and must be filed within thirty (30) days of the examination date. No credit may be added after the eligible list has been established.

Candidates currently on active duty may apply within thirty (30) days of the examination. Upon discharge, candidates must submit a copy of their military discharge papers (DD-214). Any extra points will be applied upon our receipt of the discharge papers.

**Active Military Members:**
Special testing arrangements may be available to applicants who are active military members. For further information contact the Monroe County Department of Human Resources before submitting an application.

**Children of Firefighters and Police Officers Killed in the Line of Duty:**
In conformance with section 85-a of the Civil Service Law, children of firefighters and police officers killed in the line of duty shall be entitled to receive an additional ten points in a competitive examination for original appointment in the same municipality in which his or her parent has served. If you are qualified to participate in this examination and are a child of a firefighter or police officer killed in the line of duty in this municipality, please inform this office of this matter when you submit your application for examination. A candidate claiming such credit must provide the necessary documentation to verify additional credit eligibility within thirty (30) days of the examination date. No credit may be added after the eligible list has been established.

**Special Arrangements for Examination:**
If you need an alternate test date because you are a Religious Observer [for religious reasons, cannot be tested on date of examination(s)] or if you have a disability that requires special accommodations for you to participate in an examination, you must notify us at the address or telephone numbers listed on the front page of this announcement by the application deadline. Indicate your request on the front of your application for each exam, and under separate cover submit a statement outlining the reason for your request, the exam number(s) and title(s), and attach supporting documentation.

**Multiple Exam Takers:**
Persons also applying for examinations offered by the City of Rochester and/or New York State Civil Service Commission held on the same date must complete a crossfiler form, available from the Monroe County Department of Human Resources, which will provide for special arrangements. Arrangements must be made to take **ALL** examinations at **ONE** test site. Unless this form is filed with the Monroe County Department of Human Resources three (3) weeks prior to the exam date, we cannot ensure that such arrangements will be made. **If you are taking multiple exams on the same date with Monroe County Civil Service Commission only, you do not have to file a crossfiler form.**

Candidates taking more than one (1) exam in different exam series will be allowed the specified length of time for each exam, up to a maximum of eight (8) hours. Example: If you are taking one (1) exam which allows six (6) hours and another exam in a different series which allows four (4) hours, you must complete both tests in eight (8) hours, but you can spend no more time on each exam than the time allotted for that exam.

**Admission to Examination:**
All applications will be reviewed after the “Closing Date for Filing” listed on the front page of this announcement. If there is a problem with your application, you will be notified in writing and given an opportunity to submit additional information to support your application. If there are no problems with your application, you will be sent an admission notice approximately one week before the exam date. If you have not received your admission notice to appear for the examination **three days** before the date of the exam, call the Monroe County Department

of Human Resources at (585) 753-1700.

**Issue Date:** December 3, 2007

**New York State**
**Department of Civil Service**

***Committed to Innovation, Quality and Excellence***

# *A Guide to the Written Test*

**for**

# Probation Officer
# Probation Officer Trainee

**in**
**New York State**
**(exclusive of New York City)**

Eliot Spitzer
*Governor*

Nancy G. Groenwegen
*Commissioner*

***So, you want to become a***

# *PROBATION OFFICER/PROBATION OFFICER TRAINEE*

## INTRODUCTION

In New York State, Probation Officers and Trainees are appointed through the competitive Civil Service process to assure the merit and fitness of all appointees. This Test Guide is divided into several parts. Each part provides important information about the Probation Officer and Trainee positions and about the written test for these positions.

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We are pleased that you are interested in becoming a Probation Officer or Trainee in New York State. These are important jobs, so we want to make sure that we appoint those persons who will be successful in these challenging and rewarding positions.

*Thank you for your interest and good luck.*

**New York State Department of Civil Service**

# PART 1

# JOB DUTIES OF A PROBATION OFFICER

## General Statement of Duties:

Provides evaluation, investigation, and supervision services for persons within the jurisdiction of the courts; does related work as required.

## Distinguishing Features of the Class:

This is the beginning position at the professional level in probation work. The duties require the application of modern social work techniques in making evaluations of adults or juveniles and in supervising persons on probation. A Probation Officer is called upon to exercise sound professional judgment in analyzing data and in making recommendations concerning court dispositions. He/she assists persons on probation and other persons whom the probation agency services. A Probation Officer works under supervision of a higher ranking professional employee and may help to supervise the work of Probation Assistants, Probation Officer Trainees, or volunteers.

Probation Officer Trainees who have satisfactorily completed one year of service are automatically appointed to this title.

## Examples of Work:

May be assigned to an intake unit to evaluate matters for adjustment at the intake level or to perform supervision of persons in lieu of court action;

Obtains and analyzes social and legal data and prepares reports in relation to matters pending in the courts concerning persons awaiting disposition of the courts;

Interprets conditions of sentence to persons placed under probation supervision, supervises such individuals by ascertaining compliance with conditions of probation, and counsels and assists them in problems related to compliance and to the maintenance of lawful behavior in the community;

Prepares progress reports on persons under supervision and periodically reviews case histories to determine degree of adjustment;

Prepares violation reports and testifies at delinquency hearings;

Establishes and maintains contact with other social and law enforcement agencies and cooperates with them in matters of mutual interest;

Helps to maintain a variety of records utilized by the probation office;

Assists in supervision of Probation Officer Trainees, Probation Assistants, and volunteers.

## Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

Basic knowledge of social sciences, including sociology, psychology, and economics; basic knowledge of social service programs and other community resources; basic knowledge of laws pertaining to probation work and functions and procedures of Family and Criminal courts; basic knowledge of factors related to crime and delinquency; good judgment in dealing with people; ability to understand, interpret, and prepare written material.

## Generally Acceptable Training and Experience:

**Promotion:** Satisfactory completion of one year service as Probation Officer Trainee.

**Open-competitive:** Graduate degree in social work, education, administration, law, sociology, psychology, criminology, or a related field;

OR Bachelor's degree and two years experience in counseling or casework in a recognized agency adhering to acceptable standards in probation, parole, social services, psychiatric or medical social work, or related work;

OR appropriate combination of above training and experience.

# JOB DUTIES OF A PROBATION OFFICER TRAINEE

## General Statement of Duties:

Performs varied duties related to investigation and supervision in a local probation agency while participating in a continuous in-service training program; does related work as required.

## Distinguishing Features of the Class:

The trainee level is used to recruit to the probation field college graduates with a career interest in probation. Trainees receive on-the-job training while performing duties of a limited professional nature under close and continuing supervision.

Trainee appointments are for a period of one year, following which incumbents receiving satisfactory ratings will be advanced to the title of Probation Officer without further examination.

## Examples of Work:

Assists in the collection and analysis of social and legal history data, and in the preparation of investigation reports concerning cases pending in the courts;

Helps to supervise probationers by counseling and otherwise assisting them to maintain lawful behavior in the community;

Helps to maintain appropriate case records of persons under probation supervision;

Makes home visits and other community contacts to assist in monitoring and adherence to conditions of probation;

Helps to establish and maintain contact with persons and organizations in the community that may provide necessary resources for individuals served by the agency;

May assist in counseling of persons under court order to pay family support when referred by collection unit;

Attends on-the-job and special training sessions and participates in conferences and regular staff meetings;

Studies and reviews literature and other appropriate materials related to probation, criminal justice, and social work to systematically acquire essential knowledge of profession.

## Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

Basic knowledge of social sciences, including sociology, psychology, and economics; basic knowledge of social service programs and other community resources; basic knowledge of factors related to crime and delinquency; good judgment in dealing with people; ability to understand, interpret, and prepare written material.

### Generally Acceptable Training and Experience:

**Open-competitive:** Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university, or one recognized by the New York State Education Department, with at least thirty (30) credit hours in the social or behavioral sciences.

# PART 2

## SELECTION PROCESS

To be appointed to a Probation Officer or Trainee position, you must pass several hurdles.

### A. Application

You must complete an application which is reviewed by the county civil service agency. If they determine you meet the minimum qualifications which they have established for the position, they consider you a candidate for the examination.

### B. Written Test

Because this examination is "open-competitive" and because the minimum qualifications for the trainee level do not require it, candidates need not have prior experience working as a counselor, caseworker, or probation officer (although it is likely that some candidates will have such backgrounds). Therefore, this test will not measure the kind of knowledge that can only be acquired from experience on the job. The minimum educational background that is required of candidates who are eligible to take the exam ensures that all candidates will have had some exposure to practices and strategies that are commonly used in the working relationship of professionals and clients.

This written test is composed of the following subjects:

**1) Establishing and Maintaining Working Relationships with Defendants, Respondents, and Probationers**

Three quarters of the written test (45 out of 60 points) will be in this area. As described in the examination announcement, these questions will present situations that are typically encountered in working with clients. Candidates will be required to choose the best analysis of, solution to, or approach in handling the problem described. In addition, some questions may test for understanding of concepts that underlie successful interaction with clients, or even with persons related to or involved with clients. (An officer must recognize that a probationer's family, friends, employer, and other professional contacts are an integral part of the probationer's environment and a constant influence on his or her behavior, including the ability to change.) Some questions will test for a recognition and understanding of concepts that relate to normal and abnormal human development, including behavioral effects of social and psychological problems.

**2) Preparing Written Material**

There will be 30 questions, weighted 0.5 each, for a total of 15 points in this area. This portion of the test will measure your ability to prepare written material. Probation Officers must keep detailed written documentation of their cases. Therefore, the ability to write clearly is crucial to success on the job.

After the test is given, usually the Saturday after the test, candidates have the opportunity to see some (or all) of the questions and their tentative answers. At this review, called the prerating review, candidates are allowed to submit written comments concerning the test as a whole, or concerning individual questions and their keys. These comments are then evaluated, along with statistical information that has been produced about candidate performance on the individual questions and the different parts of the test. After extensive analysis, the examination is officially scored.

Then, the New York State Department of Civil Service sends the results to the county, which produces an eligible list and mails the scores to the candidates. The county can then begin the process of screening eligible individuals for vacant positions.

### C. Special Requirements

Some counties may require that candidates undergo a character screening or physical examination or possess a driver license before they are appointed to the positions. You should check on the test announcement for any special requirements.

# PART 3

# WRITTEN TEST GUIDE

## TIPS ON HOW TO TAKE A MULTIPLE-CHOICE TEST

The written test for Probation Officer/Trainee will consist of multiple-choice questions, with which you are probably quite familiar.

**Sample Multiple-Choice Question:**

Which one of the following trees is an evergreen?

A. maple
B. oak
C. birch
D. pine

*The correct answer to this sample question is D.*

**Explanation:**

*Only one of the four choices offered is correct; the others are wrong in some way. The answer to this sample question is choice D, pine. Its needles stay green all year. The other choices – maple, oak, and birch – all lose their leaves in the fall.*

*This sample question requires you to recall a fact. Other kinds of multiple-choice questions – including those in the Probation Officer/Trainee test – require you to make analyses, solve problems, or choose the best course of action in a given situation. Explanations of these will be given in the sections that follow.*

**First, here is some general information and advice on how to approach the test.**

1. **Read all the instructions.** Be sure you understand them before you start on the questions. Make sure you know which questions you are supposed to answer. The cover of the test booklet or separate instructions should give you this information.

2. **Read each question carefully**. Make sure you are reading what is printed in the test booklet -- not what you expect to see or want to see. Read each question carefully, then read all the choices.

   - Make sure you understand each choice before you decide which answer is best. Read all the choices before selecting your answer.
   - Pick out the one choice that BEST answers the question. In action-oriented questions, for example, the best choice will be the one that tells what people in the job should do most of the time.
   - Answer the question as it is asked in the booklet. Do not assume the question means something it does not say.

3. **Use Your Time Wisely.** You should have ample time to read and answer all the questions carefully. Do not waste time, however. Keep working continuously through the test.

4. **Answer The Easier Questions First, But Answer Every Question.** You get just as much credit for an easy question as for a difficult one. Do not take too much time at first on the difficult questions. Proceed to answer all of the easy ones. Then, in the time left over, go back and work on the questions that require more time and thought. If you skip a question, make sure that you leave the response position which corresponds to that question blank on the separate Answer Sheet.

5. **Answer Every Question.** If you are not sure, guess. There is no penalty for guessing on this test. If you do not answer a question, you will not get credit for it.

   - If you are sure a choice is wrong, eliminate that choice. The questions have four possible choices. Most people see right away that one or two of the choices just cannot be correct. Throw out the choices you can eliminate immediately and concentrate on the others.
   - Choose the best of the choices that remain. Even if one choice seems only slightly better than the rest, choose that one.

## TIPS ON TAKING THE PROBATION OFFICER/TRAINEE WRITTEN TEST

**Establishing and Maintaining Working Relationships with Defendants, Respondents, and Probationers.**

### Sample Question 1:

Assume that you are a Probation Officer. You are talking with Mrs. Collins, the mother of a 17-year-old male who is a probationer in your current caseload. During the conversation, Mrs. Collins tells you that her husband beats her. Which one of the following is the most appropriate action for you to take in this situation?

A. Call the police and have her husband arrested.
B. Tell her that you will use your authority to "straighten out" her husband.
C. Provide her with information on how to get help when an incident arises.
D. Avoid becoming involved, since your responsibility is to supervise her son.

*The correct answer to sample question 1 is C.*

### Explanation:

***Choice A*** *is wrong because calling the police is far too hasty an action to take. You cannot have her husband arrested because you don't know for a fact that he beats Mrs. Collins; only that she says so. This is not enough reason for the police to take action. Furthermore, Mrs. Collins must actually be willing to press charges. She may be afraid of her husband's temper or ashamed of the way she is treated. It may have taken great effort for her to tell anyone about the beatings. If you immediately call the police, you risk violating her confidence and embarrassing her. You might also bring about another beating if her husband finds out and loses his temper over the contact with police.*

***Choice B,*** *saying you'll use your authority to "straighten out" her husband, is wrong because it is an unseemly show of your "authority" over a matter that is not within your authority at all. You are, in effect, telling Mrs. Collins that you will threaten her husband, if need be, in order to change his behavior. You do not have this kind of control over private citizens. Implying that you do would be very unprofessional conduct for an officer. Aside from promising much more than you can expect to deliver, you may make the situation worse by leaving Mrs. Collins alone to face her husband's anger after you have confronted him.*

***Choice C, providing Mrs. Collins with information on how to get help when an incident arises, is the best choice.*** *Very often, people in distress are not aware of the kinds of services that are available to them. You, as a Probation Officer, are in a position to be familiar with these services and can best help Mrs. Collins by providing information about various ways she could get help in dealing with her situation. She may prefer one way to another, so the decision about which to pursue at what time, as well as the responsibility for making the decision itself, rests with Mrs. Collins. You have just provided information, perhaps some guidance and a little direction, without meddling in her life or her husband's.*

***Choice D,*** *avoid becoming involved, is wrong. Aside from being a callous response to what Mrs. Collins has said, you can reason that an improvement in the home situation Mrs. Collins faces would be part of an overall improvement in the home environment of her son, your client. Although you are not professionally involved with Mrs. Collins, your ability to provide the assistance described in choice C above may not only benefit her directly, but also contribute to her son's successful completion of probation.*

**Establishing and Maintaining Working Relationships with Defendants, Respondents, and Probationers.**

## Sample Question 2:

Mark is a 16-year-old member of a street gang who is suspected of being involved in a number of violent crimes, including armed robbery. Which one of the following factors probably contributes MOST to the development of Mark's juvenile delinquency?

A. genetic abnormality
B. faulty personality development
C. his family's economic need
D. his social environment

*The correct answer to sample question 2 is D.*

**Explanation:**

***Choice A*** *is wrong because it is based on outmoded and incorrect theories that see criminal behavior as caused by genetic make-up. In these discredited theories, the tendency to commit crimes is thought of as an inherited trait or a by-product of some kind of malformation at the level of the gene or chromosome.*

***Choice B*** *is wrong because it places blame on Mark himself. It assumes that he was bound to turn out this way, and that no change in his behavior is possible. There is no information in the question to support this assumption.*

***Choice C*** *is wrong because many studies have shown that there is no connection between juvenile delinquency and the economic status of the delinquent's family. Juvenile delinquency is a problem common to all economic levels of society. The fact that Mark is suspected of having committed armed robbery is not proof, by itself, of economic need.*

***Choice D is correct.*** *Mark is a member of a street gang which functions as a "subculture" within the dominant, law-abiding culture. Group acceptance is based on conforming to the gang's standards. Since Mark's membership in the gang is the one fact mentioned in connection with his criminal behavior, it is reasonable to assume that the gang values lawlessness and violence. Mark's juvenile delinquency is most likely based MAINLY on his needs to be accepted within the group and to gain status by pushing his behavior to new levels of delinquency.*

*Note that the question asks which of four listed possibilities probably contributed MOST to the development of Mark's juvenile delinquency. It does not ask for the only contributing factor. A single factor or cause rarely explains human behavior all by itself. The questions on the test recognize this. You will usually be asked for the "most probable" explanation, the "most likely" reason. When selecting your answer, choose the one that fits the facts in the question best, even if that choice might not fit all cases all of the time.*

**Establishing and Maintaining Working Relationships with Defendants, Respondents, and Probationers.**

## Sample Case History:

You are a Probation Officer assigned to the Family Court Intake Unit. Your responsibility is screening cases to determine if they might be handled informally through some type of social service assistance. Among the cases you screen are those of youths under age 16 who are disobedient to their parents, are runaways, and/or are truant from school.

Mrs. Twilley has brought in her son Jimmy, age 14, to Intake. She complains that Jimmy refuses to obey her and often stays out very late, sometimes all night long. Jimmy's attendance and grades at school have fallen off sharply, she says. Mrs. Twilley states that her son hangs around with a group of older boys who have a reputation in the neighborhood as troublemakers. She is also concerned that Jimmy is drinking and using drugs with these teens.

## Sample Case History Question 1:

Assume that you are meeting with Mrs. Twilley for the first time. You have not yet met with Jimmy. As the interview with Mrs. Twilley proceeds, she says that she is certain she knows the main reason for her son's trouble. She says that Jimmy has a crush on a 16-year-old girl, one of a few girls who hang out with the youths that Jimmy associates with. Mrs. Twilley does not like any of these neighborhood teens, especially this girl, who is loud and obnoxious, and she has tried to forbid Jimmy to see any of them anymore. Which one of the following is the best way to deal with this information at this stage of the interview?

A. Tell Mrs. Twilley that her assessment of the situation is probably correct, because Jimmy is trying to impress the girl by hanging around with an older crowd.
B. Advise Mrs. Twilley that her son's interest in the older girl is only a symptom of a much larger problem.
C. Caution Mrs. Twilley that her judgment about her son's group may be wrong and she should try not to antagonize him about it.
D. Ask Mrs. Twilley if there might be any other factors contributing to her son's present behavior besides his interest in the older girl.

*The correct answer to sample case history question 1 is D.*

## Explanation:

*One of the most important considerations in this question is the fact that the interview is proceeding; it is still going on, as if in the present, between Mrs. Twilley and you, the Probation Officer. Therefore, you have not yet heard all of the information pertaining to Jimmy. Without hearing anything other than Mrs. Twilley's low opinion of the neighborhood teens, you are not in a position to speculate on the cause of Jimmy's behavior. Therefore, it is wrong to assume at this point that Mrs. Twilley has fully understood and presented the situation (choice A), or to conclude that Jimmy has a much larger problem (choice B), or to turn the tables on Mrs. Twilley and speak as if you are likely to side with her son (choice C). All of these choices involve premature decisions.* ***Choice D is correct*** *because, true to good interview practice, you have not stopped in mid-interview to make a judgment about the case, but are still trying to acquire as much pertinent information about Jimmy as possible.*

**Establishing and Maintaining Working Relationships with Defendants, Respondents, and Probationers.**

If this were the actual written test, there might be more questions concerned with other aspects of this interview or the interview to come with Jimmy. Further information would be presented as needed to answer these additional questions. For now, try answering the next sample case history question, about the Probation Officer's disposition of the Intake case, with what you already know about Mrs. Twilley and Jimmy.

## Sample Case History Question 2:

In making the decision to adjust this case informally or to refer it to court for formal adjudication, which one of the following is most important to determine?

A. whether Mrs. Twilley's complaint is justified and can be sustained in court
B. whether there is any responsibility on Mrs. Twilley's part for her son's behavior
C. whether Mrs. Twilley and Jimmy could work out their differences with the assistance of counseling
D. whether Jimmy is willing to try changing his behavior to conform to his mother's wishes

**Explanation:**

*Referring a case to court is a serious step. Court calendars are crowded, and judges have little time to consider subtle personal factors in reviewing a case. Under these conditions, the judicial system can lose sight of people as individuals.*

*In this case, the facts indicate that Jimmy is attempting to establish himself as an individual. His defiance of parental rules and preference for a group his mother dislikes are within the range of typical adolescent behavior. Jimmy's mother is reacting as many parents of teenagers have reacted before her. If the case goes to court, Jimmy will have to deal with several more levels of authority who do not understand him any better than his mother does. It will probably be harder for him to find constructive ways to be himself. Jimmy's mother will see an institution -- the court -- taking over part of her role as parent. If what she really wants is less strain in her life and in her relationship with Jimmy, she may be disappointed to find more strain instead.*

*The ideal solution at present would be to get mother and son to reach an agreement between themselves. They both would be more willing to live with an arrangement that they themselves had made. It seems clear that such an arrangement would require the assistance of a counselor to help the two begin the process of talking to and understanding each other. As this has not yet been tried, it is most important for the officer to determine if the chance of success for counseling is good.* ***Thus, choice C is the best answer to this question.***

*Choice A is wrong because it puts the needs of the judicial system (whether the complaint will hold up in court) ahead of the needs of the clients (what approach will solve their problem). Further, it assumes that the legal aspects of the situation are serious enough to warrant adjudication. From what has been revealed of Jimmy's behavior, this does not seem to be true.*

*Neither choice B nor choice D is an appropriate consideration because each assigns blame to one person. Choice B implies that Mrs. Twilley is at fault for her son's behavior, while choice D implies that only Jimmy needs to change his behavior. This matter is better to address in counseling sessions aimed at reconciling the differences between Mrs. Twilley and Jimmy. The counselor will help both mother and son see how their behaviors affect each other.*

## Preparing Written Material

**There will be 30 Preparing Written Material questions, weighted 0.5 each, for a total of 15 points in this area.**

**There will be 20 Information Presentation test questions that take the form of the following two samples:**

**Sample Information Presentation Questions:**

1. Which one of the following sentences more clearly indicates who is having the mechanical difficulties?

   A. The officer called in, while following the defendant, that he was having mechanical difficulties and would probably have to pull over.
   B. The officer called in, while following the defendant, that the defendant was having mechanical difficulties and would probably have to pull over.

2. Which one of the following sentences more clearly presents the information given?

   A. Ted was a high school dropout but obtained his G.E.D. certificate and is now employed at two jobs.
   B. Ted was a high school dropout but is now employed at two jobs and has obtained his G.E.D. certificate.

**Explanation of Sample Information Presentation Questions:**
In question 1, choice A does not make it clear who was having the difficulty, the officer or the defendant. Choice B is the BETTER answer to the question because it states that the defendant was having mechanical difficulties.

In question 2, choice B does not make it clear when Ted obtained his G.E.D. certificate. Choice A is the BETTER answer to the question because it makes it clear that Ted first obtained his G.E.D. certificate, and is now employed at two jobs.

**There will be 10 Paragraph Organization test questions that take the form of the following sample:**

**Sample Paragraph Organization Question:**

The sentences below are out of sequence; but, when they are correctly arranged, they form a connected, well-organized paragraph. Read the sentences, and then answer the question about the best arrangement of these sentences.

1. Eventually, they piece all of this information together, and make a choice.
2. Before actually deciding upon a job, people usually think about several possibilities.
3. They imagine themselves in different situations, and in so doing, they probably think about their interests, goals, and abilities.
4. Choosing an occupation is an important decision to make.

Which one of the following is the best arrangement of these sentences?

A. 2-3-1-4
B. 2-3-4-1
C. 4-2-1-3
D. 4-2-3-1

**Explanation of Sample Paragraph Organization Question:**
The best arrangement of these sentences is Choice D, 4-2-3-1. Sentence 4 introduces the main idea of the paragraph: "choosing an occupation." Sentences 2-3-1 then follow up on this idea by describing, in order, the steps involved in making such a choice. Choice D is the BEST ANSWER to the question.

# PART 4

## SUMMARY

This guide provided you with information about the job of Probation Officer and the selection process used by most New York State jurisdictions to hire Probation Officers and Trainees. It then offered advice on how to take a multiple-choice test, such as this one will be, with specific suggestions for how best to proceed through easy and more difficult questions. The areas that make up the Probation Officer/Trainee written test were discussed in detail, and sample questions for each were presented along with explanations for the correct and incorrect answers.

### Other sources of help…

There are other sources available to you that may help you in preparing for the written test. You might wish to talk with others to compare your knowledge and experiences, or simply to review on your own what you have learned from your educational and employment background. There are many texts on probation which can be found at local libraries or perhaps at your own place of study or employment. You do not need to consult such reference books to prepare for this examination; but, obviously, a greater familiarity with the profession should be the goal of anyone desiring to become a Probation Officer.

### The day of the test…

Finally, be sure you know how to get to your particular test center. It is best to expect that many people will be taking this as well as other examinations at the same time at your test center, so give yourself plenty of time to find suitable parking in the area, or to make connections via public transportation. (Remember, mass transit is often on a reduced schedule on Saturdays.) If you do not have to rush to make the test's starting time, you will have a better chance to stay calm, to collect yourself and be confident in what you know, and to perform to the best of your ability on the written test. Good luck!

# PART 5

## TEST SECURITY

The test you will be taking is the property of the New York State Department of Civil Service. Candidates may not remove test material from the test site and may not reproduce, reconstruct, or discuss the test content with others. Unauthorized possession or disclosure of the test material is prohibited by law and punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine. Additionally, candidates may be disqualified from appointment to the positions for which the examination is being held and from being a candidate for any Civil Service examination for five years. After you take the test, other individuals may want to talk with you about the test. You should not discuss the questions and answers, even in general terms. You should be careful that you do not inadvertently violate test security and put yourself at risk.

## CONCLUSION

Your attitude and approach to the test will influence how well you perform. A positive attitude will help you do your best.

**Before the test…**

- Study and review this guide to become familiar with what the test will cover.
- Study and review the subject areas that will be covered on the test.

**On the day of the test…**

- Arrive at the test site on time.
- Bring your admission notice, two No. 2 pencils, your ID containing your signature, a quiet lunch or snack, and any other **allowed** materials.
- Do **NOT** bring this test guide to the site.

**During the test…**

- Read and follow all directions on your admission notice, test booklets, answer sheets, and Candidate Directions.
- Follow the Monitor's instructions.
- Keep track of the time.

**After the test…**

- Do **NOT** remove any test material from the test room
- Do **NOT** paraphrase, reconstruct, or reproduce the test material in any way.
- Do **NOT** discuss the test material with others.

*It is the policy of the New York State Department of Civil Service to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure effective communication of information to individuals with disabilities. If you need an auxiliary aid or service to make this information available to you, please contact the New York State Department of Civil Service Public Information Office at (518) 457-9375.*

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New York State
Department of Civil Service
Albany, NY 12239

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