



Adult Probation and Parole: District #12 (Staunton)

Placement Description

Interns will work under the direction of Probation/Parole Officers, and assist with the supervision of offenders placed on probation/parole.

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- Court Observations
- Work with offenders and their families
- Home visits
- Employment contacts
- Observe interviews
- Assist with reports and paperwork

Contact Information

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Read about students' experiences at this site below:

Fall 2021 - Maddie Eger

Harrisonburg Probation and Parole seeks to provide a healing environment for people who have recently been released from incarceration or were recently charged with a crime. These individuals, called supervisees, are paired with an officer who will help connect them with resources within the Harrisonburg community. The supervisees assigned to an officer will also perform regular check-ins and drug screens to ensure that they are maintaining their sobriety and that there are no additional problems that have arisen that may hinder or threaten the supervisee's progress. Probation officers also communicate with the court and community organizations (such as the Community Services Board) about the well-being of the supervisee, and if any additional supports would possibly be needed and can be hence implemented for that individual.

In my time at Probation and Parole, I feel that I got a very well-rounded experience. I performed in person and phone check-ins with supervisees, performed drug screens, went on home visits, updated case notes, and got to visit the Harrisonburg Community Corrections Alternative Program (CCAP), which is where certain supervisees can spend the first months of their probation on work release in a facility that is similar to a jail, in that it has a similar structure. In my time, I got to experience all of the parts of the job that a probation officer is expected to do, and I am grateful that I got the wonderful opportunity that I did.

My impression of this field placement was overwhelmingly positive. Everyone was kind and accepting and took the time needed to make sure that I understood what they were doing or what was being asked of me. One advantage was that officers were very willing to include me in what they were doing and allow me to experience a multitude of things in a very short time. This was also thanks to the supervisees who were willing to let me sit in on initial check-ins to observe until I was ready to perform them on my own. The experience that I liked the most was the home visits. This was an opportunity to see supervisees in an environment that they cultivated and made their own. It was a good experience to see what they value and what was most important to them during these visits as opposed to the more stale environment when doing an office check-in. I cannot think of one thing that I particularly disliked. Though some things I enjoyed doing less, such as urine screens, I still recognize that it is part of the job and would not say it lessened my experience there.

I learned a lot about the inner workings of our legal system while at Probation and Parole. Before, I had a pretty general idea of what a probation officer did and how they interacted with supervisees. However, I got to see first-hand the work that is put in to try and ensure that supervisees successfully complete their probation and have the supports needed to do so. I always knew that I wanted to work with people who are either incarcerated or recently released from jail, and this field placement site has helped reassure me that this is the right path for me. While at Probation and Parole, I was exposed to the innerworkings of the job and could see myself doing this job or something similar in the future. I do like the more helping aspect of the job and not the violating and returning people to court part, but I can also see why that would be



necessary. I hope in the future to get my Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and to work with previously incarcerated individuals to help them reintegrate into society and ensure they have the support necessary to do so. Working either in the probation office as a mental health advisor or in tandem with probation at a separate office is what is most attractive to me.

The psychology major at JMU provided me with a foundation upon which to build my experiences. The different approaches to therapy allowed me to take different approaches when talking to each supervisee based on how we were interacting. For example, when someone was speaking more in a way that seemed like they were looking for advice, I would use more reflection (as used by Carl Rogers in Person-Centered therapy) to see if I could get them to come to a conclusion that they saw fit before advising them on the best course of action for court purposes. I also think that the psychology major focuses on different aspects that could be causing people to act a certain way (e.g., personality traits, social upbringing), which then led me to ask more questions to see if I could decipher why certain individuals were in the situation they were in or behaving the way they were.

My contribution project included the creation of Spanish scripts in order to provide more comfort to both the supervisee and the officer when in certain situations that, for the most part, stayed consistent (scheduling appointments and urine screens). I noticed that these were situations where the verbiage tended to stay the same but the Spanish speaking supervisees still struggled with what was being asked of them. Being the only Spanish speaker in the office, I was used to translate for many situations; however, I will not be there forever and wanted to provide a basis for officers in the future to be able to comfortably communicate, at least in these situations. Thus far, the scripts have been implemented, but the usage is slow going as there are only a few individuals who speak only Spanish, and I was the person who saw the ones who had come in for their check-ins and scheduled their next appointments. However, I feel that these scripts will be useful in the future, and if anything, will provide a backup and make the officer feel more comfortable knowing that they will be there to be relied on if they are needed.

Overall, I feel that this site will provide a good basis for professional development for anyone who is considering working with someone who has previously been incarcerated. There are many moving parts to the legal system, and this allows insight into the innerworkings. Communication skills are also developed in two different capacities: with coworkers and with the supervisees. Communication is essential no matter what line of work one chooses to pursue, and this placement offers the opportunity to further develop these skills. I would also like to add that the officers and supervisors at Probation and Parole are very understanding of limits and making sure that one is comfortable before entering a situation. I was never put in a situation that I did not feel that I could handle and knew that if I were to say that I had certain hesitations, I could bring them up with no repercussions. Any experience is what you make of it, but Probation and Parole makes it easy for the experience to be fulfilling.



Spring 2020– Riley Hawes

District 12 Probation and Parole located in Staunton, Virginia has the following mission statement: “enhance the quality of life in the Commonwealth by improving public safety”. The staff does their best to follow this mission statement and this is done by “providing supervision and control, effective programs and re-entry services in safe environments which foster positive change and growth consistent with researched based-evidence”. District 12 has upheld this personal vision of theirs to “make good things happen to other people” by ensuring the reintegrating of sentenced men and women effectively. They truly succeed in this because they have managed to maintain the lowest recidivism rate in the country for the third year in a row at 23.4%.

While at my time interning with District 12, I was able to do a wide variety of tasks that my site was very trusting with. For the beginning part of my internship, I was under the supervision of a senior probation officer who specialized in supervision of the sex offender cases. I spent a lot of time with her and had the opportunity to observe personal office contacts with offenders of hers, go on home visits to the offender’s home, attend court hearings and observe sentencings, observe a home plan investigation and arrests, administer drug screens to offenders, help with orientation duties of new offenders, and schedule appointments to meet with offenders. I also got to attend a training session with the district mental health clinician and visit the Middle River Regional Jail. Not only did I spend time with the sex offender probation officer, but I got to shadow other general probation officers, learn a lot from the gang member probation officer, and my favorite was shadowing the mental health probation officer and district mental health clinician.

My main duties were assisting with orientation duties, which included collecting fingerprints, administering drug screens, and putting together packets of resources for the incoming offenders. I also was tasked with something that was fairly new to the site which was voice verification screening for the offenders who were very low level supervision and had been approved by a supervisor to be assigned an “online probation officer”; the offenders could conduct monthly check-ins through an app they download. This was exciting in that I was one of the few who knew the process and I was able to schedule my own appointments and meet with the offenders to conduct the initial voice screening interview and tell them about the conditions. My supervisor was very trusting in my capabilities and was always there if I had any questions.

Working with District 12 was such an amazing experience and provides you with so many opportunities to develop and strengthen new skills. Everyone at the site was willing to include me in any task they were doing so I could learn a variety of the jobs to do there. After the first or second time they demonstrated a task for me, they would trust me to try it for myself, if I had the proper training. I was never once bored there and if I ever felt I needed to be challenged more or I desired to see something specific, all I had to do was ask and they would accommodate my wants and needs as an intern. I loved that every day there was different and within a minute something could change and you would have to be prepared for unexpected surprises. There is so much room for growth at this site and your time there I what you make of it. The staff and



employees just want to see you succeed and are willing to help in any way they can to educate you. I felt so comfortable in the environment at District 12 and it is because they treat you respectfully and they care about your opinions even as an intern who has less experience than them. This field placement site pushes you out of your comfort zone in more ways than one, but it is more rewarding than any other experience I have ever had.

For my contribution project I wanted to help with something I noticed within my first week at District 12. It involved creating a resource manual with information about employers within the Staunton area that were willing to hire offenders. Many offenders find it difficult to obtain employment because so many places say they will not hire those with known convictions. I think it is important and beneficial for offenders to have a stable income from employment, not only because it is part of many of their term and conditions of probation, but also because I think it will help reduce recidivism rates in that it will help them stay away from engaging in criminal behavior and associating with risky individuals. Once I gathered the information from employers about requirements for application, I put together the resource manual and gave it to my supervisor. This manual may be used to give to offenders during orientation or given to them by their probation officer, so they can start early in trying to find available jobs.

One of the most impactful things I learned at my time here is developing interpersonal skills in working with high-risk individuals and the importance of evidence-based practices. I was able to see how much these practices effectively helped offenders during their time on probation and the positive changes they made in their lives in efforts for them to be reintegrated into the community. Also, it was amazing to be able to spend time learning from the previous interns who did field placement at District 12. They were so helpful in explaining some of the expectations of supervisors and the opportunities I should take advantage of within the site. I had no idea at the beginning of my internship that my interest in conflict management and criminal justice would take me this far. This inspired me to want to work with this population of individuals in the future and I am so grateful for the opportunity field placement has given me through my experiences at District 12. I will forever be grateful for this academic experience, and would do it all over again if I could.

Fall 2019 – Jenna Foster

District 12 Probation and Parole has the following vision statement: “We’re here to make good things happen for other people.” The office’s vision is accomplished through abiding by the Department of Correction’s mission statement: “Enhancing the quality of life in the Commonwealth by improving public safety.” Public safety is being improved in the Commonwealth, “through the reintegration of sentenced men and women in our custody and care by providing supervision and control, effective programs and services in safe environments.” While other sites may attempt to adhere to their mission statements, the Virginia Department of Corrections has proven their dedication to enhancing public safety by maintaining the lowest recidivism rate in the country at 23.4%.



During my internship, I was provided with a wide array of hands-on opportunities. Although I was under the supervision of a sex offender probation officer, my experiences extended beyond the sex offender unit. I was able to shadow my supervisor as well as other general probation officers, the gang unit probation officer, and the district mental health clinician. Throughout my time at District 12, I was able to attend court hearings, observe arrests, help with offender orientation, administer drug screens, complete different training courses, assist with home visits, attend task force and disclosure meetings, as well as numerous other opportunities. I was also able to participate in conferences and go on tours of Augusta Correctional Center, Middle River Regional Jail, Cold Springs Correctional Center, and The Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation.

In addition to all of the diverse experiences I had, I was one of the first interns entrusted with a full caseload of my own offenders. With this caseload, I was able to work on my high-volume case management abilities, learn the best strategies to build relationships with the offenders, gain a basic understanding of expectations and conditions of offenders on probation and parole, learn how to utilize CORIS, and learn how to correctly and efficiently enter log notes for personal contacts and community contacts with offenders. Having such a unique opportunity has substantially guided my career goals. I have now applied for a probation officer position at District 12 and have received a second interview with the chief and deputy chief. Without having the experience that I had throughout my internship at District 12, I am not sure that I would have been so confident about pursuing a career with the Virginia Department of Corrections.

My contribution project for the office consisted of two separate parts. I created a re-entry board for one of the supervising probation officers who attend the re-entry fairs for inmates and prisoners at nearby facilities. The board allowed offenders to easily view District 12's booth and get a general idea about expectations, conditions, and services offered to offenders. Without having this board, the stigma surrounding probation and parole deterred offenders from approaching the booth and receiving the information provided. The second part of my contribution project involved creating a packet of employers that are verified to hire felons. One of the most common excuses heard from offenders as to why they are not currently employed is that there are no businesses that will hire felons. With this packet of employers across the district, probation officers will be able to provide their offenders with this packet and ensure the ability to obtain employment as a convicted felon is not impossible.

The advantages of deciding to have an internship at District 12 are endless. All of the staff at District 12 are very kind and willing to help students shape their experience into something that matches their passions and interests. This site also gives students countless opportunities for hands-on experiences with offenders both in and outside of the office. Each officer in the building wants to make the student's experience memorable and strives to give them experiences or skills that will be beneficial to add to their resume. In addition, all of the staff will treat students just like they're another employee in the office. They will include students in anything that they have an interest in and value their opinions just as much as other probation officers. I cannot say enough great things about District 12 and all of the staff that made my experience so worthwhile. My internship in this office has given me more opportunities and skills



than I had ever expected, and there isn't a single part of it that I would change. I am very thankful that taking Field Placement gave me this opportunity and potentially carved the path to my future career with the Department of Corrections.

Fall 2018 – Haley Brill

District 12: Staunton Probation and Parole follows the mission statement of the Department of Corrections, which is to “enhance the quality of life in the Commonwealth by improving public safety”. This is done in a variety of ways including “the reintegration of sentenced men and women in their custody and care by providing supervision and control, effective programs and re-entry services in safe environments which foster positive change and growth consistent with research-based evidence, fiscal responsibility, and constitutional standards”. D12 has their own personal vision of “We are here to make good things happen to other people”.

During my time at the site, I was able to have a diverse experience. I shadowed the mental health probation officer. Through this, I was able to meet and observe the supervision of people with serious mental illnesses. I got to watch several court hearings and learn about the different documents required for court as well as the different types of hearings. My time at District 12 allowed me to go to Western State, Middle River Regional Jail, and Cold Springs. I conducted urinalysis screens, fingerprinting, and presentence interview reports. Towards the end of my internship, I was able to supervise my own small caseload. This was very exciting and I think has prepared me for “the real job experience”. I scheduled my own appointments and met with offenders one on one. I conducted COMPAS assessments and helped offenders come up with goals to reach during their time on probation. I was able to log my notes and observations into CORIS, the database used for probation.

There are so many advantages to being at Probation and Parole. Every person in the office was helpful to me in some way, shape, or form. The officers and supervisors wanted to see me succeed in everything that I did. They included me in everything and treated me like a real part of the office. I was encouraged to give my opinions about the happenings around the office and I participated in the monthly staff meetings as well. There was something new every day that I went into the office. There was opportunity to get out of the office frequently as well. There are home visits to be conducted and other types of field work. At this placement site, a person has to expect the unexpected. It requires being able to shift gears and do something completely different at a moment's notice. This was something that I really loved about the office. The internship is what you make of it. They will allow you to go above and beyond if that is what you're interested in.

My contribution project involved creating a resource manual of local resources. This was distributed amongst all the officers. It included information about all the housing, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and food/clothing resources within in the district. I put the applications for each of these resources in the manual as well. This allows the officers to be



able to have help readily available for their offenders. This is important because the goal of probation is to lower recidivism rates and I believe that this will really help.

I think conflict management was one of the most important skills that I learned at this placement. No matter what a future job throws at me, I have learned how to be prepared for the unexpected. It might be that all your appointments show up at once, one of your offenders gets arrested, or an offender comes in and needs to be sanctioned. I have loved this experience so much that I have applied here. It really helped me shape what I wanted to do with my degree. This field placement has truly been the best part of my academic career thus far.

Spring 2017 – Allison Reese

The Staunton Probation and Parole Office's mission is to enhance the quality of life in the Commonwealth and public safety. They do this through providing supervision and control, having effective programs and reentry services, and fostering positive change using evidence based practices.

My experience there involved a lot because I tried to make the most of it. I was able to help supervise a low risk level caseload through which I conducted my own appointments. I shadowed officers in appointments, court, home visits, and orientation. I was able to sit in with the sex offender peer group and learn about what that includes. A lot of what I did was make appointments for the caseload and home visits and to conduct the actual appointments. I also learned to take drug screens, finger print, and went through metal detector training. I got to participate in the staff meetings once a month as well.

This site is fantastic if you are interested in conflict management, criminal justice, or high risk populations. At first I did not think that I would want to be an intern here but after my interview and experiencing the atmosphere I knew it was a good fit! My advice would be that if you feel like you aren't getting enough work or experience, then ask for more. The workers at the site are extremely helpful and friendly and want to make your internship experience as educational and useful to you as possible. This site will push you out of your comfort zone, but that is why you should want to be there. My supervisor never made me do things I was uncomfortable with and was always there to answer questions. I think everyone agrees that drug tests are not very fun but they are a new skill and it is different. My favorite part was feeling like my contribution project was actually helpful. Work with your supervisor and be observant to determine something that you could contribute to the office; this makes the whole process so enjoyable.

Through my internship I learned more about evidence based practices and the important role that probation officers have in the community. It inspired me to work with high risk populations and to continue helping others. My time was so influential that I have applied for a job opening in their office. For incoming students looking at internships, if this site at all interests you,



definitely try and get an interview and get a feel for it. You might find a hidden gem of an experience!