

Tioga County Probation Summary for 2024 Annual Report

The Tioga County Probation Department works with Tioga County Court, Drug Treatment Court, Family Court, Surrogates Court and 13 separate Town or Village Justice Courts in the County. The Department prepares time sensitive documents to assist those courts in making sentencing decisions for the citizens before them.

Much of the Department's work is prescribed by New York State laws, such as what information must be included in an investigation submitted to the courts and how frequently Probation Officers meet with individuals sentenced to probation supervision. Over the years, New York State has moved from an equal partnership with counties regarding Probation funding to the current state of only funding 9% of the Probation budget. This makes Probation, a mandated service in counties, one of the top ten departments that affect county budgets. Currently, 90% of the Probation budget is covered by Tioga County taxpayers.

Tioga County Probation runs Alternative to Detention programs to reduce or eliminate the use of expensive detention placement for youth in the juvenile justice system. Evidenced based programs and techniques such as Decision Points, Interactive Journaling, and Motivational Interviewing are a few examples.

Tioga County Probation operates three Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programs to reduce reliance on the Tioga County Jail. The presence of an approved ATI program also assists the County by allowing the Jail to follow a reduced classification system within the facility, reducing its costs. The Department operates Pre-Trial Release, (an opportunity to be released from jail and monitored, without paying bail) Community Service, (perform community service hours at government or not for profit agencies in lieu of incarceration) and Electronic Monitoring (wearing an ankle unit or downloading an app on one's phone that tracks GPS location in lieu of incarceration). However, due in large part to the implementation of bail reform, the ability to operate the Pre-Trial Release and Community Service programs was significantly impacted.

2024 was a year of initiatives, collaboration, community focus, and progress at Probation including:

- Continued and more focused Collaboration with other agencies (Veterans Services, Schools, DSS, Employment Center, Law Enforcement, District Attorney, Alcohol/Drug Agencies)
- Continuation of the Probation Vehicle upgrade plan
- Staffing/Training (onboarding of new POs and completing new state training requirements)
- Equipped all officers with iPads to allow for more effective service provision to Justice Courts

- Initiated the creation of a comprehensive training manual for the onboarding of new staff
- Expanded pretrial services available to the courts
- Began enrolling probationers under supervision for a sex offense in the IPPC Technologies Program.
- Created and implemented quality assurance program
- Continued the destruction of files in compliance with records retention schedule
- Presented the Decision Points curriculum in a Tioga County School District
- Initiated use of Alcotag units through Probation's contract with Buddi. Alcotag units provide real time alcohol consumption monitoring of probationers in combination with GPS location
- Focused on incentivizing youth
- With the assistance of IT and the County Administrator, distributed anonymous survey to Probation staff regarding ways in which the Department can make positive enhancements

Probation placed an emphasis on providing officers with new tools to help them more effectively supervisor their caseloads in 2024. All Officers received iPads to use when they are in the field. This allows Officers to access case information through our Caseload Explorer data system so they have real time information regarding the cases they are supervising.

Probation also continued its journey to provide the most essential piece of safety equipment to our Officers, reliable All Wheel Drive vehicles. We completed this goal in 2024 by purchasing a new 2023 AWD Dodge Durango. The probation fleet now consists of three AWD vehicles, a 2018 Ford Escape, a black 2023 Dodge Durango, and a white 2023 Dodge Durango.

New tools put into use in 2024 that enhance the supervision of probationers include the addition of IPPC Technologies and the expansion of Probation's contract with Buddi to add Alcotag technology. IPPC Technologies is a company that monitors devices used by offenders convicted of a sex offense and assures the offender is not accessing prohibited sites on the internet such as social media sites and pornography sites. After enlarging our contract with Buddi, Probation now has at its disposal Alcotags which give real time alcohol use information regarding the Probationer who is wearing the device.

Probation also continued its mission to collaborate with other agencies in 2024. All Probation Officers enrolled in and completed the Threat Evaluation and Reporting Course (TERC) presented by Emergency Management Services in 2024. Probation became a member of the Tioga County Threat Assessment Management (TAM) Team which meets on a monthly basis. In addition, Probation worked closely with Tioga County Veteran's Services in providing outreach and

services to the Tioga County Veteran population through grocery giveaways and recognition ceremonies. Probation also participated in the backpack give away at Tioga Central School prior to the start of the school year, the Tioga County Overdose Vigil in the Fall as well as the Downtown Owego Halloween celebration.

Probation continued with its records retention program in 2024, destroying several hundred old probation files per the Records Retention Schedule. This process includes the scanning and digital storage of important documents prior to destruction.

As we enter 2025, Probation looks forward to numerous changes and accomplishing many goals including:

- Fully staffing Probation to include an Officer that writes Investigations 75% of the time
- Training three Officers to become trainers in the anticipated Southern Tier Training Academy which will provide basic training for newly hired Probation Officers in our region
- Developing "Secondary Officers" for each specialty Probation Caseload
- Submit a proposal to the Legislature to equip Probation Officers with non-lethal defensive capability
- Expand the Decision Points curriculum to the majority of Tioga County School Districts
- Develop plans for a future fully functional Probation substation in the Waverly area
- Initiate Succession Planning within the Department
- Provide trainings for Tioga County Law Enforcement Agencies, Tioga County Department of Social Services, other County Agencies, and Tioga County Justices regarding Probation and the services we provide

In 2024 Probation looked to strengthen our working relationship and enhance our understanding of the duties and responsibilities of other Tioga County Departments. To that end, Probation initiated a joint effort with the Tioga County Sheriff's Office that has a Probation Officer accompany a Tioga County Sheriff's Deputy when returning an absconded Probationer to New York from another state. The collaboration not only provides Probation with a better understanding of the logistics of such an operation but also alleviates some of the financial burden of the Sheriff's Office for the transport.

2024 saw Probation enhance its monitoring capabilities of those individuals under supervision convicted of a sex offense. The use of IPPC Technologies began in 2024 and quickly became not only a monitoring device, but a deterrent for those offenders who had urges to use technology for inappropriate purposes.

Finally, to ensure Probation continues to provide exceptional service to the citizens of Tioga County, the Department developed and implemented a Quality Assurance Program within the Department in 2024. The audit process involves the random selection of cases to be audited by Supervisory staff to assure all State mandated regulations are being followed and Best Practice guidelines defined by the Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives and Department of Criminal Justice Services are being utilized.

The Tioga County Probation Department is committed to meeting the challenges and achieving the goals established for 2025 to enhance the services it provides to the citizens of Tioga County.