

# Lake County Juvenile Court

## Judge Karen Lawson

### Probation Department

Probation is the most widely used correctional technique to address delinquent behavior. The primary assumption underlying probation is that the individual offender can be most effectively helped within his own community, as opposed to placing him in an institutional setting. The goal of probation is to enable the individual to remain in the community by assisting him to make the behavioral and attitudinal changes necessary for him to function as a law-abiding citizen.

Creating or helping to create changes in anyone's behavior is a difficult and complex task. Nevertheless, this is a probation officer's primary function. In order to accomplish this, the probation officer must call upon all of the resources available. This entails the establishment and maintenance of a trusting and honest relationship as well as the ability to understand the personalized problems that the probationer may be experiencing. There are a number of techniques that may be used in this process: counseling, both family and individual; removing the child from his environment; addressing specific issues such as drug/alcohol use, physical abuse, etc.

The rules of probation, which are established by order of the Court, are the most important and effective tools used by the probation officer. These rules are designed to establish parameters of acceptable behavior for the probationer and are consistently enforced by the probation officer. Once the individual's behavior is within the parameters established by the rules of probation, it is then the probation officer's task to help the probationers internalize their behaviors through the use of counseling and guidance. All available community resources and programs are utilized to assist probationers and their families to make the necessary changes in their lives.

The Lake County Juvenile Court has twelve probation officers to cover the entire county. Two of these officers supervise specialized caseloads such as children who are severely behavioral handicapped children, children in residential placement and children in need of intensive close day to day supervision.

Each probationer is seen by his/her probation officer bi-weekly (more/less often depending upon circumstances) in school, their homes, and in community settings. The "average" length that a child is on probation is nine months. Some children are under court supervision much longer depending upon the nature of their offense and/or adjustment to probation supervision.