



Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County

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New Juvenile Probation Handbook provides guidance to youth and families

Handbook helps youth and their families navigate involvement with probation

PHOENIX (February 21, 2023) – Being placed on probation can lead to youth and their families feeling confused and overwhelmed about the process, including attending court hearings and how to communicate with their assigned probation officers.

The Juvenile Probation Department, part of the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County, recently introduced the *Juvenile Probation Handbook for Youth and Family*, which provides valuable information and explains the differences between Probation, Diversion and Detention.

“One significant challenge prior to the handbook’s creation was ensuring that youth and their family and/or guardians received all the necessary and helpful information while navigating the Juvenile Justice System,” said Juvenile Probation’s Project Lead, Megan Wing. “Our officers work with a variety of youth, so it can be very difficult to find the time to collect and compile answers, resources and explanations for each component of probation or detention. Additionally, some youth might not know what questions to ask, or they might feel overwhelmed during the probation process.”

The *Juvenile Probation Handbook for Youth and Family* was developed to help youth and their families gain a clear understanding of the Maricopa County juvenile justice system in easy-to-understand terminology. This removes the anxiety and confusion that can come from an abundance of technical and legal jargon. It includes general explanations and definitions of the probation department’s programs and systems, including what to expect. The handbook also covers information about who youth and their families will interact with and what role they play in their case.

“The court hearing information is extremely helpful for youth to understand what to expect during any type of hearing or exposure to court they might have,” said Wing. “We were supported in authoring this section with the Maricopa County Office of Public Advocate as well, who gave excellent guidance for content and definitions suitable for youth.”

A section of the handbook was created with parents and guardians in mind, providing ways they can help support their child through this process. Tips for parents such as staying informed, researching their

rights and realizing their importance in their child's success are outlined in the handbook and can play an important role in a kid's ability to complete probation.

"Ultimately, we hope that the handbook is helpful and provides some level of comfort and guidance to youth on probation. Our department's mission is to serve families and equip the youth with tools for positive change and the opportunity to grow," said Wing. "The handbook itself is meant to be a 'living' document, meaning that any time there is change, whether it be policy, law, or additional suggestions, we are willing and able to revise its contents."

A list of community resources such as housing, education and family services are provided within the handbook for families who may need some assistance. Youth and their families are also given information about the Hope Closet, which provides clothes, hygiene products, bags and backpacks to kids leaving Juvenile Detention.

The Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Department's goal is to empower youth by continuing to provide valuable resources, such as the newly created handbook, and help them in their transition into the community. In Maricopa County, 80% of juveniles placed on probation have not received another referral (arrest) within a year after completing their probation.

"The handbook is filled with digestible content so that youth and their families feel supported and have immediate access to helpful information," said Wing. "Our department's goal is to see this handbook provided to all youth and families who come into contact with our system."

A group of interns from Arizona State University's Maricopa County Leadership Education Advancing Public Service Program assisted in the creation of the Juvenile Probation handbook and helped to oversee the Hope Closet program.

"For a few months, during the inception of this project, I worked closely with one of our ASU Interns, Vishnu Raghavan. He was extremely helpful in collecting resources and pulling content and research together which really laid the foundation for this amazing end result," said Wing. "He was a great support for envisioning what the handbook would include and how to write its content in the most user-friendly manner."

The Juvenile Probation Handbook for Youth and Family is available at all Juvenile Probation locations throughout Maricopa County and is also available online by visiting:

<https://superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/media/7590/jpd-handbook.pdf>

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The Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County is comprised of Superior Court, Adult Probation and Juvenile Probation, which includes juvenile detention. The Judicial Branch in Maricopa County is the fourth largest trial court system in the nation and, along with its 3,200 employees, is dedicated to providing a safe, fair and impartial forum for resolving disputes, enhancing access to services, and providing innovative, evidence-based practices that improve the safety of the community and ensure the public's trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch. For more information, visit www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov.