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PHILADELPHIA COURT OF COMMON PLEAS  
FAMILY COURT DIVISION - JUVENILE BRANCH

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ACTING CHIEF

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In Philadelphia, the Juvenile Court typically disposes 8,000 to 9,000 new delinquency cases annually. In 1990, 8,432 delinquent petitions were referred to the court for disposition. Of these cases, 4,611 were eventually placed under the court's supervision.

In 1990, five percent of the juvenile population between the ages of 10 and 17 were charged with delinquent acts. 90% of all delinquents are males. The typical delinquent case involved a 17 year old male who was charged with a theft offense.

While the majority of the adjudicated cases are assigned to a form of probation supervision, close to 30% are committed to delinquent residential institutions.

Recently Philadelphia has begun to restructure probation services by increasing the number of specialized supervision programs available to the court. The majority of these programs are

designed to provide alternatives to incarceration, either prior to the commitment decision; or by reducing the number of days in placement.

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Philadelphia has committed itself to providing the highest level of probation services possible. We are committed to providing for the safety and security of the citizens of our city. We are attempting to do both: provide community safety, and client rehabilitation at the lowest reasonable costs to society.

However, the increasing costs of providing competent Juvenile Justice services places a greater burden on the citizens of Philadelphia at a time of severe economic hardship. We recognize our responsibility but feel that in order to maintain quality service, we must depend on a shared commitment with the counties in the surrounding area and the state government.

This request for an increase in state support for probation officers salaries comes at a time when we are experiencing a state budgetary freeze for Juvenile Justice supported programs.

A recent study of the delinquent residential commitments from Philadelphia show that all placements were equal to an annual rate of 488,852 client days of care. Using an average cost of \$120.00 per client day of care, Philadelphia will spend greater than 58 million dollars for delinquent commitments.

Probation services in Philadelphia are supported by state aid totaling approximately 700,000.00 dollars, with a recent proposal for an additional 490,000.00 dollars.

This aid is used to fund:

- 1) The Intensive Drug and Alcohol Unit (300,000.00)
- 2) A Probation Drug Testing Unit ( 29,000.00)
- 3) Approximately 20 Probation Officers in the

Intensive Aftercare Unit, House Arrest Unit,  
The Intensive Unit (331,022.00)  
4) Staff Training ( 20,000.00)

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Additionally, the proposed grant was to be made available to assist the court in reducing the number of days clients spend in placement by a minimum of 5%.

5) Days of Care (490,000.00)

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The primary thrust of these programs is to increase services to the delinquent population, provide greater safety to Philadelphians, and reduce the amount spent by the state (\$58 million) on delinquent commitments.

The decision by the State Budgetary Committee to put these funds into budgetary reserve will have a drastic impact on probation in Philadelphia. It will drive up the already high costs for institutional placements.

The proposed \$490,000.00 "Days of Care" grant, was to be used to fund programs that would reduce days of care by a minimum of 5%:

- 1) Establish a computerized system for individually tracking each Philadelphia youth in placement.
- 2) Develop a system of classification to accurately identify client needs and risks and to provide appropriate services prior to the commitment decision.
- 3) Create a unit to develop community based "needs" programs, to recommend appropriate community treatment programs, or placement recommendations; and review all commitment decisions to insure appropriate placement.
- 4) Expand the capacity of intensive/specialized units to provide probation alternatives, to commitment.

- 5) Create/expand intensive aftercare services to provide for early release of clients from delinquent placements.

The above "Days of Care" proposal would result in a minimum 5% reduction in the length of time delinquents spend in placement totaling a savings of 2.9 million dollars. Research suggest that costs would be reduced by closer to 10%, or 5.8 million dollars.

The Intensive Drug and Alcohol Unit funded by a \$300,000.00 grant supervises 250 adjudicated drug sellers. It is the only probation program designed to work with this hard core group. The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office recommends commitment in all cases involving drug sales. Without the Intensive Drug and Alcohol Unit the Court would have no alternative but to accept the District Attorney's recommendation for commitment at a cost to the state of an additional 8 million dollars.

The Grant in Aid received from the state totaling \$331,000.00 is used to fund 20 probation positions in 4 specialized units. the loss of these positions would either decrease the number of alternative probation responses available to the court or extend the length of time delinquents must remain in placement.

The Intensive Probation Unit, 16 probation officers, is designed as a probation alternative to commitment. It has averaged a greater than 10% reduction in the number of court commitments.

The Intensive Aftercare Unit, 4 probation officers, provides early release to 70 delinquents annually, reducing their average length of commitment by 90 days per client.

The House Arrest Unit, 6 probation officers, provides an alternative to detention for 80 delinquents daily. The cost of detention is \$220.00 per day.



The combined impact of the loss of probation positions in these specialized units would increase the number of delinquents being committed, remaining in placement or in detention. The current savings through these programs is \$11 to \$16 million dollars annually.

Furthermore, the court is receiving aid to perform drug testing on probation clients and to provide ongoing training for the probation staff.

One of the primary causes of crime today is believed to be related to the use and distribution of drugs. By initiating a drug testing program, the court has been able to measure client drug use, monitor compliance with court ordered sanctions against drug use, maintain sobriety and reduce drug related crime.

While actual figures have not been computed regarding the impact of drug testing it can be suggested that the information concerning drug use goes a long way in identifying areas for future

program development. Also the monitoring of this problem gives the probation department actual evidence to deal with the drug use problem.

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It is becoming increasingly evident that more money should be invested in this area to help identify drug users at an earlier time and get them into programs to deal with their addictive behavior. By so doing we may well be preventing the growth of minor delinquents into habitual offenders.

Finally, but not least, we can not measure the loss of training funds for our probation staff. Training has many benefits; directly as information used by the staff to provided increased levels of service and indirectly as measured by staff moral, and a feeling of professional growth.

In conclusion, the figures speak for themselves.

Anticipated Annual Aid	\$1.2 million
Anticipated Program Savings	\$25 million

The loss of \$1.2 million in state aid will result in the loss of probation officers, service to the city of Philadelphia, the loss of safety and security and a considerable increase in the amount of money necessary to make up for the consequences of these lost programs.

We strongly believe that the \$1.2 million spent in state aid is money spent in the best interest of all Pennsylvania.