



*Indiana Probation Officer Professional  
Development Project*

*Interview Guide*



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
**EXECUTIVE EDUCATION**

# *Indiana Probation Officer Professional Development Project*

## *Interview Guide*

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T H I S S P A C E  
I N T E N T I O N A L L Y  
L E F T B L A N K

# Introduction

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## Overview

New hires can impact the culture of the probation department. People must be selected based on who possess the competencies required for the position. The employment interview is an effective way of determining who has these attributes and therefore, who is right for the job.

The employment interview is popular because it is more personal than written assessments and because it can be used to evaluate job characteristics not easily measured with other procedures (e.g., Interpersonal and Self-Management Skills).

## The Purpose of this Guide

This guide provides information on the design of a structured interview using behavioral based questions aligned to competencies recognized as essential to an Indiana probation officer. The guide discusses the steps involved in an interview process. It also presents a bank of behavior based questions interviewers may wish to use to evaluate candidates for Indiana Probation officer positions. It is organized scientifically to guide the hiring of the most qualified Indiana probation officers in a legally defensible manner. The intention is not to pose every question in this guide to probation officer candidates. Instead, interviewers from each Indiana County may choose the questions from each section that fits their needs.

This guide offers a bank of questions intended to evaluate core competencies of an Indiana probation officer (Interpersonal, Self-Management, and Technical). We do not recommend that more than two questions be asked from each category so that the overall interview does not last more than one hour.

## Departmental Cooperation with Supervising Judge and Court Hiring Policies

This guide assumes that its user is working closely with their supervising judge as much as possible in each county. Before conducting the interview, it is important that you contact the supervising judge. There may be extenuating circumstances in counties that would necessitate asking questions not covered in this guide. Other county specific considerations may also exist. Each probation office supervising judge should be considered the first level of guidance before proceeding with the interview process.

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# Section I: Components of Competency-Based Behavioral Interviewing

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## Structured Interviews

This guide instructs on how to conduct structured employment interviews. Structured interviews differ from unstructured in that:

- All candidates are asked the same questions in the same order.
- All candidates are evaluated using a common rating scale.
- Interviewers agree on acceptable answers.

Structured interviews ensure that candidates have equal opportunities to provide information and are assessed accurately and consistently. Also, standardization in the interview procedure makes the process more legally defensible (Terpstra, Mohamed, and Kethley 1999<sup>1</sup>; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 2003<sup>2</sup>).

## Behavioral Based Interviewing

Behavior-based interviewing is a technique used in which the job candidate has the opportunity to demonstrate their potential for succeeding in the new job by providing specific examples of how they handled similar situations based on their experience.

The primary purpose of the behavioral interview is to gather information from job candidates about their actual behavior during past experiences which demonstrates competencies required for the job. The underlying premise is the best predictor of future behavior on the job is past behavior under similar circumstances.

## Three Core Competencies of an Indiana Probation Officer

HR professionals define a competency as a cluster of related abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills that enable an Indiana probation officer to act effectively on the job. After conducting a job analysis of an Indiana probation officer, the following three core competencies were identified as essential:

- Interpersonal Competencies
- Self-Management Competencies
- Technical Competencies

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<sup>1</sup> Terpstra, D. E., Mohamed, A. A., & Kethley, R. B. (1999). An analysis of Federal court cases involving nine selection devices. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 7, 26-34.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Merit Systems Protection Board. (2003). *The federal selection interview: Unrealized potential*. Washington, DC: Office of Policy and Evaluation.

*Interpersonal competencies* refer to the way an Indiana probation officer communicates and interacts with people (people skills).

With regard to interpersonal competencies, an Indiana probation officer should:

- Be able to demonstrate qualities of collaboration.
- Be able to manage and work with diverse groups and individuals.
- Have qualities of empathy, patience, and adaptability.
- Be effective at communicating with co-workers, other county departments, and the public, including being sensitive to professional ethics, gender, cultural diversities, and disabilities.
- Be a motivator and leader.
- Be able to demonstrate qualities of a team player.

*Technical competencies* refer to the knowledge that Indiana probation officers should have about the field of probation as conducted in the State of Indiana, and their ability to use that expertise on the job. Education is the central component to technical competency.

With regard to technical competencies, an Indiana probation officer should have:

- A working knowledge of local, state, and federal regulations, standard policies, procedures and legal terminology of the justice system.
- Demonstrated skills in working with, and knowledge of various computer-based programs, including the Microsoft Office suite and database management/entry.
- An undergraduate degree with a major in criminal justice, social work, psychology or related field.
- Experience and/or training as community corrections officer or probation officer.
- The knowledge of philosophy, theories, and practices in the correctional field and related disciplines.
- The knowledge of available community resources with understanding and skill to use them.
- The knowledge of evidence-based practices for use in all interactions with probationers.

*Self-management competencies* refer to how Indiana probation officers manage and express themselves.

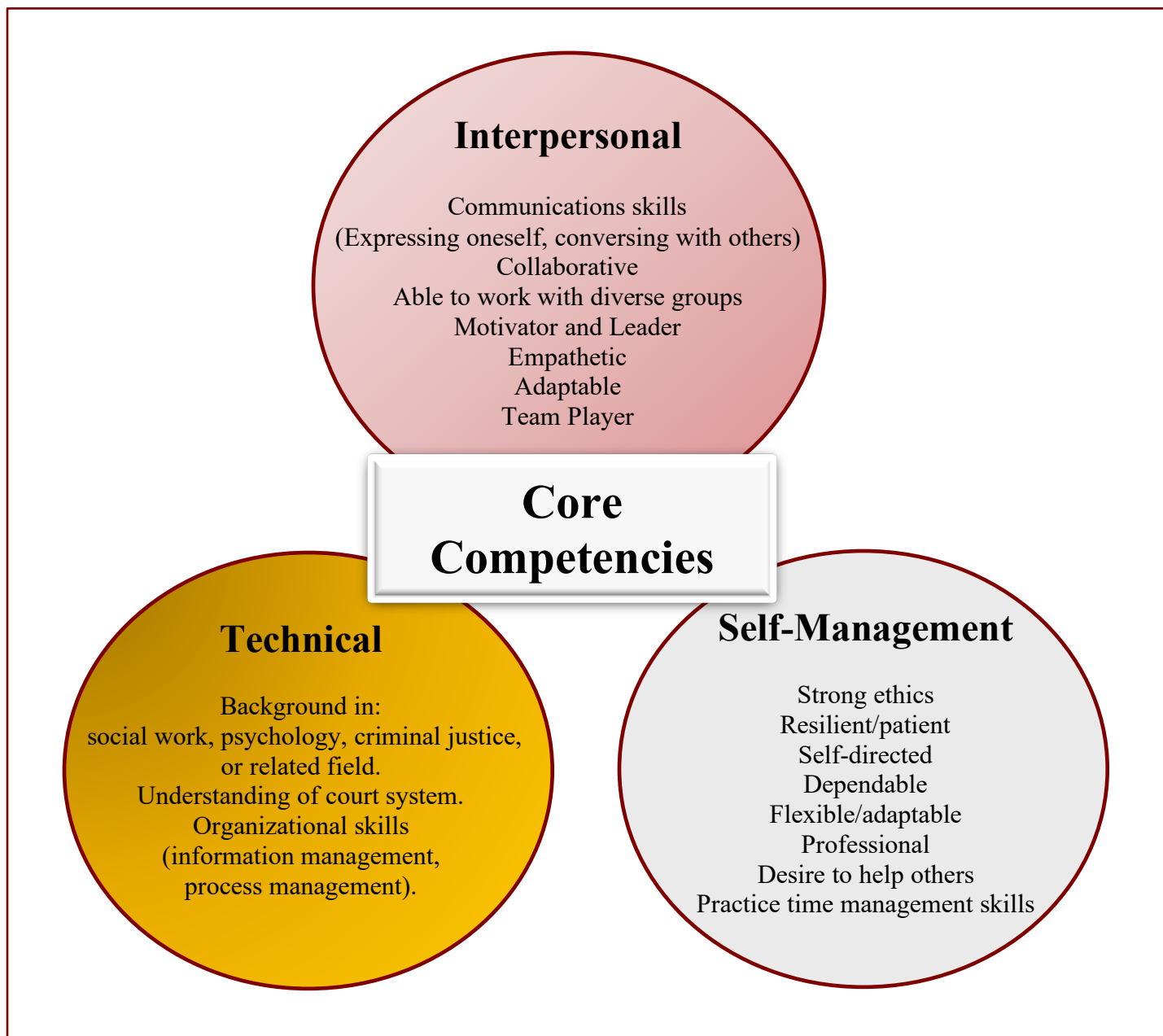
An Indiana probation officer should:

- Demonstrate an ability to work independently with minimal supervision (self-directed).
- Be flexible, adaptable, and dependable.
- Be professional.
- Have a strong desire to help others.
- Have the ability to comply with all employer and department policies and work rules, including, but not limited to, attendance, safety, drug-free workplace, and personal conduct (strong ethics).
- Be able to serve on-call and respond to emergencies on a 24-hour basis. (county-dependent)
- Have the ability to work on several tasks at the same time and work rapidly for long periods, occasionally under time pressure (multitask).
- Be able to occasionally work extended hours, including evenings, and travel out of town for continuing education courses, sometimes overnight.
- Effectively manage their time.



Figure 1 graphically represents the three core competencies of an Indiana probation. The behavior-based interview questions provided in this guide are intentionally aligned with each competency, probing the related abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills of the candidates to those identified as essential to an Indiana Probation Officer.

Figure 1 Competency Triangle of Indiana Probation Officer



## Explanation of the Rating Scale Used in this Guide

Table 1 provides a 3-level proficiency rating with labels for each.

*Table 1: Rating Scale*

<b>Proficiency Level</b>	<b>General Competencies</b>
Level 3 – Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applies the competency in exceptionally difficult situations.</li><li>• Serves as a key resource and advises others</li></ul>
Level 2 - Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applies the competency in difficult situations.</li><li>• Requires occasional guidance.</li></ul>
Level 1 - Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applies the competency in the simplest situations.</li><li>• Requires close and extensive guidance.</li></ul>

Table 1 is provided as a general guide. The questions provided in this guide have specific answers to facilitate standardized evaluation of Indiana probation officer candidates. Use your professional judgment when evaluating candidates.

### Interview Probes

A probe is a question asked by the interviewer to help clarify a candidate's response or ensure the candidate has provided enough information. When probes are necessary, interviewers should use very similar probes for all candidates to ensure the interviewers give each candidate the same opportunities to excel. While probes may need to be tailored to address each candidate's specific response, the general meaning of the probes should not change.

Before the interview, establish the desired range of probing (for example, no probes, a limited number of probes, unlimited probes). If using probes, determine the specific probes for each question, the interviewer is allowed to use.

Examples of probing questions as follow-ups to behavior-based questions include:

To a situation:

- What factors led up to the situation?
- Could you or anyone else have done something to prevent the situation?
- What did you determine as the most critical issue to address in this situation?

To an action:

- How did you respond?
- What was the most important factor you considered in taking action?
- What is the first thing you did?

For an outcome:

- What was the outcome?
- Is there anything you would have said and/or done differently?
- Were there any benefits from the situation?

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# Section II: Administering a Structured Interview

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## Chapter 1: Before the Interview

The interview provides an early opportunity to form relationships and prepare the interviewers to (eventually) respond to the unique strengths and professional development needs of a probation officer. It also is a good gauge of "who is out there" so changes in the job market can be detected and workable responses formulated (e.g., change the recruiting ad, upgrade pay scales, change workshop training, prepare for greater coaching challenges). The purpose of the main interview is to gain and give information. We recommend that the interviewer uses their best active listening skills and takes notes throughout the process.

Before the face to face interview the following steps should be followed:

- Review the candidate's resume and application.
- Review the probation department's human resource policies.
- Review this interview guide.
- Conduct optional telephone/Skype Interview for pre-screening.
- Decide format of Interview: Individual or Team?

### *Reviewing the candidate's resume and application.*

In reviewing the candidate's resume and application look for basic qualifications like a college degree in criminal justice, social work, psychology or related work or volunteer experience. Also, is it complete? Are there any red flags? Are there gaps in work history?

### *Reviewing the probation department's human resource policies.*

The Indiana County's Probation Departments HR policies support the way the State and Counties define roles and rules, explain consequences of actions and behavior and provide employees with tools necessary to do their work. HR policies and procedures also support equal employment opportunity in giving fair treatment to applicants and employees throughout the hiring process and the employment experience. It is important that one conducts hiring procedures in a way that follows established HR guidelines to ensure consistency and fairness in hiring.

### *Reviewing this interview guide.*

This interview guide is intended to facilitate the interviewing process in a fair, consistent manner to determine the best candidates for hiring. It will be helpful for the individual or hiring team (panel) to be familiar with this document.

### *Conducting optional telephone/Skype Interview for pre-screening*

The phone screen allows the courts to determine if the Indiana probation officer candidate's qualifications, experience, workplace preferences, and salary needs are congruent with the position.

The phone screen saves time and eliminates unlikely candidates.

It would be helpful to have the probation officer full job description and salary range available when talking to the candidate.

We recommended that the department familiarized the candidate with the general summary of duties purpose, difficulty of the work, working conditions, and personal work relationships from the probation officer job description.

On the phone or video conferencing software (e.g., Skype), explain the position and the kinds of situations an Indiana Probation Officer encounters. Ask questions about the person's qualifications. Listen for enthusiasm, self-assurance, and ease of talking.

### *Decide format of Interview: Individual or Team?*

Will the interview be conducted by an individual or a team? Benefits of having one individual managing interviews include less preparation time, and the interviewer is in control. This makes the process more efficient. Drawbacks include less department buy-in on the hiring decision and less diversity of opinion. If the department decides to conduct a team interview, the person who is responsible for doing the hiring becomes the selecting/lead interviewer. The selecting official recruits the panel members and assigns them questions. Best practice dictates that the panel meets at least 30 minutes before the interview, or a day before, to go over the questions and review the process. Benefits of a panel interview include greater buy-in from the department, a greater diversity of opinion, and less chance of individual bias in hiring. However, panel interviews require more time because of the more complicated logistics that it necessitates.

## **Chapter 2: Conducting the Interview**

### *Competency Aligned Behavioral Questions*

As explained in Section 1 of this guide, best evidenced-based research concludes that probing-behavioral based questions are most successful in evaluating a candidate's competencies. A thorough job analysis of an Indiana probation officer discovered the three most essential competencies for the position are: Interpersonal, Self-Management, and Technical. Therefore, the main phase of the interview for an Indiana probation officer contained in this guide has suggested questions that seek to evaluate those competencies.

### *Phases of an Interview*

This guide breaks the face-to-face interview into three main phases:

- Interview Part I: Introduction and Rapport Building
- Interview Part 2: Competency Aligned Behavioral Questions
- Interview Part 3: Closing

*Interview Part I: Introduction and Rapport Building*

It is important before the interview formally starts to build rapport with the candidate. Such actions as shaking hands, removing barriers, and making eye contact are helpful before launching into questions.

Also, at this time it is important to outline the sequence of events and what you want to achieve as a result of the interview. Describe the general timeframe set for the interview. Tell the applicant you will take notes.

An example introductory statement to begin the interview may go as follows: “Thank you for coming today. My name is [name] [and] (if in a team, have other interview team members introduce themselves) I [we] am/are going to ask you a number of questions to determine whether you are a good fit for the position of an Indiana probation officer. We should be done in about an hour. To get an accurate record of our conversation, I [we] will be taking notes.”

A rapport question is intended to put the candidate at ease and considered a "warm-up" question. The following is a suggested opening, rapport building question to start out the interview. Being an introductory question, the rapport question does not have a rating scale.

**What questions do you have about the probation officer position?**

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## *Interview Part II: Competency Aligned Behavioral Questions*

These questions are categorized by the three Indiana probation officer competencies: interpersonal, self-management, and technical. Best practices recommend not asking more than two questions from each category, to keep the overall interview down to an hour in length.

This guide offers behavioral questions and evaluation suggestions by competency beginning with the next page.

## Interpersonal Competencies

Figure 2 Interpersonal Competencies



The following question seeks to evaluate a candidate's interpersonal skill regarding conflict management. Conflict management involves empathy, patience, and adaptability along with training.

**Describe the most stressful situation involving some sort of conflict that you have ever dealt with involving two or more people and how you handled it.**

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1: Candidate

- Gave no examples.
- Did not give a response that answered the question.
- Claimed experience without examples.
- Demonstrated a difficult time dealing with resistance.

2: Candidate:

- Gave a short, non-committal answer with little confidence.
- Gave a response that required limited probing.
- Listed examples that were clear and fluently told.
- Used *two* of the following examples of conflict resolution skills:
  - The capacity to empathize with the other person's viewpoint.
  - Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reaction.
  - A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger.
  - The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing.
  - A belief that facing conflict head-on is the best thing for both sides.

3: The candidate:

- Gave a well thought-out and well-presented answer about how the respondent resolved a stressful situation demonstrating *three or more* of the following conflict resolution skills:
  - The capacity to empathize with the other person's viewpoint.
  - Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reaction.
  - A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger.
  - The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing.
  - A belief that facing conflict head-on is the best thing for both sides
- Candidate required no probing to answer the question.

The following question probes the candidate's interpersonal competency towards verbal communication.

**An Indiana probation officer is a public representative required to communicate and interact with the community and other governmental departments. Give an example of a time when you were required to do public speaking in a professional or volunteer situation.**

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1: Candidate:

- Gave no examples.
- Gave a response that did not answer the question.
- Gave a response that was inappropriate and/or showed negativity about a situation.
- Claimed experience without examples.

2: Candidate:

- Gave a short, non-committal answer with little confidence.
- Gave a response that required little probing required.
- Gave an answer demonstrating *three* of the following public speaking skills:
  - Acknowledgement of norms and expectations of their audience.
  - Statement of purpose why they spoke.
  - An indication that their speech followed a logical order using claims, reasons, and evidence.
  - An indication that candidate presented in a polite manner.
  - The candidate gave an example where they used a visual aid.
  - Candidate not only presented to an audience but also answered questions.
  - The candidate gave an example when they lead a discussion.
  - The example included a time a candidate was required to do research
  - Candidate interacted with their audience.
  - Handled unexpected issues smoothly.
  - Used their influence as a speaker to act ethically (responsibly).

3. Candidate's answer demonstrated *more than four* of the following public speaking skills:

- Acknowledgement of norms and expectations of their audience.
- Statement of purpose why they spoke.
- An indication that their speech followed a logical order using claims, reasons, and evidence.
- An indication that candidate presented in a polite manner.
- The candidate gave an example where they used a visual aid.
- Candidate not only presented to an audience but also answered questions.
- The candidate gave an example when they lead a discussion.
- The example included a time a candidate was required to do research.
- Candidate interacted with their audience.
- Handled unexpected issues smoothly.
- Used their influence as a speaker to act ethically (responsibly)

The following question evaluates how the candidate has the interpersonal competency of collaboration. The interviewer will need to focus on how the candidate approaches collaboration.

**If hired as an Indiana probation officer you will need to work with a variety of agencies and organizations to foster opportunities that reduce recidivism and foster probationers becoming more productive members of society. Give me an example when you have worked collaboratively with one or more other organizations, or in a cooperative environment?**

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Evaluation Scale:

1: Candidate

- Gave no examples.
- Gave a response that did not answer the question.
- Claimed experience without examples.

2: Candidate:

- Gave a response that required minimum probing.
- Gave an answer demonstrating *two* of the following collaboration skills:
  - Negotiating for something.
  - Asking for help.
  - Asking questions.
  - Accepting no.
  - Taking responsibility.
  - Convincing others/ using persuasion.
  - Completing an assigned task as part of a collaboration.
  - Getting someone else involved.
- The candidate could name some community resources.
- The candidate could name people with authority who can assist probationers with community services.

3. Answer demonstrated *more than two* of the following collaboration skills:

- Negotiating for something.
- Asking for help.
- Asking questions.
- Accepting no.
- Taking responsibility.
- Convincing others/ using persuasion.
- Completing an assigned task as part of a collaboration.
- Getting someone else involved.
- Candidate could name many community resources.
- Candidate could name several people who can assist probationers with community services.

The following question seeks a deeper understanding of the candidate's interpersonal skills of empathy, patience, and adaptability. The interviewer should key in on whether the candidate has active listening skills when evaluating the candidate's answer.

**An Indiana probation officer often faces difficult or even hostile probationers and families. To be effective, a probation officer must be able to build sympathetic and mutually respecting relationships. With that in mind, tell us about a time when you built a sympathetic and understanding relationship quickly with someone under difficult conditions.**

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Evaluation Scale:

1: Candidate

- Gave no examples.
- Gave a response that did not answer the question.
- Claimed experience without examples.

2:

- Candidate's response required minimum probing.
- Answer demonstrated *two* of the following active listening skills:
  - Using active listening skills:
    - Mirroring
    - Clarification
    - Summarizing
  - Finding common ground.
  - Using humor appropriately.
  - Showing empathy.
  - Matching speech patterns
  - Matching body language.
  - Showing humility and apologized if the candidate accidentally offended.

3. Answer demonstrated *more than three* of the following:

- Used active listening skills such as:
  - Mirroring
  - Clarification
  - Summarizing
- Finding common ground.
- Using humor appropriately.
- Showing empathy.

- Matching speech patterns
- Matching body language.
- Showing humility and apologizing if the candidate accidentally offended.

*This question intends to evaluate the candidate's interpersonal competency of working with diverse populations.*

**Give us an example of a time when you worked with or helped somebody of a different culture/background?**

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Evaluation Scale:

1: The candidate:

- Could not give an example of a time they worked with or helped somebody of a different culture/background than their own.
- Indicated that they were not comfortable, or were anxious about working with diverse populations.
- Used the phrase "I have [minority/ethnic] friends."

2: The candidate gave an example that only listed *two* of the following:

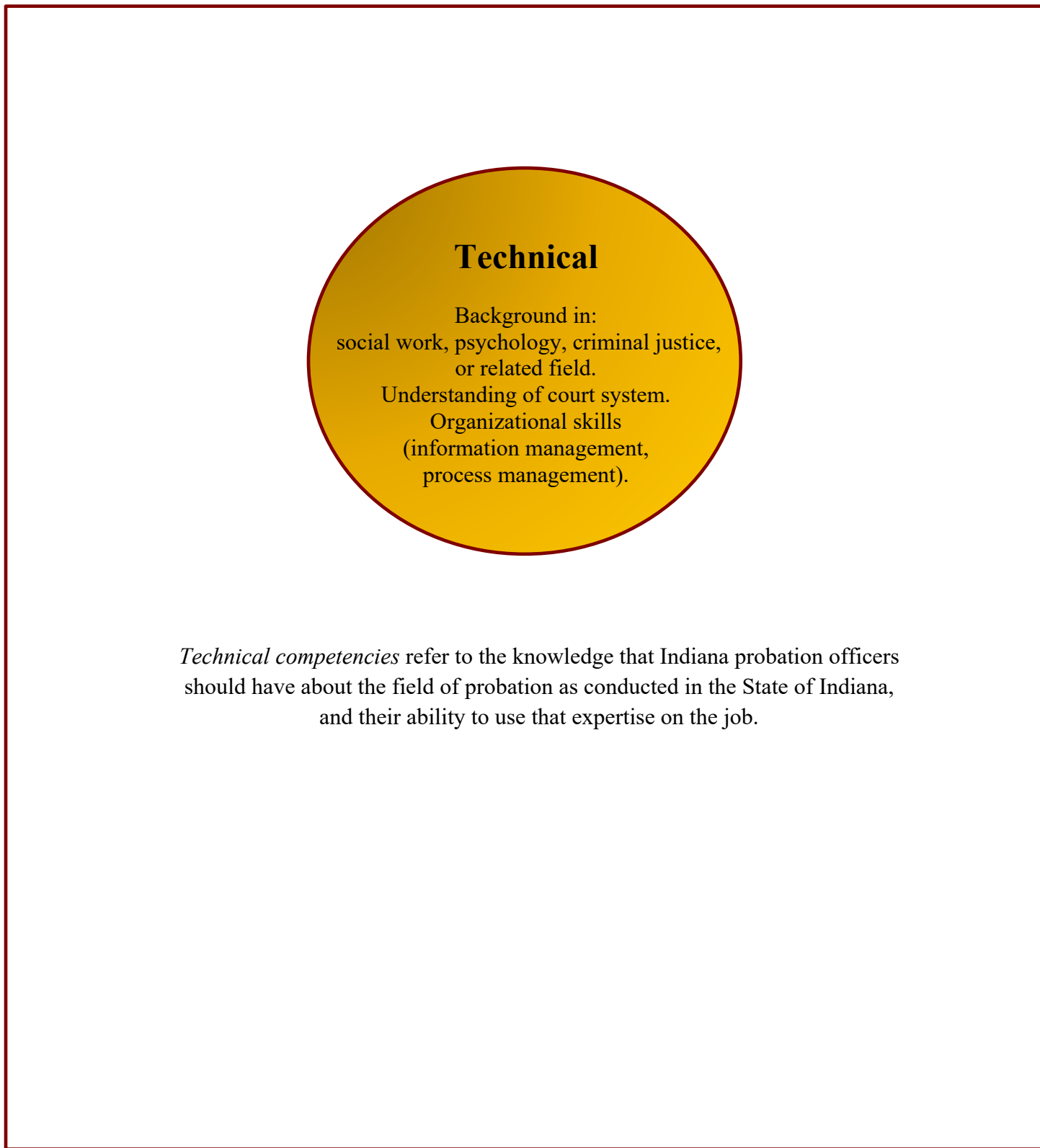
- The situation that occurred.
- Who was involved and why.
- How they stepped up to help.
- How everyone responded.
- What the final result was.

3: The candidate:

- Gave an example that listed *more than two* of the following:
  - The situation that occurred.
  - Who was involved and why.
  - How they stepped up to help.
  - How everyone responded.
  - What the final result was.
- Talked about how the experience shaped them or taught them a life lesson.

## Technical Competencies

Figure 3 Technical Competencies





*This question seeks to identify the candidate's interest in further development of their technical competencies, as well as their motivation for the position.*

**What have you done to expand your knowledge of probation or related work in the last year?**

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1: Candidate:

- Gave no examples.
- Gave a response that did not answer the question.
- Claimed experience without examples.

2: Candidate answer contained *one* of the following:

- Volunteered in an activity or organization that relates to probation.
- Joined a related professional organization.
- Regularly read a related professional journal
- Stays up to date with the field through newspapers/television news.
- Indicates that they read books related to probation.
- Participated in an internship related to probation.
- Took courses in counseling and intervention
- Indicated desire and history of knowledge acquisition.

3: Candidate displayed an understanding of the importance of *more than one* of the following:

- Volunteered in an activity or organization that relates to probation.
- Joined a related professional organization.
- Regularly read a related professional journal
- Stays up to date with the field through newspapers/television news.
- Indicates that they read books related to probation.
- Participated in an internship related to probation.
- Took courses in counseling and intervention
- Indicated desire and history of knowledge acquisition.

The following question is meant to probe the candidate's technical competency with computer software.

**Indiana probation officers must be proficient with the use of computer systems and demonstrate organizational skills at a high level. Give an example of a time when you used software as an organizational tool.**

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1: Candidate:

- Gave no examples.
- Gave a response that did not answer the question.
- Claimed experience without examples.

2: The candidate gave an example showing familiarity with *two* of the following which their example showed that they used for risk or case management.

- Calendar and scheduling software — Appointment scheduling software
- Database user interface and query software — Court records databases; Microsoft Access
- Electronic mail software — Email software; Microsoft Outlook
- Internet browser software — Web browser software
- Map creation software — Electronic tracking device software
- Office suite software — Corel WordPerfect Office Suite; Microsoft Office
- Presentation software — Microsoft PowerPoint
- Project management software — Case management software
- Spreadsheet software — Microsoft Excel
- Voice recognition software — Speech recognition software
- Word processing software — Microsoft Word

3: Candidate listed *three or more* of the following which their example showed that they used for risk or case management:

- Calendar and scheduling software — Appointment scheduling software
- Database user interface and query software — Court records databases; Microsoft Access
- Electronic mail software — Email software; Microsoft Outlook
- Internet browser software — Web browser software
- Map creation software — Electronic tracking device software
- Office suite software — Corel WordPerfect Office Suite; Microsoft Office
- Presentation software — Microsoft PowerPoint
- Project management software — Case management software
- Spreadsheet software — Microsoft Excel
- Voice recognition software — Speech recognition software
- Word processing software — Microsoft Word

## **Expert Level Candidate Technical Questions**

The following two questions can be asked if the candidate pool is very qualified and have experience in the probationary or a closely related field. To be legally defensible, if you pose any expert level questions to a candidate, you must ask the same ones to all.

*This question seeks to identify if the candidate has the technical competencies expected on account of their background in social work, psychology, criminal justice or related field. There are two parts to the answer that the interviewer should expect: 1) if the candidate can name barriers, and 2) if the candidate listed strategies for overcoming the barriers. This question would be best posed to “expert level” candidates.*

**Probationers face barriers on their path towards rehabilitation and their re-integration into society. Give an example from a work or volunteer experience when you helped a probationer or someone in a similar position overcome challenges.**

**Follow-up questions might include: What obstacles did the person or family that you assisted face? What steps did you take to help them overcome them?**

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1: Candidate:

- Gave no examples.
- Gave a response that did not answer the question.
- Claimed experience without examples.

2: Candidate:

- Gave a short, non-committal answer with little confidence.
- Candidate’s response required minimum probing.
- Answer listed *one* of the following barriers to re-entry:
  - Lack of education (qualifications)
  - Employment
  - Lack of access to transportation.
  - Having a criminal record when seeking employment.
  - Psychological (cognitive) issues.
  - Home/family life (social issues)
  - Probationer’s attitudes and patterns of behavior

Candidate indicated *one* of the following ways to address barriers that a probationer may face

- Assisting probationer in modifying attitudes and patterns of behavior that may interfere with their re-integration into society.
- Assist individuals with intervention strategies to overcome barriers.
- Referring probationer to community services to address barriers.
- Offering or referring probationer to vocational guidance counseling.

3: The candidate gave a well thought-out and presented answer that included *more than one* of the following:

- Lack of education (qualifications)

- Employment
- Lack of access to transportation.
- Having a criminal record when seeking employment.
- Psychological issues.
- Home/family life (social issues)
- The stigma of being an ex-offender.

Candidate indicated *more than two* of the following ways to address barriers that a probationer may face

- Assisting probationer in modifying attitudes and patterns of behavior that may interfere with their re-integration into society.
- Assist individuals with intervention strategies to overcome barriers.
- Referring probationer to community services to address barriers.
- Offering or referring probationer to vocational guidance counseling.

The following question seeks to evaluate the candidate's technical competencies of:

- Knowledge of available community resources with understanding and skill to use them.
- Knowledge of evidence-based practices for use in all interactions with probationers.
- Knowledge of philosophy, theories, practices in the correctional field and related disciplines.

The interviewer should focus on what services the candidate delivered or helped the individual in need access, and if they conducted a need/risks evaluation of any kind. These are advanced skills and should be posed to "expert level" candidates.

**Tell me about a time in which you provided evidence-based rehabilitation opportunities to an individual in need of them.**

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1: Candidate:

- Gave no examples.
- Gave a response that did not answer the question.
- Claimed experience without examples.

2: Candidate displayed an understanding of the importance of *two* of the following:

- Suggesting vocational guidance/counseling.
- Encouraging the probationer to set goals and devise action plans.
- Appraising interests, aptitudes, ability and personality characteristics for vocational and educational planning (giving aptitude and personality tests).
- Targeting probationer's needs to the highest risk factor related to their prior criminal behavior such as their pro-criminal attitudes and substance abuse. (Assessing probationer's needs and targeting them in treatment.)
- Matching the style and mode of intervention to the abilities, motivation, and learning style of the offender (cognitive-behavioral interventions).
- Establishing a warm, respectful and collaborative working alliance with the probationer.
- Influencing the direction of change towards the prosocial through appropriate modeling, reinforcement, problem-solving, etc.
- Suggested Treatment interventions that consider personal strengths and socio-biological personality factors.

3: Candidate displayed an understanding of the importance of *more than two* of the following:

- Suggesting vocational guidance/counseling.
- Encouraging the probationer to set goals and devise action plans.
- Appraising interests, aptitudes, ability and personality characteristics for vocational and educational planning (giving aptitude and personality tests).

- Targeting probationer's needs to the highest risk factor related to their prior criminal behavior such as their pro-criminal attitudes and substance abuse. (Assessing probationer's needs and targeting them in treatment.)
- Matching the style and mode of intervention to the abilities, motivation, and learning style of the offender (cognitive-behavioral interventions).
- Establishing a warm, respectful and collaborative working alliance with the probationer.
- Influencing the direction of change towards the prosocial through appropriate modeling, reinforcement, problem-solving, etc.
- Suggesting treatment interventions that consider personal strengths and socio-biological personality factors.

## Self-Management

Figure 4 Self-Management



*Self-management* competencies refer to how Indiana probation officers manage and express themselves.



*The following question probes the candidate's self-management competency of strong ethics.*

**Tell me about a time that you were challenged ethically.**

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1: Candidate:

- Did not answer.
- Gave a response that did not answer the question.
- Stated that they never faced an ethical challenge.
- Indicated that they do not avoid misconduct.

2: Candidate indicated that they avoid misconduct, but the example they gave did not support or only partially supported it.

3: Candidate:

- Addressed/recognized the complexity of the situation or sought feedback and guidance.
- Indicated that they avoid misconduct, but did not claim that they never did anything wrong. Ex: "I was part of a team where people inserted language that overstated what we were doing. I argued that we should not include the language, but it was left in, anyway. I signed off on the report."

The following question seeks to evaluate whether the candidate has the self-management competency of being motivated to help others and society.

**What characteristics and qualities do you believe are necessary to be a good probation officer?**

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Evaluation Scale:

1: Candidate:

- Had no answer.
- Said they just *needed* a job.

2: Answer had one of the following replies/components:

- Wanting to help people.
- Wanting to help society.
- Wanting to use their skills and education to the use of rehabilitating probationers.
- Someone who likes to set challenging goals and achieving them (setting the goal of rehabilitating probationers, achieving that goal, and helping the next).

3: Answer had more than one of the following replies/components:

- Wanting to help people.
- Wanting to help society.
- Wanting to use their skills and education to the use of rehabilitating probationers.
- Someone who likes to set challenging goals and achieving them (setting the goal of rehabilitating probationers, achieving that goal, and helping the next).

*This question seeks to evaluate whether the candidate has the self-management competency of being motivated to help others and society.*

What attracted you to the position of a probation officer?

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Evaluation Scale:

1: Candidate:

- Had no answer.
- Mentioned salary.
- Said they thought it might be an easy job.

2: Answer had one of the following replies/components:

- I want to help people.
- I want to do something that betters society.
- I have the skills and education to help turn probationer's lives around for the better (rehabilitate offenders).
- I like to work with the community and agencies that facilitate changes in an offender's life.

3: Answer had more than one of the following replies/components:

- I want to help people.
- I want to do something that betters society.
- I have the skills and education to help turn probationer's lives around for the better (rehabilitate offenders).
- I like to work with the community and agencies that facilitate changes in an offender's life.

*The following question captures several competencies and skills such as working independently, being flexible, desire to help others, being a team player, and being motivated.*

**What does your ideal work environment look like?**

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**1: Candidate:**

- Offered no examples.
- Said that their ideal workplace is one with lots of vacation time and flexible hours.
- Gave an answer that was focused purely on the people they would be working alongside.
- Gave an answer centered on themselves, and not the duties of a probation officer
- Gave a response was just a listing of a probation officers job description.

**2: Answer listed *two* of the following:**

- A place that encourages teamwork.
- A place that empowers its employees to be their best.
- A place that allows employees to work independently.
- A place that allows for the use and growth of their established skills and qualities.
- A place that allows one to "make a difference," "contribute to society," or "help people."

**3: Answer listed *more than two* of the following:**

- A place that encourages teamwork.
- A place that empowered its employees.
- A place that allowed employees to work independently.
- A place that allows for the use and growth of their established skills and qualities.
- A place that allows one to "make a difference," "contribute to society," or "help people."

*The following question tests the self-management competency of flexibility, adaptability, and dependability.*

**Probation officers may be called upon to work or attend training on evenings and weekends. Give an example of a time you worked unstructured and unpredictable hours and how you managed it?**

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Evaluation Scale:

1: Candidate:

- Indicated that they were inflexible about working weekends or evenings.
- Expressed that they must have very structured, predictable hours.

2: Candidate expressed very minimal flexibility about working hours and scheduling.

3: Candidate:

- Gave an answer and tone that indicated that they were able to be *very* flexible when it came to working hours and scheduling without any hardships.
- Indicated that they had the self-understanding to balance their personal life and work without one getting in the way of the other.

The following question evaluates the candidate's self-management skill of goal setting, working independently, and effectively managing their time.

**Give an example of how you set goals and achieve them.**

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Evaluation Scale:

1: Candidate:

- Offered no examples.
- Stated that they have no specific strategies, just "get things done."
- Stated that she or he does not set goals.

2: Candidate listed *at least two* of the following in their answer:

- *Daily prioritization.* For example, they create a fresh to-do list at the beginning of each workday, ordered by deadline and by level of importance
- Schedule their time so they can focus on one thing at a time.
- Understanding the processes and of the importance of working ahead to meet *deadlines*. For example, working backward from the deadline when planning your approach to a project, breaking it into smaller tasks and setting mini-deadlines for each task leading up to the project's overall due date.
- Candidate explained their strategies for handling interruptions.
- Candidate indicates that they have a healthy work/life balance that avoids burnout.

3: Candidate listed *three or more* of these in their answer:

- *Daily prioritization.* For example, they create a fresh to-do list at the beginning of each workday, ordered by deadline and by level of importance
- Schedule their time so they can focus on one thing at a time.
- Understanding the processes and of the importance of working ahead to meet *deadlines*. For example, working backward from the deadline when planning your approach to a project, breaking it into smaller tasks and setting mini-deadlines for each task leading up to the project's overall due date.
- Candidate explained their strategies for handling interruptions.
- Candidate indicates that they have a healthy work/life balance that avoids burnout.

*Interview Part III: Closing*

Interview Part 3 (Closing). These questions are to review information and for follow-ups. There is no evaluation scale for closing questions.

What else should we know about you that was not brought up today?

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Do you have any questions for us?

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After the last question, and giving the candidate time to ask their own questions, thank the applicant for his/her time and interest. Invite the candidate to contact the HR department (if the county has one) if there are further questions. Assure the candidate that contact will be made as soon as a decision is reached. This closes the interview on a positive note without making a commitment.

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## Chapter 3: After the Interview

### *Evaluating the Applicant*

Using the ratings and notes taken during the interview, calculate each competency, and then sum and average them again for an objective evaluation. Below is a table to aid the interviewers.

*Figure 5 Applicant Evaluation Form*

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Competency	Competency Weighting	Question 1 Score	Question 2 Score	Question 3 Score	Question 4 Score	Total Score
<i>Interpersonal</i>						
<i>Technical</i>						
<i>Self-Management</i>						
Final Score						

Additional observations:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Weighting:** Weighting can be determined by each county based on their determination of their importance. Criteria weighting can be assigned considering: 5 = vital; 4 = Very Important; 3 = Important; 2 = An Asset; and 1 = Somewhat Beneficial. To be legally defensible, weighting must be the same for each candidate. For example, if technical competencies were weighted at 5, and the candidate rated 3 on 4 questions, the calculation would be  $5 \times (3+3+3+3) = 60$ . The total score for the competency would be 60. The same procedure would be followed for all competencies, and those totals summed for the total score.

The raters multiplies the competency weighting times the candidates assessment score to yield a total score in the last column and then adds these to arrive at a final score that can be compared to other candidates. Additional professional observations can be included in the overall recommendation.

### **Overall Recommendation**

Using your professional opinion, check the recommendation below:

- |                    |                          |                                      |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Highly Recommended | <input type="checkbox"/> | Need clarification of qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Recommend          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do not recommend.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### *Asking for a Writing Sample*

If there are a number of strong candidates to choose from after going through the interview process, it is appropriate to ask for existing writing samples, to help determine who to hire. One can ask for a particularly substantive memo, a proposal, old schoolwork, or anything the candidate created that showcases their writing ability. The candidate should be reminded that the sample does not need to be directly relevant to the role of a probation officer. Also, assure the candidate that anything shared will be kept confidential, and that they are encouraged to remove names or other details that they are not comfortable sharing.

When evaluating the writing sample best, legally defensible practices is to have several people assess it, to avoid bias.

### *Documenting Your Evaluation*

The worksheets provided in this guide will serve as an important part of the documentation proving that the interview process was fair and impartial, making it legally defensible. Best practices recommend keeping all the notes made throughout the interview and the evaluation as per HR guidelines.

### *Making Your Hiring Decision*

Collaboration between Human Resources, the County Probation Department and the supervising judge will determine the recruitment protocol.

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T H I S S P A C E  
I N T E N T I O N A L L Y  
L E F T B L A N K

# Appendix 1: Suggested Reading

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Fitzwater, Terry L.

**Behavior-Based Interviewing: Selecting the Right Person for the Job**

This book describes the critical skills to find the right person for the right job every time, develop clear and accurate job descriptions and requirements, establish a fair and defensible hiring process, and construct unbiased, objective interview questions

Green, Paul C. Ph.D.

**Actions Speak!**

This is a short, practical book for new interviewers. It deals with the importance of using a job-related, structured interview with past-event questions to gain behavioral predictors and predict job performance. It also explains how to use the two-step process for evaluating the candidate's answers to interview questions.

Turner, Tom S.

**Behavioral Interviewing Guide: A Practical, Structured Approach For Conducting Effective Selection Interviews**

This book provides a practical step-by-step approach for planning, conducting and evaluating a structured, behavioral interview.

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## Appendix 2: Probation Officer Job Description Template

(Given the diverse nature of the State of Indiana and its counties, this document is meant as a template that each county can modify for their specific needs.)

**Job Title:** Probation Officer

**General Summary of Duties:** An Indiana probation officer is responsible for supervising, monitoring, and assisting probationers.

**Purpose:** An Indiana probation officer provides offenders with necessary evidence-based rehabilitation opportunities that reduce recidivism and foster becoming more productive members of society.

### Adult Probation Officer Responsibilities

Pursuant to I.C. 11-13-1-3 a probation officer shall:

- Conduct prehearing and presentence investigations and prepare reports as required by law
- Assist the courts in making pretrial release decisions.
- Assist the courts, prosecuting attorneys, and other law enforcement officials in making decisions regarding the diversion of charged individuals to appropriate noncriminal alternatives
- Furnish each person placed on probation under his supervision a written statement of the conditions of his probation and instruct him regarding those conditions.
- Supervise and assist persons on probation consistent with conditions of probation imposed by the court.
- Bring to the court's attention any modification in the conditions of probation considered advisable.
- Notify the court when a violation of a condition of probation occurs.
- Cooperate with public and private agencies and other persons concerned with the treatment or welfare of persons on probation, and assist them in obtaining services from those agencies and persons.
- Keep accurate records of cases investigated by him and of all cases assigned to him by the court and make these records available to the court upon request.
- Collect and disburse money from persons under his supervision according to the order of the court, and keep accurate and complete accounts of those collections and disbursements.
- Assist the court in transferring supervision of a person on probation to a court in another jurisdiction.
- Perform other duties required by law or as directed by the court.

### Juvenile Probation Officer Responsibilities

Pursuant to I.C.31-31-5-4, a probation officer shall, for the purpose of carrying out the juvenile law:

- Conduct such investigations and prepare such reports and recommendations as the court directs and keep a written record of those investigations, reports, and recommendations.
- Receive and examine complaints and allegations concerning matters covered by the juvenile law and make preliminary inquiries and investigations.
- Implement informal adjustments.
- Prepare and submit the predisposition report required for a dispositional hearing under the juvenile law.

- Supervise and assist by all suitable methods a child placed on probation or in the probation officer's care by order of the court or other legal authority.
- Keep complete records of the probation officer's work and comply with any order of the court concerning the collection, protection, and distribution of any money or other property coming into the probation officer's hands.
- Perform such other functions as are designated by the juvenile law or by the court in accordance with the juvenile law.

## Qualifications

As established by the Judicial Conference of Indiana:

- A probation officer shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age.
- A probation officer shall be an American citizen.
- A person who submits an application to take the examination for prospective probation officers shall have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university or be in the last semester of a baccalaureate degree program. A person may not serve as a probation officer until he or she has received a baccalaureate degree.
- A person who submits an application to take the examination for prospective probation officers shall be a person of good moral character.
- A person shall take and pass an examination for prospective probation officers prior to employment or within six months from the date that the person is first employed as a probation officer.
  - A person who fails the examination shall be permitted to take the examination a second time. The second examination shall not be given until ninety (90) days after the first examination, during which time the person shall not be permitted to serve as a probation officer.
  - A person who fails the examination a second time shall not be permitted to take the examination or serve as a probation officer until one year after the second examination.
- A probation officer shall be required to attend an orientation program conducted by the Indiana Judicial Center within one year from the date that the officer is employed.
- The qualifications established by the Judicial Conference of Indiana shall be minimum qualifications only, and a trial court judge may require higher qualifications for probation officers.
- The qualifications established by the Judicial Conference of Indiana shall be effective on July 1, 1984. The qualifications shall not apply to persons who have been certified as eligible to serve as probation officers in Indiana courts prior to July 1, 1984.

## Competencies

- Technical

An Indiana probation officer should have:

- An undergraduate degree with a major in criminal justice, social work, psychology or related field.
- Experience and/or training as Community Corrections Officer or Probation Officer.
- Knowledge of philosophy, theories, practices in the correctional field and related disciplines.
- Knowledge of available community resources with understanding and skill to use them.
- Knowledge of evidence-based practices for use in all interactions with probationers.
- Working knowledge of local, state, and federal regulations, standard policies, procedures and legal terminology of the justice system.



- Knowledge of various computer-based skills, including Microsoft Office, e-mail, and a database experience.
  
- **Interpersonal**  
 An Indiana probation officer should be:
  - Able to demonstrate qualities of a team player.
  - Able to manage and work with diverse groups and individuals.
  - Show qualities of empathy, patience, and adaptability.
  - Effective at communicating orally and in writing with co-workers, other County departments, and the public, including being sensitive to professional ethics, gender, cultural diversities, and disabilities.
  - Someone that can be a motivator and leader.
  
- **Self-Management**  
 An Indiana probation officer should:
  - Demonstrate an ability to work independently with minimal supervision (self-directed).
  - Be flexible, adaptable, and dependable.
  - Be Professional.
  - Have a strong desire to help others.
  - Have the ability to comply with all employer and department policies and work rules, including, but not limited to, attendance, safety, drug-free workplace, and personal conduct (strong ethics).
  - Be able to Serve on-call and respond to emergencies on a 24-hour basis.
  - Have the ability to work on several tasks at the same time and work rapidly for long periods, occasionally under time pressure (multitask).
  - Be able to occasionally work extended hours, including evenings, and travel out of town for continuing education courses, sometimes overnight.
  - Effectively manage their time.

### **Difficulty of Work**

An Indiana probation officer performs duties that are broad in scope and require the application of sound judgment based upon education, experience, and training. Daily decisions are frequently based upon consideration of several priorities and their potential interrelationships. Judgment is necessary for interpreting individuals' past actions and in adapting standard methods or procedures to fit situations.

## **Working Conditions**

Probation officers perform a majority of duties in a standard office environment, in a courtroom, jail/confinements centers, and probationers' homes, involving sitting, and walking at will, sitting for long periods, pushing/pulling/lifting objects weighing up to 50 pounds, crouching/kneeling, bending, close and far vision, color perception, keyboarding, handling/grasping objects, speaking clearly, and hearing sound/communication. Probation Officers may be required to work in confined areas or wear protective clothing or equipment, such as latex clothes. Probation Officers may be with or be exposed to violent/irate individuals and respond to situations involving potential harm to self and others.

## **Personal Work Relationships**

Indiana Probation Officers maintain frequent contact with Court Judges, co-workers, victims, probationers and their families, representatives of various public and private agencies, law enforcement officials and members of the general public for a variety of purposes, including explanation and interpretation of court orders and gaining the cooperation of individuals in situations of potential conflict and controversy.