

What is Probation?

Probation is one form of community supervision, which is an umbrella term that includes probation, supervised release, and pre-trial services. Many people use the term probation and community supervision interchangeably. Throughout this document, probation is used to refer to all parts of the community supervision system which are defined below.

Pre-Trial Supervision

Pretrial supervision is community supervision of person that has not yet been convicted of a crime. Agents ensure clients show up to court, comply with conditions of release, and connect them with voluntary services like substance use disorder and mental health treatment.

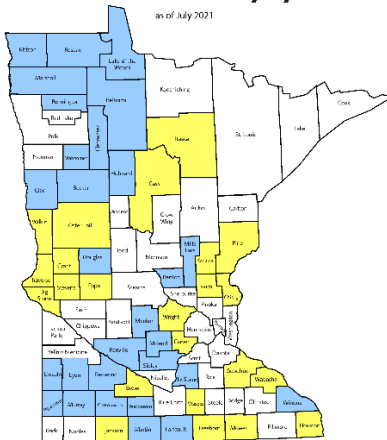
Supervised Release

Community supervision for those who committed felony offenses are released from prison on their court-ordered release date. In Minnesota, state law requires most people serve two-thirds of their sentence in prison and one-third in the community under supervision. Some people who require greater supervision are placed on intensive supervised release.

Probation

A community supervision sanction imposed on a person by the court as an alternative to or in conjunction with confinement or intermediate sanctions. They may be convicted of felony, gross misdemeanor, or misdemeanor offenses

Correctional Delivery Systems



There are three probation delivery systems in Minnesota that use a combination of state and county provided services. **Counties provide about 80% of the probation and supervised release services in the state and the Department of Corrections (DOC) provides the other 20%.**

DOC

State Corrections Department provides all supervision services.

DOC/CPO

State Corrections Department provides services for adult felons; county provides services for juveniles/adult non-felons.

CCA

Community Corrections Act provides all supervision services.

How is Probation Funded in Minnesota?

Every probation delivery system has its own method of funding.

- The DOC receives a direct agency appropriation from the Legislature and is included in the Governor's budget request to the Legislature. The Legislative funding is the main source of funding for the DOC. For DOC contract counties, the DOC provides all supervision services and bills the county for juvenile and adult non-felony cases. The county is eligible for a 50% reimbursement of costs just like the CPO Counties described in the next paragraph.
- CPO counties provide and pay for probation services for juveniles and adult non-felons, which is reimbursable up to 50% from the DOC. If the Legislature does not appropriate enough money to the DOC to reimburse the entire 50% of costs, the DOC pro-rates the reimbursements. CPO counties have not received the complete reimbursement amount since the 1990's.
- CCA counties receive a subsidy from the Legislature after it passes through the DOC budget. The subsidy is distributed to the CCA counties through a complicated formula considering population, case filings, criminal defendants that are not sent to prison, and adjusted net tax capacity. In most counties, the state subsidy does not cover more than 1/3 of costs for probation that is provided by the county on behalf of the DOC – well below the intended 50% cost-share by the state.

The Problem – Confusion and Underfunding

The three different funding mechanisms used to fund Minnesota’s probation systems are not only difficult to understand but also create inequalities in service and outcomes. Every year, the three delivery systems approach the Legislature separately for funding to provide an essential public safety service. Counties are at a disadvantage because they are not at the table as a state agency therefore, they must rely on the DOC to include county funding in the governor’s proposed budget. If that does not happen, counties must bring an independent bill to ask for funding. When choosing between the state budget and county subsidies and reimbursements, legislators often cut the county funding proposals, which means that counties – who deliver more than 80% of the State’s probation services – are consistently underfunded. Even when the DOC field services budget gets an increase, it has not been enough to hire additional field agents to meet the needs of Minnesota.

Minnesota is last in the nation when it comes to general fund spending on corrections – institutions and probation services. The impact is felt severely by smaller counties with fewer resources. Without proper resources, probation staff cannot do their job effectively which impacts public safety in every county regardless of delivery system.

The Solution – Modernizing and Fully Funding the Formula To Create Better Outcomes

AMC has gone to the Legislature year after year for funding to support better outcomes but has been unsuccessful in obtaining any meaningful changes. Until the outdated formula and funding structure are amended, counties will be required to make up the difference between what the state provides and what public safety necessitates through increased property tax levies. Counties have the solution and are unified in their proposal to fix the probation funding formula.

The AMC Community Supervision Workgroup is creating a better probation funding formula to apply one method of funding for all counties. All three probation delivery systems are retained in this proposal, preserving county choice. The simplified formula will be based on data from a workload study that is currently underway and will be used to calculate the actual cost for probation. The workload study is tracking the work of agents throughout the state to determine how many staff are required to provide evidence-based practices throughout the state. Once the required staffing is determined, the Workgroup will determine the daily cost of probation for each case which will be the basis for legislative appropriations. This will ensure that counties are part of the same funding stream as the DOC, so the entire system is funded as part of the state budget. Increased appropriations to accompany the new formula are necessary to ensure that all counties can maintain a base level of probation services and provide evidence-based practices that are proven to reduce the rate of reoffence.

The County Ask

AMC is asking the legislature to support Minnesota’s probation system by passing the formula created by the AMC Community Supervision Workgroup and appropriate additional funding to correct decades of underfunding.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Carli Stark, AMC Public Safety Policy Analyst and MACCAC Director, at 651-789-4335 or cstark@mncounties.org.

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