

## COMPETENCY PROFILE FOR PROBATION OFFICER

### 1 ESSENTIAL SITUATIONS

- 1.1 The probation officer's task is based on the methodology of 'working in a forced context'. Working methodically is essential to the Dutch Probation Service, as it contributes to substantiating the effectiveness of the Service's interventions. The methodology provides starting points for acting and offers support in dealing with dilemmas.

Key to the probation officer's task is *assessing*. Assessing the most appropriate, recognized interventions, risks, compensating factors, specific limitations, responsiveness, intensity of the intervention, etc.

High demands are thus imposed on the analytical and evaluative skills of the probation officer and on his/her awareness that an independently formulated professional opinion may be expected of him/her at any moment. This opinion is one that the probation officer is responsible for and is prepared to make, and about which he/she can communicate transparently with others. *problem analysis, opinion forming*

- 1.2 The probation officer also has a monitoring task, aimed at reducing recidivism and any damage the offender/accused person might cause to society and/or himself or herself. The general and special conditions for the supervision and the task penalty are set by the legal system. Within that framework, the probation officer makes agreements, gives instructions, supervises and addresses the offender. It is crucial for the probation officer to stick to these conditions and agreements consistently and, if it looks like people involved are deviating from them, to recognize that, both in themselves and in colleagues, and to discuss the matter. *consistent acting*
- 1.3 Within the size and severity of the caseload and the production agreements, the probation officer sets himself/herself priorities based on a professional opinion about the contents of the caseload. It is crucial to find a balance between the methodically essential depth (quality) of the work and the efforts (quantity) connected to that. *organizational skills*
- 1.4 The probation officer interacts with offenders, their network, authorities and the commissioning authority. All these different parties have differing interests. However, the probation officer has just one goal: contributing to the reduction of recidivism. That is why high demands are made of the probation officer's capacity to maintain contact with such a diverse group and achieve the set goals. He or she does this by using various discussion techniques and behavioral styles, and by anticipating swiftly changing circumstances. Furthermore, increasingly often, serious (psychological) issues are involved, and offences are becoming more severe. It is important that the probation officer sees or senses the tension and can cope with it in a controlled/adequate way. *flexibility, emotional stability*

- 1.5 Probation tasks are not performed in isolation: it's not my client, but the Dutch Probation Service's client. In various forms of consultation, the probation officer discusses the caseload, the plan of approach and his or her actions in an open and transparent way, so that others are informed of his or her working method. The role and attitude of the probation officer are decisive for how the procedure with the offender runs its course. That is why it is essential for the probation officer to examine his/her own behavior and actions critically, and to give and receive feedback constructively. He or she contributes to an atmosphere in which solutions to problems are sought jointly, both in contacts with offenders and in contacts with (legal) authorities and colleagues. *cooperation, self-reflection*

## 2 BEHAVIORAL SKILLS AND BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

**PROBLEM ANALYSIS:** Draws attention to problems. Recognizes important information. Makes connections between pieces of information. Traces possible causes of problems and looks for relevant information.

**OPINION FORMING:** Weighs up (new) information and possible behavior in the light of relevant criteria and comes to a realistic evaluation.

**CONSISTENT ACTING:** Complies with the organization's policy and/or procedures.

**ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS:** Has a clear picture of his or her own activities, classifies them according to a plan and sticks to that plan, insofar as that is possible.

**FLEXIBILITY:** Is open to, and satisfactorily and purposefully anticipates changing/changed and varying circumstances.

**EMOTIONAL STABILITY:** Takes action decisively and calmly, and continues to perform effectively under time pressure, upon setbacks, disappointment or resistance.

**COOPERATION:** Contributes to a joint result, even when there is no direct functional interest of his or her own.

**SELF-REFLECTION:** Critically evaluates his or her own behavior and opinions. Is open to evaluation by others. Learns from this and, on that basis, changes his or her own behavior or opinions.

