

# SPECIAL EDITION

## PROBATION NEWS



## Probation Department welcomes new Chief Deputies and Deputy Director

San Francisco's Fletcher joins Bettino as Chief Deputy



Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher

Chief Adolfo Gonzales

Chief Deputy Adam Bettino

The Los Angeles County Probation Department is excited to welcome three new members to our Executive Leadership Team. On August 26th, Chief Probation Officer Adolfo Gonzales announced that Ms. Karen Fletcher would be joining our probation family as the new Chief Deputy Probation Officer in charge of Adult and Juvenile Services. In addition, Mr. Adam Bettino was appointed to the position of Chief Deputy overseeing Administrative Services and Operational Support, and Mr. Richard Giron was appointed to serve the Department as Deputy Director.



Deputy Director Richard Giron

Our communications team sat down with each of the new team members to chat. Here's what each of them had to share.

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### An interview with Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher

**Why did you choose a career in probation?**

"I kind of stumbled into it. I needed a graveyard shift job while in grad school and started working as a 911 operator. Then, I applied for probation and was hired as an entry-level Probation Officer I. I loved every minute of it! It wasn't my plan, but it turned into the best kind of stumble into a career that anyone could make."

**Who has been the most significant influence in your life or career?**

"My parents. They didn't have the same opportunities I had. They weren't able to go to college, and they both worked in lower-level jobs. However, they instilled a sense in their children that you can do better. They taught me to be humble, get the job done, and go after what I wanted." Chief Deputy Fletcher recalled, "I am the youngest of four siblings and the first in my family to graduate college. My parents had a huge impact on how I pursued my education and career. They had expectations that their children were going to succeed."



Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher

**Is there a leader you admire?**

"I admire President Barack Obama. I often think of his approach to problem-solving. He started as a community organizer and became a great leader. He led with kindness, courage, and strength. He possessed all the essential qualities of a good leader, and he always maintained his humor. I believe this combination humanizes a leader and lays a strong foundation for success. President Obama made this country proud, with the ability to be adaptable and relatable to everyone. It's fascinating to me, and I wish we could have had a longer time with him in office."

**What is your leadership style?**

"I'm very relatable, and I pride myself on starting as a Deputy Probation Officer I and having worked my way through the ranks to be in a position to help others move forward. Maintaining a connection with people is 100% of this job, and leading an organization is a collaborative effort. I love to be around the staff and hearing them share how we can work together to improve things, get the job done, and provide services that benefit the community and the individuals we serve."

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### An interview with Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher (cont.)

Ms. Fletcher expressed, "It's important to have closeness and openness with staff. I believe in maintaining candidness and transparency regarding the workings of the organization. The more staff know, the better they are. Staff are leaders regardless of position. They can influence people at all levels of the organization. It's so important to keep communication open and as candid as possible. That's how people grow and learn. This has always been my approach to leadership."

#### **What do you want staff to know about you?**

"I want staff to know I've walked in their shoes and experienced some of their similar experiences. I'm committed to them, the organization, and the clients we will serve together. A leader needs to be connected, and I hope they will learn from me that I am truly committed to the probation industry. We've come so far, and I want staff to be empowered to make a difference in people's lives and in the community. I'm a 'roll up your sleeves and work alongside you' leader. The frontline staff is the best part of this business because they work with the people who need the most help."

"As probation professionals, we are often the only ones in the room that work with clients long term. We are responsible for making a difference in their lives. It's so important to hang on to those principles."  
*- Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher*

#### **Do you have a motto or philosophy?**

Chuckling as she said it, "I often remind people, Eleanor Roosevelt said, 'Well behaved women rarely make history.' Women often get painted with a certain brush if they're strong, outspoken, or adamant about something, so I rely on her words a lot. As women, we bring a different skill set to the table in terms of leadership. We are strong yet graceful and supportive of people. That is so important. I also lean on Artist Frida Kahlo's words, often used to describe Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "Not fragile like a flower, but fragile like a bomb."

#### **What advice would you offer staff as our department changes with the Board of Supervisors instructions regarding reimagining public safety?**

"I would remind them that it is essential to have a service delivery model that meets the clients' needs. It's about shifting our thoughts on what's working and how we can better meet the needs of the people we serve. It's also imperative to educate the public about who we are as probation professionals."



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### An interview with Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher (cont.)



Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher confers with Probation Director Scott Svonkin

"We must keep focused on what is right instead of looking at the instructions as a forced change. It is about holding tight to your principles. So many people just don't know, and they make assumptions about what we do.

We must stay focused on the goal, remain connected, and not be defensive. We must aim to build a cohesive team with the community, Board of Supervisors, and Community Based Organizations.

In conclusion, Chief Deputy Fletcher shared, "As probation professionals, we are often the only ones in the room that work with clients long term. We are responsible for making a difference in their lives. It's so important to hang on to those principles. Sure, we are going to shift and change and do what's right, but the core principles of the work that we do [are not going to shift]." She elaborated, "We are that linchpin in the system that makes a difference in family's lives. I recognize that it has been a challenge. However, probation has remained steadfast to our mission. We adapt but always stay on course. LA County has done a great job so far adjusting with such a huge service area. We must not take it personally but believe in and trust the process. Probation is truly a balance of a variety of areas in which a justice-involved individual can benefit."

Chief Deputy Fletcher, we are delighted to welcome you. With your 32 years of experience and expertise in the area of justice reform, the Department is excited to start our years of service under your guidance and leadership.



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### An interview with Chief Deputy Adam Bettino

Appointed as the Department's other Chief Deputy Probation Officer, Mr. Adam Bettino offered the following:

**Why did you choose a career in probation?**

"I am passionate about helping people in need. I initially came to Probation because of my interest in public policy, but I very quickly realized that this might be my calling. I do not use "calling" lightly. This has become my life's work - whether I serve in the Probation Department or elsewhere. Serving our staff and our clients has been extremely life-giving and rewarding. I consider it a privilege."

**Who has been the biggest influence in your life or career?**

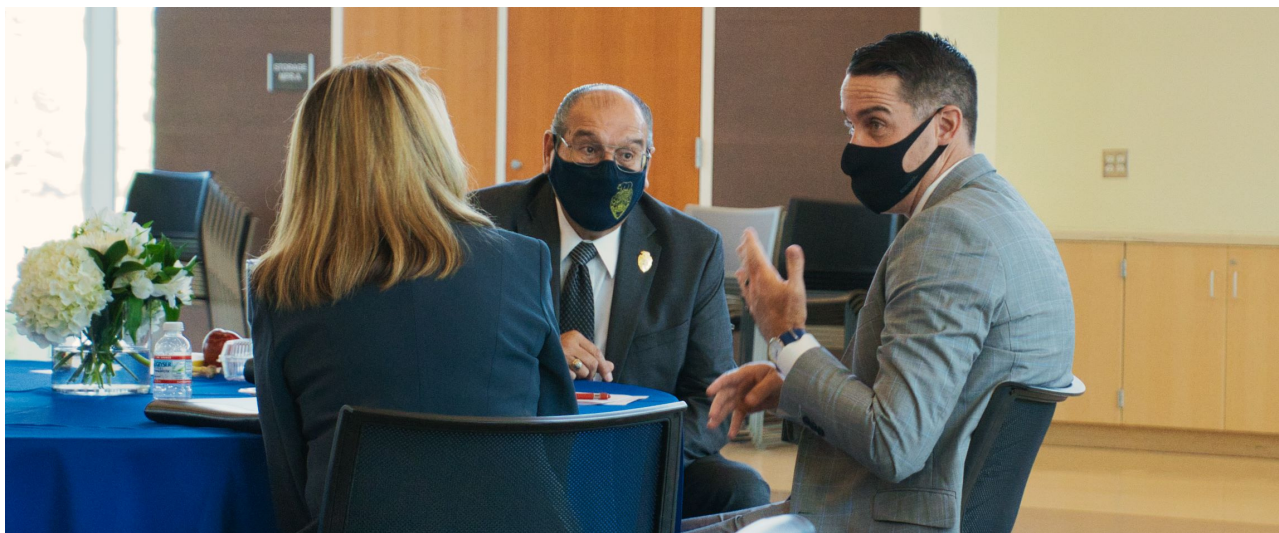
"My friends and family continue to have a huge influence on my life. I have a great support system - that keeps me balanced and refreshed. Kathy New hired me to work at Probation. She immediately pushed me into meetings with executive leadership and our partners. She trusted me to drive our mission forward. I am so grateful to her for that."

**Is there a leader you admire?**

"There are a few people who come to mind immediately, but the best leaders I have been around are those that are self-reflective and always seeking to grow personally and professionally. It is so important that we all work on our own 'stuff.'"



Chief Deputy Adam Bettino



Chief Deputy Adam Bettino with Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher (left), and Probation Chief Adolfo Gonzales (center)

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### An interview with Chief Deputy Adam Bettino (cont)



Chief Deputy Adam Bettino

"Serving our staff and our clients has been extremely life-giving and rewarding. I consider it a privilege."  
- Chief Deputy Adam Bettino

#### **What is your leadership style?**

"I try my best to be approachable and attentive to the needs of staff. I am always looking for opportunities to grow and learn."

#### **What do you want staff to know about you?**

"Family and faith are extremely important to me. I have three young children who keep my wife and I extremely busy. I love surfing, music, and the Dodgers."

#### **Do you have a motto or philosophy that you go by?**

"I don't really have a specific motto, however, I believe that kindness is underrated. I also strive to live a life that is above reproach."

#### **What advice would you offer staff on what they should do as our department changes with the Board of Supervisors instructions regarding re-imagining public safety?**

"I would like to encourage staff to continue to provide excellent services to our clients and their families. We entrust you to make so many decisions as you manage your work. Be bold as you make those decisions and filter them through our core values of service, integrity, and compassion. Continue to build relationships with our partners and the community. We do not own this work."

Congratulations Mr. Bettino on your new appointment as Chief Deputy. You have been instrumental to the Department and your leadership is a valued asset to Los Angeles County.



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# Getting to know Deputy Director Richard Giron

Lastly, Mr. Richard Giron, our new Deputy Director shared the following:

### **Why did you choose a career in probation?**

"I had a strong drive to be a professional that could have a more significant impact on my community and positively impact someone's life. As the years passed, and there were varying opportunities in job functions/caseloads, positions/roles, promotions, and advancement, I was not only given the opportunity to help clients, but I also felt I could impact the Department as a whole through knowledge, experience, training, and mentorship. Everyone benefits if we create an effective work environment."

### **Who has been the biggest influence in your life or career?**

"My father is my role model and hero. I remain close to him and am very fortunate to have him in my life."

### **What do you want staff to know about you?**

"I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the department at the Deputy Director level. My mainstays are dedication and commitment to the department; I believe in improving operational functions and employee morale through communication/transparency and innovation."

On a personal note: I am a big sports guy - go DODGERS! I'm an avid boxing fan. Chess is one of my hobbies, and I enjoy a good cup of coffee."

### **What is your leadership style?**

"My belief is that the best and most impactful leaders are consistent, fair, and decisive. Integrity and a balanced approach are paramount to productivity and effectiveness. I strive to be a Transformational Leader because I welcome the challenges placed on me and prefer to challenge those who work for me to be innovative in their work. I am a lead by example type of leader who values communication with others to aid in inspiring, motivating, teaching and mentoring to attempt to bring out the best in them."



Deputy Director Richard Giron



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### Getting to know Deputy Director Richard Giron (cont.)

"I believe that the engagement of others empowers them to think they're having the most significant impact on outcomes within the department."

#### **Do you have a motto or philosophy?**

"'Treat people with respect', 'Lead People, Manage Process', 'Great leadership is contagious'. I expect people to be professional and treat others with respect."



(l to r) Gina Byrnes, Richard Giron, Jim Green, and David Grkinich

"My belief is that the best and most impactful leaders are consistent, fair, and decisive."

*-Deputy Director  
Richard Giron*

#### **Is there a leader you admire?**

"I admire visionary, courageous leaders that have made a lasting impact on society. Leaders like Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, FDR, & JFK.

Being a big sports guy---- Ali, Jackie Robinson, and Roberto Clemente are all inspirational."

#### **What advice would you offer staff on what they should do as our department changes with the Board of Supervisors instructions regarding reimagining public safety?**

"Two things: Our Probation Family is comprised of caring people who want to help. These strong intentions keep us in this challenging work as our procedures may change our hearts do not. So, keep moving forward in excellence so that our intentions are realized."

"I would also advise staff to take pride in our work and remain flexible because we are in a time of change. Public safety is everchanging as legislation impacts the way we do business. Maintain an open mind and never forget why you started this career in the first place. No matter how we are expected to do things by our Board of Supervisors, you will always be allowed to affect someone's life with your words and actions positively."

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As the Department progresses with the times and strives to answer the call and develop a newly imagined juvenile probation system, we are excited to work under the direction of these three visionaries and great leaders. On behalf of your Los Angeles County Probation Department family, congratulations to each of you. With your guidance, we look forward to continuing our efforts to change lives and positively impact the communities of Los Angeles County.



Executive Leadership Team

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