



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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## “Report Points to Change at Los Angeles County Probation”

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 4, 2013

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We are pleased to see the Office of Independent Review (OIR) acknowledge the progress Los Angeles County Probation is making in reforming and raising standards for the nation’s largest Probation Department. The ongoing partnership between the OIR and the department has created a strategic collaboration. Their assistance is helping Probation develop more specific reforms and policy changes that benefit the employees, the public and the more than 80,000 adults and juveniles under L.A. County Probation supervision.



“A primary objective when I took over leadership of this Department was to remove silos and end the systemic breakdown of the organization from both internal and external factors, says Chief Probation Officer Jerry Powers, “The OIR Report helps to confirm that change for the better is well underway. We appreciate the OIR noting in its annual report Probation’s increased candor and consistent pro-active effort to reform policies at a steady pace.”

Key tenets to reform are establishing new policies and practices, but just as importantly it requires us to bring some very painful internal failings and issues to light. The examples of employee misconduct in the OIR report are disturbing but indicators that we will not try to obscure our failings in the shadows. They represent a small but significant minority of negative behavior, but these examples are a confirmation that we must continue our pursuit of aggressive reforms and change.

"Probation has been willing to hold a mirror up to itself and look for the deep causes of misconduct, on-duty and off," agrees Robert Miller, Deputy Chief Attorney, Office of Independent Review.

Among the many reforms under way, L.A. County Probation now:

- formally reviews and tracks all cases of employee misconduct to see if there are indications of patterns or systemic failures as well as to learn from our mistakes and misdeeds.
- put in place stricter guidelines and standards in the hiring and training of all staff, including the majority who are sworn peace officers.

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- adopted proven technologies such as the Computer Voice Stress Analyzer and polygraph to assist us in the screening of potential new employees. This technology will enhance Probation's stricter background criteria and assist us in hiring only those who are best suited for this difficult profession.
- Requires probation leadership team to be very specific about its expectation of staff behavior on and off the job. Employees have been educated, some might say warned, with clear, unambiguous directives regarding use of controlled substances, falsifying time cards or work-related injuries or omission of relevant information during Department investigations of misconduct.

There is greater accountability in the education and supervision of youth in the Halls and Camps. Probation continues to install cameras in the Halls and Camps and there is a mandatory executive review of all video of negative interaction with juveniles.

It has been said that the best disinfectant is light. We continue to work with the Office of Independent Review along with the Board of Supervisors to shed light on reforms that indicate it is a new day at L.A. County Probation.