

Christiane Joy Galang

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Prof. David Prihoda

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Probation Officer Position

A probation officer is responsible for supervising individuals who are on probation, rather than serving jail time or once they are released. They are required to ensure individuals follow strict rules and guidelines after their court procedures. They help people on probation readjust and/or rehabilitate into society. Probation officers must assess the person's needs and create plans for a safe and secure rehabilitation. This includes interviewing and providing positive support to individuals placed on probation. During this process, they are required to document records to present to the court and to track compliance with the court's requirements. In this job application, there are no names or levels, but it does state, "Previous Experience In A Corrections Or Probation Setting" (State of Virginia, 2025). It does not specify the number of years of experience required for this position, but it is likely looking for familiarity with the corrections or probation environment, such as an internship.

The criminal justice system is continuously growing as crimes increase. They are beginning to choose the rehabilitation path before punishing a criminal. It is crucial to give people who commit low-danger crimes a chance to rehabilitate before sending them to prison, and probation officers are important for this mission. How they approach offenders and create the steps for rehabilitation will impact their lives. Community safety and rehabilitation are the main priorities of a probation officer. Recidivism is high because of the lack of support offenders have once they are released. A criminal record makes it difficult for them to be hired by

companies, which makes it hard for them to reintegrate into society. It is one of the reasons people reoffend once they are released. It is also difficult to reintegrate into a society where they are viewed as criminals. A great probation officer will help guide offenders to the right path to avoid future criminal activities. They help offenders plan their lives ahead of them.

To be a successful Virginia probation officer, there are several requirements and skills that should be considered when evaluating an applicant. The State of Virginia (2025) states that “A bachelor’s degree in criminal justice or a related field” and “Experience working in the criminal justice system” are required to apply for this job. Applicants are also responsible for conducting intake interviews, developing specialized rehabilitation plans, documenting progress, conducting home visits and drug screenings, and providing testimony in court. These are all roles that a probation officer has to attend to. It ensures that the probationer follows all the court rules and laws to avoid going to jail. They are held accountable for documenting the progress an individual has made and reporting to the court. To successfully perform these responsibilities, applicants must have good interpersonal skills, handle stressful situations, communicate effectively, be compassionate and firm, and maintain confidentiality (State of Virginia, 2025). The ad also states that applicants must obtain CPR and First Aid certifications. Probation officers can encounter unexpected situations, such as drug overdoses or self-harm, so it is important to know how to handle them safely.

To be a probation officer, there are many other important skills an applicant must have that are not listed in the job interviews. It is important to have strong emotional regulation to handle the type of individuals they encounter on the job. It is critical to know how to de-escalate emotion-driven situations. This takes advanced communication skills and emotional regulation. Some probationers may be hostile towards their probation officers, so it is important to handle

these situations calmly and sharply. One training I think might be useful for this role is self-defense, whether that is physical or with a weapon. When dealing with offenders, state employees may not know what they are handling. It is controversial whether or not firearms should be encouraged for probation officers, but at the very least, they should be trained for self-defense if a violent situation arises. Dealing with offenders can be a dangerous job; probation officers must not walk into a situation defenseless.

A job advertisement cannot list all the soft skills needed for a specific job. One important soft skill to have is patience. The job application states, “Handle crisis situations and make appropriate decisions to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals on probation and the community” (State of Virginia, 2025). Most of these individuals may be hard to deal with, considering the difference in environment and attitude towards the probation officer. Not everyone wants to get better, but must be forced to rehabilitate. Relapsing and struggling to comply are two major issues that probation officers frequently encounter. They must learn how to deal with the situation calmly and avoid escalation. Additionally, situational awareness is crucial for this job. Home visits are required for probation officers. Individuals may live in dangerous neighborhoods; being able to assess situations effectively is crucial for their safety. Lastly, it is important to know any signs of drug abuse. Although drug tests are crucial for the job, individuals may learn to cheat on the tests. Learning how people act sober and how drug users act is important to know as a probation officer. It is not possible to list all the skills needed to be a probation officer, as it is a mentally and physically challenging job.

I am a cybercrime and criminal justice major. In all my previous criminal justice and sociology classes, I am aware that the recidivism rate in the United States is high. As a future probation officer, I want to help rehabilitate offenders rather than punish them. I believe that

people should have a chance to change before ruining their reputation. With the rise of cybercrimes and knowledge of the criminal justice system, I would be a great candidate for the probation officer job. I am knowledgeable about court systems and procedures, which is helpful for probation officers. The State of Virginia (2025) requires “Strong Communication And Interpersonal Skills To Effectively Work With Individuals From Diverse Backgrounds” to be qualified for this job. My previous class in Interpersonal Communication will help with this job, as I learned about different cultures and how people’s environment affects the way that they act. The State of Virginia (2025) also requires “Collaborate with other criminal justice professionals.” Another course I have taken is Substantive Criminal Law, which taught me the elements of proving a crime and the legal definitions of specific offenses. My previous Criminology course will also help me with this job because I was introduced to the concept, extent, and causes of crime. Lastly, I am currently taking a Leadership in Society class. This course will teach me what it takes to be a great leader. People who are on probation need a role model, and this course provides different assignments and readings to show how leaders become leaders. These different classes will help me understand why people commit crimes, rather than making assumptions about the type of person they are. It will also help me create individualized rehabilitation plans for them. My understanding of court procedures and systems from my previous courses will help me with case reports and communicating with legal professionals.

I have a few concerns about this role. They are valid concerns, but they should not affect my ability to perform the job well. One concern I have is the ability to defend myself if a crisis arises. Although this is unlikely to happen, I am not a big person, and I cannot easily defend myself without a weapon. On the other hand, bringing a weapon with me would make offenders lose their trust or feel uncomfortable, especially if their crime was not violent. Additionally, as a

freshly-graduated college student, I am not completely sure if I have the emotional capacity to deal with hostile or aggressive individuals. Hopefully, that part will not be too much of an issue, as I am an understanding and compliant person. I want to be able to help individuals, not turn them against me.

The wording on the job application is neutral for the most part, but somewhat encouraging. People who want to see a change in community safety and advocate for rehabilitation may find it encouraging to apply for this position. As it states in the job application, “Serve as a positive role model and advocate for individuals on probation, promoting their successful reintegration into society” (State of Virginia, 2025). As someone who may be interested in this position, it is nice to hear that I have a chance to be a positive role model to these individuals. I would want to help them change their ways for the better. Although trusting and respecting a probation officer may be difficult for probationers, I want them to realize that I believe they can change and do better for themselves.

To prepare myself for this position, I will find a probation officer internship in my area. An internship will allow me to observe what daily life as a probation officer will look like. It will give me a feel of the field if it is really what I am interested in doing. For the most part, I think I am really interested in this position. Having experience will increase my chances of getting the position. I will plan to take more sociology classes to learn more about the effects of people’s environment, but I also need to work on my emotional stability to avoid any altercations with individuals. I want to give my full support to all my probationers; surely, they are in a place in life where they have little to no support.

References

State of Virginia. (2025). *Probation Officer*.

https://www.jobzmall.com/state-of-virginia/job/probation-officer-8dwelqef1h?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic