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**Probations Impact on Breaking the Cycle of Recidivism in Collaborative Courts  
A Message from Steve Jackson, Chief Probation Officer of San Joaquin County**

Recently, I was asked to speak to a group of probation clients who were graduating from our Day Reporting Center (DRC) program. After giving them the standard congratulatory speech, I went into a more personal approach of how our stories in life can often look the same. Such as, when a client enters the DRC, or a Collaborative Courts program, they are assessed for their static risk factors and needs. From there, a treatment or case plan is developed which involves a collaborative effort among various professionals, including probation officers, behavioral health specialists, educators, workforce development experts, and community-based organizations. Family members and significant others are also integrated into the support network to ensure the client's success. Likewise, when I or any other professional person goes through a season or traumatic time in their life, we too, seek support from different sources such as family, friends, professionals, or faith-based individuals. So, while our circumstances may be completely different, the model of recovery and rehabilitation look the same for all of us.

I also emphasized the importance of aftercare in both the Day Reporting Center program and Collaborative Court program. This phase is essential as it provides a structured period to aid clients in successfully reintegrating into their communities without our direct supervision.

Much can be said about a Probation Departments role in Collaborative Courts and the efforts made to reduce recidivism rates. Our department is actively involved in various Collaborative Courts, such as Post-Release Compliance Court, Drug Court, and Veterans Treatment Court. These Courts involve probation officers, the Court, case managers, behavioral health specialists, and others who collaborate to develop and monitor integrated case plans.

When approaching treatment, there must be a balance between opportunity and accountability. While offering clients opportunities for growth, they must also be held accountable for their actions. This requires the use of assessment tools, the development of comprehensive case plans, and clearly defined roles for each team member. It is important that clients have a clear understanding of expectations and recognize that their team will provide support and opportunities for change while also holding them accountable when necessary.

Clients must also recognize the importance of both cognitive transformation and learning. By providing evidence-based or promising practices, it allows them to view themselves and the justice system differently. When I talk to clients who exit our system via a Collaborative Court or the Day Reporting Center, they often express gratitude for the role their probation officer, case manager, or treatment provider played in allowing them to be vulnerable and open their mind to a different manner of thinking. In many ways, it’s the investment the officer has made into their care, and they simply do not want to let them down.

In some cases, clients may be ready due to hitting rock bottom, or their family has left them, or maybe they are fearful of the Judge, or the judicial system’s consequences for not complying. Whatever the method of change is for our clients, they need to understand we are committed to joining their team and providing them the resources to be successful.

**Now, a look into California Proposition 36: Drug and Theft Crime Penalties and Treatment-Mandated Felonies Initiative**

As Chief of the San Joaquin County Probation Department, I am in support of Proposition 36 (Prop 36). Moreover, the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC) are also in support of this initiative. Many of my peers around the State would echo my comment, that the foundation of our service to clients and the community is a balance of opportunity and accountability. Prop 36 offers us the opportunity to restore this balance by injecting accountability and consequences with treatment and rehabilitative services. Change is necessary, and that is not a bad thing to admit. It is important to look at how laws impact our communities and take action to address any shortcomings. As the justice system continues to experience on-going reform, it is essential to recognize and rectify ineffective laws that leave our communities riddled with crime and our victims without justice. Having a balance is critical in public safety, and Prop 36 is a step forward in restoring that balance.

By utilizing Compliance Courts, specifically Drug Courts, for individuals ordered into treatment via Prop 36, we can revitalize an evidence-based model left depleted by the impacts of Proposition 47. There must be a system in place that incentivizes completion and provides accountability to those who continually fail. California Probation Departments have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Collaborative Court Model in providing comprehensive care and treatment to clients, leading them to successfully restoring themselves, their families, the community, and victims.

Now, is Prop 36 written perfectly? Does it consider all forms of treatment and where that balance lies? No. Implementation will be the key to its success. It is important, although not overly stated, that probation department personnel be utilized in the implementation process. We will be doing the work and should have a hand in how that work gets done. Furthermore, I would encourage the legislature and any other entity looking to place initiatives on the ballot, to seek input from the agency responsible for implementation prior to moving forward. By including probation departments and law enforcement agencies in the initial planning stages, I truly believe we could be more effective in reformative efforts. Implementation must restore a balance by giving probation and law enforcement the tools to hold individuals accountable while also offering meaningful incentives for completing treatment. Alternatives to incarceration should not replace consequences, but rather work alongside treatment programs, the Court, and probation officers who understand how to balance accountability with rehabilitation.