

## **Directive # 9-06**

[Questions or comments may be directed  
to 609-292-1589 or 609-292-0499.]

**TO:**           **Assignment Judges  
                  Trial Court Administrators**

**FROM:**       **Philip S. Carchman, J.A.D.**

**SUBJECT:**   **Probation Collections – Standards Regarding Accepting Payments at  
                  Probation Offices**

**DATE:**       **June 9, 2006**

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This Directive sets forth standards for collecting funds (fines, fees, and restitution) from probationers in Probation offices. The standards were recommended by the Administrative Council and approved by the Judicial Council on April 26, 2006. This Directive and the attached protocol address Probation collections at three categories of Probation offices:

- (a) “Main Probation Office”- the location where Probation administration (Chief Probation Officer, etc.) is located and where the majority of Probation staff are assigned and the majority of reporting takes place. In most vicinages, the main probation office is located in the county courthouse; but in some it is located in an outlying building.
- (b) “Satellite Probation Office”- an additional Probation location staffed with fulltime Probation personnel to which individuals under supervision are regularly scheduled to report. Satellite offices are established in selected locations for the purpose of providing effective and convenient customer service to Probation clients on a continuing basis.
- (c) “Reporting Station”- a temporary or ad hoc location to which a Probation Officer arranges for probationers to report at a specified time, and which a Probation Officer is stationed periodically rather than permanently, such as a library.

In Main Probation Offices, the standards require the Finance Division, except in compelling circumstances approved by the Assignment Judge, to collect all forms of payment, (cash, check, money order) during regular and extended hours. The standards also mandate all Satellite Probation Offices to accept checks and money orders. Satellite offices are prohibited, however, from accepting cash payments unless staffed by Finance personnel and provided with armed security. Finally, the exchange of funds in any form is prohibited at reporting stations.

As detailed below, the standards strike the appropriate balance between security concerns on the one hand and the need to provide probationers with every opportunity to meet their court-imposed obligations on the other.

### **Standard #1 – Collections in Main Probation Offices**

Finance Division staff shall collect all forms of payment at every Main Probation Office during regular court hours and extended reporting hours, regardless of whether collections occur in the courthouse complex (for Main Probation Offices located in or near the complex) or elsewhere (not in close proximity to the courthouse complex). If local security or other compelling circumstances so require, the Assignment Judge may limit payments in Main Probation Offices to checks and money orders during extended reporting hours, (i.e., outside the regular court work day) following the attached Protocol for Accepting Checks and Money Orders at Satellite Probation Offices.

### **Standard #2 – Collections in Satellite Probation Offices**

All Satellite Probation Offices must accept checks and money orders using the procedures set forth in the attached Protocol for Accepting Checks and Money Orders at Satellite Probation Offices. This will necessitate that each such Satellite Probation Office have a secure drop safe. Cash shall not be collected in any Satellite Probation Office unless it is staffed by Finance personnel and provided with armed security.

### **Standard #3 – No Collections in Reporting Stations**

There should be no exchange of funds in any form at reporting stations.

This directive and the attached protocol for Satellite Probation Offices are effective immediately. I ask that each vicinage develop an implementation plan to address any changes required by the new standards and protocol. This plan should include a review of current operations and practices, as compared to new standards, along with planned actions to be taken to bring the vicinage into conformity with the new practices and standards. **Please submit your written implementation plan to me by Friday, July 21, 2006.**

Questions or comments may be directed to Robert Sebastian, Assistant Director, Probation Services at (609) 292-1589 or Shelley Webster, Assistant Director, Management Services at (609) 292-0499.

P.S.C.

Attachment: Protocol for Accepting Checks and Money  
Orders at Satellite Probation Offices

cc: Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz  
Theodore J. Fetter, Deputy Administrative Director  
AOC Directors and Assistant Directors  
Vicinage Chief Probation Officers  
Finance Division Managers  
Operations Managers  
Steven D. Bonville, Special Assistant  
Francis W. Hoeber, Special Assistant

## **Protocol for Accepting Checks and Money Orders at Satellite Probation Offices**

There are four essential elements that must be addressed when Vicinages accept check and money order payments in Satellite Probation Offices.

### **I. Safeguard Assets in a Drop Safe**

Assets must be safeguarded. There must be a drop safe bolted to the floor, or otherwise properly secured, to hold payments prior to transfer to the Finance Division. The combination to the drop safe should be limited and restricted to managerial and supervisory personnel within the Satellite Probation Office. A primary person and a minimum of two alternates should be authorized access. For emergencies and off-site authorized access, the Vicinage Finance Division Manager and another Court Executive should have authorized access.

### **II. Placement of Payments in the Drop Safe**

When a Probationer is making a payment, it is advisable for Probation staff to witness the check or money order being placed into the drop safe. Under no circumstances shall payments be accepted by a Probation Officer to be dropped in the safe later. Probation staff must provide all clients with their case number and advise all clients to place that number and their name on all checks and money orders in order to ensure proper credit to their account.

### **III. Prepare Payments for Transport to Finance Division**

On a daily basis, the safe should be opened only when the contents are being prepared for transport and when actual transport to the Finance Division occurs. Preparation of payments for transport must include two individuals, the Satellite Probation Office Supervisor (or one of the alternates designated in accordance with section I. above) and a witness. A witness may be any staff member available to observe and attest to the preparation of payments for transport. Preparation for transportation entails:

- a. The supervisor of the Satellite Probation Office or alternate and the witness will secure the environment, open the safe, remove the checks and money orders, and place a restrictive endorsement on the back of all checks and money orders.
- b. A calculator tape, including item count and dollar amount, should be run totaling all of the checks and money orders, documented by dual signatures of the Satellite Probation Office supervisor or alternate and the witness on the calculator tape.
- c. A log should be maintained to include the date, the amount placed in the envelope, and the signatures of the preparer and witness to the process.

- d. In the presence of the witness, the Satellite Probation Office supervisor or alternate will seal the restrictively endorsed checks/money orders in an envelope for transport to the Finance Division.
- e. After preparation for transport, the envelope will be transported to the Finance Division. If the transfer will not occur immediately following the preparation of contents, the envelope should be returned to the drop safe.
- f. The transfer of the envelope should be documented on a log maintained by Finance that reflects the date and time of transfer and contains the signature of both persons involved in the transfer.
- g. Upon receipt of the envelope, Finance will process the contents according to the appropriate internal controls and operating procedures.

#### IV. **Informational Signs**

Signs should be prominently posted in the Satellite Probation Office and in the area of the drop safe stating:

- a. NO CASH PAYMENTS
- b. All checks and money orders should be made payable to ***“Treasurer, State of New Jersey.”***
- c. Your name and case number must be written on the face of the check or money order in order to ensure proper credit to your account.
- d. Place your payment in the drop safe. A receipt will not be issued. If you need proof of payment, you will need to contact your bank or money order vendor to get a copy of the paid document.