



LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICES

Alaska State Legislature
Division of Legal and Research Services
State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 465-3991 phone
(907) 465-3908 fax
research@akleg.gov

Research Brief

TO: Representative Chris Tuck
FROM: Tim Spengler, Legislative Analyst
DATE: December 26, 2014
RE: Caseloads of Adult Probation Officers
LRS Report 15.125

You asked about caseloads for adult probation officers (POs) in Alaska.¹ Specifically, you wished to know the average caseload for a PO; how many hours per week POs generally spend on duties pertaining to their caseloads; and whether there are any statutes or regulations that limit caseloads. Additionally, you wished to know if other states have such limits.

Statewide, approximately 93 adult probation officers serve in 13 probation offices in Alaska located in Anchorage, Barrow, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Nome, Palmer, and Sitka.² A rough estimate of the average caseload for POs statewide was 66.³ It is important to note that as a result of myriad factors—including staff turnover, offender release, unfilled vacancies, and shifting caseloads—enumerating precise averages is highly problematic. For this reason, we urge you to use the estimates in Table 1 with caution.

Table 1: Estimate of Average Caseloads for Probation Officers in Selected Alaska Communities, Fiscal Year 2014			
Probation Office	Average Total Office Caseload	Number of Probation Officers	Average Probation Officer Caseload
Anchorage	3,100	43	72
Barrow	71	1	71
Bethel	290	5	58
Fairbanks	705	11	64
Juneau	243	6	41
Nome	76	1	76
Palmer	716	11	65
Statewide	6,111	93	66

Notes: Caseload averages are rough estimates as staff turnover, offender release, unfilled vacancies, and shifting caseloads, among other factors, make enumerating precise averages highly problematic.
Sources: We received the average caseload per office figures from Sherrie Daigle, legislative liaison, Department of Corrections (907.465.4645). We identified the number of probation officers per office from the Department of Corrections website www.correct.state.ak.us/probation-parole/offices.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) estimates that probation officers spend between 80 and 85 percent of their time on their caseload each month.⁴ The DOC estimate is based on interviews with supervisors and POs.

¹ While a number of states use the title “parole officer,” the job class in Alaska that you were interested in uses the title “probation officer.”

² Probation officers in these 13 offices supervise individuals throughout the entire state.

³ In Fiscal Year 2014, the average number of individuals on probation statewide was 6,171 at any time.

⁴ Information provided by Alaska Department of Corrections legislative liaison Sherri Daigle. Ms. Daigle can be reached at (907) 465-4645.

There are no statutes, regulations, or policies in Alaska that limit the caseloads of probation officers. We identified eleven states, however, that do limit their PO's caseloads in some way, which we summarize in Table 2.⁵ Some of these statutes are specific and others quite general. You will also note that in a number of states the limits are specific to POs providing supervision to high risk or dangerous individuals.

Table 2: Adult Probation and Parole Officer Caseload Statutes

State	Statute	Summary
Arizona	12-251	Deputy probation officers will supervise no more than 65 individuals.
	13.916(b)	A two person intensive probation team will supervise not more than 40 individuals.
Connecticut	54-105(d)	In high-level supervision situations, probation officers will have not more than 35 probationers.
Florida	947.1405	For some released offenders deemed dangerous, caseloads may be restricted to 40 offenders.
	948.001(5)	Drug offender probation caseloads are limited to 50.
Idaho	20-219(4)	Subject to funding, caseloads for officers supervising moderate to high risk individuals will not exceed 50.
Kentucky	439.3101(1)	Caseload guidelines are to be based on risk levels and take into account departmental resources.
Minnesota	244.13	For intensive supervision, caseload should not exceed 30 offenders for every two officers.
Nebraska	83-1,103	The parole service should be large enough to assure that no officer's case load is unmanageable.
New Mexico	31-21-13.1	Maximum caseload for intensive supervision programs is 40.
North Carolina	15A-1343.2c)	Caseloads should not exceed an average of 60 offenders.
Texas	508.1142	Various caseload maximums (from 11-60) depending on the degree of supervision needed.
Vermont	28 § 105-106	Officers working with offenders 21 years of age and younger will have caseloads up to 25. Other probation officer's caseloads are capped at 45.

Sources: Westlaw, National Conference of State Legislatures.

Below we list and provide a link to a number of studies/reports on the topic of probation caseloads that you may find of interest.

- From the American Probation and Parole Association: "Probation and Parole's Growing Caseload and Workload Allocation" (2007), www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/appa/pubs/SMDM.pdf; and "Caseload Standards for Probation and Parole" (2006), www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/stances/ip_CSPP.pdf.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics: "Characteristics of State Parole Supervising Agencies" (2006), www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cspsa06.pdf.
- Urban Institute: "Putting Public Safety First" (2008), www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411800_public_safety_first.pdf.
- Minnesota Department of Corrections: "Adult Felony Workload Study" (2013), www.doc.state.mn.us/pages/files/4313/9084/6228/Adult_Felon_Workload_Study_2013_.pdf.
- New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives: "Probation Staffing and Caseload Survey" (2007), <http://dpc.state.ny.us/pdfs/2007dpcacaseadstudy.pdf>

We hope this is helpful. If you have questions or need additional information, please let us know.

⁵ While we believe our search to be thorough, it is possible that other states limit probation officer's caseloads.