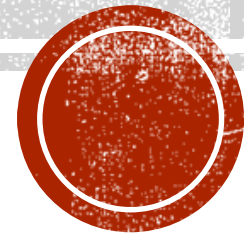


UNITED STATES PROBATION AND PRETRIAL SERVICES

Melissa R. Hernandez

U.S. Probation Officer

Eastern District of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Office



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Educational Information
- Significant interest in criminology and law since middle school
 - At that time, middle school and high school did not offer specific law or criminal justice classes
 - Studied various aspects of the Criminal Justice System through research and readings outside of school
 - Bachelor of Arts
 - Attended Marquette University, 1999-2003
 - Double Major: Criminology and Law Studies and Psychology
 - Minor: Philosophy
 - Executive Vice President of the Criminology and Law Studies Society
 - Master of Science
 - Attended University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2005-2007
 - Master's Degree in Criminal Justice

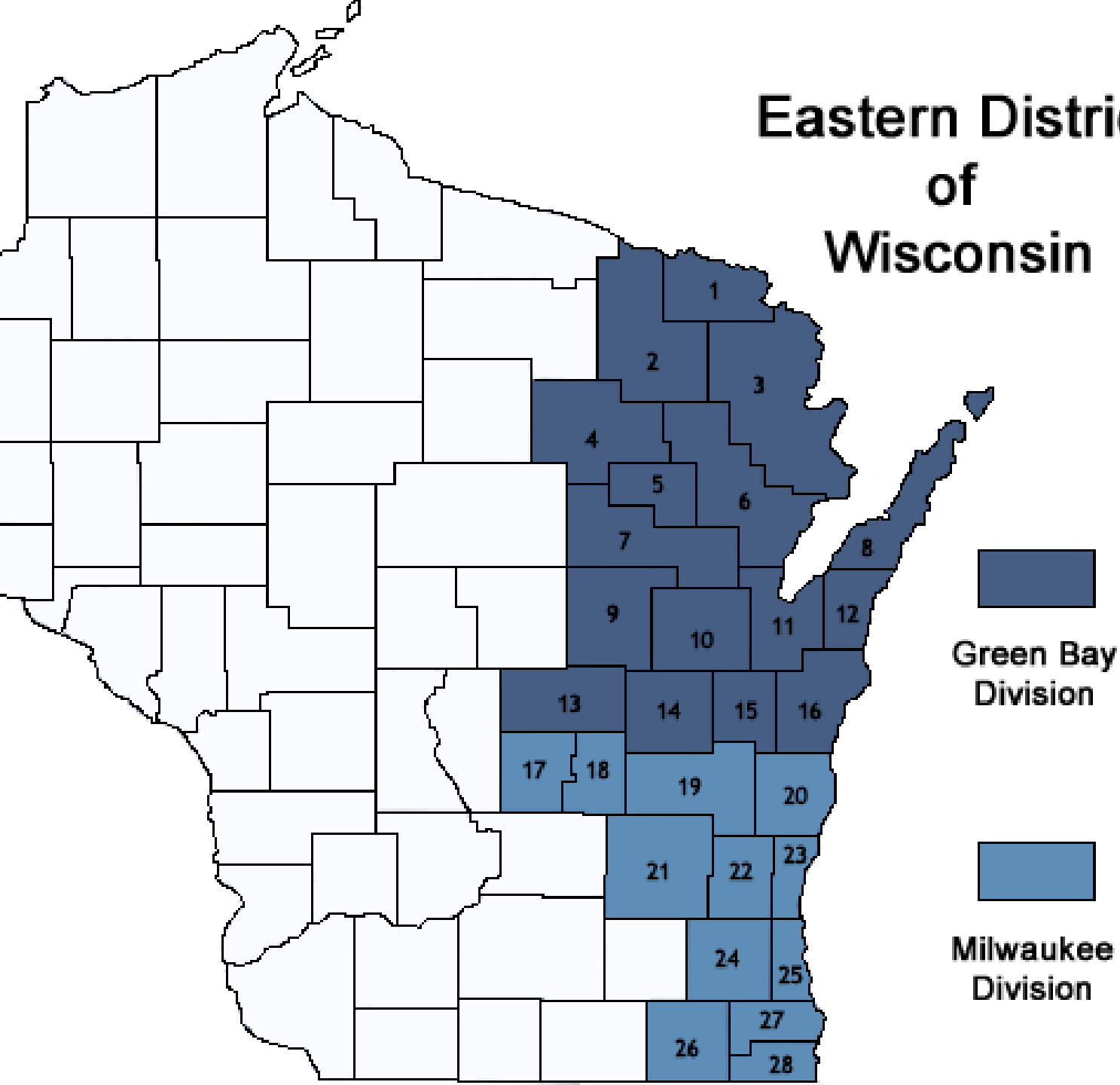


BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- **Career Background**
 - At the age of 19, started working as a Crisis Advocate in a women and children's shelter in Manitowoc County
 - Maintained the 24-hour crisis hotline
 - Assisted the women and children in shelter with questions, concerns, crises
 - Provided court support to clients (criminal court proceedings and civil court proceedings)
 - Assisted with the shelter support groups
 - At the age of 20, started working as an Investigative Assistant with the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office Investigative Unit
 - Worked with the Acting Chief Investigator
 - Completed consumer fraud investigations and reports
 - Assisted in the management of the evidence vehicle lot
 - Completed interviews of victims and witnesses of domestic violence incidents
 - Variety of work experiences that expanded my knowledge of the Criminal Justice System: Legal Assistant; Project Coordinator/Ad Hoc Researcher; Advocate/Specialist in Domestic Violence; Ad Hoc Instructor



Eastern District of Wisconsin



EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

- 94 District Courts are organized into 12 Circuits (ED/WI – 7th Circuit with IN and IL)
- Probation Act of 1925, President Coolidge – probation system for federal courts
- First federal probation officer was appointed in 1927 in the District of Massachusetts



UNITED STATES PROBATION OFFICER

- Eastern District of Wisconsin (Milwaukee and Green Bay offices)
- Started working as a U.S. Probation Officer in 2013
 - United States Probation is under the United States Courts (federal courts)
 - Branch – Judicial
- Experience working in the following areas:
 - Presentence investigations
 - Pretrial investigations
 - Pretrial supervision
 - Post-conviction investigations and supervision
- Salary range: \$43,893 to \$99,332 starting depending on experience
- Website about U.S. Probation Officer: <https://www.wiep.uscourts.gov/about/job.html>



RESPONSIBILITIES

- Supervise individuals released from federal prison (post-conviction supervision)
 - Probation cases and Supervised Release cases
- Monitor the conditions as ordered by the Court
 - Mandatory
 - Standard
 - Special
- Enforce any restrictions on persons under supervision as ordered by the Court
 - Drug testing
 - Alcohol testing
 - No contact (gangs, co-defendants, collaterals)
- Interventions
 - Core correctional practices (cognitive restructuring, problem solving, motivation, skills)



DAILY ACTIVITIES

- Meet with people under supervision
 - Office appointments
 - Home visits
 - Treatment appointments/staffings with treatment providers
- Attend court hearings before U.S. Magistrate Judges and U.S. District Judges
- Discuss current status of people under supervision with Assistant United States Attorneys and Federal Defenders/Defense Attorneys
- Daily documentation of all contacts and activities completed
- Completion of reports for the Court (violations, modifications, notifications)
- Completion of investigations for the Court and other districts (relocation requests, transfer requests, etc.)



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- District Firearms Instructor, NLTA Instructor, and Safety Instructor
 - Provide firearms training and monitor training activities with officers
 - Monitor mandatory qualifications for firearms for district officers
 - Provide safety training in defensive tactics and tactical movement for district officers
 - Complete additional instructor training at the National Training Academy (FLETC) every five years
- District Search Team Member
 - Complete searches on individuals that provide consent or have a condition for search
- Thinking for a Change Instructor/Facilitator – cognitive programming completed within the district



TRAINING

- Initial training for federal probation officers
 - 6-week training program at the National Training Academy (FLETC) in Charleston, South Carolina
 - Completion of firearms training, safety training, tactical training and classroom training; written examinations and practical examinations on all aspects of training received
- Yearly trainings to maintain firearm and safety requirements
- Attended National Training Academy for Firearms Instructor (2-week program) and Safety Instructor (2-week program); recertifications required every 5 years for both Safety and Firearms Instruction
- Interventions and Core Correctional Practices trainings and refresher trainings
- Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR Model) training
- Search trainings within district



SKILLS NEEDED

- **Communication skills**
 - Excellent verbal and written communication
 - Ability to communicate effectively with your coworkers and management, people being supervised, as well as United States District Judges and United States Magistrate Judges, Assistant United States Attorneys, Federal Defenders, Defense Attorneys, Clerks, United States Marshals, Case Agents (local police, FBI, DEA, ATF, Secret Service, IRS, etc.)
- **Collaboration**
 - Along with communication, it is important to have collaborative relationships with individuals on supervision (role clarification), as well as collaterals (family, friends, significant others, employment, treatment) and the court family (listed above)



SKILLS NEEDED

- **Critical Thinking**
 - Ability to complete investigations for other districts and the Court in a thorough and objective manner
 - Provide reasoning for recommendations utilizing evidence gathered
 - Provide comprehensive information pertaining to a person under supervision and possible outcomes
- **Creativity**
 - “Think Outside the Box” when it comes to people under supervision and responding to their needs
 - Many different obstacles/barriers faced by individuals released from prison
 - What do you think some of those barriers could be?



BEST PART OF MY JOB

- Daily interaction with people
- Interventions with people under supervision
- Witnessing positive changes in the people we supervise
- Ability to present to individuals/train individuals
- Ability to teach/instruct on a variety of topics to coworkers and to people under supervision
- Utilization of problem solving and critical thinking in review of cases
- Training opportunities (travel around the United States)
- Challenging on a daily basis!



IN HIGH SCHOOL, I WISH I...

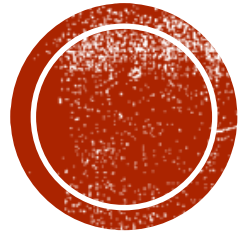
- I knew more about the career opportunities in the federal system
- Had the opportunity to take a criminal justice/law focused class
 - If this is something you are interested in, and there are classes available, take advantage of these opportunities because it will provide valuable insight into our federal, state and local systems
- Job shadowed with law enforcement



REMEMBER...

- It's never too early to explore the careers that are out there and gather as much information as you can. The best way to know if something is a “fit” for you is to try it out first.
 - Take advantage of job shadowing opportunities, as well as volunteer and internship opportunities during high school if possible
 - Internships in college are especially important
 - Build connections with people in the community
 - It is never too early to gain experience





ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS??

If you have any questions pertaining to U.S. Probation, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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 - <http://www.wiep.uscourts.gov/>

