



# Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

## News

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### **Sex Offender Intensive Supervision Officers Hired** **For immediate release Monday, October 19, 2009**

Charleston, W.Va. – Supreme Court Chief Justice Brent D. Benjamin will swear-in four new sex offender intensive supervision officers at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 20, in the Supreme Court Chamber, located on the third floor of the East Wing of the Capitol.

The specialized officers are working under provisions of the Child Protection Act of 2006 (House Bill 101, passed June 14, 2006).

Probation Officers Arthur Houchins, Tonya Lash, Matthew West, and Heath Harmon were hired October 1 to work in Region Six, which includes Fayette, Raleigh, Pocahontas, Greenbrier, Monroe, Summers, Mercer, McDowell, and Wyoming Counties. Their official swearing-in was delayed by scheduling issues.

Also, Probation Officer Courtney Lewis has transferred from Region Five to Region Six to act as the new team's coordinator. Ms. Lewis was among the first group of sexual offender probation officers hired in November 2008 to work in Region Five, which consists of Boone, Cabell, Lincoln, Logan, Mingo, Putnam, and Wayne Counties. Those officers operated a pilot program to carry out provisions of the new law, which requires extended supervision for sexual offenders, especially those convicted of crimes against children.

The officers' only duty is to supervise sex offenders. They work out of their cars, not offices. They work holidays, nights, weekends, and hours in between to provide intensive supervision. The officers also work with circuit court judges and treatment providers to make sure offenders are complying with court orders. The extended supervision includes polygraph examinations and electronic monitoring.

The supervision program is being expanded one region at a time throughout the state. A total of thirty probation officers eventually will be hired to carry out provisions of the law.

The program was developed under the leadership of Justice Robin Jean Davis when she was Chief Justice in 2006 and 2007. Her support was crucial in refining the vision of the supervision protocol. Her work was a continuation of her interest in protecting children in our communities during her "Year of the Child" in 2006 and "Year of the Child, Too" in 2007.

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