

CRIMINAL JUSTICE and the **MEDIA:**

PROBATION OFFICERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

For most of us, reading Facebook, checking Instagram, or reading tweets while at work goes against our workplace rules. For probation officers, however, social media has become a powerful tool that officers can use to keep an eye on their probationers. In the words of one officer, "I can gauge what's going on in their lives. I see people partying or using drugs and alcohol. . . . If people are told not to search the Internet or use electronic devices, they have to be compliant with that order" (WCVB.com, 2013). Think about the types of pictures people post in social media. These posts provide an insight into our daily lives and allow probation

officers to make a "home visit" without even leaving the office. In one case, a probationer was so brazen to taunt his officer after absconding. He posted the following on his Facebook page: "Fresh out of another state. Catch me if you can" (Bernstein, 2012). It did not take the officer long to track down this offender. The judge sent the Facebook poster to prison for 2.5 years.

WCVB.com. (2013). Probation officers keep tabs on offenders through social media. Retrieved from <http://www.wcvb.com/news/local/boston-south/Probation-officers-keep-tabs-on-offenders-through-social-media/18003106#ixzz3C7Yqyt2B>; and Bernstein, M. (2012). Probation officer answers Facebook taunt. Retrieved from http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2012/06/probation_officer_answers_face.html