



PAROLE ESSENTIALS: PRACTICAL GUIDES FOR PAROLE LEADERS

3

Paroling Authorities' Strategic Planning and Management for Results

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Contents

Foreword	v
Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	xi
The Role of Parole Authorities in the Criminal Justice System	xi
Purpose of This Paper	xii
Organization of This Paper	xii
Chapter 1. Craft Your Vision and Mission Statements	1
Know Your Direction and Objectives	1
Define a Clear Vision	2
Define Your Mission	4
Chapter 2. Assess Your Organization’s Current Operating Practices	7
Consider the Value of Objective Information	7
Learn the Sources of Objective Information	7
Review the Information Collected	9
Chapter 3. Engage Key Partners	11
Identify Necessary Participants in Problem-Solving Discussions	11
Ensure Effective Collaboration	12
Chapter 4. Plan and Take Strategic Action	15
Plan for Action	15
Initiate the Plan	17

Chapter 5. Review Information and Manage for Results	19
Develop Critical Indicators	19
Analyze the Information Received and Modify Activities as Necessary	20
Manage for Results	20
Chapter 6. Conclusion	23
References	25
List of Exhibits	
Exhibit 2–1. Considering Objective Information: Comparing Georgia’s Successful Parole Completion Rate to the National Average	7
Exhibit 2–2. Using Objective Information: Texas Board of Pardons, Paroles, and Approval Rates, Fiscal Years 2004–08	9
Exhibit 6–1. Developing an Objective-Driven Action Plan	23

Foreword

Paroling authorities play a critical role in correctional systems nationwide. They make thousands of decisions about the timing of release from prison for a significant number of offenders each year. They set conditions of release and respond to violations of postrelease supervision for many thousands more. Recognizing this critical role, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) is engaged in a major initiative to develop useful resources for parole board chairs, members, and executive staff. In 2008, this initiative sponsored the development of *Comprehensive Framework for Paroling Authorities in an Era of Evidence-Based Practices* (Campbell 2008). The *Comprehensive Framework* provides an overview of how the role of paroling authorities is, and should be, changing to meet the challenges facing the corrections field in the second decade of the 21st century. NIC has also made training curricula, delivery, and technical assistance available as part of the initiative.

As an additional part of this initiative, NIC has commissioned the development of a series of five papers entitled *Parole Essentials: Practical Guides for Parole Leaders*. This series builds on the *Comprehensive Framework* and provides concrete guidance on implementing the principles that it outlines. The series is composed of an informative set of products focused on the unique challenges facing parole leaders; it will assist them in honing their technical skills, clearly defining their roles and responsibilities, and supporting effective practice. This document, *Paroling Authorities' Strategic Planning and Management for Results*, is the third of the series, and is intended to provide a roadmap for parole leaders as they take on the challenge of effectively managing a paroling authority—defining its vision and mission, assembling information and resources to accomplish its goals, and putting into place appropriate management and performance measurement systems to carry out its objectives and measure its progress.

It is NIC's hope that this document will serve as a resource toward professional excellence for the parole community.

Morris L. Thigpen

Director

National Institute of Corrections

Preface

This paper is the third in a series of five resource documents developed under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). The series, entitled *Parole Essentials: Practical Guides for Parole Leaders*, is intended to provide practical information and guidance for paroling authority chairs, members, executive staff, and the officials charged with appointing them.

Titles in the series include:

1. *Core Competencies: A Resource for Parole Board Chairs, Members, and Executive Staff*
2. *Evidence-Based Policy, Practice, and Decisionmaking: Implications for Paroling Authorities*
3. *Paroling Authorities' Strategic Planning and Management for Results*
4. *Special Challenges Facing Parole*
5. *The Future of Parole as a Key Partner in Assuring Public Safety*

These papers are being developed as part of a larger NIC initiative to provide current information and guidance to paroling authorities. This initiative includes the broad context defined by *Comprehensive Framework for Paroling Authorities in an Era of Evidence-Based Practices* (Campbell 2008), accessible on the NIC website at www.nicic.gov. Additionally, the initiative includes the development, piloting, and delivery of a training curriculum for paroling authority members entitled *Integrating Evidence-Based Principles Into Parole Board Practices* and authored by Betty Gurnell and Susan A. Yeres. The reader is referred to the Campbell paper and others cited in the References section of this document, as well as to the other four documents in this series, as additional resources in pursuing excellence in carrying out paroling authorities' considerable responsibilities in the criminal justice system.

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Introduction

Parole boards,¹ releasing authorities, and parole directors have been invested with significant public responsibilities. The individuals who comprise paroling authorities and parole boards have been entrusted with the authority to make critical parole case decisions. More broadly, parole boards, releasing authorities, and their executives are charged with making organizational decisions that can affect—in a variety of ways—every citizen in their jurisdictions.

In light of the broad public policy, criminal justice, and fiscal responsibilities that these key officials exercise, it is imperative that the leaders of parole organizations:

1. Have clarity of vision. They should be able to develop a clear sense of what their organization strives to accomplish and the values that drive its work.

2. Assess the organization's current operating practices. They should be able to appreciate the organization's current circumstances and its position relative to its goals.

3. Engage key partners. They should be able to develop and use the skills necessary to bring appropriate individuals together to define, assess, and prioritize critical issues.

4. Take strategic action. They should be able to plan and execute strategic actions that will allow the organization to advance toward its objectives.

5. Review information and manage for results. They must monitor and adjust activities consistent with the results of objective information, feedback, and evaluations.

In *Comprehensive Framework for Paroling Authorities in an Era of Evidence-Based Practices*, author Nancy Campbell (2008:6) makes an important observation:

... for a parole board to be effective, it is not enough for the members of the organization to learn new skills and/or to recognize the way they *individually* frame ideas about others or about issues. Rather, they must also change the way they view themselves and their individual roles *within* the organization and redefine the organization's role and processes (emphasis in original).

This paper discusses the five areas outlined above as they relate to parole boards and releasing authorities. It offers specific methods and techniques parole leaders can use to explore and transform their organization's role and processes to better achieve their desired organizational goals. It is intended to help parole leaders hone their capacity to analyze and manage effectively the many and varied challenges they face.

The Role of Parole Authorities in the Criminal Justice System

According to Glaze and Bonczar (2008), more than 2 million adults are in prisons and jails in the United States. Of the nearly 700,000 offenders released from prison each year, approximately 500,000 are released on parole. The number of offenders on parole supervision has also reached an all-time

¹ Responsibility for parole functions is exercised by public entities that are identified by a variety of terms—parole boards, paroling authorities, releasing authorities, parole commissions, etc. To simplify the language used in this document, the term "parole board" is used to refer to all of those public entities that exercise significant responsibility for traditional and newly defined parole functions.

high—more than 825,000 (Glaze and Bonczar 2008). Given these numbers, there is a widespread understanding of the critical role that parole boards and releasing authorities play in making case decisions about the timing and conditions of release, the return of parolees to prison as a result of parole violations, and the enormous impact these decisions have on prisons, communities, and the allocation of resources. What is less understood is the critical role that parole leaders play in creating an organizational infrastructure, developing sound policy, and strategically managing their resources to support good decisionmaking in individual parole cases.

The role of paroling authorities has evolved dramatically since parole's inception in this country during the early decades of the 20th century. At that time, parole was conceived of as a vehicle for the ordinary citizen—named as a parole board member—to exercise judgment over the timing of an incarcerated person's release. Despite reductions in discretion brought about by the introduction of determinate sentencing, paroling authorities continue to exercise enormous influence over the operation of the parole release and revocation systems. One-fifth of the states retain releasing authority in a system they describe as "indeterminate," and almost half (44 percent) report that releasing authorities operate in a mixed determinate/indeterminate system (Kinnevy and Caplan 2008). Virtually all paroling authorities retain the ability to set conditions and respond to violations of the terms of parole.

Given the authority and discretion inherent in the parole function, it is critical that parole leaders work to establish and maintain strong, well-managed organizations that can serve as supportive environments in which sound, well-considered, and effective decisions can be made. Parole leaders must have both a clear vision of their organization's overall goals and the ability to help their organizations advance toward these goals.

Purpose of This Paper

This paper is the third in a series sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections that is intended to help parole board chairs, members, and their executive staff carry out their critical responsibilities as effectively as possible. It addresses the challenges of leading and managing a parole board, both as a group of individual decisionmakers and as an organization charged with accomplishing certain organizational outcomes. The paper outlines a sequence of practical steps that parole leaders can take to help ensure that their organizational goals are realized.

Organization of This Paper

This paper is divided into five chapters. Each chapter presents the issue to be addressed and its importance, then outlines a series of steps that, if followed, will guide parole leaders through a process to assess the current situation, define desired improvements, and create an action plan to strengthen their organization. This paper presents examples of the types of issues that can be addressed using these action steps. In addition, each chapter contains examples from various jurisdictions to illustrate how such an approach can be useful in practice. The conclusion summarizes the key steps that parole leaders can take to develop an objective-driven plan as described within this paper.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN THIS SERIES

Core Competencies: A Resource for Parole Board Chairs, Members, and Executive Staff. The first paper in the series outlines core competencies that parole leaders should possess and demonstrate in performing their duties.

Evidence-Based Policy, Practice, and Decisionmaking: Implications for Paroling Authorities. The second paper examines information emerging from the research regarding evidence-based practice and decisionmaking for the parole field.

Special Challenges Facing Parole. The fourth paper provides an overview of a number of challenging populations that paroling authorities encounter as they make decisions.

The Future of Parole as a Key Partner in Assuring Public Safety. The final paper discusses the decisionmaking functions of paroling authorities and the future role of paroling authorities.

Craft Your Vision and Mission Statements

Parole boards, as essential entities within the broader criminal justice system, draw their authority and purpose from individual statutes (see “Examples of State Parole Statutes”). These statutes delineate the structure of a board and identify the procedural steps that must be taken when the board or releasing authority discharges its responsibilities. Much, however, is left undefined by statute.

Often, the more specific expectations, focus, and direction of parole in a particular state are left to the board to determine. In some states, boards attempt to articulate their goals and objectives through annual reports, strategic plans, vision or mission statements, or other methods. Where they do not, however, a clear direction will be difficult to define and maintain.

Know Your Direction and Objectives

It is crucial that parole boards determine and articulate their goals and objectives. Knowing their goals and objectives gives parole leaders and board members a set of foundational

EXAMPLES OF STATE PAROLE STATUTES

Pennsylvania (Public Policy as to Parole, 61 Pa, Cons. Stat. § 331.1)

The parole system provides several benefits to the criminal justice system, including the provision of adequate supervision of the offender while protecting the public, the opportunity for the offender to become a useful member of society and the diversion of appropriate offenders from prison.

In providing these benefits to the criminal justice system, the board and any other paroling entity shall first and foremost seek to protect the safety of the public. In addition to this goal, the board and any other paroling entity shall address input by crime victims, assist in the fair administration of justice by ensuring the custody, control and treatment of paroled offenders, shall consider any applicable guidelines established by the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing and shall ensure that parole proceedings, release and recommitment are administered in an efficient and timely manner.

Sources: Pennsylvania Statute—Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes title 61, section 331.1 (Public Policy as to Parole).

Colorado Statute—Colorado Revised Statutes, 17-22.5-404(3) section 6 (Parole Guidelines).

Colorado (Parole Guidelines, Colo. Rev. Stat. § 17-22.5-404)

(1) As to any person sentenced for a class 2, class 3, class 4, class 5, or class 6 felony who is eligible for parole pursuant to section 17-22.5-403, or a person who is eligible for parole pursuant to section 17-22.5-403.7, the board may consider all applications for parole, as well as all persons to be supervised under any interstate compact, and may parole any person who is sentenced or committed to a correctional facility when the board determines, by using the guidelines established by this section, that there is a strong and reasonable probability that the person will not thereafter violate the law and that the person’s release from institutional custody is compatible with the welfare of society. The board shall first consider the risk of violence to the public in every release decision it makes.

principles to guide them in their parole decisions. A set of common goals and objectives promotes the sense that the board is working together as a corporate body to improve justice system outcomes for offenders and victims and to make the community as a whole safer (see “Examples of Clear Goals and Objectives”).

In the absence of any particular direction, organizations will simply carry out assigned functions. Parole leaders and board members have a considerable amount of work to complete, and accomplishing this work can easily consume each workday. The overall goals and objectives of the organization may receive little attention, as the pressures to simply carry out responsibilities on individual cases in a timely fashion may make it difficult to devote the time and energy necessary to contemplate the

broader purpose of parole. The result, in the absence of an overarching sense of vision and purpose, is that parole boards will focus on deciding individual cases with little to help guide those decisions. Looking at case decisions in the aggregate, what picture is revealed? Does this picture adequately or accurately reflect the intentions, desires, or goals of the parole leaders in that jurisdiction?

Where no overall organizational goal is articulated and the organization focuses on making single case decisions, individuals are free to insert their own personal perspectives into the many decisions that are routinely made. As a result, cases with similar circumstances may have widely different outcomes that may depend significantly on the person(s) making the decision in each case.

EXAMPLES OF CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles

Our Mission: To enhance public safety by making informed parole decisions and successfully transitioning offenders back to the community.

Our Vision: A parole system that leads to a safe Georgia.

Our Core Values: We value ethics, integrity, fairness, and honesty.

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

Vision Statement: The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, guided by sound application of the discretionary authority vested by the Constitution of the State of Texas, shall:

- Render just determination in regard to parole release and revocations, thereby maximizing the restoration of human potential while restraining the growth of prison and jail populations;
- Impose reasonable and prudent conditions of release consistent with the goal of structured reintegration of the release into the community; and
- Resolutely administer the clemency process with recommendation to the Governor fully commensurate with public safety and due consideration.

Sources: Georgia—Excerpted from Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, *Annual Report FY 06*, p.4, <http://oldweb.pap.state.ga.us/06Annual%20Report.pdf>.

Texas—Excerpted from Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 2004*, p. 5, www.tdcj.state.tx.us/bpp/publications/AR%20FY04.pdf.

Action Step 1: Parole leaders and board members should develop a consensus about the direction and focus of parole efforts in their jurisdiction.

Define a Clear Vision

Given the incredible number of incarcerated individuals who will be considered by parole or releasing authorities this year and the impact of parole decisions, it is essential that the leaders of parole organizations have a clear sense of their objectives, goals,

and intended outcomes. Too often, leaders are so focused on the problems and issues in front of them (the “urgent” matters) that they fail to consider the general direction, focus, or purpose of the organization (Covey 2004). In the absence of an intentional destination, the parole organization can be seen as simply a

case-processing entity, and satisfaction with that entity may largely be driven by the specific outcomes of individual cases.

A parole board should be able to state its vision—its “preferred future”—clearly. A vision statement provides an opportunity for an organization to articulate its true objectives and interests, and to identify and prioritize the ideas and possible outcomes that are most important. A clear and compelling vision is one characteristic of a successful team (Larson and LaFasto 1989). It can motivate and draw people forward in the face of challenges and difficulties. A clear and compelling vision can also communicate the importance of the work to key stakeholders.

When setting a vision, a parole board should consider the following:

- Does the releasing authority or parole entity seek to improve public safety? If so, what specifically is it doing to advance toward that goal?
- Is there a belief that community supervision after incarceration is preferable to no community supervision? If so, how does that belief affect case decisions?
- Is there a commitment to helping ensure that offenders are successful in the community after release? If so, how does the parole authority help promote that outcome through its release and condition-setting authorities?
- What is the purpose of the parole hearing? How do the questions posed (or, if applicable, the conditions imposed) help the releasing authority achieve its broader goals?
- How does parole fit into the jurisdiction’s broader criminal justice framework? Who defines the role that parole should play in this system?

For a parole board or agency, achieving consensus around broader considerations such as these can affect both the general direction of the parole organization and its day-to-day operations.

Action Step 2: Parole leaders and board members should reach a consensus about the personal values that they collectively believe should drive the direction and daily activities of the organization.

Understand the Values That Drive the Vision

Parole leaders hold a wide variety of beliefs that influence or affect the way they approach their work. For example, the leader of a parole organization may believe that:

- Parole organizations should strive to demonstrate excellence in accomplishing all assigned responsibilities.
- People are capable of changing their behaviors, and parole can play a major part in bringing about positive changes in offender behavior.
- Objective, reliable, and validated assessment tools can assist the parole entity in identifying offender risks and criminogenic needs.
- Offender risk can be reduced through a variety of specific and focused interventions.
- Community safety should be valued and can be enhanced by certain efforts or interactions that may be undertaken within the parole field.
- Evidence-based research in the parole field should be valued, and the results of this research should be embraced and employed.
- Parole case outcomes for offenders who present similar circumstances should be similar.

An organization’s vision is driven by the values held by those who hold the organization’s destiny in their hands. Identifying the values or beliefs held by key leaders, and arriving at a consensus about the important role that these values can play in the direction and operation of parole, can aid a parole board in pursuing its preferred outcomes.

By sharing their personal values and beliefs with board members, parole leaders can explain to others their motivations for pursuing change and help build a strong foundation within a

board or an organization for exploring particular ideas. For a leader to build a consensus regarding the organization's direction, others must understand the leader's motives. For example, a leader's belief that using interventions effectively can reduce offender risk may help explain the underlying reason for exploring how, when, or why conditions are imposed. Although parole leaders can pursue ideas on their own, consensus among board

members, other parole leaders, and leaders of other organizations concerning areas of potential change is critical to the ultimate success of any new initiative. When board members understand the beliefs that drive the leader's interests, all parties can engage in meaningful discussions concerning the future direction of the board or the parole organization.

Action Step 3: *Parole leaders and board members should develop, or revisit and revise, the organizational vision statement. The vision statement should identify the intended direction of the organization and reflect the values and beliefs of parole leaders and board members.*

Develop or Revisit Your Vision Statement

Parole board members should consider the language of their current vision statement, if one exists, and how it can be improved or modified to better reflect current beliefs or new knowledge emerging from good, empirical research (e.g., the value of using evidence-based practices).

An effective vision statement should:

- Identify the intended direction of the organization.
- Reflect the values, ideals, and principles of the organization's leaders.
- Be a positive, optimistic statement about the future.
- Be lofty and compelling, pulling people forward.

- Be broad and general in nature (not weighted with specifics).
- Be easily understood.

For an example of a vision statement that meets these requirements, see "Ohio Parole Board Vision Statement."

Define Your Mission

Parole leaders have the responsibility to properly and effectively carry out those tasks and duties outlined in pertinent statutes, regulations, executive orders, and relevant court decisions. However, these responsibilities can be prioritized, accomplished, and integrated into the work of a broader criminal justice system in a great many ways. Also, particular desired outcomes and system or public interests may drive particular efforts or initiatives. These may become the focus of a parole organization's mission.

Outline Specific Objectives

An organizational mission is a statement that clearly outlines the intentions of an organization to achieve a broad objective—one that is consistent with the vision and values of that organization and helps move that entity in the direction of its preferred future. When the National Aeronautics and Space Administration determined in the early 1960s that it would land a man on the moon by the end of the decade, that constituted an organizational mission. It provided a focus for accomplishing a specific task (landing a man on the moon) that was consistent with the broad vision of the agency.

OHIO PAROLE BOARD VISION STATEMENT

The Ohio Parole Board strives to ensure fairness and systemic participation in all levels of decisionmaking by focusing on timeliness, consistency, and clarity. Furthermore, the Ohio Parole Board seeks to promote successful offender reentry by maintaining contact with offenders during their supervision to not only intervene and address violation behavior, but to acknowledge and support compliance and accomplishments.

Source: Ohio Parole Board, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, www.drc.ohio.gov/web/parboard.htm.

Action Step 4: *Parole leaders and board members should identify and prioritize the broad missions or undertakings under way in their organization. They should review each of these efforts to determine its clarity, purpose, and value. As the vision and values of the organization become clearer, parole leaders and board members may need to articulate and pursue new missions. In so doing, they should clearly indicate the outcome that is sought and the timeframe intended for its accomplishment.*

Identify and Articulate Your Most Important Mission(s)

An effective mission statement may address a broad issue, but it should indicate precisely what will be achieved. It should also outline a projected timeframe for completing the mission and the mission's relationship to the broader vision or preferred future of the organization. For example, when a parole organization indicates that its most important function is to make appropriate parole decisions—and that it seeks to improve its parole decisionmaking operation by integrating an objective risk tool into the decisionmaking process in the next 12 months—it has stated a specific mission.

An organization may seek to undertake a great many missions at one time. To improve the likelihood that each mission will be successful, parole leaders must consider the focus, clarity, integration, and priorities that have been given to each mission. At a minimum, parole leaders should be able to identify and appreciate the value of each mission that is under way and collectively determine those missions that should be given the greatest priority or attention. Considerable time and energy can sometimes be devoted to missions that are no longer of interest or value to current parole leaders. Such missions should be terminated. To find the time to devote to matters of genuine interest or concern, particularly those that have the greatest possibility of helping the organization move in the direction of its vision, each mission should be carefully considered to determine its value.

Assess Your Organization's Current Operating Practices

Although individual perspectives, newspaper articles, letters from the public, and comments made during parole hearings can be informative, they do not necessarily convey an accurate assessment of the landscape, direction, or outcomes of the parole work being accomplished. To determine the challenges that a parole organization faces or the specific opportunities available, it is important that parole leaders consider relevant, timely, and objective information.

Action Step 5: *Parole leaders should acknowledge the important role that objective information can and should play in making significant organizational choices.*

Consider the Value of Objective Information

Objective information (clear measurement data on various aspects of the parole authority's functioning and the outcomes of its decisions) can help parole leaders and board members appreciate the impact that individual decisions have on the broader criminal justice system and how that system is working overall (see exhibit 2-1). Without objective information about the overall operation of the organization, leaders are not in the best position to make informed organizational decisions, appreciate or be aware of problem areas, or consider the relative merits of possible choices.

Learn the Sources of Objective Information

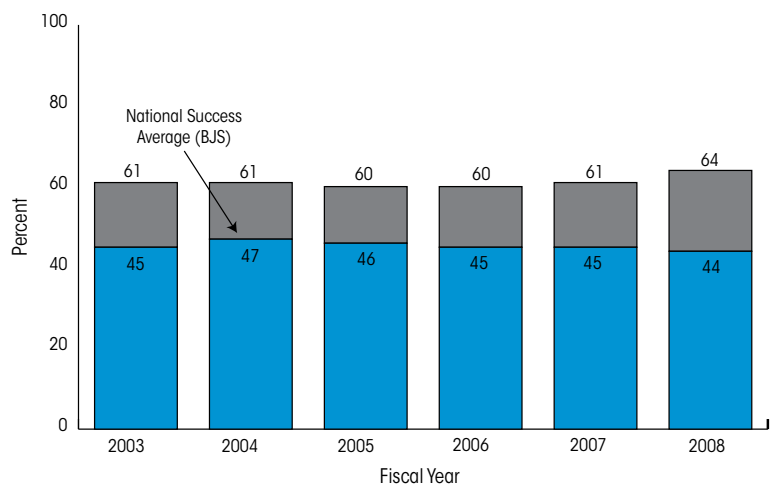
In light of the vision statement, values, and preferred future articulated by the organization, the parole leader should assess what he or she needs to know about the organization's situation, progress, and circumstances, and how to get this information.

Some parole boards may have in-house staff who can be tasked with developing and providing particular types of data or information. However, many parole leaders have to rely on staff

from other organizations to provide these types of data. In either event, the first question to ask of oneself as a parole official is: "What kind of information would I like to receive?" The types of information required will typically fall into two categories:

1. **Cost/benefit analyses and program evaluations** that inform a board about what types of interventions can, for

Exhibit 2-1: Considering Objective Information: Comparing Georgia's Successful Parole Completion Rate to the National Average



Source: John Prevost. 2009. Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles. Unpublished report. Atlanta, GA.

example, result in reduced recidivism. Research staff or partnerships with local universities can provide this type of information.

2. **“Dashboard” indicators.** This information is provided on a routine basis over time, e.g., each week, month, quarter, or year (see exhibit 2–2). The indicators inform parole leaders about measures that track significant events within their organizations and that can be used to understand trends over time (see “Examples of Dashboard Indicators”). These indicators might include:
- Number of cases considered for parole each month (comparison of parole consideration cases in the current month with the same period last year/quarter).
 - Number of individuals who waived parole consideration in the current month (comparison of parole consideration waivers with the same period last year/quarter).
 - Timeliness of considerations for parole or other matters in the current month (comparison of timeliness with the same period last year/quarter).
 - Number of revocations/violations in the current month (comparison of number of revocations/violations with the same period last year/quarter).

- Percentage of cases paroled in the current month (comparison of release percentages with the same period last year/quarter).
- Percentage of decisions consistent with guidelines or other recommendations in the current month (comparison with the same period last year/quarter).
- Votes for or against parole by board member.
- Revocation requests by region/district of the state.
- Percentage of cases successfully completing parole in the current year/quarter (comparison of successful completions with the previous year/quarter).
- Percentage of parolees working/in designated programs this year/quarter (comparison of parolees working/in programs with the previous year/quarter).
- Current waiting list/waiting time for certain programs.
- Time between decision to release and release occurring.

Parole leaders have a responsibility to identify the types of objective data they need to assist them in identifying the current status and movement of relevant activities. Identifying the proper

Action Step 6: *Parole leaders should identify and develop consensus regarding “critical indicators” (the most significant objective information that provides measures of the work and activities that their parole organization undertakes) and determine methods for acquiring this information and disseminating it to parole decisionmakers and others. A select few of the critical indicators may be thought of as a “dashboard” that provides quick, concise feedback for decisionmakers and other key stakeholders.*

Action Step 7: *Parole leaders should review critical indicator information periodically (e.g., yearly/quarterly) to gain a better sense of the organization’s current status and direction.*

Exhibit 2–2: Using Objective Information: Texas Board of Pardons, Paroles, and Approval Rates, Fiscal Years 2004–08

Fiscal Year	Cases Considered for Parole	Cases Approved for Parole	Approval Rate (%)
2004	64,008	19,440	30.37
2005	71,207	19,582	27.50
2006	72,583	19,061	26.26
2007	74,488	22,209	29.82
2008	74,895	23,025	30.74

Source: Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles Annual Reports, www.tdcj.state.tx.us/bpp/publications/publications.html.

individuals—whether they are inside or outside the organization—and asking them to design, assemble, and deliver this information is essential to understanding matters critical to the parole organization’s functioning.

Review the Information Collected

Identifying critical indicator information is an important step in determining the status and direction of the organization. However, this information is helpful only if it is understood—and valuable only if it is used to understand and improve practice. Parole leaders have a responsibility to determine the type of information that is important for them to track, to arrange for its collection and distribution, and to understand and use the information that is provided.

Parole leaders and board members should meet routinely to discuss their critical indicators to identify trends, understand current circumstances, and establish a foundation for understanding the status of their parole system. They should also consider how these indicators can be a vehicle for communicating information about workload and performance to other stakeholders and to the public.

A common mistake that many leaders make is to assume that once an issue has been identified as being of particular importance, the solution to the problem will be readily apparent. In addition, the ever-present pressure for quick action can cause an organization to seize on the first proposed solution as an agenda for action. This often leads to ineffective action. Only after

a careful analysis of the problem (What do we know about current policy, practices, and resources? What are the contributing causes of the problem?) and an exploration of a range of possible solutions (which may include collaborating with partners) should action be undertaken.

Identify the Issues and Areas That Require Further Attention

After the board has determined areas of opportunity and the parole leader has conducted a routine analysis of the objective information gathered, the parole leader and board must then

EXAMPLES OF DASHBOARD INDICATORS

Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles

- Percentage of parolees successfully discharged or revoked.
- Employment aptitude and rates.
- Program participation, including types of programs and completion rates.
- Drug tests completed and results.

Kansas Parole Board

- Prison admissions.
- Parole violators returned to prison for new offenses and/or technical violations.
- New offenses over time by offenders on parole.

identify the critical issues that require further study. These areas may relate to broad criminal justice system issues (e.g., the impact that parole release decisions may be having on state resources), areas of responsibility (e.g., the timeliness of parole consideration or the application of special conditions), or the

use of tools or technology (e.g., whether risk assessment instruments are being used properly, the extent to which guidelines or recommendations are followed, or the impact of video conferencing on operations) (see “Examples of Critical Issues Facing Parole Leaders”).

Action Step 8: *Parole leaders should use objective information to identify specific issues to be explored. They should then prioritize issues of interest so as to promote working first on those areas that have the greatest potential value to the parole organization. They should establish a regular schedule for strategic management/planning opportunities that bring them together for discussions to identify problems and set priorities for addressing them.*

Leaders may want to address many issues or areas of interest, but financial resources, time, staff availability, and other considerations may limit an organization’s ability to focus on all the significant matters at the same time. Therefore, it is important that leaders are able to define, assess, and prioritize issues or areas to be addressed.

Prioritize Issues and Areas of Interest

Once potential issues or opportunities are identified, they must be prioritized. When setting priorities, parole leaders should keep in mind the core values and vision that are being reaffirmed—the role of parole in enhancing public safety, ensuring just and equitable punishment, and honoring the interests of victims. These values should provide guidance when the leader is considering:

- Which of the issues, if successfully addressed or resolved, has the potential to have the greatest benefit to the state or the parole system? For example, what action(s) would most greatly improve public safety, financial resources, or the methods and processes of the board and the parole organization?
- What is the external environment at this time, and what challenges and opportunities does it present?
- Is the board under scrutiny for some aspect of its operation, or is there considerable discussion or momentum for making promising changes to practice or policy?
- Are the resources (e.g., funds, staff) necessary to pursue this issue available or can they reasonably be acquired?

These considerations—the potential impact, the timing of actions, and consideration of resources—should aid parole executives in prioritizing areas of interest.

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL ISSUES FACING PAROLE LEADERS

Critical issues facing parole leaders and board members that might be addressed using the action steps outlined in this paper include:

- Anticipating and minimizing the damage of high-profile cases.
- Managing hearing and case review workloads.
- Acquiring better decisionmaking tools.
- Reviewing decision guidelines.
- Reviewing and refining standard and special conditions.

COLLABORATING WITH PEERS

Parole leaders within a state should routinely meet as a team to define the issues that emerge from the information they are collecting and to discuss the implications of that information for their work and for the direction of the agency. Leaders should use these exchanges as opportunities to set new goals and make plans for moving their work forward. Parole leaders must find or create opportunities to engage in these critical discussions.

Engage Key Partners

Parole board members, as a team, should confer frequently about the critical issues they face as a board. In many cases, the board, operating as a committee of the whole, may use the methods outlined in this paper to address questions of vision, mission, and operations. In many other instances, however, the critical areas or issues that parole leaders identify as requiring the most immediate attention involve more than the people or activities within their organization—they also involve other agencies/individuals who are not organizationally assigned to the parole board or parole agency.

These other agencies/individuals typically include traditional partners such as staff from the Department of Corrections or the parole supervision entity, community partners, service providers, or a wide variety of other government and nongovernmental personnel.

Identify Necessary Participants in Problem-Solving Discussions

It is essential that parole leaders enlist the right people and agencies—those with a range of perspectives, expertise, and experience—to work with them to define critical problems accurately and develop effective, workable solutions. Properly identifying the individuals who should be invited to participate in the discussion or resolution of an issue and mutually determining roles are critical to accomplishing successful outcomes. Over the past decade, the importance of collaborating with traditional and nontraditional partners in the criminal justice system and with other stakeholders, such as social service agencies, has become increasingly apparent (see “Examples of External Stakeholders Partnering With Parole in Missouri,” page 12). Typically, the challenges any criminal justice entity faces are not

RESPONDING TO RECIDIVISM

A key challenge facing many parole boards is the high rate of return of paroled offenders to prison. Developing effective strategies for responding to violations requires collaboration among the board, supervision staff, local service providers, and others.

completely within its control, and its success depends fundamentally on collaborating with other entities so that together they can accomplish their common goals. In addition, grant funders often require a description of participating agencies and the roles and responsibilities of each in investigating and improving the system.

Reaching out to others and openly discussing issues of concern—often of mutual concern—require a degree of faith and trust. Effective strategic planning requires that parole leaders exercise these traits and develop the confidence and ability to engage other partners in the resolution of key issues.

Action Step 9: *Parole leaders should work to improve dialogue and collaborative teamwork among parole board members. As the scope of issues and problems goes beyond the board itself, the board should engage other key partners. Collaborating with individuals and entities that represent common interests will aid the board in properly identifying and resolving issues.*

EXAMPLES OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS PARTNERING WITH PAROLE IN MISSOURI

The Department of Revenue has been a key partner with the parole board in the Missouri Re-Entry Process. In 2004, the Department of Revenue began working with the Missouri Department of Corrections to implement a program to assist offenders in obtaining a non-driver's-license identification card in an effort to allow a smoother transition into the community. Such a card allows offenders the immediate possibility of proving their identity to enable them to comply with conditions of release such as obtaining employment, education, and financial services.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is a service agency that works with educators, legislators, government agencies, and citizens to maintain a strong public education system. DESE works closely with the Missouri Department of Corrections to provide educational and vocational classes in Missouri communities to benefit offenders, including GED classes (having a GED is typically a standard condition of parole in Missouri). Both departments recognize that educational deficits and illiteracy are among the primary factors contributing to continued criminogenic behavior.

As part of the Missouri Re-Entry Process, the Department of Health and Senior Services provides HIV Transitional Case Management through the Positive Start Program. Entry into this program occurs before the offender is released from the correctional facility. The program provides counseling, encouragement, and short-term assistance to HIV-positive men and women who are returning to the community. Case managers work with clients to address primary health care and other basic needs, including housing, entitlements, medical care, counseling, and drug treatment. Case managers help the clients establish short- and long-term goals and link them with appropriate community support services that will help them meet these goals.

Ensure Effective Collaboration

Despite a willingness to work together, and an investment of time and effort, a collaborative team can easily find itself frustrated by limited progress. This may happen for a number of

reasons: group members may not clearly understand exactly what they are expected to do, or timeframes for their work together might be unclear or unrealistic.

For a team to be productive, it must (Larson and LaFasto 1989):

- Clearly understand what it is being asked to do and appreciate why it matters.
- Have a structure that clearly outlines duties, responsibilities, and timelines.
- Have a process for acquiring and considering information that is pertinent to its inquiry.
- Be composed of the "right" members—those who have sufficient knowledge and a professional attitude about the subject being studied.
- Have an appropriate timeframe for completing its work.
- Know to whom it should report its findings and the method for doing so.

One tool that can be extremely helpful to collaborative teams is a clear and detailed charter that outlines what the group is being asked to do and how it should move forward with its work (see "Examples of Team Planning Charters").

As a starting point for any significant issue, group members should be asked to study the current situation. Where does that situation fall short of the board's vision of the future? What are the gaps, weaknesses, or opportunities for improvement?

As a part of their charter, study groups should be asked to submit their findings and specific recommendations for action concerning the topics or issues that they are asked to investigate to a designated individual or group by a specified date. Developing a work flowchart that describes the order in which key activities or elements of work must occur can assist in this effort.

Action Step 10: *Parole leaders should assemble the most appropriate individuals and provide them with clear guidance about the issues to be considered and the structure that should govern their efforts in order to develop meaningful recommendations for action.*

When groups fail to meet their time requirements or do not address the specific issues to the satisfaction of the recipient(s) of the findings and recommendations, then additional instructions should be provided to the group or other actions should be promptly taken.

Whatever the issues, problems, or areas of opportunity that are identified, the clarity with which they are defined and the parole leader's ability to solve problems will be critical to all future efforts to understand, improve, or modify agency practice.

EXAMPLES OF TEAM PLANNING CHARTERS

Missouri

In Missouri, an ad hoc team focusing specifically on the employment and vocational needs of offenders under parole supervision has been formed. The group's aim is to connect offenders to employment-readiness resources and support services more effectively. The team's charter provides a clear rationale and data that support its efforts, outlines team membership and roles, sets boundaries the team must follow (including the scope of its responsibilities, which include recommendations for change but not implementation plans; the frequency, duration, and location of meetings; and a timeline for its work), and defines desired and undesired outcomes as follows:

A successful project will result in an increase in the percentage of offenders who are employed within the first 60 days after release and an increase in the percentage of offenders with improved vocational skills.

A successful project will not result in an employment/vocational training system that ends with offender release from prison, does not incorporate elements of employability from other stakeholders, and fails to consider the impact of life skills on employment.

Colorado

Colorado's Post-Incarceration Supervision Task Force has been charged with identifying the best postincarceration supervision structure and practices by systematically reviewing and analyzing evidence-based correctional practices and comparing them with current legislation, policies, regulations, and practices in Colorado.

The task force's charter delineates six distinct structural areas of study, along with supporting data and information that underlie the team's work, and defines desired outcomes:

A successful project will result in identified gaps in policy, procedures, services, and staff training; short- and long-term strategies to address these gaps; a focus on significant recidivism reduction; an initial set of recommendations; and reinvestment of cost savings.

The Post-Incarceration Supervision Task Force will gather and analyze relevant information pertaining to the above issues and will address, at a minimum, the issues and application of evidence-based practice. The Transition Task Force will make specific recommendations to the Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) Oversight Committee on Re-Entry, which will make recommendations to CCJJ.

Sources: Missouri—Personal communication from Sharon Dunn, Special Projects Coordinator, Missouri Board of Probation and Parole, September 19, 2009.

Colorado—Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, Committee on Re-Entry. 2007. *Post-Incarceration Supervision: Charter and Scope of Work*. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, http://cdpsweb.state.co.us/ccjj/Post_Incarceration-Reentry.html.

Plan and Take Strategic Action

Parole leaders should be prepared to receive recommendations from work teams and should have a structure and strategy in place for developing and executing a work plan.

Plan for Action

Before implementing work team recommendations, the parole leader should:

1. Prioritize action items according to:
 - The “preferred future” of the organization.
 - The value/potential impacts of particular actions.
 - Critical circumstances (e.g., reductions in budget, particular legal challenges) that require special attention at this time.
2. Conduct a budget analysis to understand the financial costs of action (or inaction).
3. Identify key individual and agency partners.
4. Be aware of any additional information that will affect implementation.

(See the full discussion in chapter 2).

Distinguish Short-Term Versus Long-Term Actions or Strategies

In some cases, work activities may be divided into short-term and longer term actions or strategies. An issue or area may be designated as short term if:

- The organization already has the authority/responsibility to address the issue.
- Meaningful actions can be taken to change practice/policy within 6 months.
- No new resources will have to be acquired to address the issue (although existing resources may be shifted to address new priorities).

Long-term action generally involves issues that require the acquisition of new resources, a change in statute, or situations where significant work activities cannot be completed within 6 months. It may sometimes be helpful to tackle an issue with both short-term and long-term actions at the same time to bring

Action Step 11: *Parole leaders should study, prioritize, and act on recommendations for action. Creating implementation teams with appropriate charters and considering both short- and long-term action strategies can help the parole organization move toward its goal.*

Action Step 12: Parole leaders should outline specific objectives and tasks to help the group or organization accomplish its goals. These objectives and tasks should have sufficient specificity and designated timeframes so that the individual responsible for the task and the progress being made are readily apparent.

EXAMPLE OF AN IMPLEMENTATION CHARTER

Missouri's Reinventing Probation and Parole Supervision— Field Risk-Reduction Instrument Implementation Committee

The mission of this committee was to develop the technology-related infrastructure that would support the successful transition to a new, evidence-based field probation and parole supervision model. Among other features, this model would incorporate the use of a risk-reduction instrument.

The committee clearly outlined its desired outcomes for its effort, including:

- Effective coordination and collaboration with other reinventing supervision teams.
- Recommendations for resolutions relative to the conversion to the reinventing supervision process by October 15, 2008.
- Guidance relative to technology-related items that need to be included in the lesson plans by December 1, 2008.
- The submission of monthly technology-related updates to the marketing team for inclusion in the monthly newsletter.
- The finalization of the Risk Reduction FOCUS Program based on policy and procedure development, with research and evaluation, by December 1, 2008.
- The development of a policy and procedure for the use of the field risk-reduction instrument, to include frequency and use with the Transition Accountability Plan, by December 1, 2008.
- The development, with research and evaluation, of a compliance report to track the use of the new risk-reduction tool and additional key outcomes, by March 1, 2009.

The committee also decided that any of the following would represent a failure to meet its goals:

- A lack of coordination of effort with other reinventing supervision teams.
- Failing to meet established deadlines.
- The development/recommendation of technology (such as GPS, electronic monitoring, etc., that focuses heavily on surveillance) that would inhibit the reinventing supervision changes.

The committee was free to assign specific tasks, membership, and a timeline for completion.

about changes that can be made as quickly as possible while continuing to pursue longer term strategies (e.g., implement a small project with existing resources while pursuing budget requests to expand the initiative).

Create Implementation Teams

Parole leaders may need to assemble an implementation team to oversee the desired modification of policy or practice. Such a team is particularly helpful when the issues to be dealt with are complex or involve multiple agencies. The team should be composed of knowledgeable individuals with the capacity to effect change. The team should have or develop a clear charter that outlines the desired objectives, roles and responsibilities of members, and a timeline for accomplishing required actions (see "Example of an Implementation Charter").

Identify Critical Next Steps

After the recommendations have been presented and prioritized, the parole leader and/or the implementation team will likely have to undertake further steps to help the organization advance toward its preferred future. These steps could include:

1. Identifying opportunities to acquire resources, technologies, or tools.
2. Gaining access to training or services that might improve critical skills or knowledge.
3. Modifying work practices to streamline operations, improve performance, increase collaboration, or make more time available for critical tasks.
4. Realigning functions or responsibilities to ensure that specific objectives are achieved.
5. Determining the types of future information that must be available to understand whether changes of policy, practice, or methods are having the desired outcomes.

Specific goals should be articulated for each issue or area of interest. Under each goal, critical objectives should be spelled out. An objective is critical if the goal will not be reached unless the objective is achieved. Each objective should have an individual noted as being responsible for its completion and a timeframe associated with its accomplishment. Specific work tasks should be identified under each objective. Each work task should indicate the person responsible for the activity, the individuals who are assigned to assist with this matter and their roles, and the timeframe for completing the task (see “Example of a Work Task”).

EXAMPLE OF A WORK TASK

- Task #1: Identify and assess current policy and practices that address the delivery of transitional services to conditional-release offenders.
- Party Responsible: Jane Alexander.
- Timeline: By 9–30–2011.

Action Step 13: *Parole leaders should undertake specific actions to demonstrate to staff and stakeholders that changes are being implemented and that improvements in practice or policy are occurring. The use of small implementation or pilot sites can help an organization accomplish its desired outcomes.*

Initiate the Plan

The implementation team’s authority to put in place modifications of policy, procedure, or practice should be spelled out in the team’s charter. Once the proper implementation activities have been identified, they should be executed.

In some cases, it can be helpful to experiment on a small scale before implementing a new practice or procedure. Creating or using pilot sites allows a parole board or agency the opportunity to experiment with various methods for achieving the desired results (see “Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative”).

The pilot-site approach has three significant benefits:

- It encourages staff at the line and frontline supervisor levels to “try things on for size,” to experiment, and to develop ownership.
- It helps develop expertise in an activity that can be shared with others in the future.

- It helps identify the best way of doing something. It is the end result—accomplishing the desired goal—that matters the most. Organizations that remain flexible in their methods, but committed to accomplishing their broader goals, have the best results (Covey 2004).

MICHIGAN PRISONER REENTRY INITIATIVE

Michigan has implemented the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI) model using a “learning site” approach. The MPRI model involves improved decisionmaking, case management, supervision, and programming in seven critical decision points in the three phases of incarceration, transition, and community supervision and aftercare. An initial pilot site project in one county allowed for an evaluation period that informed future implementation statewide, as well as a comprehensive evaluation of the model after it is implemented to scale. This pilot approach provided the assistance needed to provide stakeholders in the MPRI effort with data that supported the premise that the model is sound and reduces crime.

Review Information and Manage for Results

Will Rogers once said, “You might be on the right track, but you’ll get run over if you just sit there.” For parole leaders, this means they must continually consider their practices, review their data, move forward with positive changes, and inspire their staff to pursue the broader goals of the organization.

To determine whether a parole organization truly is progressing toward a desired goal, methods for measuring progress or outcomes must be developed. These measurements can focus

on outcomes (such as returns to prison) or processes (such as the time it takes to complete the parole consideration process).

Action Step 14: *Parole leaders should develop a few critical indicators—information they will need to know to judge whether appropriate progress is being made in an area of interest—and review this information regularly.*

Develop Critical Indicators

Parole leaders should develop a few critical indicators (see “Examples of Critical Indicators,” page 20) and use this information to help them better understand the current state of an issue or an area of interest, how the issue or area is developing over time, and the relationship between certain actions and outcomes related to that issue. For example, the ability to identify actions taken at specific levels (from frontline

staff to parole board members) and to compare similar actions taken by similarly situated persons within the organization will allow leaders to quickly identify organizational trends, successes, or weaknesses.

Acquiring this information may require adjustments or improvements to automated systems, gaining access to information contained in other systems, and/or making changes to reporting or data-collection methods. (See the discussion on data and information in chapter 2.)

Action Step 15: *Parole leaders should use critical indicator information to identify issues or areas of opportunity, and take prompt action concerning these matters. When parole leaders consistently rely on and respond to objective information in pursuit of organizational goals, they demonstrate the values and priorities of the organization.*

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INDICATORS

Florida Parole Commission

- Parolees who have successfully completed supervision without revocation within the first 2 years.
 - Percentage of revocation cases completed within 90 days after final hearing.
 - Percentage of cases placed before the Parole Commission/Clemency Board that contain no factual errors.
 - Number of conditional release/addiction recovery cases handled.
 - Number of revocation determinations.
 - Number of clemency cases handled.
 - Number of parolee release decisions.
 - Number of victim assists.
- Percentage of active registered victims for which the board has an accurate point of contact for notification of hearings and of an offender's release.
 - Percentage of warrants received by the board for which the warrant is issued within 5 days.
 - Percentage of revocations for offenders who violate conditions of parole or postprison supervision.
 - Percentage of expiration orders that have been completed and mailed within 5 days of an offender's discharge from parole or postprison supervision.
 - Percentage of administrative review responses completed and mailed within 60 days of receipt of an inmate/offender's administrative review request.
 - Percentage of customers rating their satisfaction with the agency's customer service as "good" or "excellent." Categories include overall customer service, timeliness, accuracy, helpfulness, expertise, and availability of information.
 - Percentage of total best practices met by the board.

Oregon Board of Parole

- Rate of parolee recidivism (conviction for a new felony within 3 years).
- Orders of supervision received by community corrections agency before offender's release date.

Sources: Florida—Adapted from the Florida Parole Commission, *Annual Report 2005–2006*, p. 18, <https://fpc.state.fl.us/PDFs/FPCannualreport200506.pdf>.

Oregon—Adapted from the Oregon Board of Parole & Post-Supervision, *Website Overview 2009*, www.oregon.gov/BOPPPS/docs/Board_Overview.pdf?ga=t.

Analyze the Information Received and Modify Activities as Necessary

Once steps have been initiated to improve parole operations or the parole system and leaders have information indicating whether the desired actions or outcomes are being achieved, they must then be prepared to take action based on what they are learning and make adjustments as necessary.

As a result of the information provided, parole leaders should be prepared to revisit periodically the issues that were studied and make modifications, improvements, or expansions, or take other actions as may be warranted (see "Using Data To Inform Board Activity: Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles").

Manage for Results

An old adage states: "What gets measured gets done." Analyzing and responding to information that reflects how specific tasks are

being accomplished demonstrate the importance of that work to the individuals who are performing the tasks. The value of performance measures can go well beyond holding people accountable; they reflect the values, priorities, and "preferred future" of the organization. Incorporating such measures into performance or program evaluations, audits, or similar activities can further demonstrate the importance of particular activities to all employees of an organization (see "Managing for Results: Missouri Department of Probation and Parole Measurements").

Research on evidence-based practices has demonstrated the importance of maintaining a "learning organization" atmosphere. As parole leaders monitor information from their system, and consider the research and information that might come from other jurisdictions, future changes can be built on expanding knowledge of the business of parole.

USING DATA TO INFORM BOARD ACTIVITY: GEORGIA BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

The parole board voted unanimously to amend its rules pertaining to parole consideration as it relates to parole decision guidelines. The adjustments to the parole decision guidelines represented a 3-year study and analysis of risk factors used in granting clemency to offenders, past clemency practices, and the effects of the new guidelines on prison capacity. It was found to be in the public's best interest, and specifically in the best interest of the criminal justice community, to establish parole decision guidelines that incorporate a scientifically based, data-driven risk instrument with new time-to-serve recommendations.

These guidelines represent, for the first time, a linking of historical board decisions with the statewide average length of prison sentences imposed by Superior Court judges. The new parole decision guidelines exemplify the board's effort to ensure public safety for the citizens of Georgia, while making the best use of state prison beds for the most dangerous offenders.

Source: Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles. 2009. *Parole Decisionmaking Guidelines*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia Department of Corrections.

MANAGING FOR RESULTS: MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION AND PAROLE MEASUREMENTS

Caseload: The statewide caseload increased by ___ cases from last month. Since the beginning of the fiscal year the actual caseload increase is _____. The total number of cases (____) continues the trend upward.

Staffing: The monthly vacancy rate (____) increased slightly this month. The FY__ average (____) remains lower than the established rates from the past 5 years.

Workload: The total field work hours increased from last month (____). This brings the average FY__ rate to _____. Overall, the work hours continue to trend upward, reflecting a workload much greater than the past 5 years.

Court Returns: Law violations remain nearly the same as last month (____). The average established rate to date for FY__ is consistent with FY__ and remains lower than the rate for the 4 years prior. The technical violation rate decreased (____) from last month. The technical violation average for FY__ (____) is slightly below the FY__ average and remains lower than the rates established in the previous 5 years.

Board Returns: Law violations decreased from last month (____). The FY__ average (____) is well below the rates established in the preceding 5 years. Technical violations increased from last month (____). The average rate established so far in FY__ (____) remains lower than the established rates in previous years.

Total Returns: The total return rate (court and board) decreased slightly to (____). The FY__ average (____) remains below the rates established in the previous 5 years.

Employment: The unemployment rate increased slightly from last month (____). The average FY__ rate (____) continues to reflect a trend of growth in the unemployment rate and is higher than the average rates established in the past 5 years.

Substance Abuse: The average monthly substance abuse rate shows a slight increase from last month (____). The average FY__ rate established (____) is higher than the rates established in the past 5 years.

Arrests/Pending Charge: The monthly rate declined slightly from last month (____). The average FY__ rate (____) is lower than the rate established in FY__.

Absconders: The monthly absconder rate (____) is lower than last month. The FY__ average (____) continues to remain lower than the rate established in FY__.

Source: Personal correspondence from Scott Johnston, Chief State Supervisor for the Probation and Parole Division of the Missouri Department of Corrections, September 2, 2009.

Action Step 16: Parole leaders should continue to analyze data and information consistently over time and modify policy, practice, and methods as necessary.

Conclusion

Parole leaders are confronted daily with the challenges associated with making individual case decisions. Another significant component of their work, however, must be to seek out ways in which they can lead their agencies to meet their full potential as gatekeepers of public safety.

To this end, parole board members, executives, and other leaders should:

- Have clarity of vision.
- Understand the organization's current operating practices.
- Engage key partners.
- Take strategic action.
- Review information and manage for results.

Exhibit 6–1 summarizes key steps that parole leaders can take in support of the objectives described above. Parole leaders can use this chart to track their progress toward meeting these organizational goals.

Exhibit 6–1: Developing an Objective-Driven Action Plan

Objective	Action Step
<p>Craft Vision and Mission Statements (Chapter 1)</p>	<p>Parole leaders and board members should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Action Step 1: Develop a consensus about the direction and focus of parole efforts in their jurisdiction. <input type="checkbox"/> Action Step 2: Reach a consensus regarding the personal values that they collectively believe should drive the direction and daily activities of the organization. <input type="checkbox"/> Action Step 3: Develop, or revisit and revise, the organizational vision statement. The vision statement should identify the intended direction of the organization and reflect the values and beliefs of parole leaders and board members. <input type="checkbox"/> Action Step 4: Identify and prioritize the broad missions or undertakings under way in their organization. They should review each of these efforts to determine its clarity, purpose, and value. As the vision and values of the organization become clearer, parole leaders and board members may need to articulate and pursue new missions. In so doing, they should clearly indicate the outcome that is sought and the time-frame intended for its accomplishment.
<p>Assess the Organization's Current Operating Practices (Chapter 2)</p>	<p>Parole leaders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Action Step 5: Acknowledge the important role that objective information can and should play in making significant organizational choices. <input type="checkbox"/> Action Step 6: Identify and develop consensus regarding "critical indicators" (the most significant measures of the work and activities that the parole organization undertakes) and determine methods for acquiring this information and disseminating it to parole decisionmakers and others. A select few of the critical indicators may be thought of as a "dashboard" that provides quick, concise feedback for decisionmakers and other key stakeholders.

Exhibit 6–1: Developing an Objective-Driven Action Plan (continued)

<p>Assess the Organization's Current Operating Practices (Chapter 2) (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Action Step 7: Periodically (e.g., yearly/quarterly) review critical indicator information to gain a better sense of the organization's current status and direction.❑ Action Step 8: Use objective information to identify specific issues to be explored. They should then prioritize issues of interest so as to promote working first on those areas that have the greatest potential value to the parole organization. They should establish a regular schedule for strategic management/planning opportunities that bring them together for discussions to identify problems and set priorities for addressing them.
<p>Engage Key Partners (Chapter 3)</p>	<p>Parole leaders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Action Step 9: Work to improve dialogue and collaborative teamwork among parole board members. As the scope of issues and problems goes beyond the board itself, the board should engage other key partners. Collaborating with individuals and entities that represent common interests will aid the board in properly identifying and resolving issues.❑ Action Step 10: Assemble the most appropriate individuals and provide them with clear guidance about the issues to be considered and the structure that should govern their efforts in order to develop meaningful recommendations for action.
<p>Plan and Take Strategic Action (Chapter 4)</p>	<p>Parole leaders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Action Step 11: Study, prioritize, and act on recommendations for action. Creating implementation teams with appropriate charters and considering both short- and long-term action strategies can help the parole organization move toward its goal.❑ Action Step 12: Outline specific objectives and tasks to help the group or organization accomplish its goals. These objectives and tasks should have sufficient specificity and designated timeframes so that the individual responsible for the task and the progress being made are readily apparent.❑ Action Step 13: Undertake specific actions to demonstrate to staff and stakeholders that changes are being implemented and that improvements in practice or policy are occurring. The use of small implementation or pilot sites can help an organization accomplish its desired outcomes.
<p>Review Information and Manage for Results (Chapter 5)</p>	<p>Parole leaders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Action Step 14: Develop a few critical indicators—information they will need to know to judge whether appropriate progress is being made in an area of interest—and review this information regularly.❑ Action Step 15: Use critical indicator information to identify issues or areas of opportunity, and take prompt action concerning these matters. When parole leaders consistently rely on and respond to objective information in pursuit of organizational goals, they demonstrate the values and priorities of the organization.❑ Action Step 16: Continue to analyze data and information consistently over time and modify policy, practice, and methods as necessary.

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