



National Parole Resource Center

*Helping parole leaders meet the challenges of the future.*

# Public and Stakeholder Education Toolkit

*November 2014*

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APAI is the single professional association that represents, and whose membership comprises, members of paroling authorities. CEPP is a nonprofit organization with long-standing expertise on parole. The Urban Institute is a social policy research organization and a leader in prisoner reentry and community supervision research. The Urban Institute is the primary author of this document. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.



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## Section I: Background and Purpose of this Effort

The roughly 325 individuals who serve on parole Boards and other releasing authorities<sup>1</sup> in the United States carry enormous responsibilities for making release decisions, setting conditions of supervision, and responding to violations of parole. Despite declines in discretionary parole releases as a percentage of total releases from prison over the past decades (see Figure 1), more than 187,000 individuals were released to parole supervision in 2012 via the discretionary decision of a releasing authority (Maruschak and Glaze, 2012). Additionally, nearly all of the more than 850,000 individuals under parole supervision are supervised under conditions set by a releasing authority (Maruschak and Glaze, 2012). Parole Boards returned 8 percent of parolees to prison in 2012 as a result of a parole revocation (Maruschak and Glaze, 2012).

Thus, releasing authorities determine when many individuals are released from prison, set the conditions of supervised release for large numbers of parolees, and make determinations regarding what violations of those conditions should result in a return to prison. This gives them a key role in both protecting public safety and also effectively utilizing the massive resources devoted to our justice system.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance, recognizing the critical and growing importance of parole Boards, funded the National Parole Resource Center (NPRC) to help support and guide the future direction of parole Boards as an increasingly effective and central stakeholder in the criminal justice system.

The mission of the National Parole Resource Center (NPRC) is to serve as:



A source of information, training, and technical assistance for paroling authorities and the supervision agencies with whom they collaborate and that they may, in some states, oversee;



A forum and source of support that will enable parole leadership to continue to define the evolving role of parole in a criminal justice system, seeking to carry out their statutory mandates including the community protection, and the wise use of public resources; and

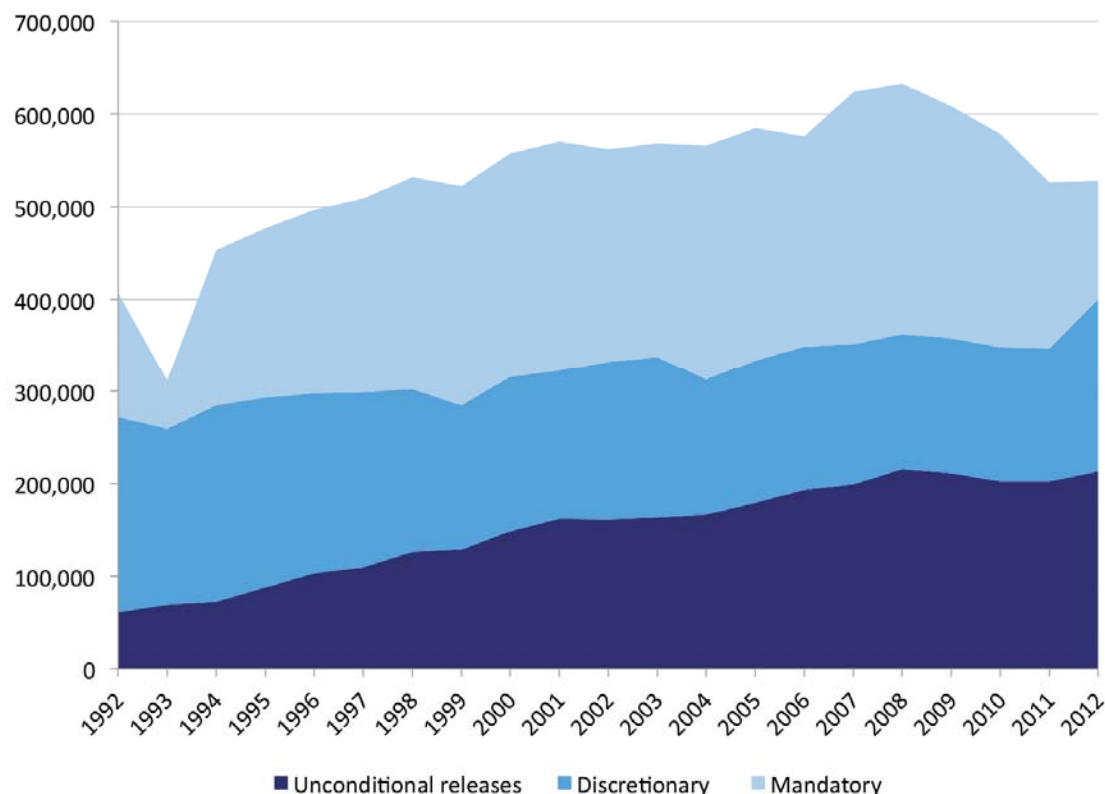


A "portal" to other resources for parole, beyond those directly provided by the NPRC, by establishing collaborative partnerships with other public and private entities seeking to assist paroling authorities and agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> While we acknowledge that some releasing authorities do not refer to themselves as parole Boards, we will use that term throughout this toolkit in the interest of simplicity.

Figure 1. Prison Releases by Type, 1994-2012



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Probationers and Parolees in the United States Series; Prisoners in the United States Series.

Providing guidance to releasing authorities in developing a public and stakeholder education strategy is one of the charges of NPRC. This Toolkit is based on research and experience from a range of public policy disciplines, including parole — and provides both overall guidance along with examples intended to assist individual parole Boards as they develop a public and stakeholder strategy appropriate to their own mission and role.

### **Why are Public and Stakeholder Education Strategies so Critical?**

Public and stakeholder education strategies are critical, first, because they are essential to a parole Board to accomplish its mission. All of the elements of a paroling Board's ability to make good decisions, to assist in the targeting of resources for maximum risk reduction, and to assure fundamental fairness depend upon collaborative work with their justice system partners, the support of executive and legislative branch leadership, the collaboration of service providers and community organizations — and the support of the community at large. Thus, assuring that these key partners understand the mission and operations of the Board, how it is operating to continually strengthen its practice and make good decisions, and how other stakeholders' support is essential to accomplishing its mission — all these are the outcomes of a strong education/communication strategy — and why it is so important.

Also, in a crisis situation, where a Board is suddenly thrust into the public eye because of a high profile, heinous act of someone on parole — the presence of a well-informed and supportive network of stakeholders and the public can bring important rationality and caution to the crafting of a crisis response.

Much of what parole Boards do depends upon sharing information, collaborating and securing the support of other stakeholders — corrections agencies, community supervision agencies, mental health service providers, substance abuse treatment providers, legislators, and the general public. Frequently, parole Boards do their work with very little visibility to the public, the legislature, or other system stakeholders. All too often, parole Boards only become visible after a heinous act committed by a parolee raises public outrage and anger. And all too often this has resulted in rash actions, such as pulling back a paroling Board’s discretion, or taking other actions that might be contrary to best parole practices or even to long term public safety interests. Risk communication, involving an ongoing process of identifying stakeholders and audiences for messages, crafting and disseminating messages, can help Boards address this challenge by becoming a trustworthy source of information about risk and risk management.

*Much of what parole Boards do depends upon sharing information, collaborating and securing the support of other stakeholders.*

The purposes for developing a public and stakeholder education strategy are twofold.

- It will assist parole Boards in taking deliberate steps to increase their visibility and credibility with important stakeholders so that these stakeholders will better understand the direction, objectives, and methods currently being used by a parole Board. Good communication aids stakeholders in understanding how the Board is discharging its responsibilities and how particular steps or actions being taken are consistent with public safety considerations and best practices in the parole field.
- It will support an effective response in a planned and strategic fashion to various concerns that might be raised. In the context of a crisis situation, parole Boards benefit from skills and processes that improve interaction with concerned audiences.

Section II of the Toolkit defines the context by laying out key philosophical principles that should guide a parole Board’s communications strategy. Section III provides guidance on how to craft a message that presents a full and coherent picture of why the paroling Board does what it does. Section IV provides a discussion of the priority audiences for the communication message, and how to tailor the communication strategy to best reach each. Section V discusses how to determine who on the Board is responsible for delivering the Board’s message. Section VI discusses crisis response communications. Section VII presents tools and techniques to support these communication strategies, and the appendices present specific examples from Boards across the country.

## Section II: Guiding Principles for a Communications Strategy

A parole Board should develop a communications strategy that is driven by a series of guiding principles. These provide the foundation for the strategy and link it to sound, effective and ethical practices.



***A parole Board's responsibilities include educating stakeholders and the public.***

The education of key stakeholders can be done most effectively and efficiently by the parole Board itself. Other organizations with critical skills and relevant experience may play a supporting role, but the ultimate responsibility rests with the Board. The development of public understanding of and trust in the parole process is essential to the effectiveness of the Board and the parole process overall.



***The values of openness, transparency, honesty, and responsiveness guide good public and stakeholder education.***

The values form the guideposts for the strategy. The Board must be open and transparent in all of its communications; anything less undermines the agency's credibility. Honesty in all communications is fundamental and essential. It is unlikely in the current media environment that critical information will remain hidden for any length of time. The damage done to agency credibility by anything less than honest communication is incalculable. The parole Board should also be responsive to inquiries from all parties, providing timely, accurate and complete information. When information is confidential or otherwise protected, that should be explained in the response.



***Public and stakeholder education is a strategic, long-term endeavor.***

The parole Board must make an organizational commitment to develop and maintain an effective stakeholder education strategy. With many Board members appointed for limited terms, it is essential that each Board engage senior administrative staff in this strategy to ensure continuity as Board members turn over. This should be a priority for Board members and staff, and not confined to the public information officer (PIO) or one individual or unit. The stakeholders of the Board are a large and diverse group with many interests. The stakeholder groups are dynamic – not a fixed group of individuals for all time. The messages conveyed must be kept current and be responsive to current issues, concerns and practices. Stakeholder education is an ongoing responsibility that must be given priority if it to be effective.



***Parole Boards should engage in proactive communication and relationship-building.***

The parole Board should be proactive in its education and communication efforts, building knowledge about and support for the Board and the parole process over time, and NOT simply in reaction to a crisis situation. Such a proactive strategy enables the Board to build healthy, continuing and productive relationships with the public, key stakeholders and the media. All too often, parole Board communication with the public and key stakeholders is reactive, with the Board in the difficult position of trying to educate the public and stakeholders about the parole process while explaining and/or defending agency actions. If a Board is proactive in education and communication, the public and stakeholders have a body of information about and some experience with the Board and the parole process when a crisis occurs. While this will not eliminate the difficult questions and challenges to practices, these relationships can certainly mitigate the negative impact.



***The public and stakeholder education strategy should reflect collaboration with other criminal justice and corrections partners.***

Parole Boards operate in a complex network of social, political and operational relationships. They work in partnership with many other agencies and organizations, including the department of corrections, the community supervision agency (if outside the Board), law enforcement, treatment providers and community organizations. The education strategy should be based on a shared vision developed through a collaborative effort involving all partners. This will help to ensure that a unified message is shared by all partners and integrated into their education and communication efforts.



***The public and stakeholder education strategy should emphasize a commitment to evidence-based and best practices.***

The Board should be continually refining and improving policies and practices. Its commitment to evidence-based and best practices should be incorporated into the public and stakeholder education strategy in order to build the credibility of the Board and provide concrete evidence of the agency's focus on ensuring public safety by implementing proven practices. Such practices include ongoing performance measurement and feedback, providing tangible information about the parole Board's effectiveness to the public and key stakeholders.



## Section III: Crafting a Positive Narrative for Parole Boards

Once a parole Board has committed in principle to undertake a public and stakeholder education effort, a first step is to develop and achieve consensus on the narrative that the Board wishes to communicate. A narrative unifies the themes that are most important to the Board into an overall story. This shared way of talking about parole will help shape the Board's reputation over time. A good narrative will have a beginning, middle and end that emphasize two or three major messages that make it memorable. While different messages may be emphasized when communicating with different stakeholder audiences (see Section IV), it is important that the underlying narrative remain the same regardless of the audience and the Board member or staff person conveying it.

Release decisionmaking is a complex endeavor, so one of the challenges of crafting an effective message for parole Boards is to accurately convey why the Board operates as it does in clear and simple terms. Additionally, it is important for the message to be credible (including not over-promising) and compelling, speaking to values and goals that are important to a broad array of stakeholders. Many Boards structure a great deal of communication around the statutory language that creates a mandate for the Board. While compliance with such statutes is a necessity for the Board and drives many of its practices, compliance is unlikely to be meaningful and compelling to external audiences.

*“The mission of the Tennessee Board of Parole is to minimize public risk and promote lawful behavior by the prudent, orderly release of adult offenders.”*

*- Sample Mission Statement: Tennessee Board of Parole*

A natural starting place to define the Board's key messages is the mission statement. The mission statement represents the purpose of the Board. In order to accomplish the mission, the Board needs to effectively communicate about it to its constituents. A mission statement should be short, clear, and reflect the consensus of the organization on its purpose. It should indicate how the Board adds value to the justice system. Given that the mission statement usually figures prominently in the website, letterhead, annual reports and other broad communication vehicles, it is doubly useful to take the time to ensure that it represents the story that the Board wants to convey about itself. The mission can serve as the starting point for efforts to articulate the Board's messages.

A Board can flesh out its narrative beyond the mission statement by developing messages that describe the ways in which it creates public value. This will draw the connection between the overarching purpose of the Board as summarized by the mission statement and the concrete practices and policies of the Board that allow it to achieve the mission. As stated in the Tennessee Board of Parole's mission, a Board's message would need to say how it works to minimize public risk and promote lawful behavior, and why its practices lead to releases that are orderly and prudent.

The value of parole Boards' work can be communicated in many ways. Nonetheless, certain themes emerge as broadly applicable to any Board. These messages include contributing to public safety, holding offenders accountable, and ensuring the wise use of public resources. A sample statement divided into three messages with broad applicability is included below.

### Sample Parole Board Messages

Our parole Board contributes to public safety by:

- Basing decisions on validated empirical tools to gauge risk to re-offend
- Requiring treatment to reduce that risk
- Motivating offenders to change their lives
- Facilitating reentry by releasing individuals to community supervision whenever possible, rather than having them leave prison with no further obligation to the criminal justice system

Our parole Board holds offenders accountable by:

- Insisting upon their engagement in appropriate risk reduction treatment and services while incarcerated
- Insisting that offenders commit to paying victim restitution, court fees and fines, and other restorative obligations
- Imposing conditions of release and supervision that are realistic, relevant and research-based, and enforcing compliance with those conditions.

Our parole Board ensures the wise use of public funds by:

- Seeking to reserve prison space for those needing incapacitation to support public safety or punitive incarceration in the interest of justice
- Using evidence-based practice to target scarce treatment resources to offenders according to their level of risk and the factors driving their risk to re-offend
- Utilizing sanctions in the community whenever possible
- Reducing recidivism and returns to prison

## *Creating a Parole 101 Resource*

Laying out the key ways that the Board provides public value will be indispensable in building understanding of and support for the Board's work. It's important not to forget how little many in the intended audiences know about what parole Boards do. To address this, it is helpful to develop a "Parole 101" resource that summarizes the Board's main functions and processes, including Board membership, release decisionmaking and criteria, condition setting, supervision in the community, and revocation decisionmaking. This resource should be short, no more than a few pages, and intended for a lay audience. It should not aspire to the level of detail about the processes that is needed for participants in the parole and revocation processes. The goal is to lay out the context in which the Board produces public value.

The mission and messages communicate why and how the Board does its work, and Parole 101 provides a useful overview in what that work entails. A final piece of the puzzle is to convey how this work is done, the operating requirements and principles that shape the Board's work. Any Board functions

according to a variety of statutory and case law requirements, and these legal mandates should be made clear, particularly around practices that may be poorly understood or potentially controversial. However, compliance with such requirements will not generally be very compelling or meaningful to external audiences. More meaningful will be the ability to indicate that the Board's work is guided by evidence-based and best practices, and that the Board is committed to continually improving practice.

In order to make this claim about improving practices a part of the Board's messaging to stakeholders and the public, it is necessary for such efforts to be underway. Messages about how the Board accomplishes the mission must be consistent with what audiences see happening when they observe the Board in action. Third parties — partners in the justice system and in the community — are excellent validators. Help other groups make the case by providing good supporting facts about the work of the Board. A great advantage of committing to harmonize the Board's practice with best and evidence-based practice is that outside experts, if asked to comment on the practices, are much more likely to endorse what the Board is doing.

This raises the question of what are evidence-based and best practices. This knowledge base is constantly evolving, but national practitioner partners such as the NPRC are working to consolidate and communicate what constitutes it. A good place to start is with NPRC's ten practice targets:

- Use good, empirically-based actuarial tools to assess risk and criminogenic needs of offenders
- Develop and use clear, evidence-based, policy-driven decisionmaking tools, policies, and guidelines that reflect that full range of a parole Board's concerns (e.g. punishment, victim issues, community safety)
- Maintain meaningful partnerships with institutional corrections and community supervision (and others) to encourage a seamless transition process and the availability of sound, evidence-based programs
- Use their influence and leverage to target institutional and community resources to mid and high risk offenders to address their criminogenic needs
- Consider for release at the earliest stage possible — in light of statutes and other sentencing interests — offenders assessed as low risk
- Use the parole interview/hearing/review process as an opportunity to, among other goals, enhance offender motivation to change
- Fashion condition setting policy to minimize requirements on low risk offenders, and target conditions to criminogenic needs of medium and high risk offenders
- Develop policy-driven, evidence-informed responses to parole violations that incorporate considerations of risk, criminogenic need and severity, assure even-handed treatment of

violators, and utilize resources wisely

- Develop and strengthen case-level decisionmaking skills/capacities in these areas
- Develop and strengthen agency level policy making, strategic management and performance measurement skills/capacities

Tools to measure a Board's current practices against these practice targets and further information on what they mean and how to meet them are available from the National Parole Resource Center's website, [www.nationalparoleresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalparoleresourcecenter.org).

Finally, some of the best messages can be backed up with data. The Board should have performance measures in place to track key outcomes and processes for internal purposes, allowing all members to monitor whether the Board's work is proceeding as intended and generating desired outcomes. But performance data also allows you to support statements about the Board is accomplishing, and demonstrate that the Board is committed to rigorously tracking performance and results.

When preparing to make performance information available, keep the following in mind:

- Take the time to make sure all Board members and key staff understand and can readily explain the numbers that you're using.
- Consider whether you are willing to be judged by the trends in those numbers over the long term.
- Verify that the measures you are presenting reflect what you believe are the most important elements of your work. This is true of all components of your messaging — you are signaling to your stakeholders what is most important about what the Board does.

#### Key Releasing Authority Data Points to Highlight

##### Recidivism rates for parolees

- Report separately by risk level and offense type

##### Parole approval rates

- Report separately by risk level and offense type

##### % of parolees paying fines and restitution

- Total dollar value of restitution collected
- % of parolees successfully discharging from parole by risk level and offense type

##### % of parolees employed

- Prison bed days averted due to discretionary release
- Due to non-revocation responses to parole violations

## Section IV: Target Stakeholder Audiences

Effective delivery of the Board’s messages to stakeholders and the public requires careful thinking about each of audiences and how best to reach them. It is important to specifically define “stakeholders” so that outreach, education, or other efforts can focus on appropriate groups and provide meaningful information to each group. For purposes of this Toolkit, “stakeholders” are organized into six categories:

- All parole Board members and staff, including new members upon appointment to the Board
- Government leaders in the executive, legislative and judicial branches
- Partners who are involved with the work of parole on a daily basis, such as corrections agencies, community supervision agencies, and critical service providers
- Victims, family members of victims, family members of incarcerated persons, and others who have a specific and personal interest in the case-level operation of parole
- The media
- Community members throughout the jurisdiction your Board serves

For each of the identified groups, it is important to identify the specific types of information that are thought to be of most interest or concern to each group, and to develop strategies for conveying critical pieces of information. In order to determine the types of information that will be of most value to different groups, a Board must develop outreach strategies so that the perspectives of different groups can help inform this process. While some general information may be appropriate or even necessary to share with each group, some amount of specialized information will be most helpful in aiding members of particular groups understand critical issues regarding the work of the parole Board.

*Outreach to stakeholder audiences will produce the greatest reputational gains when the representatives of the Board are actively listening and reflecting on what they are hearing.*

When the Board is engaged with these audiences in outreach, it is very important to place a high value on listening. Outreach to stakeholder audiences will produce the greatest reputational gains when the representatives of the Board are actively listening and reflecting on what they are hearing. Doing so and then using it to refine the messages will increase buy-in among the stakeholders.

### ***Releasing Authority Members and Staff***

While the communication within a Board will take a different form and have different purposes than that for external partners, it is important to consistently communicate the Board’s narrative and messages within the organization. As any Board member or staffer may be in the position of delivering that message (see Section V), they must all understand and buy into that message. Attending to Board members and staff as a target audience can help maintain internal consensus, bring new members and staffers up to speed on how to explain the Board’s work, and minimize the likelihood that the Board sends mixed messages to the public.

## Government Leaders

Government leaders in the executive, legislative and judicial branches often have the authority to impact the nature, scope, design, and general operation of a parole system. As such, it is critical to gain and maintain their support. They are also the audience that may act to change policies related to the Board in the event of a negative incident. Outreach work with them in advance can provide them with a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Board's work, and avoid a situation in which they do not think about the Board except when there is a controversy or a negative incident.

With the government leader audience, it will be helpful to focus on data demonstrating impact. Material for this audience needs to be particularly concise, with written documents held to a single page if possible, and key points bulleted. Material provided to staffers for these leaders can provide greater detail.

## Partner Corrections Agencies

The potential of parole Boards to contribute to enhanced public safety, offender behavior change and the wise allocation of justice system resources can only be fully realized through partnership among the Board, institutional corrections, and community supervision. Dialogue across these parts of the correctional continuum is necessary in order to develop a seamless transition process in which institutional corrections works to identify individual-level risk factors and works to reduce that risk, the Board considers and provides incentives for risk reduction work done during incarceration in release decisionmaking, and community supervision works to manage risk in the community, facilitate transition, and respond to violations of supervision in a consistent and effective manner.

This can only happen if each partner in the process communicates with the others. For example, institutional corrections needs to understand what the Board is looking for in terms of risk reduction programs and services so that they can work to transmit those expectations to offenders. This communication should be a reciprocal expectation. The Board needs to have access to information on programming offered in the institutions if it is to appropriately consider program participation in making release decisions. And only by understanding the options available for addressing violation behavior other than revocation can the Board determine the most appropriate response to supervision violations. Service providers working

### Target Audiences Quick Reference Guide

- 
**Board Members and Staff**  
*Ensure consistency of messaging.*
- 
**Government Leaders**  
*Provide context in the event of negative incidents.*
- 
**Partner Corrections Agencies**  
*Build and/or strengthen mutual understanding and collaboration.*
- 
**Victims, Families of Victims, Families of the Incarcerated**  
*Provide information on Board processes that directly affect them.*
- 
**Media**  
*Develop understanding of release and revocation processes.*
- 
**Community**  
*Foster confidence in the Board's work.*


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with the correctional system need to understand the Board's expectations of them in terms of evidence-based and best practices, and to provide information necessary for the Board and other system players to determine if the services and programming meet their standards.

### *Tailoring the Message by Audience*

Audience	Purpose for Communication	Communication Vehicles	Emphasis
Board members and staff	Build/maintain consensus Ensure consistency of messaging	Training, communications guides, strategic planning documents	Purpose and values of the Board Connection between values and specific practices/processes
Government leaders	Secure support for Board strategic direction Providing context in the event of negative incidents	Briefings, fact sheets, Board meetings	Public value added by Board Conformity of Board practice to EBP/best practice Performance metrics
Partner corrections agencies	Build and/or strengthen mutual understanding and collaborative practice	Routine communication, strategic planning documents	Conformity of Board practice to EBP/best practice Criteria for Board release, condition-setting and revocation decisions
Victims, their families, and families of the incarcerated	Provide information on Board processes that directly affect them and their loved ones	FAQs, short guides to Board processes, website	Principles and values behind Board practices Specifics of the process
Media	Develop understanding of release and revocation processes	Background briefings, face-to-face meetings	Public value added by Board Conformity of Board practice to EBP/best practice
General public	Foster confidence in the Board's work	Media, public forums, website	Public value added by Board

As the Board's work constantly intersects with that of these correctional partners, the work of communication and education is also constant. Parole Boards have different responsibilities than do the

other correctional entities, and collaboration will function more smoothly if the Board's strategy and priorities are clearly communicated. Not only that, if all the correctional partners are operating in a consensus manner, it will make it more likely that they will respond to a negative incident as a team, and not send mixed messages or point fingers.

### *Victims, Families of Victims, and Families of the Incarcerated*

It may seem surprising at first that victims and their families and the families of the incarcerated would be discussed as a single audience. There are many considerations in terms of educating and communicating with them that are in common, however.

First, the deliberations and decisions of the Board are directly impacting their lives and the lives of people they love. They want, and deserve, clear information that helps them understand how the release consideration and/or parole revocation process will play out, what is happening and why. Unfortunately, many victims and their families experience justice processes as opaque and frustrating, which only adds to the burden of their victimization.

*Unfortunately, many individuals experience justice processes as opaque and frustrating, which only adds to the burden of their victimization.*

Similarly, families of the incarcerated or parolees, who can be important potential allies in the change process, experience similar difficulties. Effectively educating them on parole processes is, therefore, very valuable. They are also populations from whom it will be particularly valuable to get feedback on the Board's communication, with the goal of continuing to make it clearer and more useful.

While this audience needs concrete detail on the Board's case-level processes, it is also important to communicate with them on the level of values. Many in this audience will want to know not only what the Board will do and when, but why it operates as it does. In short, they care about the principles driving what the Board does. Participants in justice processes are more satisfied if the process is seen as transparent and fair, regardless of outcome (Casper, Tyler & Fisher 1988). Similarly, evidence indicates that offenders are more likely to obey the law or comply with conditions if they believe that justice processes are legitimate (Papachristos, Meares & Fagan 2012). Educating this audience about the goals of parole decisionmaking supports transparency in the process, which in turn will increase the satisfaction of participants in the process and enhance the perceived legitimacy of the Board in particular and the justice system generally.



## *The Media and the Community at Large*

The media (both local and national), including newspapers, television and radio, and Internet sources provide news and information regarding parole Boards to a wide audience. Social media's sharing platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, also have become powerful amplifiers of news. The power of media coverage of negative incidents to undermine the ability of Boards to effectively engage in effective practice is well known. For this reason, it is important to work proactively to develop an understanding of the Board's overall approach among key media figures in the local context.

Outreach to journalists who cover crime and justice issues to discuss what the Board does and why won't guarantee more favorable coverage. It will increase the likelihood that individual incidents are framed in the overall context of what the Board is trying to do. Participation in social media platforms can also help introduce larger segments of the local community to the role of the Boards.

It is worth noting that many journalists covering justice issues, particularly in the changing media environment, are obliged to be generalists. They may not know very much about how the justice system operates. Or they may view justice issues primarily through the prism of specific incidents, rather than from the system perspective at which risk management and resource allocation decisions are made. For these reasons, the opportunity to hear from Board leadership regarding how the parole Board operates and why may be tremendously valuable to them. It may be desirable to identify specific media members to approach, or editorial Boards of newspapers with whom to meet, or both.

If seeking positive coverage proactively, Boards will benefit from considering the supporting materials that could be useful to media outlets. Media coverage gravitates towards drama and conflict. It also requires strong images and actors to bring stories alive to their readers and viewers. Interaction with the media can lead to better coverage when Boards can provide succinct facts, meaningful photos, and interesting and informative charts or figures.

The community at large is the most diffuse and challenging stakeholder audience. Media often serve as the most reliable tool to reach this broad public. However, the Board may wish to hold public events such as town halls or community forums. In doing so, the Board needs to consider the characteristics of the state and the communities within it that the Board wishes to reach. It will be important for boards to draw upon the gender, ethnic and racial diversity that often is reflected in its own membership to be able to reach out and build opportunities for positive communication that are sensitive to the concerns of the range of communities they serve.

## Section V: Communicating the Message - Who Delivers the Message and How?

Once a parole Board has achieved consensus on the reputation it wants to build, and has considered how to define and emphasize that message to its various target audiences, the next question is who will deliver the message, and how they will do so.

Consistent with the guiding principle articulated in Section II, it is clear that this responsibility falls upon all Board members and staff. Conveying a message about why the Board's work is important, and why it does what it does is a part of the job. While larger Boards, or Boards that are part of a larger organization, may have the services of a public information officer, public education remains a shared task. Board members generally have strong personal and professional networks, and should not miss the opportunity to explain parole to them. As with any educational effort, there is value in repetition. Board members and staff must be ready to tell the story over and over again, and to commit to maintain consistency with the agreed-upon message about the organization's work.

There are multiple channels that this communication can take, aside from bending the ears of friends and colleagues.

- Public presentations on the Board's work can be very effective in raising the public profile of the parole Board and understanding of its work.
- Professional conferences provide a good opportunity, and practice in discussing the Board's work in front of informed audiences.
- For lay audiences, the Board may wish to develop a speakers' bureau and reach out to community groups and service clubs, which can provide an interested non-specialist audience.
- Academia can be another venue, with the possibility of developing courses, delivering guest lectures or offering internships.
- Finally, you may wish to do targeted criminal justice outreach events, such as the series of *Understanding the PA Parole System* forums hosted by the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole.

Print publications are also an effective means of communicating the Board's message, and they can support public presentations with more detail and serve as a future reference. Press releases and annual reports are standard documents that many Boards produce, and these should be reviewed to see how clearly and effectively that serve the message-transmission purposes discussed in this Toolkit. Further, the Board may wish to be more proactive, by having members publish op-eds in local papers, or releasing practice briefs, research reports related to parole practice or presenting performance measure data.

Most of this written information will be accessed electronically, generally via a website. (The appendix to this Tool Kit presents a number of good examples of communications to various audiences via parole Boards' web sites.) The website is the public face of the parole Board, and needs to be functional while also conveying to all target audiences what is most important about the work that the Board does. Look at the Board website and ask, what does the first place that the public will go for information say about

why our work matters and what principles guide it? The Board may wish to supplement the website with other forms of electronic communication, such as e-newsletters or engaging in social media. In order for this to work, the Board must regularly generate and post new information. If new information appears monthly or quarterly, that suggests a newsletter could be produced regularly. To meaningfully participate in social media, you would need to commit to post much more frequently.

Finally, there is communication with the media, which is a powerful channel for outreach and sharing information. It may be desirable, perhaps in conjunction with the partner community supervision agency, to seek to get positive human interest stories published or broadcast on a routine basis. Success stories involving parolees happen every day, and numerous media outlets have done single stories or series about the struggles and triumphs of citizens returning from incarceration. These stories rarely acknowledge the role played by the parole Board, however, and it can be valuable to work in partnership with other agencies or organizations to ensure that the Board's role in these stories is acknowledged. It may be wise to invest time and resources in providing media training to Board members and staff, if they are likely to speak with the media. Such training can be very helpful in preparing members to successfully communicate via the media.

## Section VI: Crisis Management

The previous sections of this Toolkit have focused upon an overall education and communication strategy — building familiarity, credibility, and — hopefully — trust, among the range of stakeholders that are part of the environment in which parole Boards do their work. Such a communication strategy is important for any public agency with a complex mission, and which interacts with many stakeholders in the community. However, in the context of a parole Board, where at the core of its mission lies the issue of risk to the community, this education and communication strategy can draw important lessons from an academic discipline known as *risk communication*.

Risk communication is defined as “...an interactive process of exchange of information and opinions among individuals, groups and institutions. It involves multiple messages about the nature of the risk and...legal or institutional arrangement for risk management” (National Research Council, 1989). Built upon four decades of sociological, psychological and communication research, risk communication explores through experiments and study how people respond to information differently under threatening conditions.

The public and stakeholder education strategy outlined to this point explicitly includes the issue of risk to the community and how the Board’s practices manage that risk through the use of evidence-based practices and decisionmaking tools. The essential “narrative” that communicates the mission and worth of a parole Board to its broader stakeholders, must certainly include how it assesses and manages risk for the protection of the community. However, what the research on risk communication tells us is that people react differently to messages when they find themselves under threatening conditions. The implication for parole Boards is that their education strategy must also have a component that will educate and communicate with the public and stakeholders in the context of a crisis, when individuals are seeing themselves in a “threatening” situation.

*The importance of perceived trust in and credibility of organizations generating risk messages cannot be overstated.*

Therefore, in addition to building a sense of general confidence in the Board’s role, its public and stakeholder education strategy must have a component, tailored specifically to anticipate a crisis situation.

The nature of the parole business and human nature are such that it is just a question of *when* a crisis will occur rather than *if* one will. The unpredictability of human behavior, in particular among the offender population is such that despite the best efforts of the

parole Board and staff, serious crimes will be committed by persons released from prison. When that happens, the focus will more often than not turn to the releasing authority and the decisionmaking process.

As with so many things, the best defense is careful preparation. The Board should have a plan for responding to crisis situations. A good communication plan is good crisis preparation. All staff should be

familiar with the plan and their roles in it. Appropriate messages should be developed in advance with mechanisms for their delivery.

A crisis communications plan consists of two parts. First, it is necessary to define a process. The parole Board should agree to roles and responsibilities in advance. A crisis team can be formed of key individuals who will integrate information during an emergency quickly and determine appropriate responses. “Relationship managers” can be assigned to ensure that communication occurs early and often with priority audiences. Spokespeople should be designated and trained. These action items can be codified in a crisis communication plan.

The second aspect of a good crisis communication plan consists of scenarios. The parole Board knows what events are likely to prove damaging to the organization’s reputation. Some events will be fast moving and require rapid response; other crisis scenarios may unfold over time and then trigger severe concerns. In both cases, the parole Board can forecast the types of concerns that will erode trust in their efforts and develop response strategies for different audiences. Adding written summaries of these scenarios to the plan can provide important base materials, which will accelerate real time responses when crisis actually occurs. These scenarios can include a summary of the possible problem, a standby statement characterizing the Board’s likely response and key contacts of third parties who may lend their support or interpretation of the situation in favor of the Board.

The following are guidelines for responding in a crisis situation:

- Communicate honestly and empathetically.
- Assure the public and media that the Board is concerned about public safety and is working diligently to improve it.
- Facts alone are not sufficient. People want to know that you care about their concerns. The focus needs to be on the victims and the concerns of the community. Apologize if necessary and appropriate.
- Take responsibility for the actions of the agency and the results. Do not shift blame or avoid addressing the difficult issues and questions.
- Respond promptly and provide accurate information. Take the initiative and issue a press release. Crisis communications relies on speed.
- Thoroughly investigate and confirm facts prior to responding to a specific incident. Often initial reports do not accurately capture what actually transpired. When facts are not readily available, communicate what is being done to get them.
- Engage the media. Fill the information void with your message. If the Board doesn’t communicate, others will fill the void and often that information will often be inaccurate or wrong or unfavorable to the Board, or all three.

- ✓ Use the opportunity to communicate positively about the agency. While all the facts may not yet be available on the crisis case, talk about how the agency operates in a general way. If the facts reveal a departure from policy, acknowledge that while emphasizing the policy.
- ✓ Avoid “no comment.” That is the equivalent of saying “we’re guilty.” Explain that some information is not available to share.
- ✓ Be clear and concise. Communicate in clear, plain language avoiding jargon and techno-speak.
- ✓ Be willing to acknowledge, “I don’t know.” If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so. Emphasize how the Board is working to get the answer.
- ✓ Provide all of the information that is available. Attempts to bury facts that portray the agency or staff in bad light will eventually come out and extend the crisis. Providing as much information as possible and acknowledging when information is lacking will help preserve trust in the Board.

It is important to remember that during any crisis the parole Board and staff are likely to suffer, at least in the short term. Advance planning and preparation can help accelerate the Board’s return to normal operations. Managing expectations among key audiences will serve to achieve reputational goals after the initial emergency. Negative media coverage and critical social media may be difficult in the moment. But a well-prepared and responsive Board can weather the crisis and emerge intact and even stronger in the long term. Credibility, public trust, strong relationships, honest and open communication are characteristics that can help a Board overcome immediate concerns. With these characteristics and a commitment to proving public value, parole Boards will build lasting, positive relationships with all of their stakeholders, especially the public.

## Section VII: Tools and Techniques for Stakeholder Outreach and Education

### *Developing the Strategies, Techniques, and Tools*

Implementation of a public and stakeholder education strategy requires planning, development and support for those who will be involved. The strategy should address target audiences, venues, agents (who will deliver the message), content and message, materials (written, electronic, visual, graphic), scheduling, format (formal presentation, town hall style, conference presentation, panel discussion, formal Q&A/dialogue session) and monitoring and feedback on effectiveness.

### *Training and Equipping Board Members and Staff*

The delivery of a consistent message by multiple agents working in varying venues calls for the development of a support system that will be able to assist the Board members and staff as they carry out the strategy. This should include in-depth orientation to the Board vision, mission and values, the public and stakeholder educational narrative, key messages, the target audiences and the communication goals.

If the Board decides to utilize the risk communication approach, those involved with the outreach should be trained in the risk communication philosophy and techniques. All Board members and staff should be given the opportunity to participate in training and practice sessions prior to implementing the strategy to ensure they have the level of confidence and the knowledge and skills to deliver the message effectively. Practice is a very important aspect. Board members need to hear themselves deliver the messages and see audiences respond to them.

Given the scope and complexity of parole release process, it may be advisable to have an experienced and trained staff person accompany the Board member to public events to assist with questions and technical issues.

Whenever a Board member or staff person is scheduled to conduct a public event, staff should ensure that they have all of the equipment they need, sufficient quantities of up-to-date materials and that they have been briefed on the audience and any specific issues or concerns that audience may have.

Implementation of a comprehensive public and stakeholder education strategy is a time consuming endeavor. The leadership of the Board should be sensitive to the workload impact of such a strategy (time away from case decisionmaking and other duties) on Board members and staff. This is particularly important for parole Boards with part-time members and small (or no) staff complements.

## Checklist for Developing a Public and Stakeholder Education Approach

Guiding Principles	Yes	No
Does the parole Board have a formal communications strategy?		
Does the strategy include public and stakeholder education?		
Does the parole Board (members and staff) participate in the implementation of the strategy?		
Does the parole Board engage in proactive communication?		
Does the parole Board work on building relationships with key stakeholders and constituents?		
Does the strategy include collaboration with criminal justice and corrections partners?		
Does the strategy emphasize evidence-based and best practices?		
The Board's Narrative		
Does the parole Board have a specific narrative about itself that forms the substance of the communications strategy?		
Are there specific messages contained within the narrative?		
Do the narrative and the messages flow from the Board's mission statement?		
Are the narrative and the messages in alignment with the Board's mission statement and policies?		
Does the parole Board have a "Parole 101" document that explains the Board's operations to a non-specialist audience?		
Does the parole Board support the <i>Ten Practice Targets</i> developed by the National Parole Resource Center?		
Has the Board assessed its current operations relative to the practice targets?		
Are the practice targets integrated into the parole Board's narrative?		
Does the parole Board have performance information available to support the narrative and messages?		
Is the performance information readily accessible and timely?		
Is the performance information understandable to lay audiences?		
Do Board members and staff understand the performance information well enough to use it in public presentations?		
Stakeholder Audiences		
Has the parole Board developed a list of target stakeholder audiences?		



Has the parole Board identified the major issues and concerns for each stakeholder audience?		
Has information specific to each stakeholder audience been developed and incorporated into the strategy?		
Has the parole Board reached out to each stakeholder audience to establish a relationship and foster two-way communication and mutual education?		
<b>Communicating the Message</b>		
Has the parole Board determined who will be responsible for implementing the communications strategy?		
Have those individuals been trained on effective communications techniques?		
Have those individuals been fully briefed on the content of the strategy, including the narrative, the messages and the performance information?		
Has the parole Board developed a comprehensive list of channels/venues for outreach and public education?		
Does the parole Board have a complete set of documents to carry its message?		
Are all documents and reports fully aligned with the communications strategy?		
Are all documents understandable to the non-specialist audience?		
Does the parole Board have a website?		
Is the website easy to navigate?		
Are the key communication documents available on the website?		
Is the website regularly reviewed and updated?		
Does the parole Board utilize social media?		
Is social media part of the overall communication strategy?		
Does the parole Board have a specific strategy for interacting with the print and electronic media?		
Is the strategy proactive (as opposed to dealing only with responding to inquiries or crises)?		
Is there ongoing communication to help tell the parole Board's story in positive terms (e.g. implementation of evidence-based/best practices to improve effectiveness, human interest stories about positive adjustments and parolee successes, performance-based information to demonstrate public value created by the Board)?		
<b>Risk Communication</b>		
Does the parole Board know the principles of risk communication?		
If not, is there interest in learning techniques to communicate effectively when audience		

trust of the Board is low and concern about an issue is high?		
Does the parole Board have assigned relationship managers to maintain open lines of communication among key interest groups affected by their actions?		
How many leaders, external to the parole Board, have enough information to speak supportively of the parole Board's work?		
<b>Crisis Management</b>		
Does the parole Board have a crisis management policy?		
Is there a designated spokesperson(s) who is authorized and prepared to speak on behalf of the parole Board in a crisis situation?		
Has the parole Board discussed possible crisis scenarios and their planned response activities?		
Does the parole Board have pre-approved standby statements on the most probable issues to create a crisis situation?		

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# APPENDIX

## *Sample Documents*

### ***Frequently Asked Questions — Colorado Board of Parole***

#### **What is the mission of the Colorado Board of Parole?**

The mission of the Colorado Board of Parole is to increase public safety by critical evaluation, through the utilization of evidence based practices, of inmate potential for successful reintegration to society. The Board determines parole suitability through the process of setting conditions of parole and assists the parolee by helping to create an atmosphere for a successful reintegration and return to the community. (Colorado Board of Parole Strategic Plan, 2012-2015; created in accordance with the SMART Government Act, 2-7-201, C.R.S. (2013)).

#### **What types of hearings are conducted by the Parole Board?**

There are primarily three types of hearings:

- I. Application interviews,
- II. Rescission hearings, and
- III. Revocation hearings.

The Parole Board also conducts probable cause hearings for interstate parolees, and sexually violent predator designation hearings for offenders not designated by the judicial system.

#### **May I attend a Parole Board Hearing, if so how do I arrange it?**

Yes, Parole Board Hearings are open to the public; however, depending on the type of hearing you wish to attend, will dictate the procedure you must follow.

If you wish to attend an application hearing: You must attend at the facility where the offender is located. Since each private facility and state facility have specific security requirements, it is imperative you contact the offender's case manager for information on how to apply for a security clearance prior to arriving at the facility.

If you wish to attend a revocation hearing: You must attend at the jail where the parolee is located. Please contact the supervising parole officer for instruction on the clearance process.

#### **I cannot attend the Parole Board Hearing at the facility. Can I write a letter of support for the offender instead?**

Yes, you may write a letter of support for the offender. However, please ensure the letter is sent to the offender's case manager for upload into the "Offender Portal." Case managers are the only ones with access to the Offender Portal, so please do not send letters of support directly to the Parole Board. Letters sent directly to the Parole Board will be immediately sent to the offender's case manager for processing. This delay may result in your letter not being uploaded in time for review by the Board.

**I am the victim of a crime; how do I receive notification of upcoming Parole Board Hearings?**

If you are a victim of a crime and wish to be notified of upcoming hearings, it is imperative that you actively enroll with the Colorado Department of Corrections' Victim Service Unit (<http://www.doc.state.co.us/victim-services>, (800) 886-7688). Once enrolled, you will receive timely notifications of upcoming hearings.

**I am the victim of a crime and I wish to attend a parole hearing, what do I need to do?**

Please contact the Colorado Department of Corrections' Victim Service Unit for arrangements to attend a parole hearing (<http://www.doc.state.co.us/victim-services>, (800) 886-7688).

**How are hearings conducted?**

The Parole Board conducts the majority of its hearings by video conferencing. It also conducts hearings by telephone and face-to-face.

**What factors do you consider in making parole decisions?**

The factors we consider are set forth in 17-22.5-404, C.R.S. (2013):

In considering offenders for parole, the state Board of parole shall consider the totality of the circumstances, which include, but need not be limited to, the following factors:

- I. The testimony or written statement from the victim of the crime, or a relative of the victim, or a designee, pursuant to section 17-2-214;
- II. The actuarial risk of reoffense;
- III. The offender's assessed criminogenic need level;
- IV. The offender's program or treatment participation and progress;
- V. The offender's institutional conduct;
- VI. The adequacy of the offender's parole plan;
- VII. Whether the offender while under sentence has threatened or harassed the victim or the victim's family or has caused the victim or the victim's family to be threatened or harassed, either verbally or in writing;
- VIII. Aggravating or mitigating factors from the criminal case;
- IX. The testimony or written statement from a prospective parole sponsor, employer, or other person who would be available to assist the offender if released on parole;
- X. Whether the offender had previously absconded or escaped or attempted to abscond or escape while on community supervision; and
- XI. Whether the offender completed or worked toward completing a high school diploma, a general equivalency degree, or a college degree during his or her period of incarceration.

In addition, we pay particular attention to the Colorado Risk Assessment Scale (CARAS) and Administrative Release Guideline Instrument in making decisions. (17-22.5-404, C.R.S. (2013))

**Is there a different procedure for violent offenders versus nonviolent offenders?**

Yes. Individual Board members do not have the authority to parole offenders convicted of a violent crime. Instead, if a Board member believes he or she is a good candidate for parole, the member refers the offender to the entire Parole Board for consideration. The Board sits as a "Full Board" at least once a week and votes on parole applications for violent offenders. An offender needs at least 4 affirmative

votes to be released on parole. In contrast, individual members retain the authority to make final release decisions for non-violent offenders.

**I have been notified of the application interview results and wish to appeal the decision. How can this be accomplished?**

In accordance with the Rules Governing the State Board of Parole and Parole Proceedings, 8 CCR 1511-1 (9.03): Decisions resulting from Parole Applications are not subject to appeal.

**How do you decide to revoke an offender's parole?**

The Parole Revocation process is governed by 17-2-103, C.R.S. (2013). Each hearing is an independent event. The Parole Board member conducting the hearing is an objective hearing officer and accepts testimony and evidence from the Division of Adult Parole and the parolee. After the reviewing all pertinent information, the Board member uses his or her best judgment to render a decision.

**I have been notified by the offender of the revocation hearing results and wish to appeal the decision. How can this be accomplished?**

Only the parolee or the parolee's attorney may appeal the parole revocation and the appeal must be received by the Colorado State Board of Parole within 30 day of the revocation hearing for consideration.

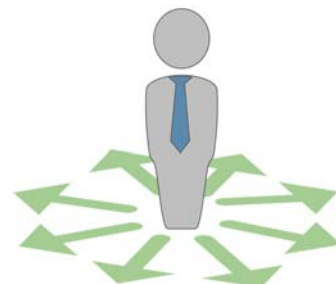
**I wish to file a complaint against a parole officer. How can I accomplish this?**

The Board of Parole is a separate entity from the Colorado Department of Corrections; additionally, the Board of Parole has no jurisdiction over the Colorado Division of Adult Parole. Please contact the Colorado Department of Corrections with your concerns (<http://www.doc.state.co.us/parole-and-community>, (303) 763-2420).

## Statement on Effective Supervision Strategies — Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

### *Use of Effective Supervision Strategies*

Many strategies are used to keep offenders in a pattern of success, strategies derived from a wide body of correctional research known as evidence-based practices or the Principles of Effective Intervention that promise significant reductions in offender recidivism.



Evidence-based practices expert, **Mark Carey (The Carey Group)** has provided training on this topic to both line staff on how to incorporate these skills into practice and supervisors on how to reinforce the use of EBP skills. These strategies are used throughout the entire parole process, but they become especially important during field supervision to make sure that any progress an offender has made is maintained effectively:

### *Determine Risk/Needs Using Actuarial Assessments*

The research shows that using actuarial assessments to determine risk and needs is superior to using unguided clinical judgment. Even experienced clinicians are correct in predicting outcomes only about half the time whereas assessments are accurate approximately 70%-80% of the time.

As previously mentioned, the PBPP utilizes the LSI-R as its primary field risk/needs assessment. The LSI-R is used in over 500 jurisdictions around the world. The PBPP has contracted with experts such as Dr. James Austin (JFA Associates) to conduct validation research on the LSI-R, and Dr. David Simourd (ACES, Inc.) to provide staff with ongoing LSI-R training on appropriate use of the assessment. The PBPP also uses the Static 99 to assess the risk of sexual reoffending and has received training from experts such as Dr. R. Karl Hanson (Canada Public Safety) on appropriate use.

More recently, the PBPP instituted the use of an Offender Violent Risk Typology tool to create classifications for propensity for violence with the assistance of Dr. John Goldkamp (Temple University). The PBPP is looking to improve in this area as it is currently contracting with Dr. Richard Berk (University of Pennsylvania) to create a “violence forecasting model.”

### *Enhance Intrinsic Motivation*

Research has demonstrated that lasting change is more likely only if the subject of the change has an internal desire to do so. External factors, such as threats of incarceration, are much more likely to have short term effects. Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a style of communication that has been proven effective at enhancing intrinsic motivation and moving offenders through the various stages of change. The PBPP has contracted with Michael Clark, MSW (Center for Strength-Based Strategies), to train staff on utilizing this skill. Additionally, Mr. Clark’s company has trained a number of PBPP staff to train others on Motivational Interviewing.

## ***Target Interventions***

This principle is comprised of five subcategories: Risk, Need, Responsivity, Dosage, and Treatment. Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) is the backbone of EBP. The Risk Principle states that resources should be targeted to higher risk offenders. Correctional agencies should focus their finite resources on the offender group that is most likely to present a risk to society.

By utilizing the LSI-R to determine risk and subsequently basing supervision levels on the LSI-R score, the PBPP adheres to this principle. The Need Principle states that interventions should target identified criminogenic needs. The relationship between correctly targeting criminogenic needs and reduced recidivism is among the strongest found in social science research. The PBPP accomplishes this by incorporating the results of the LSI-R into offender case plans.

Policy requires that case plans be reviewed and progress in each criminogenic deficiency be addressed on a semi-annual basis. The Responsivity Principle states that treatment interventions be delivered in a manner to which the offender is most likely to be responsive. This includes using cognitive-behavioral programming in general, and specifically matching interventions to the offender's personality traits, gender, learning style, motivation, culture, etc. Dosage is closely related to the Risk Principle in that agencies should assure that supervision and treatment are commensurate to an offender's level of risk/need, and Treatment is closely related to the Responsivity Principle in that treatment interventions must be targeted, timely, and delivered with fidelity.

## ***Train for Skills with Directed Practice***

Many offenders lack the skills needed to live law abiding lifestyles. Cognitive behavioral programming has been proven to be an effective method of training people how to make changes that are lasting. Cognitive behavioral treatment is based on the premise that thoughts, attitudes and beliefs strongly influence how one acts. Accordingly, training offenders on alternatives to criminal/anti-social thinking, attitudes, and beliefs and practicing pro-social responses can reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior. The PBPP contracted with the National Curriculum and Training Institute to have staff trained on delivering cognitive behavioral groups. Cognitive life skills, violence prevention, anger management, and drug/alcohol groups are offered by PBPP staff in all 10 districts.

## ***Increase Rewards***

Research on social learning theory has shown that rewards are more effective than punishments in shaping behavior. In fact, issuing four rewards to every punishment is the optimum balance for shaping behavior. Rewards do not have to be tangible — a simple statement of appreciation for improvements made can be quite influential under the right circumstances. One basic — yet important — MI skill (see “Enhance Intrinsic Motivation”) is to use affirmations. Just by utilizing MI, the PBPP has taken a significant step in satisfying this principle. Field staff are encouraged to look for ways to reward offenders. For example, offenders who display significant, sustained reductions in risk of reoffending may be relieved of certain conditions of parole (IE: reduced reporting). Recently, the legislature authorized the PBPP to utilize Administrative Parole. Staff needs two contacts per year for offenders under this supervision. It is reserved for non-violent offenders who have a very low risk of reoffending.



### ***Engage Offenders in Natural Communities***

Research shows that interventions can be more effective in the community than in prison. This finding is strengthened when offenders have stronger support in their natural communities. PBPP field supervision is community-based as field agents are generally working in the field 80% of the time. Additionally, PBPP policy requires agents to make a certain amount of collateral contacts for each offender. This requirement allows the agents to make meaningful contacts with individuals who comprise the offender's support system and engage them in the supervision process when possible.

### ***Measure Relevant Practices and Processes/Provide Measurement Feedback***

It is important for agencies to measure what they want to see accomplished and share feedback with the staff who are charged with achieving those accomplishments. Research shows that doing so is associated with increased motivation. The PBPP's Research and Development Division runs a number of reports on a regular basis to accomplish this.

Offenders are individuals and have different needs and challenges.

### ***Managing Parole Violators***

Most offenders can be safely and effectively managed in the community where they are connected with family and resources. However, parolees who are a serious threat to themselves or others, or who have protracted and escalating violations or have a new criminal arrest, are returned to prison. That said, not all violations amount to serious threats that require return to prison. The PBPP is committed to managing violations in a manner that enhances public safety, and this calls for a wide range of responses to violative behavior.

The PBPP is committed to correcting minor rule violations when doing so will work toward the goal of successful reentry. When technical violations (violations of parole conditions), are detected, they are addressed with swiftness and certainty. In order to assure that the manner in which technical violations are addressed is proportional and consistent, the PBPP utilizes a Violation Sanctioning Grid (VSG). This tool was developed in collaboration with a national expert on technical parole violator management, Peggy Burke (Center for Effective Public Policy).

The Violation Sanctioning Grid (VSG) considers an offender's risk to reoffend, severity of their violative behavior, and type of criminogenic (crime-producing) needs displayed to fashion a recommended response. Some offenders may have a high risk to reoffend and/or their violation might be to such a degree that it is no longer safe to manage them in the community. These offenders are placed in a secure setting. Many offenders, however, can be redirected by using intermediate sanctions (interventions that do not involve reincarceration) to address violations. These sanctions can be particularly effective at correcting behavior when they address criminogenic needs. This approach has resulted in a 21% reduction in the rate of reincarceration as the result of technical violations over the past four fiscal years. The VSG offers over 25 different recommended interventions to include: increased reporting requirements; imposition of curfew; imposition of electronic monitoring; referral to drug/alcohol treatment; documented job search; and travel restrictions.

# Statement of Risk, Reentry and Recidivism Reduction Strategy — Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles, 2012

## *Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles* **Risk, Reentry and Recidivism Reduction Strategy**

In 2011, The Board of Pardons and Paroles committed to utilizing our resources more efficiently and effectively, and focusing on establishing results-based, data-driven, policies, practices, and measures of performance and outcomes. Toward this end, the Board, in partnership with the Department of Correction, has been working closely with the National Parole Resource Center (NPRC) and the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) to prepare for full implementation of a statewide, evidence-based, risk and needs assessment system, the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS), which, in CT, will be called the Statewide Collaborative Offender Risk Evaluation System (SCORES). The Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP), in collaboration with the Department of Correction (DOC) conducted research and comparison of available risk assessment tools and determined the ORAS would best suit the needs and goals of the two departments. At this time, both agencies plan to adopt and implement the system in 2012.

Consistent with the philosophy and goals in other states who have adopted the ORAS, the Board, DOC, and P&CS believe the implementation of SCORES will facilitate enhanced risk and needs assessment, thereby allowing for more efficient and effective use of limited staff and program resources our departments. Specifically, upon intake to the Department of Correction, the SCORES will serve as the basis for developing the Offender Accountability Plan (OAP) which establishes the specific risk-reduction programs offenders should complete while incarcerated.

With enhanced, evidence-based, assessment (i.e., use of SCORES) serving as the basis for the OAP and release decisionmaking, we expect to realize in the long-term a decrease in crime and recidivism. Offenders will be expected to complete programs deemed appropriate based upon the assessment of their specific criminogenic risk and needs (i.e., factors associated with their likelihood of recidivism). Assessing and targeting the specific criminogenic needs (barring certain overrides, such as Domestic Violence, Sex Offenses) of offenders will allow for more efficient and cost-effective use of program resources and also reduce the likelihood of offenders engaging in future crimes.

Further, offenders with low risk, low needs, and low impact (i.e., non-violent history) could potentially be targeted for early release and completion of programs in the community, thereby reducing prison bed costs. This also allows prison-based programs to be utilized more efficiently for the moderate and higher risk offenders most in need of risk reduction programs. Clearly, there are financial benefits to managing offenders within the community compared to prison. In Connecticut, the daily cost of housing an inmate in prison is \$92.35 while the average daily cost of managing offenders under parole supervision is approximately \$ 16.93 - approximately 80 % less than the cost of housing an inmate in prison (DOC 2009 Annual Report). With nearly 18, 000 offenders currently incarcerated in the Connecticut Department of Correction, the financial implications of identifying and releasing to parole

the low risk / low need / low impact offenders at the earliest release possible are considerable and will result in a decrease in spending on prison beds and programs.

The SCORES will also facilitate enhanced release and stipulation decisionmaking by the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Specifically, use of the new assessment system will result in more accurate assessment of changes in offender risk and needs and determination of which offenders are most suitable for release and under what conditions if released to parole. Use of an evidence-based assessment tool will also facilitate more efficient identification and use of community supervision resources, which should result in reductions in recidivism as well as costs associated with supervision resources.

The Board of Pardons and Paroles also has been planning implementation of the Structured Parole Decision-Making (SPDM) framework, developed by Dr. Ralph Serin from Carleton University, and sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections. The SPDM framework facilitates systematic, guided, review of criminogenic risk and need factors assessed by the SCORES and Institutional Parole Officer interviews. The SPDM also assists the Board to focus questions during the parole hearing on the most salient factors established through research to be associated with criminal recidivism. The Board members and staff will receive training on the SPDM in 2012 with full implementation also expected in 2012.

Taken together, the Board's use of the SCORES system and Structured Parole Decision Making framework should result in a decrease in recidivism and costs by ensuring the most appropriate offenders are released after completing the most appropriate program and under the most appropriate conditions – and in all cases – only those programs and stipulations deemed necessary to manage risk using evidence-based assessments.

## Parole Success Story — Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles

### *Parole Success Stories*

Alexander's support has helped him.

He's responsible, dependable, and loyal," says Pastor Edward Grant. Grant is talking about parolee Willie Alexander, who stays and works at Good News at Noon, a community center and shelter operating in Gainesville. Grant is the executive director of the center.



It is not the manner in which you could always describe Alexander. Not when he was serving prison time for murder, armed robbery or for violating his parole. Not the way you describe him when he was paroled in February 2008 and arrived at Good News at Noon and certainly not the way you would describe him when he ran by the name of "Miami" in South Carolina, or another alias, "Taboo" which he picked up in prison.

Alexander's parole officer, Dale Williams says when he came out on parole, he couldn't identify with the outside world and the changes that had occurred while he was incarcerated. He had difficulty, but his story is enlightening, she says.

Up until February 2008, Alexander had spent most of his life in prison since his first conviction in 1971 for armed robbery. He got life for the murder he committed in 1980 in Georgia. Yes, he was given chances. Paroled in 1989, more criminal activity, and back in by 1992. Out again, but right back in. Parole revoked, and back serving the life sentence.

Perhaps it is simply maturity, but he will tell you, it is more than that. He says, "I work for the Lord, I serve the Lord."

Alexander says, "I changed my life. My life consists of serving God. It took me 58 years to get here."

Good News at Noon distributes food, clothing and many other necessities to the needy in Gainesville and the surrounding community. Its founder is "Mr. B" as he's affectionately called. Gene Beckstein has helped Alexander since his arrival at Good News. He has provided the opportunities for Alexander who has taken advantage and is now working at the center as a program manager. Among his responsibilities is managing offenders who come to Good News to complete community service. Their responsibilities include getting together the donations to the shelter and they clean up, mop and do garbage detail.

Alexander utilizes his past experiences and mentors those he manages, those he comes into contact with that are younger, as most everyone is, and who have come in contact with the criminal justice system, as he did at their age.

Alexander freely gives his testimony and tells about himself as he speaks to youth in church group settings, in schools and elsewhere. He has attempted to reach gang members telling them their lives, if pursued, will have repercussions.

He says what he does, makes him stronger and is granted through prayer.

He says it makes him feel good and it's worthwhile and gives him a measure of redemption. He says, "What I've done (his past) is not in vain."

He says he knows he's done wrong; now he's doing right. How does a 60 plus year old aging criminal relate to today's youth? Alexander answers, "They love to relate to me. They don't see age, they see the truth and I'm straight up with them."

He admits to them doing drugs; "weed and cocaine," he tells me. He admits participating in gangs. He sees the respect the youth have for him and says these youth know they can talk in confidence with him.



Alexander freely admits, when he came to Good News in February 2008, he came without the Lord. He gives "Mr. B" the credit and says he was instrumental in getting him on the right track.

"He showed me love," says Alexander. Alexander credits Mr. B with his success and says Mr. B reintroduced him to love and reminded him to let God show you love and you show others. Alexander says he tells Mr. B, "You can depend on me."

#### **Supervision:**

Officer Dale Williams says Alexander is among her top parolees. She says he would say that, "freedom is precious, he's made mistakes and he helps others."

Williams says Alexander meets all conditions and he shares his insights with parolees, students, clubs and church groups. She says he's earned the respect of those at Good News and the community supporters who volunteer and give there.

She emphasizes there have been no problems with his supervision. "He's made a change," she says. She adds, "Others say they've changed, but they don't live it." She says she hasn't seen any example that he's not doing what he says. She says Alexander seems, "earnest and humble."

She views his change (since his parole) as part maturity and change. "He is older and wiser, but also he gives all credit to God," says Williams.

As a parole officer, "It's hard to be a trusting soul, I want to believe him," she adds.

Williams closes her part by saying that, "Alexander is an inspiration. I hope I'm not fooled," and she finishes, that Alexander says, "freedom is precious."

**Alexander's future plans:**

He has none, but admits he would, as a goal, like to get off of the lifetime parole supervision. He says that would be an accomplishment. He says his only plans are to continue what he's doing; serve the Lord and doing the right thing. Alexander says he's not leaving; he has nothing to run to, no family.

He says he spends too much time helping people for him to get into trouble. He reiterates, "I know right from wrong."

He thinks back to his early age, and his convictions; "I was hotheaded, I was into a negative life." He says he thinks about the life he took, the situation and what he could have done differently. "I think of what I could have done, not killing him, not shooting him."

He admits maturity has a great deal to do with it, "absolutely. Experience in life gives you the knowledge."

## Annual Statistical Report (excerpt) — Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES



# *Annual Statistical Report*

Fiscal Year 2012

## MISSION STATEMENT

THE MISSION OF THE TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES is to perform its duties as imposed by Article IV, Section 11, of the Texas Constitution and:

- Determine which prisoners are to be released on parole or discretionary mandatory supervision;
- Determine conditions of parole and mandatory supervision;
- Determine revocation of parole and mandatory supervision; and,
- Recommend the resolution of clemency matters to the Governor.

## 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 offender into the community; and,
- Resolutely administer the clemency process with recommendation to the Governor fully commensurate with public safety and due consideration.

This statistical report has been prepared to fulfill the requirements of Section 508.036, Texas Government Code.

*June 2013*



**BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES ACTIVITY**

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## 2012 ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, a constitutionally created agency, decides whether to parole eligible offenders, terms of parole supervision and whether to revoke parole if terms are violated. The Board also recommends clemency to the governor.

The Board consists of seven members appointed for six-year terms by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Board members must be representative of the general public and have lived in Texas the two years before appointment. The presiding officer reports directly to the governor and serves as administrative head of the agency.

The Board sets policy for parole and mandatory supervision consideration, votes special cases requiring a full Board vote, and votes clemency matters.

The Board uses research-based Parole Guidelines to assess each offender's likelihood for a successful parole against the risk to society.

In deciding whether to revoke parole, the Board uses a graduated sanctions approach. Depending on the seriousness of the violation, the Board may continue parole, impose additional conditions, place the offender in an Intermediate Sanction Facility, or use other alternatives to revoking parole and sending the offender back to prison.

Twelve parole commissioners are hired by the presiding officer to assist the Board in deciding parole release and revocation by serving as voting members on parole panels.



*Bottom Row (left to right):* Board Members: Thomas Leeper, Conrith Davis, Juanita Gonzalez, Presiding Officer Rissie Owens, Michelle Skyrme, David Gutierrez, and James LaFavers

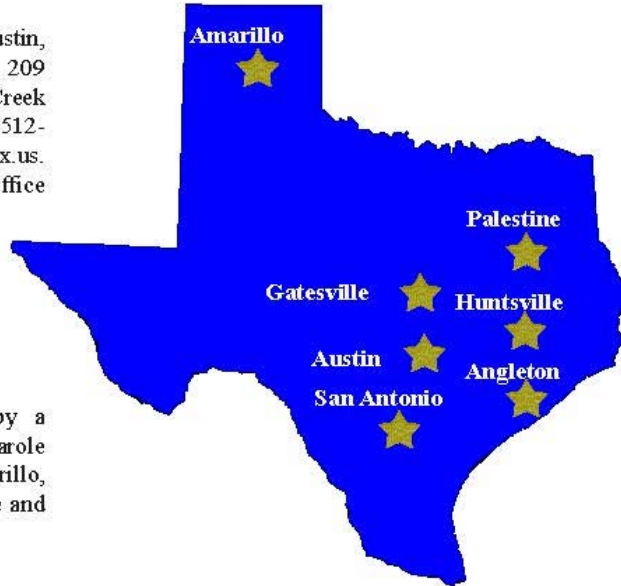
*Top row (left to right):* Parole Commissioners: Marsha Moberley, Pamela Freeman, Charles Shipman, Tony Garcia, Paul Kiel, Trent Marshall, Elvis Hightower, Troy Fox, Fred Rangel, James Hensarling, and Lynn Ruzicka

The central agency headquarters is in Austin, with offices at the Price Daniel Building, 209 W. 14th St., Suite 500, and at 8610 Shoal Creek Boulevard. For general information, call 512-406-5452 or email [bpp-pio@tdcj.state.tx.us](mailto:bpp-pio@tdcj.state.tx.us). The Board also maintains a headquarters office in Huntsville at 1300 11th St.

The mailing address is:

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles  
 P.O. Box 13401  
 Austin, TX 78711-3401

The six Board offices are managed by a board member and each includes two parole commissioners. Board offices are in Amarillo, Angleton, Gatesville, Huntsville, Palestine and San Antonio.



BOARD MEMBERS	APPOINTED	TERM EXPIRES OR EXPIRED	OFFICE
Rissie Owens, Presiding Officer	02/02/2004	02/01/2015	Huntsville
Connith Davis	04/07/2008	02/01/2013	Angleton
Juarita Gonzalez	02/02/2004	02/01/2015	San Antonio
David Gutierrez	04/09/2009	02/01/2015	Gatesville
James LaFavers	07/11/2011	02/01/2017	Amarillo
Thomas Leeper	04/09/2009	02/01/2013	Huntsville
Michelle Skyrme	07/11/2011	02/01/2017	Palestine

PAROLE COMMISSIONERS	HIRE DATE	OFFICE
Troy Fox	1/15/2012	San Antonio
Pamela Freeman	02/09/2004	Huntsville
Roy (Tony) Garcia	07/17/2006	Huntsville
James Hensarling	03/03/2008	Palestine
Elvis Hightower	10/01/2005	Gatesville
James (Paul) Kiel	04/05/2004	Palestine
Trenton Marshall	08/01/2011	Gatesville
Marsha Moberley	01/19/2010	Amarillo
Fred Rangel	1/30/2012	Angleton
Lynn Ruzicka	02/15/2004	Angleton
Charles Shipman	02/15/2004	Amarillo
Charles Speier	04/05/2004	San Antonio

## PAROLE REVIEW PROCESS

The parole review process entails an exhaustive review and consideration of an offender's case, from conviction offense, to medical and psychological history, to how they have adjusted and behaved in prison. Case files arrive regularly in each Board office or are sent as an electronic file through the Offender Management Information System (OIMS). Each parole panel of the Board reviews files and interviews victims upon request as required in Texas Government Code, §508.153. Interviews with offenders and other individuals in support or protest of an offender is at the discretion of the parole panel's lead voter.

### Parole Panels

A parole panel is composed of one board member and two parole commissioners who make decisions by majority vote concerning parole and discretionary mandatory release, revocation and imposing conditions of supervision. For offenders convicted of certain offenses, the law requires a vote of two-thirds of the board members to grant parole (Texas Government Code, §508.046, Extraordinary Vote Required).

### Parole Review

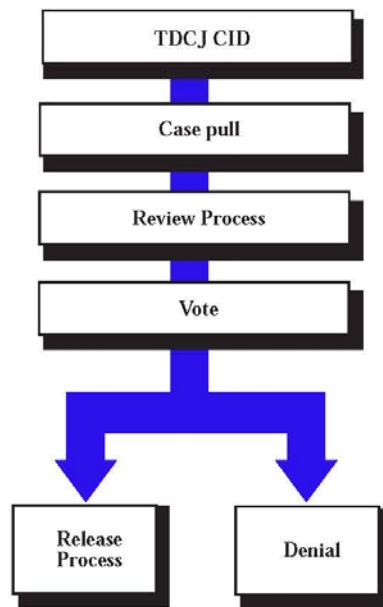
All offenders sentenced to a term of incarceration in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Correctional Institutions Division (TDCJ-CID) are eligible for release on parole, except those sentenced to death, to life imprisonment without parole, or who committed an offense listed in Texas Government Code, §508.145.

If an offender is denied parole, a parole panel or the Board is required to reconsider an offender for release as soon as practical after the first anniversary of the denied date unless the offender is convicted of an offense listed in Texas Government Code, §508.149(a). For those cases, the parole panel or the Board will set a new review in one to five years.

### Board Activity Report

The Board of Pardons and Paroles was established by the Texas Constitution to make decisions concerning parole and to recommend clemency to the Governor. The tables in this section of the annual report detail the activities of the board members and parole commissioners, including votes for and against parole and discretionary mandatory supervision; revocation

and non-revocation decisions, the number of hearings conducted and waivers reviewed, and the number of clemency cases reviewed by the board members.



### Parole Considerations

The overall parole approval rate for FY 2012 was 37 percent. Parole considerations in the following table are separated into violent and non-violent and aggravated sexual and aggravated non-sexual cases. An example of a violent offense is murder and non-violent is credit-debit card fraud. The sexual and non-sexual categories are self-explanatory.

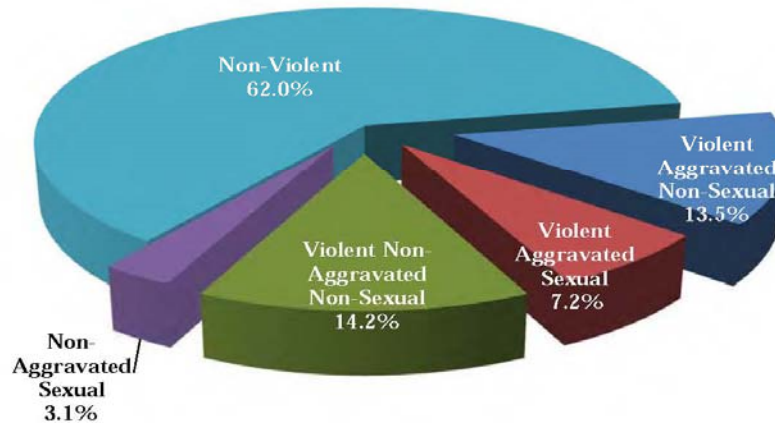
Additional tables in this section provide a history of the overall parole approval rates, approval and denial rates for each board member, approval rate by type and other related parole tables by designated categories i.e., consecutive sentences, Parole in Absentia, Medically Recommended Intensive Supervision (MRIS) and special review.

## SUMMARY OF BOARD ACTIVITY

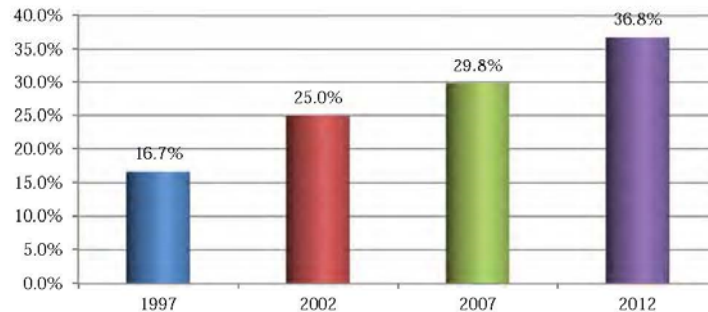
### Parole Considerations and Approval Rates by Offense Type

	CASES CONSIDERED	CASES APPROVED	APPROVAL RATE
Violent Aggravated Non-Sexual	11,342	4,017	35.4%
Violent Aggravated Sexual	4,387	2,127	48.5%
Violent Non-Aggravated Non-Sexual	14,836	4,221	28.5%
Non-Aggravated Sexual	2,801	915	32.7%
Non-Violent	47,278	18,415	39.0%
TOTALS	80,644	29,695	36.8%

### Parole Approval Rates by Offense Type



### Parole Approval Rates 15-Year Trend



# Strategic Plan — Wyoming Board of Parole

## Wyoming Board of Parole Strategic Plan 2015-2016

### Quality of Life Result

Wyoming families & individuals live in a stable, safe, supportive, nurturing, healthy environment.

### Agency

Wyoming Board of Parole

### Contribution to Wyoming Quality of Life

The Wyoming Board of Parole's (Board) formal statement of its mission is:

The mission of the Board is to conduct prompt, fair, impartial hearings on the matters brought to its attention and take appropriate action. Consideration will be given to public safety, victims and the treatment and control of the offender.

This mission guides the Board in making the critical decisions whether or not the release of inmates from the prisons to supervision in the community is in the best short and long term interests of public safety.

Board Policy recognizes the punishment, deterrent and incapacitation purposes of sentencing in criminal cases. However those concerns are balanced by the knowledge based on evidence that the majority of inmates will have better long term success if released to a period of community supervision before they finish their sentences rather than finishing their sentences in prison and coming back to the community with no strings attached. The Board's mission is further informed by the belief that offenders should be viewed as human beings who are capable of positive change, that the Board plays an important role in fostering such change and that all offenders should be given a fair chance to benefit from change opportunities.

One reason why parolees fare better after release from prison is the Board's requirement that they successfully complete recommended rehabilitation programs and exhibit acceptable behavior in prison before release. Equally important is the assistance they receive in planning for community reentry. Next, supervision in the community provides the necessary monitoring and assistance to help develop patterns of behaviors which will best ensure successful long term reintegration. Finally, evidence shows that the longer inmates remain in prison, the more likely they are to reoffend after release.

The timing of parole release is contingent on two primary factors. First, in imposing the term of years of the minimum sentence, the sentencing judge expresses his or her judgment, based on all sentencing factors including the crime and criminal history of the defendant and the impact of the crime on the victim, as to the minimum amount of time to be served before parole may be considered. When the minimum sentence has been served, the Board, in its judgment, and in consideration of the crime and criminal history, rehabilitative progress, victim impact and reentry plan, determines whether release to parole is in the best interests of public safety, victims and rehabilitation of the inmate.

The Board's work contributes significantly to the quality of life in Wyoming communities. Reduced recidivism means fewer crimes and less victimization of citizens. Lives of offenders and their families are restored. Reformed offenders, rather than costing taxpayers \$55,000 per year in incarceration costs, contribute to the economy and tax base. With an average of 650 parolees out of prison, the State is saved around \$35,000,000. Additionally, through awards of parole good time to parolees who comply with the conditions of parole, the Board reduces Agent caseloads and supervision costs. Based on awards of 73,596 days in FY 2013, annual caseloads were reduced by 202 parolees and, at an average daily cost of \$11, \$ 809,556 was saved.

### **Basic Facts**

The Board is a separate operating agency comprising seven (7) Board members with administrative and operational support provided by seven (7) staff members including an Executive Director appointed by the Board.

Board members are gubernatorially appointed to serve six year terms. The statutory criterion for appointment is that no more than four (4) members may belong to the same political party. Members work part time, receiving the same pay as legislators for days worked at hearings, business meetings, training and other Board-related activities. The members appoint a non-member Executive Director who is responsible for overall management of the agency and its operations.

Hearings are conducted at least once each calendar quarter at each of the five WDOC facilities and two of the Adult Community Corrections facilities for a total of 24 hearing sessions per year. Inmates receive their first hearing in the quarter preceding the quarter in which they will complete their minimum sentences, making them eligible for parole, and, if denied, may appear during the same quarter in succeeding years. Inmates with minimum sentences of more than ten (10) years receive their initial hearings further in advance of eligibility as an opportunity for the Board to gain familiarity with the inmate and motivate positive behaviors.

Prior to hearings, the members review all file materials on each inmate they will interview, including WDOC reports on the crime, criminal and family history, assessed risks and needs, institutional adjustment and behavior, victim input and parole plans. For each hearing session, three members located throughout the State and two staff members travel, by land and by air, to convene at the hearing location. Usually around twenty-five inmates are brought before the Board each day for parole hearings, and hearing sessions last from two to three days. The Board also conducts revocation hearings for parole violators and provides victim interviews upon request. Each member on average participates in 11 hearings per year and attends four business meetings, with additional training days.

At the parole hearing, the inmate may be asked to relate the facts of the crime, to describe his or her rehabilitative accomplishments and plan for reentry and may submit any special requests to the Board for desired action. WDOC caseworkers inform the Board about their views of the inmate's institutional performance and readiness for parole.

In each case, the three members of the hearing panel consider all material received, the testimony of the inmate, supporters, victims, case workers and counselors and, with fairness, impartiality and consideration of public safety, victims and treatment and control of the offender as their guide, decide whether the inmate will be paroled or spend another year in prison.

The following table summarizes the Board's activities in the last two fiscal years:

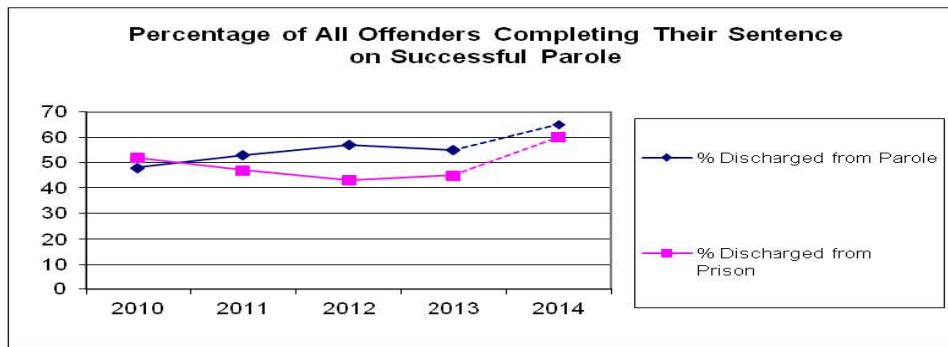
	2012	2013
Hearing Days	57	59
Parole Interviews	1038	1009
Parole Grants	658	612
Parole Denials	365	427
Revocation Hearings	137	175
Revocations with Re-incarceration	61	93
Special Matters	161	150
Victim Interviews	67	86
Victim Input Letters Received	101	103
Initial Victim Letters Sent	1023	666
Commutation Recommendations	8	4
Jail/ACC Sanctions Approved	35	54
Parole Good Time Days Awarded	68,555	73,596

The biennium budget of the Board for 2013-2014 was \$1,764,357 in appropriated general funds, with a \$10,000 grant from the Department of Victim Services to reimburse victims for travel to interviews with the Board.

**Performance Measures**

The most important performance measures to the Board of Parole are:

#1:



Percent Discharge from Parole =  $\frac{\text{All Offenders Discharged}}{\text{Discharged From Parole}}$

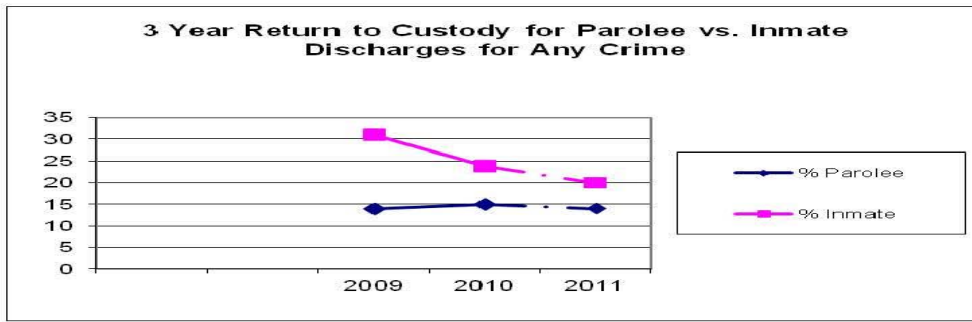
Percent Discharge as Inmate =  $\frac{\text{All Offenders Discharged}}{\text{Discharged as Inmate}}$



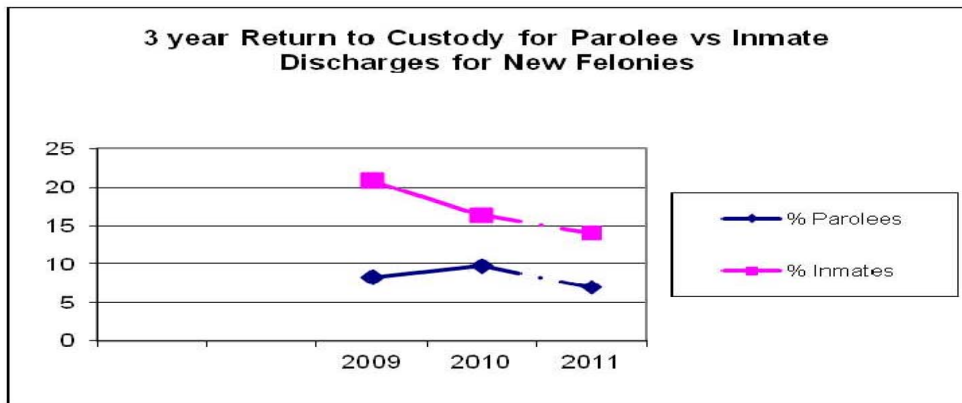
This is the primary measurement by which the Board will gauge the effectiveness and the value of its efforts in the future. It shows for each year what percentage of offenders finished their sentence after a successful period of parole supervision as opposed to finishing the sentence in prison and leaving on their own terms. It is premised on the principle that offenders who successfully complete parole rather than languishing in prison until they complete their sentences have a better chance of sustaining a long-term law-abiding and productive life.

The measurement encompasses both the rates at which the Board granted parole and the predictive quality of the Board's decisions in terms of rates of successful parole completion versus violations and revocations.

#2



# Parole Discharge	265	288
# Parolee-any offense	37	43
# Prison Discharge	317	320
# Prison Discharge-any offense	98	76



# Parole Discharge	265	288
# Parole New Felony	22	28
# Prison Discharge	317	320
# Prison New Felony	66	52

This measure consists of four components based on returns to WDOC custody or supervision within three years after sentence completion. They are:

**Graph 1**

- Parolees who returned to WDOC within three years of successful completion of parole because of the commission of any crime (felony or misdemeanor).
- Inmates who returned to WDOC within three years of discharge from prison because of the commission of any crime.

**Graph 2**

- Parolees who returned to WDOC within three years of successful completion of parole because of a new felony conviction.
- Inmates who returned to WDOC within three years of discharge from prison because of a new felony conviction.

As seen, the measure provides comparative recidivism rates between paroles and inmate discharges, broken down by all crimes and felonies only. By such comparison, the Board is able to measure the quality of its decision-making as well as the value of releases to parole prior to discharge in reducing long-term reoffending. As one would expect, the results are significantly better for parolees than for inmates. If the trend were to reverse, the Board would question the effectiveness of its decision-making.

**#1: Story Behind The Performance**

**Percentage of all offenders completing their sentences on successful parole.**

There has been dramatic improvement in relative rates of sentence completions from parole versus discharges directly from prison. This result is the product of concerted and sustained efforts to identify and implement best practices identified through the strategic planning process since the creation of this agency in 2003.

Strategies which have been successfully implemented in the last ten years include:

- The Board was legislatively reorganized from being under the budget and administration of WDOC to become a separate operating agency. This provided the Board with the ability to independently pursue initiatives to improve performance without seeking approval or funding from WDOC. It also placed the Board on a more level playing field in pursuing collaborative efforts with WDOC and other stakeholders.
- The preliminary revocation hearing function was legislatively transferred from WDOC to the Board, which allows the Board to consider and employ diversionary strategies in lieu of revocation in cases referred by WDOC for revocation because of parole violations.
- Legislative authority was obtained for use of short term jail placements and other sanctions in lieu of revocations, providing the opportunity to address parole violations by means other than returns to prison with the consequent loss of progress in community reintegration. The Board supported WDOC's implementation of a violation matrix which provides guidance to agents in responding to violations utilizing a system of graduated sanctions.

- Legislative authority was obtained to provide the Governor with rulemaking authority to establish a system of good time awards for parolees. A system is now in place which rewards parolees for being compliant with parole conditions by reducing their term of parole. This provides an incentive for inmates to prepare for and seek parole and to do well on parole. As a result, rates of parole-eligible inmates who decline their parole hearings has been reduced from 40% to 25% since implementation.
- Legislative authority was obtained to place addicted inmates in Court Supervised Treatment (“Drug Court”) programs as a condition of parole, thereby providing an additional community treatment option.
- Quarterly administrative meetings were established for the Board, which have provided an opportunity for on-going training, policy development and strategic planning. Intensive training has been provided on nationally-recognized best parole practices as well as on changing local developments.
- Board offender files were digitalized and a secure system was implemented to transmit files to members for review prior to hearings. As a result, the members have more information than ever, including audios of prior hearings, to consider in their deliberations. Additionally, the Board was in the forefront of replacing US Mail document sharing with e-mails, which has increased efficiency and reduced lag-time in processing parole-related matters.
- Several positive developments have emerged from the Board’s participation in the Transition from Prison to the Community Program along with WDOC and other stakeholders. Collaborative efforts with WDOC have resulted in Community Reentry Checklists, which provide a platform for individual inmate parole planning and preparation, pre-parole hearing plan investigations and approvals and Parole Decision Guidelines, which replace subjective WDOC parole recommendations with an objective rating of parole-readiness based on institutional performance. “Resource Fairs” were implemented to bring community service providers into the prisons to educate inmates about available assistance after release.
- The Board has regularly provided training to WDOC agents, ACC caseworkers and other stakeholders, and joint development and implementation of initiatives with WDOC has afforded a high degree of collaboration in furtherance of the Board’s mission.

## **#2: Story Behind The Performance**

### **Three year recidivism rates for offenders who completed their sentences upon successful completion of parole vs. offenders who completed their sentences in prison.**

As shown, offenders who successfully complete their sentences on parole consistently recidivate at a lower rate than the population which finishes their sentences in prison without a period of parole supervision. This is reflective of the performance under Measure #1; that is, by offering the incentive and opportunity for positive change to more inmates, crime is reduced.

It is noted that recidivism rates for parolees increased slightly during the two years for which data was available. The reasons for this are unknown, but if the trend continues in the future further study will be warranted.

### **Strategies To Improve Performance In The Future**

This year the Board applied for and received technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice, through the National Parole Resource Center, in its strategic planning. An expert facilitator worked with the members of the Board in two day and a half planning sessions to develop performance measures and strategies to improve performance. Those efforts yielded the following action plans.

Over the last two years, the Board has worked with WDOC to develop a decision guideline tool which will replace historic subjective WDOC parole recommendations with an objective parole-suitability rating for each parole candidate. Scores are based on each inmate's institutional behavior, progress in rehabilitative programming and development of a suitable plan for reentry. The Board will consider that score, along with assessed risk of reoffending and all other pertinent information in making its decisions. The new instrument went into effect in July 2013. This initiative directly correlates to the Board's stated mission of providing fair and impartial hearings, as it will result in more consistent decisions based on less subjective information.

The Board will conduct an independent audit of the merit of revocation cases referred to it by WDOC agents. Beginning in July 2013 and continuing for six months, the Board will identify at revocation hearings cases which it believes merited intermediate sanctions rather than revocations. The results of that study will be incorporated into the preliminary revocation hearing process to guide Board hearing officers in making recommendations for dismissal, and will be shared with WDOC Agents to guide them in initiating revocation actions. This is expected to reduce the number of unwarranted revocations which needlessly disrupt the societal reintegration of parolees who violate parole conditions, while encouraging more effective use of intermediate interventions to address violations.

A process will be established to provide quarterly reports to the members on critical indicators of their performance. Such reports will include basic information such as numbers of cases heard, paroles granted and revocations during each reporting period. More analytical information will also be included, such as numbers of low risk inmates paroled at their first hearings (39% in FY 2013) and individual voting records for each member in the last quarter. Ongoing review of the underlying factors which drive the primary performance measures on a continuing real-time basis will enable the Board to proactively identify and address performance issues in a more timely fashion.

Per discussions with the FY 2013 Joint Judiciary Interim Committee of the Wyoming Legislature, the Board is working and will continue to work with WDOC to develop a system for a final parole review of inmates who will discharge their sentences in prison within one year absent some intervention. The target group includes the groups of eligible inmates who were granted a parole but have not been released to parole, those who were denied parole at their last hearing, those who waived their parole hearing and those who had less than one year between their minimum and maximum sentences. The goal is to review such cases and, if deemed appropriate, to provide another chance for parole rather than sentence completion in prison. The expected increase in parole releases will improve the primary performance measure.

Training of Board members will be enhanced to include more training on the various assessments employed by WDOC to gauge the risk of reoffending and treatment needs of inmates such as sex offenders and substance abusers. A better understanding of the methodology

and meaning of these assessments will provide better-informed decision making. Additionally a refresher course for senior members and new training for newer members will be delivered on Motivational Interviewing techniques. This approach will assist the Board in utilizing the parole hearing as an opportunity to motivate inmates to engage in positive change efforts and pro-social behaviors.

The Board will review the general parole conditions which it imposes in all cases to determine which conditions may not be reasonably related to successful reintegration and public safety. Elimination of unwarranted conditions will make the parole grant and agreement less daunting for inmates and parolees and may result in less technical violations of conditions which may not have real rehabilitative or public safety impacts.

The Board, in collaboration with WDOC, will develop a program for Victim-Offender Dialogues, which will provide facilitated meetings between inmates and their victims upon request. This program will assist victims in the healing process and have rehabilitative benefits for inmates by promoting empathy for their victims. Training in facilitating such meetings is scheduled for Board and WDOC staff and selected volunteers in the fall of 2013. The next steps will be development of policy and procedure and then activation of the program.

Finally, the Board will step up outreach activities with key stakeholders whose involvement with inmates and parolees affects primary performance. For example, meetings will be arranged with Adult Community Corrections Boards, which control admissions to and terminations from privately operated halfway houses in the State. As the Board relies heavily on such programs as a paroling option, it is hoped that discussions about the Board's decision making process, the factors it considers in making referrals and the importance of the programs for successful paroles in some cases will result in a more cooperative relationship with the Community Boards. The desired end result would be more acceptances of Board referrals and less terminations for technical rules violations, which result in parole revocations. Increased interaction with the judicial and legislative branches will also be pursued to enhance understanding of and support of the parole process as well as to learn how the Board may become more responsive to the expectations of those entities.

As seen, there is ample opportunity for the Board to improve the services which it provides to the State. Above all, the Board will continue with the recognition that there is room for improvement in the criminal justice system, and will embrace opportunities to enhance positive outcomes from its critical role in that system.

# What Offenders and Their Families Need to Know — Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

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## Preparing For Your Return To The Community:

### What Offenders and Their Families Need To Know



## Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

*Toward Safer Communities*



[www.pbpp.state.pa.us](http://www.pbpp.state.pa.us)

June 2012

## Preparing for Your Release: The Key to Starting Over

As a person who wants to leave your criminal past behind and rebuild your life, it is important that you realize that returning home to your community is a process that begins from the day you enter prison.

Begin preparing now. Put your time to good use.

It is up to **you** to follow the correctional plan that has been developed specifically to meet your needs. DOC will assign you a counselor who will monitor your progress in specific programs or treatment.

It is up to **you** to take advantage of educational and vocational Programs that will help you once you are released. Talk to your counselor about a GED or college diploma, vocational training, parenting classes, basic life skills courses, and how you can get involved in other positive programs or activities within the prison.

**Returning home successfully requires work, but it will be rewarding.**

For you to be successful when you leave prison, it is important that you maintain connections to your family, religious or community organizations that are willing to assist offenders with reentry into the community. They will help you find solutions to problems and help you to live a safe and healthy life.

This network of support may help you find a place to live and a job, two very important parts of the reentry process. Employment will enable you to support yourself and your children, if any, and keep you on the track to a new lifestyle.

When you are released, get in touch with those individuals and organizations that you kept in contact with while in prison that can support your positive reentry into society. They can help you once you return home.

To help you adjust, get involved in local organizations. Find ways to give back to your community. Avoid individuals and organizations that will encourage you to get re-involved in criminal activity.

**Your parole agent can help you and your family once you are released.** Parole's goal is to help you be successful. Once you are released on parole, talk to your parole agent about your activities and get his or her support.

**Remember - there are many agencies, programs and people waiting to help you succeed!**

### Highlights of the Parole Process

The parole process is best described as a series of steps for both the parolee and the Board.

*Approximately 8 months prior to minimum date*

#### Preparation of Case File

Required documentation is gathered and prepared for the parole interview.

*Approximately 5 months prior to minimum date*

#### Institutional Parole Agent

Inmate works with institutional parole agent to develop a reentry plan and prepare for interview.

*Approximately 4 months prior to minimum date*

#### Pre-Interview Case Review

Board Members/hearing examiners review file and reentry plan.

#### Board Interview

Conducted either in person by a Board Member or hearing examiner or by a panel of two decision makers or by video conference. Sex offenses and Murder 2 & 3 require a majority vote of the Board.

*Approximately 3 months prior to minimum date*

#### Post Interview

Final Board decision to grant or deny parole. A grant of parole includes conditions and release of parole and starts the home plan investigation and release process.

#### Supervision

Parolee reports to the district office or community corrections center within 24 hours of release. Conditions of parole are reviewed with the field agent.

## Preparing For Your Return To The Community: What Offenders and Their Families Need To Know

Each parole district offers a family support class for offenders who are nearing release from prison. These classes help family members understand the parole process and gain an understanding of conditions of parole. The goal is to help the family understand how they can help the offender to be successful. For more information on these classes, please contact the district office where the offender will be living after being released.

An offender's successful return to the community is dependent on many factors. Planning and preparations begin while still in prison to ensure that housing, employment, benefits, treatment, programming and medical needs are met once the offender leaves prison. The efforts that an offender makes to prepare for release is viewed as the foundation for the offender to rebuild ties with the community and succeed on parole. Prior to parole consideration, an inmate must submit a home plan and employment plan. Both of these plans will be investigated to determine whether the proposed residence and place of employment is appropriate for the offender while on parole.

### Home Plan

Home plan investigations are conducted in accordance with the Board's dual mandate to protect the safety of the public and aid in the rehabilitation of the parolee. Home plans are investigated on a case by case basis. The Board investigates a home plan to consider staff and public safety as well as victim issues and any other issues that may impact the successful reentry and parole completion of the offender. These individual determinations depend upon a variety of factors. Field agents investigate each proposed home site, keeping in mind the offender's history and supervision needs, using discretion and sound judgment to determine the appropriateness of the home plan.



Ideally, an offender should submit two (2) proposed home plans in the event that one of them is not determined to be in the best interest of the offender or the public. The home plan should provide a stable environment that will provide support and assistance to the offender while searching for a job, attending counseling, seeking medical care, striving for financial stability and locating transportation. The offender will have conditions of parole that must be followed and family members can help the offender to follow them. This can be a stressful time that can cause an offender to relapse – but a strong family support system, the help of clergy and friends and mentors can help this not to happen.

Although a potential home provider may agree to accept an offender, the final decision still rests with the Board based on the individual circumstances of the case and the Board's experience in supervising certain types of offenders.

The Board's policy is that offenders must have a home plan to be released from prison or a community corrections center. The institutional parole staff will assist the offender with the home plan process, but they are not responsible for securing a home plan for an offender.

In deciding if a residence is suitable, a parole agent or parole investigator will obtain the following information and any other information deemed necessary regarding the proposed home:

- Name and relationship to offender of person offering the home
- Proximity to employment and availability of public transportation
- Location of home, including the type of neighborhood
- Sleeping arrangements
- Name and phone number of person interviewed



- List of the occupants and their relationship to offender, age, sources of income, criminal records and feelings toward offender
- Potential sources of conflict
- Responsibilities of the offender: rent, room, and rules
- Whether or not weapons are present in the home
- Determine if a telephone is available
- Any history of domestic violence with members of the household
- Confirm that the home provider is aware of the offender's criminal record

The investigating parole agent must provide potential home providers with the following information:

- Agent's role, responsibilities and contact information
- Parole conditions and their impact on those residing in the home (see general parole conditions)
- Moving/travel restrictions: the offender cannot move or leave the district without permission from his parole agent
- PBPP's weapons policy - **No weapons are allowed in the home**

■ **The agent's ability to conduct searches and make unannounced visits – without a warrant**

When investigating the employment aspect of the plan, the primary concern is that the job offer is realistic and will provide the parolee an opportunity to earn an income that will assist him/her to meet personal and family financial needs.

If employment has not been obtained, available financial support from the offender's family is investigated. Throughout any time of unemployment, potential employment opportunities shall be pursued by the offender.

The following information is obtained when investigating the employment plan:

- Name, address and contact person of the potential employer
- Name, title and phone number of person interviewed
- A definite offer of employment and for how long
- Proposed work description including wages, shift times, temporary/permanent job status and travel requirements
- Discussion of parolee's background, record and qualifications
- Explanation of parole conditions, agent's responsibilities and contact information



### If Granted Parole...

- If granted parole, the Board may parole the offender to an approved home plan (private residence), a Department of Corrections (DOC)-operated Community Corrections Center (CCC), or a privately operated facility (CCF) that operates under contract to the DOC.
- If granted parole to a CCC or CCF, the DOC will determine a bed date for the offender, based on where he plans to live and any special treatment needs he requires. DOC tries to place offenders in CCCs as close as possible to the offender's proposed home area or the committing county.

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- The offender's family members, friends, or previous employers can assist the offender in applying for employment while the offender is still incarcerated. Institutional counselors and institutional parole agents will provide guidance as appropriate – they do not have lists of employers willing to hire offenders.
  - Home plans are investigated by the agent who will supervise the offender after the offender receives a Board Action (green sheet) that says he is granted parole.
  - There are a number of restrictions imposed on the home provider, and not everybody that offers an offender a home at first will be able to keep that offer once they learn all the rules.
  - If the provider is still willing to provide an offender with a residence, they also will have to provide a copy of proof of ownership of the property or verifiable contact information for the landlord to the investigating agent.
  - *Approved home plans are valid for 150 days from the date of approval.*
  - If an offender's home plan expires, or if the situation inside the home changes, the parole agent will have to recheck the offender's plan prior to his release
  - Offenders with sex offense histories, violent criminal histories and medical concerns represent cases that may experience delays that do not fit the normal process and timing. These hard to place offenders need to work closely with their families and institutional parole agents to try to develop viable reentry plans.
  - It is in the offender's interest to remain aware of his home plan status and coordinate this information with his case manager at the prison or jail. As a guideline, parole staff has approximately 30 days to approve or deny a new home plan proposal after the field agent receives it.
  - If an offender hopes to live in another state upon parole release, he should begin the planning process as early as possible. Interstate applications require payment of a \$100 fee upon application.

## Timeline

### If the offender is in state prison or county jail and is approaching his minimum sentence date:

- Approximately eight months before the minimum sentence date, the offender should be given a Statement of Residence and a Statement of Employment form.
- The offender should send the Statement of Residence form to the person(s) offering him a residence and the Statement of Employment form to potential employers.
- Once the offender has received the Statement of Residence signed by the potential home provider or the Statement of Employment signed by the potential employer, it is the offender's responsibility to make sure the forms are given to his institutional parole agent.
- The investigation of a home plan is initiated shortly after an offender has been granted parole, which is often before the minimum sentence date.

### If the offender is in a state prison or county jail and has previously been denied parole:

- The offender's most recent Board Action will establish a proposed month for a parole review.
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- The offender's institutional parole agent will instruct the offender on how to submit a proposed home plan and proposed employment plan three months prior to the scheduled parole interview month.

**If the offender is in a CCC or halfway house (either on parole or pre-release):**

- When the offender thinks he has found a valid home plan proposal, he contacts his DOC case manager or parole agent at the facility and provides him with this information.
  - If the offender is pre-release, the DOC case manager will complete a "Home Provider Suitability Letter," and give the offender an informational pamphlet for the home provider. It is the offender's responsibility to provide these to the person offering the offender a residence.
  - Once the offender receives these materials back from the potential provider the materials are to be given to the offender's DOC case manager. The case manager will forward these materials to institutional parole staff for individual investigation by a field agent.

## How is a home plan investigated?

- The assigned parole agent will visit with the proposed home provider, in person, at the residence being offered.
- The agent will give the home provider a copy of this brochure: State Parole Reentry Plans: What Offenders and Their Families Need to Know.
- The agent will review the Home Provider Agreement Letter with the proposed home provider, and have the home provider sign the form.
- It is very important for the home provider to be available to meet with the agent.
- *Unanswered phone calls and a refusal to respond to business cards left in the door in a timely manner will result in a home plan rejection.*
- The agent will obtain input from local police, neighbors and other community members, and he or she will determine the availability of community resources to assist with reentry.

The following information will be recorded on a checklist by the agent:

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|---|--|
| ✓ A business card was given to the home provider.   | and implications for home suitability were explained.  |
| ✓ The general conditions of parole and possible special conditions for the offender were reviewed with the home provider.   | ✓ <i>The agency's right to conduct warrantless searches of the approved residence was explained.</i>   |
| ✓ The offense which the offender is currently convicted of will be disclosed to the proposed home provider. Information disclosed is limited to public information. | ✓ The home provider was informed of the location and hours of the field parole office.   |
| ✓ The procedure for the offender changing his residence was explained.  | ✓ The home provider was informed that staff may conduct visits to the residence outside of the normal business hours.  |
| ✓ The proposed home provider restrictions regarding possessing firearms and other weapons   | ✓ The home plan provider was informed of the Board's policy statement on domestic violence and was given a copy of the Board's brochure: What Offenders and Their Families Need to Know. |

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- ✓ Staff has determined the availability of a telephone in the residence and noted in the summary any lack of telephone access due to special features or Internet access.
  - ✓ The possibility of electronic monitoring restrictions was reviewed with the home provider.
  - ✓ Staff has listed all residents, their age, relationship to the offender, any source of income and any criminal record, for each.
  - ✓ Staff has toured the entire proposed residence and determined:
    - Any circumstances that would place the parole supervision staff in danger such as dangerous dogs.
    - The physical condition as far as habitability, including sleeping arrangements.
  - Any sources of conflict that may preclude approving the residence.
  - The number of exits of the home.
  - ✓ The responsibilities the home provider expects from the offender such as paying for rent, room, board, and any rules to which the offender must comply.
  - ✓ Whether the home provider is renting or leasing the residence. If so, staff must obtain the landlord's name, telephone number, and address and ask to see the lease.
  - ✓ If the plan is being submitted for investigation without employment, there must be verification of the availability of other forms of financial support such as family support, Social Security or disability benefits.

## Factors That Could Result in Home Plan Rejections

- Conditions existing within the proposed home or employer investigation that would present the likelihood of the offender committing similar offenses or incurring technical parole violations, such as known substance abusers at residence or employment.
- The proposed home provider or proposed employer was not cooperative with agents on prior occasions.
- Homes in which other parolees or those on probation for serious offenses reside are not likely to be approved if the other person under supervision is likely to increase the offender's likelihood of re-offending.
- Factors must be considered so the conditions leading to the offense are not re-established, such as when the victim or victim's family resides in the household or in close proximity, domestic violence issues, and sex offender issues.
- Residences for those convicted of sex offenses in which the victim is a minor will not be approved if located within close proximity of a school, day care facility, playground, or other location that children are known to congregate.
- The proposed home provider is unwilling to agree to conditions contained in the home agreement, or has inadequate household accommodations.
- Section 8 or other public housing where the offender was not previously on the lease is usually prohibited.
- If the home plan is going to be rejected and the investigation reveals an alternate possible residence, parole supervision staff will continue their investigation on the alternate site.

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## Inmate Obligations That Must Be Met Before Release

Most parole interviews occur four months prior to the offender's minimum sentence date, but the offender cannot be released before the minimum sentence date. Many things must happen prior to release. On average an offender is released within 4-6 weeks from the time they are notified of the decision to parole if their minimum date has passed.

After parole is granted, but before an inmate may be released to either a CCC or a home plan, the laws of Pennsylvania require completion of various actions.

■ **Negative Pre-Release Drug Screening Test**  
Inmates with drug-related convictions or who have tested positive for drugs while in prison must test negative for illegal drugs. Test results are valid for 45 days.

■ **Payment of Fees for Victims**  
Pennsylvania law requires inmates to pay a fee to a fund that provides certain services to victims of crime.

■ **Submission of DNA Sample**  
All inmates currently incarcerated for certain misdemeanors or any felony offenses are required to provide a DNA sample.

■ **Registration of Sexual Offenders**  
Inmates convicted of an offense requiring registration must register their home address, intended place of employment, and/or enrollment as a student with the Pennsylvania State Police.

■ **Participation in Victim Impact Education Program**  
If an offender is convicted of a crime of violence, as defined by 42 Pa.C.S. § 9714(g), the offender must participate in a victim impact education program offered by the DOC.

## General Conditions of Parole

- Must be under the supervision of a district office or sub-office and not leave that district without prior written permission of the supervising parole agent.
  - Must obtain prior written permission of the supervising parole agent in order to change residence.
  - Must maintain regular contact with the parole agent by:
    1. Reporting regularly as instructed and following written instructions of agent.
    2. Notifying agent within 72 hours of an arrest, receipt of a summons, citation or offenses punishable by imprisonment.
    3. Notifying agent within 72 hours of a change in status including employment, on-the-job training and education.
  - Must comply with state, county, local and federal criminal laws, regulations, ordinances, the vehicle code and the liquor code.
  - Must abstain from the unlawful possession or sale of narcotics/drugs and from the use of controlled substances without a valid prescription.
  - Must refrain from owning/possessing firearms or other weapons. This includes all firearms whether functional or not and includes facsimiles, muzzle loaders, archery equipment, etc.
  - Must refrain from assaultive behavior, including physical and verbal assault.
  - Must make continuing payments on fines, costs and restitution imposed by the sentencing court.
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## Victim's Services Homepage — Tennessee Board of Parole

*Welcome to the Tennessee Board of Parole Victim Services homepage.*

If you are visiting this page, it is likely that you or someone you know is a victim of crime. We know crime has a tremendous impact on victims, family and friends of victims and the community as a whole. The Victim Services Division is here to help you navigate the parole process. We cannot change what has occurred, but we hope to provide resources to make the journey ahead a little less confusing.

Most victims feel confused, angry and overwhelmed by the criminal justice system. We want to help you understand the process so you do not feel revictimized by it. We also want to provide you with information on many actions that occur regarding parole. And we want to make sure you have a voice throughout the parole process.

We invite you to explore our Victim Services pages. Here, you will find information about services we can provide, victim services personnel and [links to other victim service agencies and referral services](#) around the state and nation. If you or a loved one is a victim of crime, review our forms through the links at the bottom of this page to decide if you want to sign up for our services. Using these forms, you can file a [notification request](#), a [victim impact statement](#) or a [change of address](#). Doing so will ensure that you stay informed about the offender in your case.

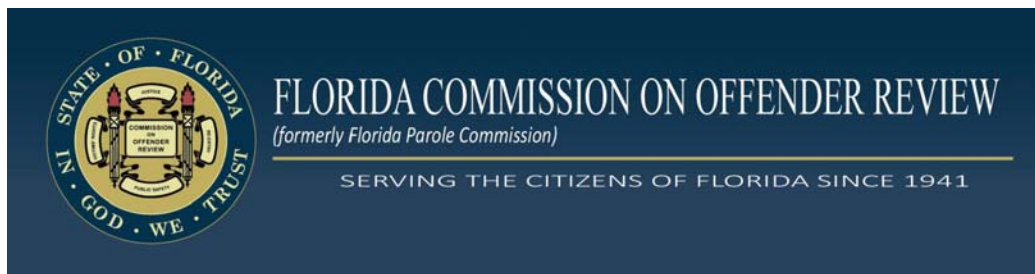
Remember: you have the right to be notified of hearings and outcomes concerning the offender(s) in your case. I encourage you to fill out a notification request to receive this information.

You can also review more detailed information about taking part in the process [here](#). If there is information you need and cannot find here, please call us. To locate the Victim Services staff person for your area, [click here](#), or email us at: [victim.witness@tn.gov](mailto:victim.witness@tn.gov).

Community safety is the primary mission of the Board of Parole. Through your continued involvement with the Victim Services Division, we can help your voice to be heard.

Sincerely,  
Tina L. Fox  
Victim Services Director

# Media Tips for Victim Interaction — Florida Commission on Offender Review



## MEDIA TIPS FOR VICTIM INTERACTION

Commission hearings are open to the public, but as a media professional we ask that you acknowledge and respect the victims' wishes if they request not to be filmed or have their pictures taken. The victims that attend the hearings are often traumatized and very emotional when they have to relive a crime. Also cited below you will find two important Florida Statutes, as it relates to victims identity being published in the media. The Commission request the media follow the below procedures to ensure proper handling of such a sensitive topic for parole and clemency hearings:

- **Notify FCOR Office Of Communications.** The Commission requests if you plan on attending a hearing please contact the FCOR Office of Communications at 850.921.2816 or by email at [publicaffairs@fcor.state.fl.us](mailto:publicaffairs@fcor.state.fl.us). This will help us to help you, obtain possible interview requests, information on camera set-up space, and other case specific inquiries.
- **Please Arrive On Time.** This ensures that you do not disrupt the proceedings. We recommend arriving at least 30 minutes early to secure a space.
- **Sign-in With Receptionist.** We ask all Commission visitors to sign- in for the Office of Commission Clerk's hearing day record of attendees.
- **Security Check Point.** On hearing days, the Commission will have police present to assist with crowd control. Please be prepared to go through a security check to ensure you don't have any inappropriate objects on you before you enter into the hearing room.

### Who Is A Victim?

Florida Statute: A victim, according to s. 960.03(13), Florida Statutes, is a person who suffers personal injury or death as a direct result of a crime or a personal loss; or a person less than 16 years of age who was present at the scene of a crime, saw or heard the crime, and suffered a psychiatric or psychological injury because of the crime, but who was not physically injured. All victim information is confidential by Florida Statute.

### VERY IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ

#### Sensitivity Relating to Sexual Battery Victims

794.03 **Unlawful to publish or broadcast information identifying sexual offense victim.**—No person shall print, publish, or broadcast, or cause or allow to be printed, published, or broadcast, in any instrument of mass communication the name, address, or other identifying fact or information of the victim of any sexual offense within this chapter, except as provided in s. [119.071\(2\)\(h\)](#) or unless the court determines that such information is no longer confidential and exempt pursuant to s. [92.56](#). An offense under this section shall constitute a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. [775.082](#) or s. [775.083](#).

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