

Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee

June 1995 Interim Compliance Report Study of Board of Parole and Parole Services

This is an interim report on the status of the Board of Parole (BOP) and Department of Correction's (DOC) compliance with a Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee recommendation. In 1992, the program review committee studied the Board of Parole and the parole services provided by the Department of Correction. The committee report, published in 1993, contained findings and recommendations related to the BOP and DOC.

Section 2-53h of the Connecticut General Statutes requires program administrators to take corrective action in response to recommendations contained in reports to the program review committee. It is committee policy to annually request agencies involved in the administration of reviewed programs to submit a compliance response addressing progress made toward implementing committee recommendations.

Overview of Compliance

During 1993 and 1994, in accordance with committee policy and statutes, the committee documented the board and department's compliance with all recommendations. The committee's recommendations, with the exception of one, required legislative action. They were successfully enacted in Public Act 93-219. Under the act, the parole board and correction department were required to develop a plan for the transfer of parole supervision responsibilities and staff from the department to the board. The Board of Parole was required to develop policy, procedures, and regulations for all aspects of its operations, including administrative hearings, review procedures, training, and parole supervision.

The Board of Parole and Department of Correction reported compliance with the legislation in 1993 and 1994 reviews.

The only program review recommendation not contained in the new legislation required the Department of Correction to create the position of institutional parole officer which would be responsible for compiling and disseminating accurate inmate information to the parole board in a timely manner. The department, through its inmate classification process, is mandated to collect and update information on those inmates sentenced to its custody. Not only is this information critical to the parole board's ability to conduct parole hearings and plan the community supervision of those inmates subsequently released to parole, but it assists the department in its population management procedures. To this end, the program review committee recommended the appointment of institutional parole officers in each of the correctional facilities to compile inmate information into parole packages for the board. These were to be Department of Correction positions.

The committee found that in 1993 and 1994 the Department of Correction failed to comply with the institutional parole officer recommendation. In its original performance audit the committee found an unacceptably high percentage of first time parole hearings had to be continued to another date because of insufficient information in the inmates' parole hearing files. During the 1993 compliance process, the DOC stated it would change its policy in this area to ensure compliance with the recommendation. However, the BOP continued to report high numbers of cases that were continued each month because of missing or incomplete inmate information from the department.

In an effort to comply with the recommendation, the department appointed a community placement officer (CPO) for each of its five regions. The department argued that the creation of a position in each correctional facility was neither cost effective nor the most useful approach in accomplishing the stated objectives of the recommendation. Under the current system, the CPO is responsible for reviewing the parole packages, which are completed at each facility by staff counselors. Each CPO is responsible for several facilities within their assigned region. The CPOs are also responsible for other duties, including the department's transitional supervision program which authorizes the early release to and supervision in the community of those inmates sentenced to two years or less.

In conducting the 1994 compliance review, the committee identified several reasons for the department's failure to adequately implement its community placement officer program. They included:

- the existing five CPO positions responsible for ensuring the completion of parole packages had no training in the development of this information;
- staff counselors assigned to correctional facilities also had no training in the development of inmate information as it relates to the parole hearing system;
- departmental policies were not developed for the CPO positions;
- the needs of the Board of Parole were not addressed in correction department procedures; and
- there was no supervision or direction by correction administrators of this program.

Due to its continued failure to comply with committee recommendations, the Department of Correction was subject to two compliance reviews during 1995, rather than the single year-end review. The department did agree to cooperate with the parole board in developing and implementing the committee's recommendation in the form of the community placement officer positions to address the needs of the DOC and BOP. The department also agreed to focus on

reducing the number of cases continued due to missing or incomplete parole packages by at least 75 percent.

Community Placement Officer

Throughout the first six-month compliance review period, the department provided the program review staff with documentation and up-dates on its progress. The department did address this issue through the continued use of the five community placement officers to provide oversight of the development of parole packages. The DOC identified, in more detail, the staff responsible for compiling the information required by the board.

That process involves the institutional staff counselors responsible for gathering and packaging information on those inmates eligible for parole that are on their caseload. The DOC reported there are 297 staff counselors assigned throughout 21 correctional institutions (prisons) with an inmate caseload. Responsibility for developing parole packages is not centralized. Each staff counselor then submits the packages for review to the facility liaison. There is one facility liaison per institution (21) who is that prison's contact for the parole board. After the facility liaison approves the package it is forwarded to the CPO for that region for further review. Parole packages that are approved by the CPO are submitted to the board. Those that are incomplete or inaccurate are either sent back to the facility staff or completed by the CPO. The parole board case analysts have reported that the department continues to submit incomplete parole packages that they have to complete.

The department has also developed a manual tracking system for the CPO caseload of parole eligible inmates. This system is currently being computerized. The system keeps a record of the dates that certain information is due or that tasks are to be completed, such as parole hearing date; date parole package requested; parole package due to CPO from facility; date CPO received package; date package sent to parole board; and date reminder letter sent to facility if package is past due. Additionally, the CPO must notify the director of community services of packages that are overdue from a facility. The director then sends a letter to the warden of that prison.

For its role, the Board of Parole created the position of case analyst to ensure that complete and accurate inmate information is presented to the board. There are currently seven case analysts employed by the board. During 1993 and 1994 the case analysts received the DOC inmate information and corrected it to meet the board's requirements. The board's analysts have reported that the department's parole package have improved slightly since the CPOs were appointed. However, the case analyst's sole responsibility is still to reconstruct the packages sent by the DOC.

Rate of Continued Cases

Since 1992, the program review committee has monitored the parole board's workload

based on the number of cases paroled, denied, and continued. Table 1 shows the number of cases in each category for the period July 1994 through May 1995.

As shown in the table, the parole board continues approximately 43 percent of its cases each month. A case may be continued at its first eligibility hearing for several reasons, but the most common is missing or incomplete inmate information at the time of hearing. The continuance results in the case being placed at the end of the list of cases available for scheduling on the board's docket. The continued cases usually do not reappear on the docket for several months due to the number of new cases eligible for a first hearing.

Table 1. Board of Parole: Outcome Statistics. July 1994-May 1995.											
Activity	1994						1995				
	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Paroled	169 35.7%	156 33.9%	181 38.9%	158 32%	144 35%	182 37.5%	182 37.5%	169 35.8%	223 37.6%	175 37%	188 34.5%
Denied	75 15.8%	73 15.8%	77 16.5%	61 12.3%	76 18.4%	87 15%	66 13.6%	72 15.2%	108 18.2%	93 19.7%	98 18%
Continued	219 46.3%	176 38.2%	184 40.2%	221 44.8%	161 39.1%	253 43.7%	227 46.8%	199 42.2%	249 41.9%	187 39.6%	242 44.4%
TOTAL*	473	460	465	493	411	578	485	471	593	472	544

* This number represents all cases heard before the board and includes close interest, reviews, rescind, and revocations not represented as a category in the table.
Source: Board of Parole

Table 2 represents a breakdown by reason of the cases continued by the parole board for the period under analysis. An average of 57 percent of the cases were continued during the period due to incomplete or missing information that was provided by the Department of Correction and 11 percent were not heard because the board required further information regarding the arrest, which is also information the department is required to provide. While an average of 32 percent of the cases were continued for administrative reasons such as pending criminal charges against the inmate or awaiting the results of a mental health evaluation requested by the board.

The number of cases continued by the board due to inadequate parole packages have remained fairly consistent since the program review committee conducted its study in 1992. The current DOC tracking system and oversight by department administrators has only been in full effect since March of 1995. However, the program review staff do not expect that the system will ultimately result in a decrease in continued cases.

Table 2. Breakdown of Parole Cases Continued By Reason. July 1994-May 1995.

Reason	1994						199				
	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Missing or Incomplete Info*	122 55.7%	89 50.5%	88 47.8%	139 58.3%	97 60.2%	148 58.4%	161 70.9%	126 63.3%	132 53%	95 50.8%	137 56.6%
Additional Arrest Info*	46 21%	49 27.8%	41 22.2%	39 17.6%	19 11.8%	11 4.3%	7 3%	7 3.5%	17 6.8%	8 4.2%	7 2.8%
Administrative	51 23.2%	38 21.5%	55 29.8%	53 23.9%	45 27.9%	94 37.1%	59 25.9%	66 33.1%	100 40.1%	84 44.9%	98 40.4%
TOTAL	219	176	184	221	161	253	227	199	249	187	242

* Inmate information provided to the Board of Parole by Department of Correction.
Source: Board of Parole

Findings

The program review staff find that the current system of oversight and case tracking implemented by the correction department has created unnecessary levels of administrative oversight and is a lengthy and cumbersome process for staff.

The action taken by the department did not address the principle problem which is ability of its line staff to compile information into the format requested by the parole board. A simpler system involving clerical as well as facility staff would have streamlined the process and consumed less time. The Department of Correction should have made this issue important to facility staff through policy and training.

It should be noted that the information requested by the parole board is routinely available and collected throughout an inmate's sentence. The department is not required to conduct any new evaluations or generate information about an inmate that is not in the file.

The only needed data not available in prison records is arrest information. The correction department, realizing the importance of this information, should attempt to collect it at the beginning of the sentence during the inmate classification process.

Recommendation

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee staff recommend that the chairman of the Board of Parole and the commissioner of the Department of Correction develop a plan for the transfer of funded positions and related staff concerning the community placement officer function from the Department of Correction to the Board

of Parole by January 1, 1996.

The chairman of the Board of Parole shall establish a unit within the board's organizational structure responsible for collecting inmate information from the Department of Correction in a format that meets the standards and needs of the board. The parole board employees appointed as case analysts shall have access to the Department of Correction inmate files and access to inmates and correctional facilities.

The program review staff concluded that the absence of clear lines of communication between the correctional institutions and the Board of Parole has resulted in a needlessly large percentage of continuances of cases at the first hearing. This conclusion was reached in the committee's 1992 study and despite the committee's recommendation has not been remedied.

The transfer of positions and responsibility for compiling parole packages from the department to the board will enable the board to set standards and criteria for the type of inmate information that is needed at a parole hearing and to have clear lines of supervision over the staff assigned to the task. The management of information will reduce the need for continuances and stop the cancellation of hearings. This will ultimately result in the parole board becoming more efficient in its hearing process.

With an increased number of staff and the transfer of responsibility, the parole board can expand the duties of the case analysts to include a role in other hearing functions such as administrative case reviews; revocation and recession hearings; and stipulation agreements. Since the analysts shall have access to the facilities and inmates, they can also be responsible for some of the tasks presently performed by parole officers. Parole officers are required to interview and provide notice of hearings to those parolees that are returned to prison. These administrative duties can better be performed by a case analyst which would free the parole officer to perform the primary supervision duties.

This recommendation gives the Board of Parole more responsibility and accountability in preparing information for use in its hearing process. It also allows more flexibility in assigning duties to the case analysts to better meet the growing needs of the board and its parole officers.