



Research Review

Unescorted Temporary Absences

KEY WORDS: *temporary absences, recidivism, conditional release*

What it means

Overall, the past and present results on the use of temporary absences indicate they can produce reductions in recidivism without increased risk to Canadians. They serve as one step in the gradual reintegration of offenders into the community. These conclusions are consistent with those reached by an independent panel that reviewed temporary absences (TAs) within CSC in 1992 (Pepino, Pépin & Stewart, 1992).

What we found

Over the past 20 years, a number of studies from the Correctional Service of Canada and academic researchers have provided support for the value of gradual release in general, and more specifically, the use of temporary absences. The results presented are from studies that use other terms, including furloughs, home leave etc., but they are all similar to what we would refer to as an unescorted temporary absence (UTA) and are provided to assist the offender to gradually reintegrate into the community after a period of incarceration.

A review of 14 studies comparing outcomes for offenders who had participated in temporary absence programs with those who had not, concluded that "...both home leave and work release schemes can be effective in reducing recidivism rates" (Cheliotis, 2008; p. 153). In a more recent example, results from a study in Ireland indicated that offenders who experienced family related absences had a recidivism rate about 10% lower than offenders who were similar to them on major risk factors, but had not had a family absence (Baumer et al., 2009). In another earlier well controlled study, offenders who participated in a TA program had a recidivism rate of about 16%, whereas the comparison group had a recidivism rate of 25% (LeClair & Guarino-Ghezzi, 1991).

CSC studies have indicated that UTAs have a significant positive effect on reintegration. Comparing offenders released on parole, with and without unescorted temporary absence experience, it has

been shown that recidivism is reduced by almost half for those who had UTAs (approximately 29% vs. 15%). For offenders released at their statutory release date, the reduction is smaller, but still significant, from 38% to 23% (Johnson & Grant, 2001). Other studies by CSC have shown an increased likelihood of receiving discretionary release after temporary absence experience and reductions in recidivism from participation in UTAs (Grant & Gal, 1998; Motiuk & Belcourt, 1996).

What we looked at

We examined studies that have compared the outcomes for offenders who have experienced UTAs with those offenders who have not experienced UTAs.

References

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