



Research *at a glance*

Parole Review Delays and Cancellations and Correctional Programs

KEY WORDS: *Correctional program, parole review, parole hearing*

Why we did this study

The Correctional Service Canada (CSC) must provide offenders with the opportunity to apply for discretionary release within the legal time frames specified by their sentences. A key factor considered in release decisions by the Parole Board of Canada (PBC) is completion of correctional programs required on offenders' correctional plans. CSC therefore needs to identify and rectify any systemic barriers to timely completion of programs. This study examined issues related to delays or postponements of parole hearings attributed to incomplete programs.

What we did

A sample of 1,345 offenders who delayed a parole review in 2007-2008 with *Programs Not Complete* as the reason and had incomplete correctional programs were identified. A profile of these offenders and the correctional programs assigned to them were compiled. These offenders were compared to a sample of 1,090 offenders who appeared before the PBC to determine offender-related and administrative factors associated with delayed parole reviews.

What we found

Of 7,202 offenders with delayed parole reviews in 2007/2008, 1,788 had *Programs not Complete* coded as the reason. However, nearly 25% of these offenders did not have a correctional program assignment that could have contributed to the decision to delay the review. Analyses focused on the 1,345 offenders with a correctional program that could have explained the delay. This sample represents 19% of all offenders who had hearing delays.

Over 40% of offenders who delayed their hearings were in the process of completing a correctional program at the time of the scheduled hearing. File reviews and profiling of the offenders indicated that both operational and offender related factors contributed to hearing delays. Offenders with delays

had more admissions to segregation, were lower motivation and had more responsivity issues than offenders who appeared before the Board. Offender-related reasons such as suspensions from programs and refusal of programs contributed to 28% of the reasons for programs being incomplete. Administrative issues related to incomplete programs including program in progress, change of program assignment, and scheduling programs without time to complete them prior to the review accounted for 72% of reasons for delays related to correctional programs.

What it means

Program completion issues are implicated in fewer than 19% of all parole hearing delays. Both administrative and offender behaviour factors contribute to delayed program completions. Substance abuse programs are the correctional programs most commonly implicated in delays. Offering them earlier could decrease parole hearing delays attributed to programs. Data coding issues in OMS are distorting the reasons for delays and adjustments to OMS may be needed. The current system appears to overestimate the problem. More precise coding could improve the understanding of the issue and identify ways to effectively reduce hearing delays.

For more information

Cabana, T., Wilton, G. & Stewart, L.A. (2011). *Parole Review Delays and Cancellations and Correctional Programs*. Research Report R-248. Ottawa (ON): Correctional Service Canada.

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