



Research at a glance

Temporary Absences and Work Releases: Characteristics and Patterns of Use

KEY WORDS: *temporary absences, work releases, failure rates, patterns*

What it means

These findings provide support for the effectiveness of the way the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and the Parole Board of Canada (PBC) are currently granting temporary absences (TA) and work releases (WR). TAs and WRs appear to be used appropriately among offenders. Almost all offenders on TAs and WRs return to the institution without incident, indicating that they are safe initiatives for the community.

What we found

Overall 89% of the absences granted were escorted temporary absences (ETA), 9% were unescorted temporary absences (UTA), and 2% were WRs. For ETAs, the most common reasons for the absence were medical and personal development (for up to 15 days), while for UTAs, the most common reasons were for family contact or personal development (for up to 60 days). Across all types of absences, the failure rate was very low, with just 0.4% failing. Virtually all WRs were granted by CSC (99.7%), 96% of ETAs were granted by CSC, and 65% of UTAs were granted by CSC (35% of UTAs were granted by PBC).

Among offenders who were released between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011, 22% participated in an ETA, 4% participated in a UTA, and 3% participated in a WR prior to their first release. About 90% of offenders who participated in at least one UTA or WR also participated in an ETA. Roughly 70% of ETAs participated in were part of a group ETA. Relative to their admission date, on average, offenders participated in their first ETA 1.2 years after their admission, their first UTA 1.5 years post-admission, and their first WR 1.7 years post-admission.

Why we did this study

The objective of TAs and WRs is to assist in community reintegration by allowing gradual and conditional access to the community while supporting offender rehabilitation efforts. Given that research

examining the trends and utilization of TAs/WRs last occurred more than a decade ago, an analysis of more recent findings was required. The current study investigated the patterns and characteristics of TAs and WRs in terms of type of TA, granting authority, length of TA/WR, success rates, number of TAs/WRs received in an offender's sentence, and when TAs/WRs occurred within an offender's sentence.

What we did

The goal of the current study was to examine the patterns in use and characteristics of TAs and WRs in the CSC via two studies. The first study explored TAs and WRs at the event level, while the second study examined TAs and WRs at the offender level. Study 1 used two datasets. The first dataset consisted of all 355,349 absences granted to federal offenders between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013. The second dataset, used just for analyses around granting authority, consisted of all 52,242 decisions to grant an absence between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013. Study 2 also used two datasets. The first dataset consisted of 27,098 offenders who had their first release from federal custody between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011. The second dataset, used just for analyses around the timing of absences, consisted of 7,341 offenders who participated in TAs or WRs after starting a sentence between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013.

For more information

Ternes, M., Helmus, L., & Forrester, T. (2015). *Temporary Absences and Work Releases: Characteristics and Patterns of Use* (Research Report, R-348). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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