



Research at a glance

The Impact of Temporary Absences and Work Releases on Community Outcomes

KEY WORDS: *temporary absences, work release, community reintegration, dosage effects, returns to custody*

What it means

Temporary absences (TAs) and work releases (WRs) play an important and effective role in the gradual reintegration of offenders into the community by reducing post-release unemployment and returns to custody. The benefits of temporary absences are also cumulative; in other words, the more absences an offender receives, the greater the benefits to their community reintegration.

What we found

Overall, 22% of offenders received an escorted temporary absence (ETA) during their sentence, while 4% received an unescorted temporary absence (UTA), and 3% participated in a WR.

Offenders participating in any TA, ETAs, UTAs, and WR were significantly more likely to receive discretionary release such as day parole. These findings were even stronger for offenders with low Reintegration Potential ratings. Moreover, participation in TAs/WRs was related to significantly lower levels of unemployment, returns to custody for any reason, returns to custody for a new offence, and returns without a new offence. These findings generally held true after controlling for differences between the two groups (those who participated versus those who did not).

There was also a significant dosage effect for any TA and ETAs in particular, whereby the more TAs the offender participated in, the greater the benefit to their community outcomes.

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. This is achieved by

allowing certain eligible and approved offenders to leave the institution for short periods of time to obtain work experience, strengthen connections in the community, or pursue rehabilitative opportunities not available in institutions.

Given the costs associated with TAs/WRs, as well as the potential risk to public safety inherent in allowing offenders conditional access to the community, it is necessary to determine whether these programs are being administered appropriately and achieving their objectives (i.e., whether they are actually assisting in the community reintegration process).

What we did

The purpose of the current study was to examine the impact of participating in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs on release and community outcomes.

The final sample included 27,098 offenders released to the community between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011. Medical and administrative TAs were excluded from the dataset because there is less discretion in granting these absences and they are less related to rehabilitative efforts.

For more information

Helmus, L., & Ternes, M. (2015). *The impact of temporary absences and work releases on community outcomes* (Research Report, R-350). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail research@csc-scc.gc.ca or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

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