
Guide. Support. Enforce.



pa board of probation and parole

www.pbpp.pa.gov

**ANNUAL REPORT
FY 16/17**



MISSION STATEMENT

The Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole is committed to promoting public safety, utilizing sound decision making practices that include evidence-based approaches, employing effective methods to aid offenders in reentering society and to reduce recidivism, addressing the needs of crime victims, and improving county adult probation and parole services.

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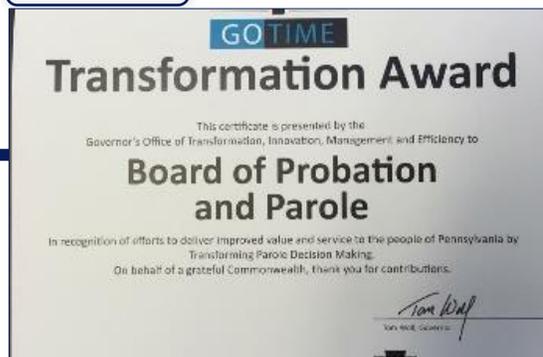
A Timeline of Our FY 16/17 Significant Accomplishments

July



The first five interviews with juvenile lifers are conducted by board members. As of June 30, 2017, 74 juvenile lifers had been interviewed and 64 were paroled.

August



OnBase, the board's document imaging system that allows current paper files to be migrated to a totally electronic environment, recognized with GO-TIME (Governor's Office of Transformation, Innovation, Modernization and Efficiency) Award.

November



Fifty new parole agents graduated the board's Basic Training Academy and are the second largest class in the history of the program.

December



Board employees donated \$23,164 to SECA (Statewide Employee Combined Appeal). The fundraising goal is achieved by 105.5% and has 79.6% employee participation rate.

March



Governor Wolf provided the keynote address and administered the oath to 54 new parole agents, the highest number of agents to ever graduate in one class at the board's Basic Training Academy.

April



PBPP recognized for best practices with juvenile lifer parole process and presented to APAI (Association of Paroling Authorities International) conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

A Timeline of Our FY 16/17 Significant Accomplishments

September



The board advertised parole agent 1 civil service exam with social media. Facebook: 119 reactions, 165 comments, 605 shares and 107,639 reaches. Twitter: 6,685 impressions and 76 interactions. After this, 2,746 individuals applied. Of these, 1,197 people were deemed eligible and moved to the eligibility list for the parole agent position.

October



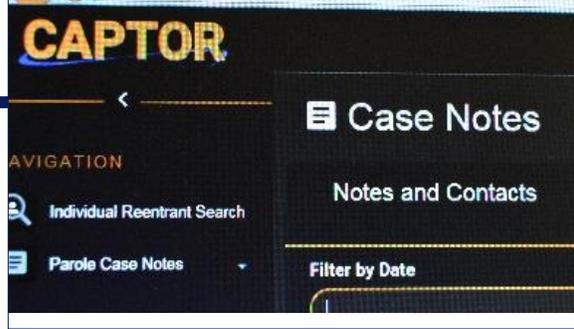
The iPad pilot began for parole agents. As part of the board's mobility initiative (EMPOWER), the iPad adoption provides staff with a lighter, and quicker device that allows them to complete their assignments in just about any location as the iPad mimics the individual's desktop PC.

January



Updated absconder website app is launched and features new search functions, anonymous online tip submission and is deployed in a responsive technology environment.

February



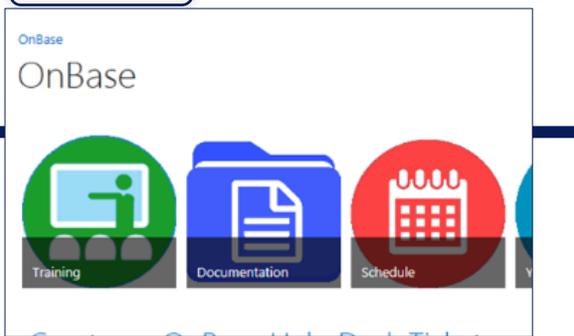
The parole case notes application was launched along with the CAPTOR application, which allowed for a significant enhancement to the way field agents' document contacts with or about their parolees.

May



Last three board staff arrived at their new work locations following the SCI-Pittsburgh closure. As of May 15, all 13 staff were reassigned throughout 12 field and institutional offices.

June



The OnBase application was deployed to both field and institutional staff. Supervision forms and processes continue to be under revision to enhance the paperless process.

Letter from the Governor

Dear Fellow Pennsylvanians:

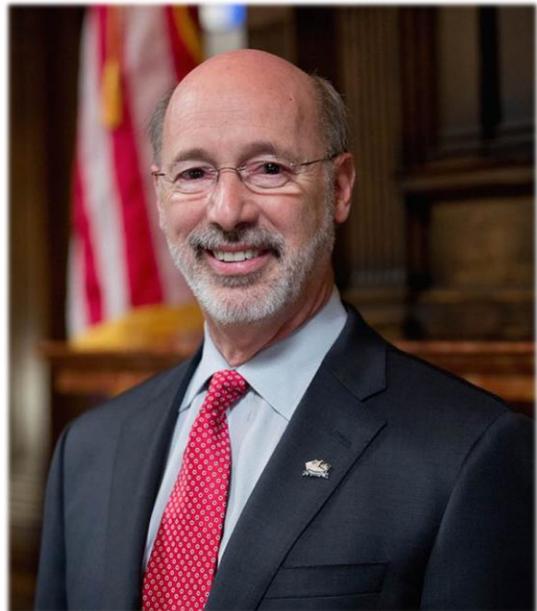
Since taking office in January 2015, it has been my goal to help the Board of Probation and Parole achieve their goals of modernization and to further my administration's promise of bringing government that works to the people of Pennsylvania.

The board has seen great changes over the last three years and has embraced the challenges that have come along with them. Since I took office the board has welcomed five new board members including its current chairman, Leo Dunn. These board members have brought a wide-ranging wealth of experience to the board and have quickly integrated themselves.

Under the leadership of Chairman Dunn, the board has seen tremendous success in the last two years. Since the beginning of Fiscal Year 2016-17, PBPP has helped to reduce the population of Pennsylvania's state correctional institutions by over 1,400. The board itself continues to find new ways to work efficiently through continued integration of technology and modernization.

The board has always considered the safety of the public and increasing the efficiency of the relationship between corrections and probation/parole, and their hard work has not gone unnoticed across the commonwealth. By working collaboratively with other state agencies, the board has ensured that new initiatives and ideas in the field of criminal justice are being looked at and examined for potential benefits.

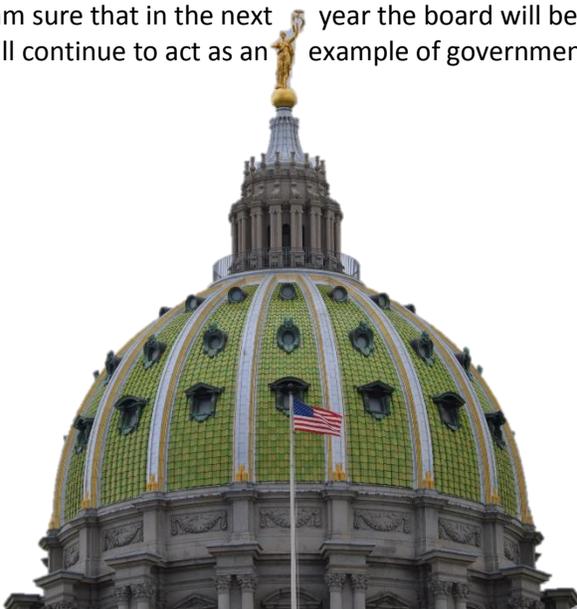
I am sure that in the next year the board will be able to meet any new challenges it faces, and that it will continue to act as an example of government that works.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Wolf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

TOM WOLF
Governor



Letter from the Chairman

Dear Constituents:

The Board of Probation and Parole has taken enormous strides to advance all aspects of our mission statement. We are ever mindful of our commitment to public safety, and we do not take lightly the duty that we perform for the citizens of this commonwealth.

In our effort to help the commonwealth save taxpayer money while protecting public safety, we put over 650 new active GPS units into the field for supervision. These units allow us to monitor in real time, parolees who our agents believe need it. Furthermore, we have provided our agents with the ability to supervise their cases in a truly mobile way. As a result of our migration from paper files to electronic files through OnBase, our agents are now able to update a parolee's file in their car as opposed to needing to drive to and from a district office. This lets them spend more time in the field supervising parolees, and less time in the office filling out paperwork.



The board continues to expand the use of evidence-based approaches to parole supervision, and each month more and more of our staff receives training in the Effective Practices for Community Supervision [EPICS] program. This approach to parole supervision is designed to better incorporate evidence-based practices within the confines of typical individual supervision contact. It allows our agents to do their jobs better than ever before, and helps to ensure that the board is fulfilling its mission statement.

This fiscal year alone, we have added over 113 parole agents to our ranks, and in January 2018, we commenced the training of another record-setting BTA class of potential agents. This has allowed us to better supervise the individuals that have been paroled. These agents commit their lives monitoring those under supervision, and collaborate with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to investigate and combat crime and work to keep all Pennsylvanian's safe by ensuring that the newly released parolees make successful transitions to productive lives in our communities. Having more agents on the street allows individuals to seek help and treatment when they need it rather than recidivating and risk returning to prison.



We are looking forward to continuing to move the Board of Probation and Parole forward, and to continue to look for new ways to help the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leo L. Dunn". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Leo L. Dunn

Board Members



Leo L. Dunn
Chairman



Edward Burke
Board Member



Leslie Grey
Board Member



Everett Gillison
Board Member



Theodore Johnson
Board Member



Mark Koch
Board Member



Craig McKay
Board Member
Retired March 31, 2017



Michael Potteiger
Board Member



Linda Rosenberg
Board Member

The core mission of the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole (board) is to protect public safety, utilize sound parole decision making practices, address the needs of crime victims and employ effective supervision methods to assist parolees reentering the community.

In Fiscal Year 16/17, the board continued to look at every function it performs, looked for ways to improve current processes and took Henry Ford's old adage to heart: "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."

EMPOWER

Enhancing Mobile Parole Office Workspace Efficiency and Responsibility



On July 18, 2016, there were 60,481 cases in the board's central office file room. One year later, there were 41,075 case files in the central office file room ~ 19,406 less. How is a reduction in the number of physical case files possible when the board's caseload has grown substantially in the past year?

One word. OnBase.

Part of the board's EMPOWER initiative is the use of innovative technology and a new document

imaging system called OnBase. OnBase allows all records associated with a parolee to be connected to each other electronically. The original paper file is no longer shipped between institutional staff, decision makers and central office staff across the state in order to generate the required number of votes to decide a case.

OnBase allows parole agents greater access to the daily information they need to perform their supervision of

parolees at a more efficient level. The amount of paper the board has scanned in as electronic documents~ and most importantly stopped using altogether ~ weighs as much as two school buses.

Government That Works Under the old" paper driven" system, every parolee the board supervises had a paper case file. The board supervises over 40,000 people on parole. Case files may range from half an inch thick to a few feet.

Through the EMPOWER initiative, the board is using technology - OnBase - to eliminate paper and products usage and storage and is saving tax payer dollars with this process.



The .78 Cents Case File

Each case file folder costs **.63 cents**.

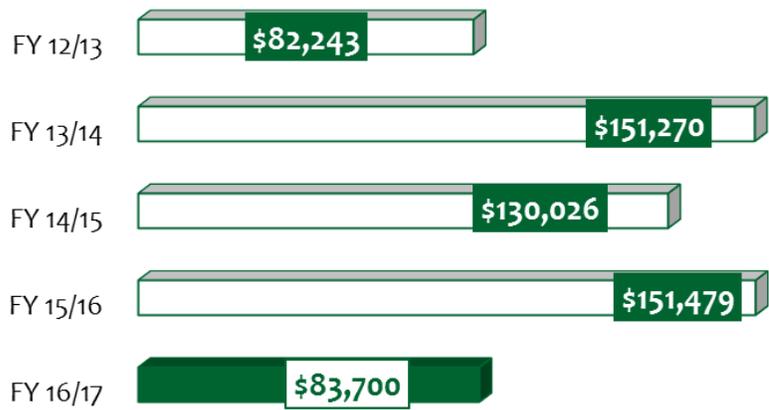
Each number/letter placed on the case file costs .03 cents each. A parole number is 5 characters (3 numbers/2 letters or 4 numbers/1 letter) or **.15 cents**.

Elimination of Case File Creation SAVINGS:

1,300 cases per month*.78*12 months= \$12,168/year

Shipping Cost Reduction

OnBase allows all records associated with a parolee to be connected to each other electronically. The board supervises over 40,000 people on parole. The paper-based case file is no longer shipped between institutional staff, decision makers and central office staff across the state in order to generate the required number of votes to decide a case. The board's reform of the voting and record keeping processes has decreased the need for parole staff to box, mail and move files between offices statewide - thus creating a significant reduction in shipping costs. Until the remaining components of the board's case file process are all electronic files, shipping costs still occur, but will continue to drop over the coming months.



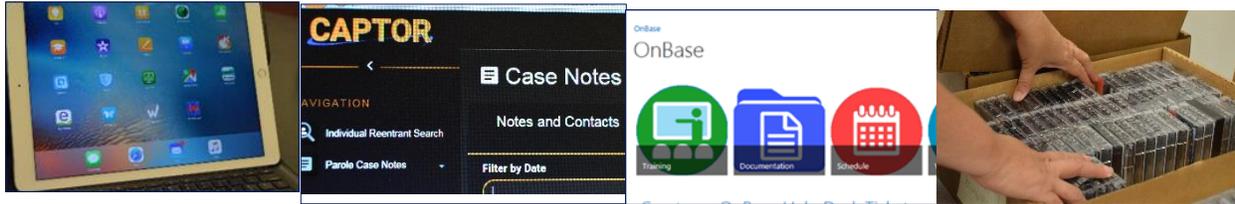
The board supervises over 40,000 individuals on parole. As the supervised caseload continues to grow, so would the need for physical space for paper file storage without On Base under the EMPOWER initiative. Using On Base to scan in all new case file information AND converting all of the old paper case files into electronic documents eliminates the need to physically store them in each office, ultimately decreases the board's annual real estate costs. Additionally, OnBase gives parole agents greater access to the daily information they need to perform their supervision of offenders at a more efficient level by allowing them to remain in the field and access all of the needed documents about their parolee cases.

The vision for the physical field parole offices will be smaller in actual square footage thus saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in lease expenditures in the coming years. The projected total cost avoidance is estimated at over \$2.3 million by the time the process is complete.

OnBase Cost Savings for FY16/17

Shipping and Paper Cost	\$ 51,226
Cost Avoidance of Additional Shelving/Real Estate	\$ 11,590
Productivity Savings	\$123,628
[minus] Expenses	-\$ 47,300
SAVINGS	\$139,144

FY 16/17 Milestones of the EMPOWER Initiative



The iPad pilot began for parole agents in October 2016. The iPad adoption provides staff with a lighter and quicker device that allows them to complete their assignments in just about any location as the iPad mimics the individual's desktop PC. Parole agents will be using iPads with a virtual desktop access for every aspect of their supervision needs. This enables the parole agents to have their "desk" in their car, input/access all data needed at the time of contact with their parolee caseload, all while remaining in the field instead of being tethered to an office desk. The last of the iPads were deployed to staff in August 2017.

The parole case notes application was launched in February 2017 along with the CAPTOR application, which allowed for a significant enhancement to the way field agents' document contacts with or about their parolees. Case Notes are an integral component of the supervision process for parole agents as they document all aspects of an individual parolee's progress while under supervision.

The OnBase application was deployed to both field and institutional staff. Supervision forms and processes continue to be under revision to enhance the paperless process.

With the oldest tape dating back to July 1992, thousands and thousands of cassette tapes of hearings the board has held were catalogued. Each tape was listened to for content. The board now has an electronic index of all of these tapes to interact with OnBase. The board will no longer physically house these tapes at its main office in Harrisburg, thus eliminating needed storage space while increasing efficiency.

Refining Field Supervision

Performance management is a constant pursuit in any responsible organization. An agency performing closely to its established policies and procedures is also more likely to achieve its mission, which in the board's case, is first and foremost to protect the safety of the public.

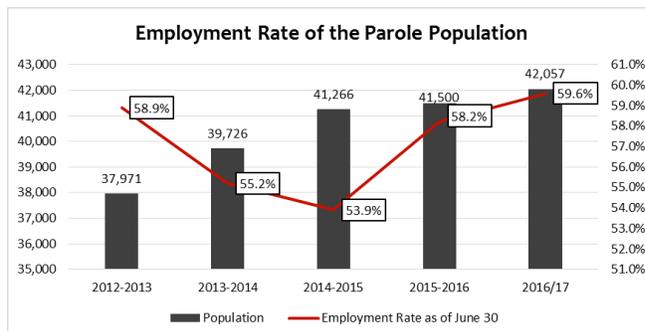
Important pieces to effective performance management are ongoing comprehensive reviews, collection of results and the appropriate reactions to the findings. This is best accomplished through a multifaceted approach which includes standardized auditing, utilization of available data sources and providing adequate case management tools to field supervision staff.

At the end of FY15/16, a comprehensive review was conducted of the previous year's audit results and a substantive corrective action plan was developed and implemented. Categories ~ such as parolee contacts, drug/alcohol testing, home plan investigations and technical parole violator managements~ are considered to be fundamental principles utilized to appropriately and most importantly- safely supervise individuals on parole within the community.

In addition to the increased audits of field supervision staff, the board continued its ongoing training for all field supervision staff in EPICS: Effective Practices in Community Supervision. Using EPICS, which is a product of the University of Cincinnati, supervision staff follows a structured approach to their interactions with their parolees as they work to determine if there are immediate needs or crises, focus on using the parolee's individual skills, work on positive problem resolutions and how to put each of these areas together to become productive, law abiding citizens.

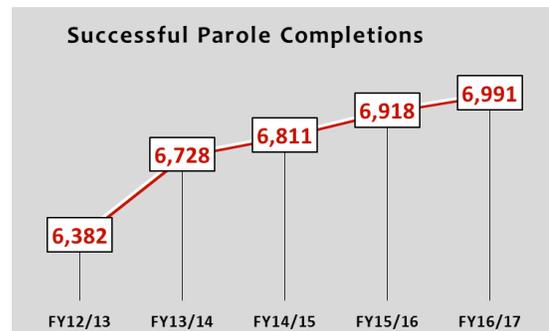
With field supervision staff actively engaged with the parolees they supervise, positive results happen.

Employment



Criminal justice experts agree a job is crucial element to a parolee's success. A job allows for the individual to pay taxes, support their family and pay all supervision fees and any court-ordered costs they are responsible for. In FY16/17, the employment rate for parolees able to work rose to 59.6%.

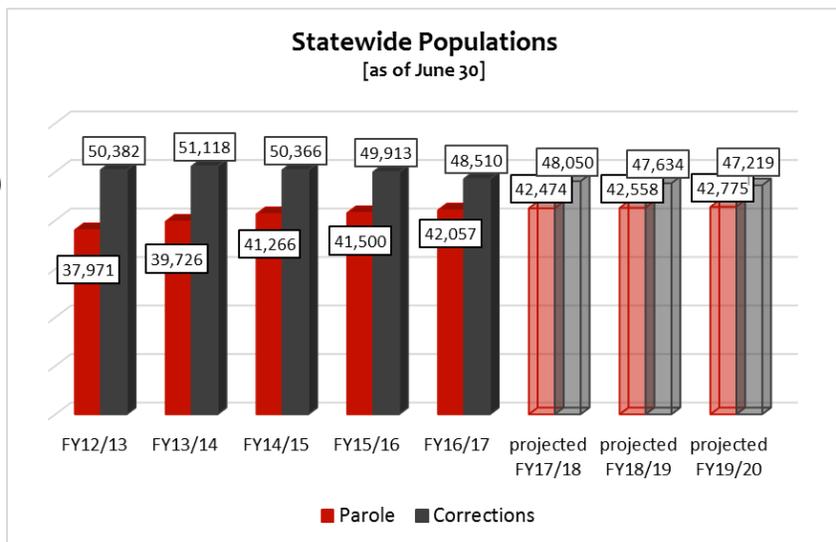
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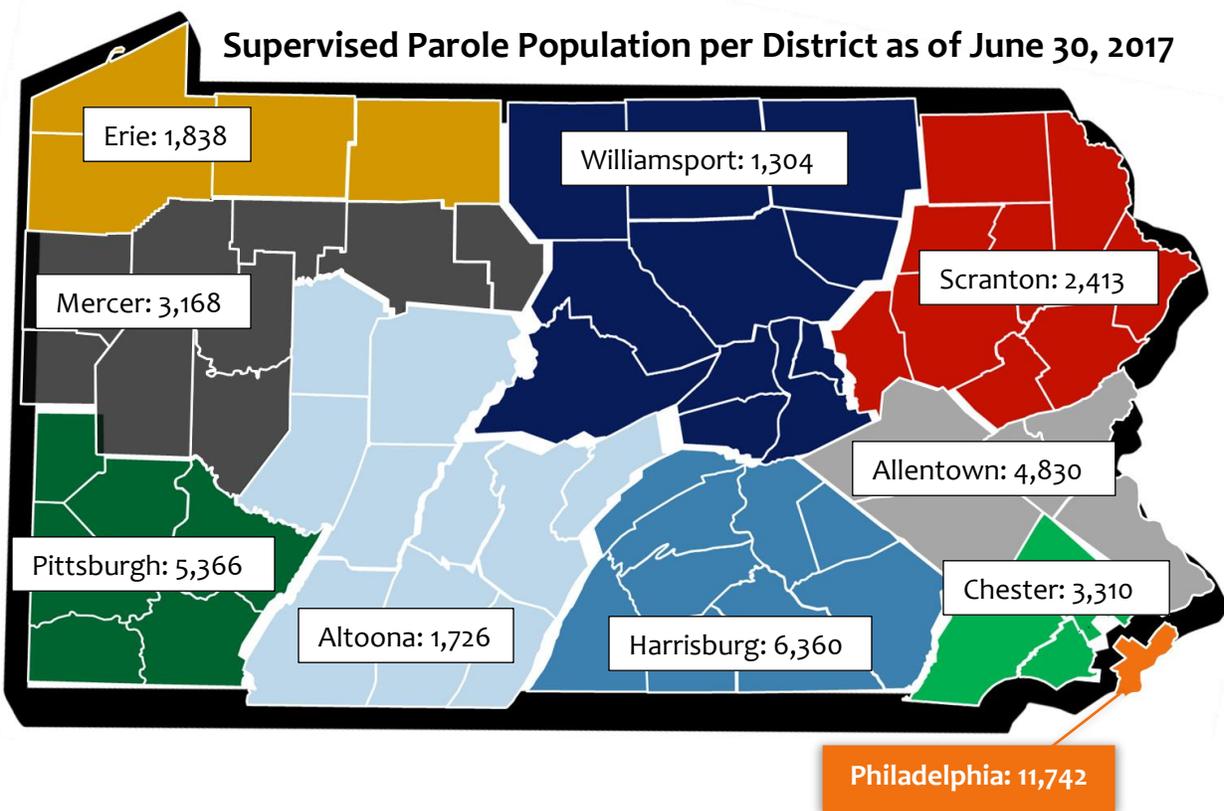
For the past five years, the board has seen an increase in the number of individuals successfully complete their parole supervision. In FY 16/17, the number reached a total of 6,991 individuals who committed no further crimes and their court-imposed sentence ended.

Prison and Parole Populations

During FY16/17, the Department of Corrections saw its inmate population reduced by over 1,200 inmates. This didn't happen because the board released more people; it happened because the board's parole agents used streamlined supervision efforts and worked to create conditions that allowed parolees to become more successful at reintegrating back into the community after their release from prison. This number of inmates equals one medium sized prison and a potential cost savings~ as long as the individual stays out of prison for a full year~ of approximately \$57.6 million.



On a per person basis, the cost of supervising a parolee for one year is \$3,500 versus \$48,302 for a year of incarceration in a state correctional institution.



Meet a Few People Behind the Parole Number

Of the thousands of men and women currently on parole in Pennsylvania, each one has a story to tell. At the first reading, one could say "isn't that what they are supposed to be doing while on parole? Following the rules? Staying out of trouble?" The answer to each of these questions is yes. However, for almost all of the 42,000 people currently on parole in the state, returning to the community is about changing attitudes. Changing a lifestyle. Controlling addictions. Asking for help. Recognizing that your past doesn't have to dictate your future.

Donte

Raised by a single mother, Donte first met his father when he was 10. Instead of being supported and encouraged, he was confronted with the words "I want to be your friend, not your father." They began using drugs together. Eleven years later, Donte was sentenced to 2-5 years for possession with intent to deliver. When sent to a state prison, he left behind a girlfriend and two young daughters. He explains that he was selling drugs to support his own heroin addiction which developed from dependency on prescription opiates. Donte received no sanctions while inside the state prison. When he left the SCI, he had the clothes on his back, \$0 to his name, past-due child support payments, was two years sober, had no job prospects and now had a felony conviction. Donte was paroled to a community corrections center in a drug infested area, miles and miles from home. Four months later, Donte was released to an approved home plan with his family. He got a job unloading cargo ships and works 70+ hours of hard manual labor per week, for not much more than minimum wage. When he was able, he bought everything his daughters needed, and eventually a used car to shorten his lengthy daily commute. Donte says "he's never been happier and he wants other parolees to know that there is work out there if you want it."



Lewis

Lewis served a 2-4 year sentence for aggravated bodily injury. He maxed out on his sentence in prison in March 2016. While incarcerated, he had 36 misconducts. After his release, he had to serve a year on special probation out of his home county. Lewis had been in and out of the prison system his entire adult life. When he was released, he got off to a poor start. He failed to report as instructed and was declared delinquent. While he was on the run he was all over social media drinking, using illegal drugs, leaving the state and threatening law enforcement. He was arrested by the board's FAST agents and U.S. Marshals fugitive task force in April 2016. During his arrest he was verbally aggressive and combative. At his hearing, it was recommended that his probation be revoked and he be sentenced to state time. The judge continued him on special probation. In May 2016, he was released from custody and told to report to his assigned parole office. When he arrived, he was placed on weekly reporting and instructed to complete cognitive life skills group. In his initial meeting with his parole agent, Lewis asked his agent why she had requested state time at his hearing. His agent responded, "I told him it was due to his record, his misconducts and his failure to report. Lewis told me people act different in prison. I told him to prove it to me." Lewis began reporting two times a week and later on a monthly basis. He has not missed an appointment.

He has submitted only negative urines and completed his classes. He is employed at a building supply company and is living now with his paramour and raising his daughter. His daughter is attending school, getting good grades and had a perfect attendance record last year. After months had passed, Lewis told his agent, "It feels good doing the right thing." Lewis said he is done with the criminal life. He maxed out his sentence on March 15, 2017 and he continues to be a law-abiding citizen.

Terrance

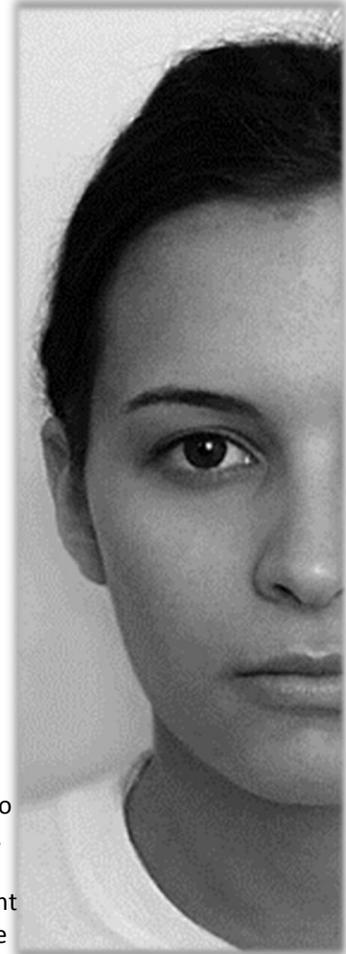
Terrance's parole agent says: "I have multiple individuals in my caseload whose reentry stories are success stories. These parolees have consistently followed instructions, have maintained regular contact, were reachable whenever necessary, and have remained on a positive progression toward successful reentry and away from returning to prison. Out of this group of individuals is Terrance." Terrance was released in 2002 and has not looked back since. He has maintained employment since his release and has been employed full-time as a lighting technician since 2010. Terrance has met all of his parole supervision conditions and has paid his court costs and restitution fees in full. Terrance never misses scheduled contacts and is diligent with updating supervision staff of anything that may affect scheduled meeting times. Most importantly now, Terrance is a family man and he speaks about his daughters continuously.

Jason

Jason has been challenged throughout his life with a drug addiction that has contributed to his criminal behavior. Jason has spent most his adult life incarcerated. While on parole for his robbery conviction, Jason violated parole five different times, all after drug relapses. So after each of these parole violations, his turnaround in life has been surprising and heartening. Jason was last re-paroled in August of 2016. His behavior has been exemplary. Though he lives within an active west Philadelphia drug corridor, he has maintained his sobriety and found the stability that he so lacked during the previous darker periods of his adult life. Within a few weeks of his release, he found employment as a parking attendant at a garage. In just nine short months, it is already the longest job he has ever held. His parents, who to their credit have stuck by him and supported him, are finally able to be proud of their son's achievements as they happen. They proudly tell the supervising parole agent this at his regular home visits.

Michelle

At age 44, Michelle was a model citizen, was involved in her children's' activities at school and doted on her two children. Michelle started to experiment with drugs and got caught in a serious addiction as she and the man she was dating were using crack cocaine and heroin together. Her addictions led to her arrest and a 1-3 year sentence followed by two years special probation for retaliation against a witness, conspiracy-aggravated assault and was not to possess or use firearms in northeast Pennsylvania. Michelle was released from SCI Cambridge Springs in October 2015 to a community corrections center (CCC) in Philadelphia. As soon as she was released, Michelle started looking for a job and secured one in the spring of 2016 with a temporary staffing company. While keeping her job, Michelle attends her outpatient drug and alcohol treatment and has not relapsed into her former drug use. Because of her negative results, Michelle is permitted weekend furlough opportunities. One of the challenges Michelle has faced is the criticism she has received from others at the center because of her drive, focus and achievements. Using what she learned in counseling and in her program classes, Michelle has created a mindset to power through the criticisms and uses the negativity from the other center residents to fuel her motivation and achieve her goals. Michelle continues to stay at the CCC because her home plans were denied because of circumstances she could not control. Michelle is focused on paying her monthly supervision fees, is not involved in any criminal activity and is counting the days until she maxes out on her sentence in April 2018. She is an educated, driven woman that strives to reach her goals. If she runs into any obstacles while trying to reach her goals, she always finds a way to continue to move forward. Michelle's criminal life is behind her, and she is not looking back or returning to prison. Michelle wants to complete her parole on a very positive note and become a positive member in the community again.



Understanding Recidivism

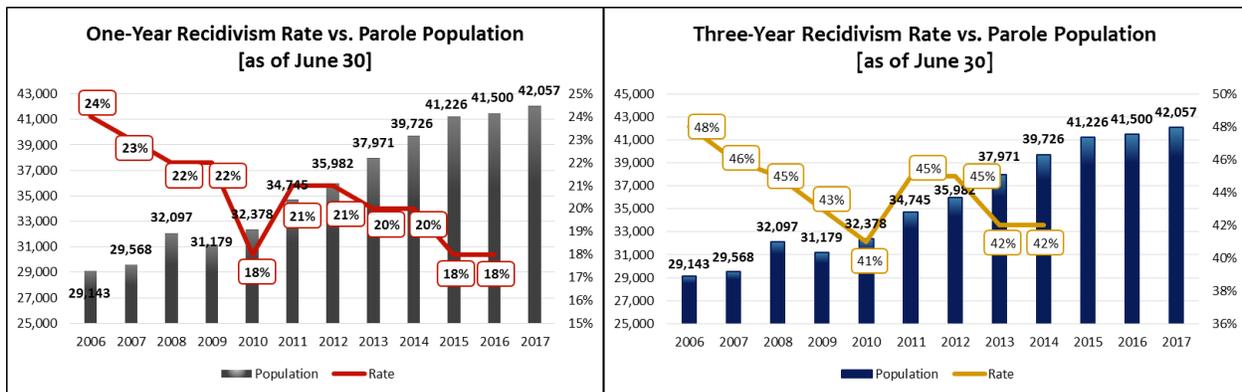
When a person returns to the community after incarceration, it is a continuation of a process that began from the first day he or she entered prison. As an inmate, individuals received the necessary counseling and programming that was determined they needed to assist their process to become a law abiding citizen. After their release, the board becomes a supportive partner, guidance counselor and enforcement officer with every parolee under its supervision. The individual parole agent works with many different people and resources in the community for assistance with drug/alcohol recovery, housing/food/clothing, employment services, mental health counseling and other programs parolees may need to help them be successful on parole.

Preventing parolees from committing more crimes after they are released from prison is a crucial goal for two important reasons: the prevention of future victimization and, by reducing the rate of parolees who return to prison, the board works to keep our communities safer and the commonwealth is able to reinvest incarceration costs to other critical state-funded programs and services.

The rate at which parolees return to prison is called recidivism. The board's definition of recidivism is:

A measure of the percentage of cases that are recommitted to prison by the parole board in a given amount of time after release to supervision. Typically, the measures are expressed as a one-year or three-year rate.

When Fiscal Year 16/17 came to a close on June 30, 2017, the board had identical numbers for both the one-year and three-year recidivism rates compared to the previous fiscal year:



“Juvenile Lifers”: From Re-sentencing to Reentry

Because of the 2014 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Montgomery v. Louisiana, every "juvenile lifer" in Pennsylvania now has the right to file a PCRA (Post Conviction Relief Act) petition. Their case will be heard by the county court that has jurisdiction over their sentence. Pennsylvania has the largest number of individuals (513) who were juveniles at the time they committed their crimes and were later sentenced to life without parole. In Pennsylvania, a life sentence excludes the possibility of parole. However, if a person's sentence is modified, they may be considered for parole as is required by state law. It must be noted the term "juvenile lifer" is often misunderstood or misused. This phrase applies only to the age of the offender at the time of the crime. It does NOT apply to the individual's current age.

In July 2016, the first five interviews with juvenile lifers were conducted by board members. It was the first time all board members have held a joint hearing since the board has been comprised of nine members. In that session, four individuals were granted parole and one was denied.

Each of the state's 67 counties can approach the issue of re-sentencing differently. There are no set rules for how to resentence. As the juvenile lifer interview process progressed in FY16/17, the board encountered issues that are being addressed as we move forward.

1. Coordination. During the fiscal year, two juvenile lifers were released directly from the judge's bench. One inmate arrived at a shelter because she was homeless and had no plan for support after she left prison; the other inmate is being supervised at the county level for two years.

2. Notification.

Counties are not obligated to alert the board when these inmates have been re-sentenced. The board continues to work with all key parties involved to improve in this area as it ultimately affects when the juvenile lifer will be seen by the board.

Before the Parole Interview

On average, it takes the board and the Department of Corrections seven weeks to put together the materials needed for an interview:

Two weeks are needed to produce the forms necessary and to calculate the minimum date.

Five weeks are needed to assemble the file and add the inmate to the docket. The board works to fit the juvenile lifers into the parole interview docket schedule, which is usually set three-four months ahead of time. Currently, staff is adding an average

PA OVERVIEW

AS OF JUNE 30, 2017

- 513 TOTAL JUVENILE LIFERS
- 104 RESENTENCED
- 74 INTERVIEWED
- 64 PAROLED
- 5 DENIALS
- 86% PAROLE RATE
- 0 PAROLE VIOLATIONS COMMITTED

of seven interviews to the docket each month.

The Parole Interview

An interview with a juvenile lifer is unique from other inmates because it requires two board members during the interview. At least one board member is in person; the other may participate via video conference. Non juvenile lifer interviews require only one board member and one hearing examiner. Five votes are needed to grant parole and there are a total of nine board members.



Reentry to Society

Three weeks is the average amount of time between a positive decision to parole happens until the actual release from prison takes place. Most of this time is spent finding a viable home plan for the individual. If no home plan is available, they are sent to a community corrections center in Philadelphia where there is a dedicated portion of this center for juvenile lifers and the focus is placed on them reintegrating back into society.

Looking Ahead

At the current rate of processing, Pennsylvania should be able to work through its list of juvenile lifers in about 3-4 years. Some inmates will not be eligible for parole immediately as they have not yet reached their minimum date re-set by the courts.

One juvenile lifer's story...

John remembers the date very well. February 16, 2017. The day he walked out of SCI Graterford after being paroled from a life sentence.

John was sentenced as a juvenile lifer for a murder he committed. He arrived at SCI Camp Hill early in 1986, with a life without parole sentence at the age of 17.

That was over 30 years ago. As the years passed, John and other juvenile lifers began following legal developments that were beginning to take place on the issue of life without parole sentences for juveniles. "I have had the same attorney for the last 12-13 years and he kept me informed of what was taking place in the court system," John said. "I had no sense of certainty about what would happen, but I was optimistic and was very hopeful the opportunity would come."

Before the juvenile lifer issue debate began in the court system, John had already been incarcerated for a number of years. "I did a lot of things while incarcerated. I made commitments to my mother to change while incarcerated. I was responsible for taking another person's life. I have taken responsibility for that and I changed in prison," John said. "I prepared if the opportunity came for me to be released that I would be ready, and be ready to contribute."

John obtained his GED. He completed substance and addiction classes. He completed therapeutic programming and he participated in organizations that he could learn from and develop in. He was in the lifers' organizations in each of the SCIs he was sent to: Camp Hill, Huntingdon and Graterford.



While at Graterford, he participated in the prison literacy program and taught other men how to read. “A lot of guys come in reading under a 5th grade level,” John explained. “By the time they complete the program, they are reading well over that level.”

John also enrolled in college classes. He was a very active participant in the Inside Out Program for 14 years. “That helped me grow personally and professionally,” John said.

“Inside Out helped me, especially because of the level of commitment from the volunteers there,” John said. “It taught me organizational skills and I then took some of the skills I learned there, into other organizations I got involved in. I started a juvenile lifer committee that studied legal decisions and how to support one another through the process.”

While active in numerous groups inside, John also held various jobs at each of the SCIs where he was incarcerated: at Camp Hill he had a plumbing job and was a library clerk; at Huntingdon, he developed new vocational trades and worked in the print shop; and, at Graterford, he was part of the para-professional law clinic for 4-5 years and the literacy program and also gave 1-on-1 tutoring for other inmates from 1994-2013. He also worked in Graterford’s library.

On October 25, 2016, John was resentenced to 30 years to life term with a minimum sentence date of September 30, 2015. Following the completion of the necessary paperwork and programming, John was interviewed by two board members on January 18, 2017.

When talking about his parole hearing, John said he “didn’t know what to expect,” he said. “The guys all talked. You hear all kinds of things and I was nervous. I went in. I was honest and with the truth you can be more comfortable. As a part of the organizations I belonged to, I was able to handle the questions and the conversation of the interview and I let my paperwork speak for itself.”

John was granted parole on January 26, 2017. “Once you find out you are leaving, you don’t get a chance to call anyone,” John explained. “I found out the day before I left that I was actually getting out. I gave my lady friend’s phone number to someone, they texted her and she got the word out I was being released. I thought I would have a couple days, but it was the next day.

“If I could change one thing, it would be to develop a better system for notification of family and friends for lifers,” John said.

John left SCI Graterford on February 16. He was paroled directly to his sister’s house in Philadelphia. His sister, his lady friend, and a professor he knew from St. Joseph University’s Redemption Program were there to meet him.

Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program®

From its website, *the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program® is an educational program with an innovative approach tailored to effectively facilitate dialogue across difference. It originated as a means of bringing together campus-based college students with incarcerated students for a semester-long course held in a prison, jail or other correctional setting. The Inside-Out Center is based at Temple University in Philadelphia, which is the international hub of the program.*

“I came out on a Thursday,” John recalled. “The first thing I encountered was just riding to my sister’s house. All the cars, just so much coming at you. I was going through a sickness, like motion sickness. I was encountering so much, so fast that weekend. That feeling lingered for a week or two and all I could eat was crackers and ginger ale.

“I wanted to take a walk. So I was shown how to use Google Maps on a phone so I found a 7-11 and started walking. I didn’t realize the walk would take me seven miles away but it was wonderful,” John recalled. “The next weekend, family and friends came to my sister’s house and we had fish, macs and cheese and chicken so that was really good.”

John talked about what he has done since his release from incarceration.

“What helped me was preparation,” John explained. “You have control over the work you put in. I had a 6-month plan [of things to do after release], and it has been going the way I planned for. Everything I set out to do has been happening. You are institutionalized to a certain way of seeing things and doing things. Now, you have to de-program yourself, navigate in a new system and find your place

“Anyone who comes out with the assumption that things are just gonna happen, things will be just wonderful are wrong,” John added. “You have to put in the effort and the planning and preparation and accept that there are going to be challenges and everything isn’t going to be perfect, it might not be easy, but those challenges can be overcome because they outweigh what we have already overcome by getting out of prison and having a second chance.”

While incarcerated, John received his bachelor’s degree from Villanova University in general studies with a minor in criminal justice and sociology. He is working on his master’s degree and he is currently employed as a program specialist/associate for the Inside Out program. John just found an apartment and is waiting for approval to move before he signs the lease.

John also chairs the juvenile lifer group from Graterford. He is very clear about the mission of this group. “The goal is to help others transition back into the community. We look for ways we can help each other find jobs, find housing, find other needed items or services. We also talk about how we can give back. This group is not for ‘woe is me.’”

Technology has amazed John with what is available, but he says he has “adjusted and adopted to it well....but learning how to deal with medical insurance, not having any credit, understanding leases...I am learning every day.”

John is allowing himself to relish experiences. “I got to go to a Phillies game not long ago,” John said. “I walked around the stadium, just getting to experience it. The opportunity to experience is good therapy.”

John is now 49. With his 6-month plan fully in motion, he thought about where he will be in five years.

“I would like to be settled in to the work that I’m doing and hopefully have my master’s degree in social work,” John said. “I want to work with young people. I want to help young people and I want to be able to help them navigate challenges and help them navigate decision making process. I want to use my experiences and there for them and help them avoid the mistakes I made.”

Basic Training Academy (BTA) Graduations

Another top priority for the board is improving the parole agent to parolee ratio. In August 2016, the ratio was 1 parole agent per 80 parolees (1:80). Starting in July 2017, the ratio has improved to 1:54. In FY16/17, the board hired 113 new parole agents to move the agency toward its goal of parole agent to mid to high risk level parolee to 1:50. The board is also moving toward a single, statewide hiring process for all parole agents. Interviews will be conducted by three teams of interviewers to help speed up the process and make it consistent.

BTA Class #127

BTA Class #127 graduated the second largest class of 50 new parole agents on Friday, November 18, 2016. The Marksmanship Award went to Agent Nathan Lee of the Harrisburg District Office. Class Valedictorian was Agent Brent Smiley of the Chambersburg Sub Office. Agent Smiley's combined test scores was a 97.6 percent.



Clockwise from above: 1. Chairman Leo L. Dunn, Agent Nathan Lee, Director of the Office of Reentry and Quality Assurance Luis Rosa and Director of the Office of Field Probation and Parole Supervision Christian Stephens. 2. Chairman Dunn, Agent Brent Smiley, Director Rosa and Director Stephens. 3. BTA Class #127.



BTA Class #128

For the first time in agency history, Governor Tom Wolf gave the keynote address and administered the Oath of Office to the largest BTA graduating class ever: 54 new parole agents. BTA Class #128 graduated on Friday, March 17, 2017. The Marksmanship Award went to Agent Corey Lindell of the Erie District Office. Class Valedictorian was Agent Mark Grauly of the North Shore (Pittsburgh District) Sub Office. Agent Grauly's combined test scores was a 97.6 percent.



Counter clockwise from above: 1. Governor Tom Wolf and class valedictorian, Agent Mark Grauly; 2. Governor Wolf and marksmanship award winner, Agent Corey Lindell. 3. Governor Wolf administers the Oath of Office to the board's 54 new agents; 4. BTA Class #128.



BTA Class #129

On Friday, June 23, 2017, the board graduated nine new agents in BTA Class #129. Parole Agent Steve Todd of the Harrisburg District Office was class valedictorian with a combined test score of 97.25 percent. Agent Brandon Martinez, a parole agent with field supervision of parolees in the Pittsburgh District, earned the marksmanship award. Agent Martinez was reassigned after the closure of SCI Pittsburgh. Board Member Mark Koch provided the keynote address and administered the Oath of Office.



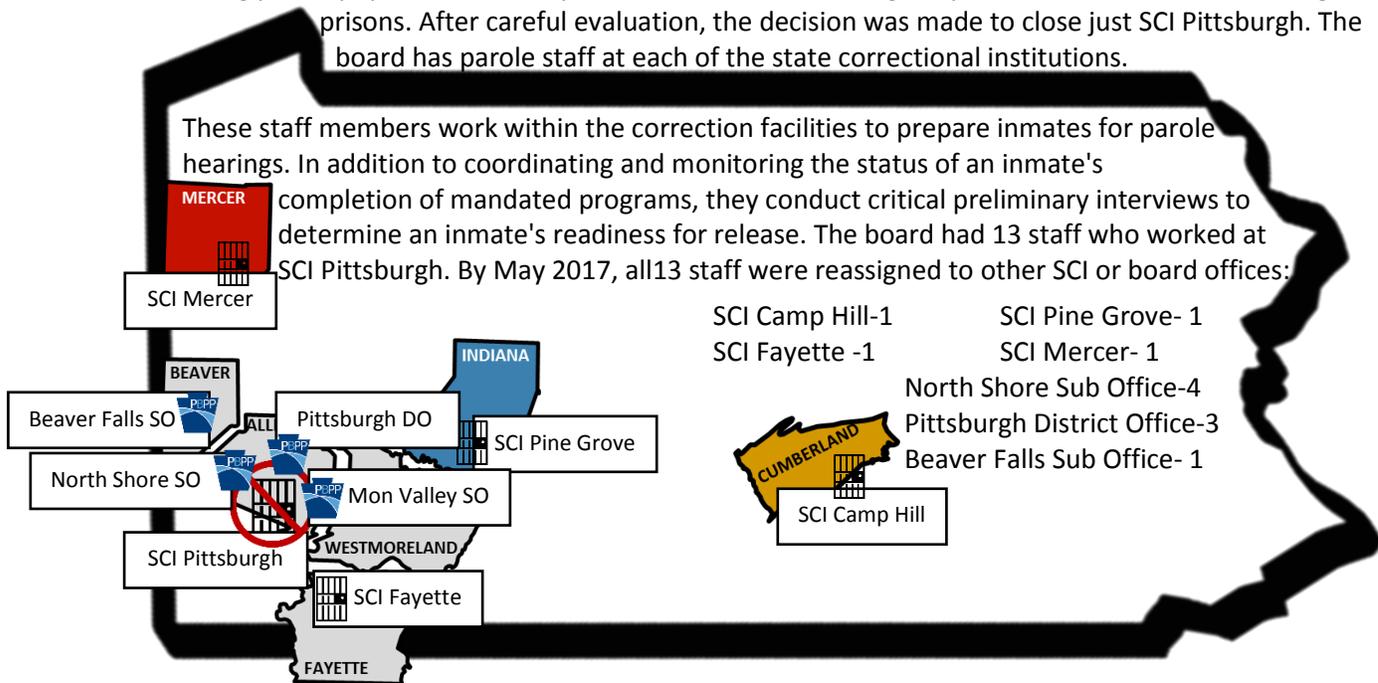
Clockwise from above: 1. Board Member Mark Koch, class valedictorian Steve Todd, Director of the Office of Reentry and Quality Assurance Luis Rosa and Director of the Office of Field Probation and Parole Supervision Christian Stephens. 2. Board Member Koch, class marksmanship award winner Agent Brandon Martinez, Director Rosa and Director Stephens. 3. BTA Class #129.

Moving Forward...

Staffing and Parole Caseloads

The board would not have been able to accomplish all that it has in FY16/17 without the input, effort and abilities from dedicated staff. In early January 2017, as part of a cost saving measure as well as a declining prison population, the Department of Corrections originally announced it would be closing two prisons. After careful evaluation, the decision was made to close just SCI Pittsburgh. The board has parole staff at each of the state correctional institutions.

These staff members work within the correction facilities to prepare inmates for parole hearings. In addition to coordinating and monitoring the status of an inmate's completion of mandated programs, they conduct critical preliminary interviews to determine an inmate's readiness for release. The board had 13 staff who worked at SCI Pittsburgh. By May 2017, all 13 staff were reassigned to other SCI or board offices:



With an eye on continuing to reduce the ratio between parole agent and the number of parolees each supervises, the board hired 113 new agents in FY16/17. As of June 30, the agent to parolee ratio was 1:54. Moving forward in the coming months, the board will be hiring additional agents to continue to reduce the ratio and look to hold a Basic Training Academy in January 2018. The goal is 1:40 for specialized parole caseloads such as those with mental health issues, sex offenders and newly specialized drug/alcohol agents to help combat the opioid epidemic. General supervision caseloads have a ratio goal of 1:50, which is the recognized national average.

Key Elements of the Parole Process Under Review

A multi-year collaboration between the Robina Institute on Criminal Law and Criminal Justice, the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing and the board began in July 2016. The agencies are conducting a joint research project focusing on the accuracy of the board's Parole Decisional Instrument ~ also known as the "361" ~ in predicting recidivism, and the fit between this tool and the Board's release decision-making process. The overall project is designed to address a broad set of issues targeting multiple dimensions associated with the decision to grant or deny parole. Potential outcomes of this project include a revised Parole Decisional Instrument and vote sheet for the board's decision makers and a new risk and needs assessment for state inmates that will replace what is currently being used by the board in its decision making process.

GPS (Global Positioning System) Initiative

Since 2006, the board has conducted various GPS pilot programs to test device functionality, user friendliness of software and reporting, with the goal of getting a GPS program started for Pennsylvania

parolees. In the early pilots, cost was a significant detractor, coupled with the realization of device tracking and connectivity across the state, especially in the northern tier and in less-populated areas (fewer cell towers combined with rugged terrain) and in towns and cities in situations where parolees lived in and among large buildings that were difficult to read locations.

GPS will be used by the board as an intermediate sanctioning option for parolees for technical parole violations. It is a cost-effective alternative to incarceration. The current per day monitoring cost per parolee is \$3.85. The yearly cost for a GPS unit on a parolee is \$1,405.25 compared to \$48,302 for a year of incarceration in a state correctional institution. GPS allows parolees to remain in the community, thus helping them to maintain ties to their support systems as well as staying employed and continuing treatment or attending community-based support groups.



The GPS system the board uses searches for signals from four or more satellites that are available. Approximately 90 percent of the GPS points the board collects are accurate to within 30 feet of location. With today's technology, the hardware is easier to attach and provides multiple security and operational benefits. The software provides improved tracking, advanced reporting and near real time notifications for parole staff.

EPICS: Key Link to Improved Supervision Methods

EPICS represents the next phase toward full implementation of evidence-based practices to facilitate positive behavioral change by focusing on a typical parolee supervision contact.

Evidence-based practices certainly are not new, but making supervision contacts evidence-based has been a fairly recent development. With the EPICs model, staff follow a structured approach to their interactions with their offenders. Specifically, each contact session includes four components:

- One:** Check-In, in which the parole agent determines if the parolee has any crises or acute needs, builds rapport and discusses compliance issues.
- Two:** Review, which focuses on the skills discussed in the prior session, the application of those skills, and troubleshooting continued problems in the use of those skills.
- Three:** Intervention, where the parole agent identifies continued areas of need, trends in problems the parolee's experiences, teaches relevant skills, and targets problematic thinking.
- Four:** Homework and Rehearsal is when the parolee is given an opportunity to practice the new skill with a homework assignment and is given instructions to follow before the next visit.

Between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017, PBPP EPICS (Effective Practices in Community Supervision) trainers and University of Cincinnati trainers trained nearly 200 board staff on the EPICS model. This brings the total number of board staff trained since January 2015 to nearly 400 personnel. As of June 30,

2017, approximately 435 field parole agents and supervisors still needed to be training. The board's EPICS trainers developed a plan to ensure that all remaining staff received the initial training by the end of the 2017 calendar year. Since September 2015, all board staff attending the Basic Training Academies have been EPICS-trained.

It is important to note that becoming "EPICS-trained" is a process and not a singular training event. The training consists of an initial three-day training followed by five evenly-spaced "booster" training sessions in which a particular EPICS skill is reviewed and assigned for practice. Staff practice the reviewed skill by submitting an audio recording of themselves using the skill with a parolee, and the audio is reviewed by a skilled EPICS coder. The coder provides written feedback to the staff person using a structured evaluation form in order to help them improve their proficiency.

Supervisors are also being trained to coach staff on the use of skills based on the feedback they receive. The entire initial training process takes approximately eight months. With the remaining 435 staff members receiving the initial training in a relatively brief period, the board's trainers will develop an extended roll-out plan for them to begin the booster training process starting in 2018.

The initial training followed by boosters and recording reviews is relatively new to correctional training models. It stemmed from a noted attenuation of skills from prior trainings delivered in a more traditional "one and done" approach.

Research confirms that skills trained are much more likely to be retained and improved by staff if staff is formally supported and reinforced on the use of the skills. The board has observed the proficiency at which staff use EPICS skills increase by 10 percentage points as they go through the booster and recording process. Additionally, external research shows that as proficiency in the use of EPICS skills improves, recidivism rates decrease. Beyond the initial booster regimen, staff will continue to need ongoing refresher training and feedback. Like any skill, staff need continued, directed practice to maintain and improve skills gained. To meet this end, the board's EPICS trainers are in the process of developing ongoing training.

The board hopes to reap the rewards of lower recidivism by investing in delivering EPICS training with fidelity in a manner that gives staff the feedback and support that they need in order to continue enhancing their proficiency in use of the model. As the board continues accumulating data on the use of EPICS, the agency will eventually be in a position to examine the model's impact on recidivism.

EPICS



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