

Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles



At a Glance

CARLETON J. GILES, Chairperson

Richard Sparaco, Executive Director

Established: 1883 (Pardons) and 1957 (Parole); merged in 2004

Statutory authority: Conn. Gen. Statutes Section(s) 54-124a, and 54-131k

Central office: 55 West Main Street, Suite 520, Waterbury, CT 06702

Number of employees: 70 F/T & 6 P/T (allocated) – 67 F/T and 4 P/T (Filled)

Recurring Operating Expenses: 6,239,505 (adjusted 2018)

Organizational structure: Pardons Division; Parole Hearings Division (including the Interstate Compact Unit); Planning, Research and Development Division; and Victim Services Unit (Victim Advocates mandated by statute and funded by the Office of Victim Services).

The Board of Pardons and Paroles is an autonomous agency which is attached to the Department of Correction for “Administrative Purposes Only” (see: Conn. General Statutes Section 4-38f.)

Mission

The mission of the Board of Pardons and Paroles is to facilitate the successful reintegration of suitable offenders into the community.

Vision

1. Reduced recidivism
2. More investment in crime prevention (redirect / refocus resources)
3. Reduced victimization
4. Less violent, safer communities
5. An increased capacity to measure all of the above (performance measures)

Values

We believe:

- That public safety is best achieved if criminal justice policy takes both punishment and rehabilitation into account;
- In victims' rights;
- That everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect;
- In the potential for positive change;
- In the utilization of evidence-based practices in our decision making;
- In maximizing resources; and
- That community safety is achieved through multi-agency collaboration

Statutory Responsibility

The Board of Pardons and Paroles plays a critical role in the State's criminal justice system. Under the Connecticut General Statutes, the Board has the independent decision-making authority to (1) grant or deny parole in accordance with 54-125, 54-125a, 54-125e and 54-125g, (2) establish conditions of parole or special parole supervision in accordance with section 54-126, (3) rescind or revoke parole or special parole in accordance with sections 54-127 and 54-128, (4) grant commutations of punishment or releases, conditioned, provisional, or absolute, in the case of any person convicted of any offense against the state.

In Fiscal Year 2017/2018, the statutory make-up of the Board included fifteen (15) members, ten (10) of whom, including the Chairperson, are designated to serve full-time. The Governor is responsible for appointing all members of the Board with the advice and consent of both houses of the General Assembly. The Governor also specifies the member being appointed as Chairperson as well as the full-time and part-time members. Appointments for Fiscal Year 2017/2018 consist of nine (9) Full-Time members, plus three (3) Part-Time members, who serve on both pardon and parole release panels; and the Chairperson. The members of the Board must be qualified by education, experience or training in the administration of community corrections, parole or pardons, criminal justice, criminology, the evaluation or supervision of offenders or the provision of mental health services to offenders. In Fiscal Year 2017/2018, the Board received approval to hire a Research Analyst position who will assist our Associate Research Analyst to better determine parole and pardon outcomes. Additionally, the Board received approval to hire a Paralegal Specialist who will assist our Legislative and Administrative Advisor in creating a new Legal Affairs Division that will assist the Board with all legislative and legal matters.

Public Service

In 2017/2018, the Board of Pardons and Paroles reviewed a total of 3,960 cases for parole consideration and 1846 applications for pardon consideration. Panels of the Board conducted 3112 hearings for the purposes of granting, rescinding or revoking parole and conducted 1,066 reviews resulting in the granting or denying of various types of pardons.

Pardons Division

In 2017/2018, the Pardons Division received a total of 1,846 applications which constituted a 13% decrease in applications received in the previous fiscal year. Of those received, approximately 895 were deemed eligible for review (a 26% decrease from the previous fiscal year) and 641 of these were granted either a Certificate of Employability or Full/Absolute pardon. The overall pardons grant rate remained at 60%.

The Pardons Division receives and reviews petitions for all forms of pardons, whether absolute or provisional, from both current and former offenders, as well as applications for sentence commutation (clemency.) The Pardons Division maintains a case file on all individuals who have applied for a pardon and acts as a liaison to the public for information inquiries and correspondence. Officers assigned to the Pardons Division review all applications and prepare and distribute dockets, as well as conduct investigations on each application, which include criminal records queries and interviews with witnesses and victims. Additionally, officers assigned to the Pardons Division complete courtesy investigations for the State of New York, visiting and interviewing applicants who now reside in Connecticut and are applying for relief in New York. A written investigation, proof of residency, employment and other relevant information are submitted to the requestor.

The pardons process in Connecticut can help remove barriers to employment for various applicants. The Board may grant a Certificate of Employability (provisional) or an Absolute Pardon to an ex-offender. A Certificate of Employability specifically addresses the removal of barriers to employment, but it does not erase a person's criminal record. An Absolute Pardon, if granted, completely erases an individual's criminal record. Pardons may be issued with various conditions before granted. Being granted a pardon may increase chances of employment for the individual since the stigma of having a criminal record is either removed in the case of an Absolute Pardon, or mitigated in the case of a Certificate of Employability. Securing a pardon also increases a person's ability to further their education, especially in cases where felony convictions are pardoned. In such cases, persons applying for student loans are able to indicate on the loan application document that they have never been convicted of a felony or crime in Connecticut.

Connecticut's pardons process is unique in that the granting authority lays with a Board, not the Governor. Persons who have completed their sentences (including parole and probation,) and have shown themselves to be rehabilitated, have the opportunity to be a part of the community without the stigma of a criminal record. Persons granted Absolute Pardons can lawfully say that they have never been convicted of, nor arrested for a crime in Connecticut.

Parole Hearings Division

In 2017/2018, The Board conducted parole release hearings for 2,405 offenders (a 5% decrease compared to the previous fiscal year.) The majority of these hearings were conducted via video conference while some were conducted in person at a correctional facility. The Board also conducted 707 revocation and rescission reviews and/or hearings (a 16% decrease from the previous fiscal year.) In accordance with Public Act 15-84 "An Act Concerning Lengthy Sentences for Crimes Committed by a Child or Youth and the Sentencing of a Child or Youth Convicted of Certain Felony Offenses," the Board conducted

25 hearings for eligible offenders with 13 cases approved for parole, four (4) cases denied parole and eight (8) cases continued.

The Board may grant an offender parole if it appears “that there is a reasonable probability that the inmate will live and remain at liberty without violating the law, and that such release is not incompatible with the welfare of society” (C.G.S. Secs. 54-125 and 54-125a.) Any offender serving a total effective sentence of more than two (2) years (with the exception of certain statutory and policy exclusions) is eligible for parole. Although there is no right to parole release, the Board generally conducts hearings for eligible offenders six (6) months prior to statutory eligibility. The Board provides general information to newly-sentenced, parole-eligible offenders about the laws and policies regarding parole release, calculation of time, general conditions of release, supervision practices, revocation and rescission policies and panel hearings. The Board also determines if an offender should serve 50% or 85% of their sentence before becoming eligible for parole. Parole Officers assigned to correctional facilities are available to answer questions from Department of Correction (DOC) personnel and offender regarding all aspects of the parole process.

Parole Officers initiate case summaries for all eligible offenders and gather all statutorily-mandated documentation. Parole Officers interview all applicants, conduct risk assessments, and complete comprehensive summaries that provide Board members with information regarding an applicant’s criminal, social and correctional history, as well as details of their current offense(s). Parole Officers present cases to a panel of the Board to determine suitability for parole release. If the offender is paroled, the summaries form the basis upon which Parole Officers from the Department of Correction’s Parole and Community Services Division (DOC-PCS) develop case management, treatment and supervision plans.

Parole Officers designated to act as Hearing Examiners conduct fact-finding hearings to determine whether a violation occurred or whether the nature of the new information is such that it would affect the suitability decision of a parole panel. During a bifurcated hearing process, the Parole Officer develops a recommendation based on their finding of the conduct or new information. The Hearing Examiner later presents a summary of their findings and recommendations to a panel of the Board. The panel makes the final decision regarding the revocation or rescission of parole and imposes a disposition as it deems appropriate.

Interstate Compact Unit

The Interstate Compact Unit works in conjunction with the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS) whose membership includes paroling authorities across the nation, to guide the transfer of offenders in a manner that promotes effective supervision strategies consistent with public safety, offender accountability and crime victims’ rights. It also provides for offenders to be paroled to other state, federal and immigration detainees. In 2017/2018, the unit processed a total of 294 transfer requests, accepted 151 cases from other jurisdictions and approved 214 cases for transfer to other jurisdictions.

Planning, Research and Development Division

In 2017/2018, the Planning, Research and Development Division was comprised of a Staff Psychologist and an Associate Research Analyst, all operating under the direction of a Director/Executive Director. The Division also consisted of four (4) interns assigned to the

Associate Research Analyst; one from Quinnipiac University, one from Western Connecticut State University and two from Naugatuck Valley Community College. This unit continues to assist with agency initiatives including the risk assessment system and structured decision-making process, as well as the development and implementation of an upgraded automated case management system for the agency and the state criminal justice network.

The Planning, Research and Development Division (PRD) was established in December 2011 to assist the agency with the mandates of Section 37 of Public Act 08-01 and Conn. Gen. Statutes section 54-124a(d)(4) that require the use of a collaborative offender risk-assessment strategy and risk-based decision-making. The PRD Division is also responsible for providing statistical information for the agency's internal purposes, such as employment of best practices and quality control. The Division collects, analyzes and assists in the external distribution of data, such as recidivism rates, to criminal justice stakeholders and the general public. The focus of the PRD Division is directed toward the maintenance of agency processes that consistently produce responsible pardons and evidence-based parole release decisions. In addition, measuring the effectiveness of the Board's policies and processes, the Division's mission is to assist in streamlining the agency's organizational structure to ensure maximum cost-effectiveness.

Victim Services

Victim Services at the Board consists of two Victim Advocates from the Office of Victim Services (OVS) who are available to assist crime victims who choose to participate in the decision-making processes of the Board. The positions were mandated by P.A. 08-01 and are funded by the Office of Victim Services.

Improvements/Achievements 2016-2017

Pardons Division

In 2017/2018, the Board continued to implement efficiencies identified through the LEAN process initiated in the previous fiscal years. All applications continue to be processed in "real time." The entire process from receipt of complete application to erasure of records is approximately six (6) months.

In November 2017, the existing pardon application was revised and two checklists were created for easier applicant completion. In February of 2017, the pardons informational brochure was updated for state-wide distribution by the Court Operations Division and Courts Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch as well as the Department of Correction.

In accordance with Public Act 15-2, applicants convicted of a crime can be granted a pardon with respect to such crime without a hearing, unless a victim of such crime requests such a hearing, if such applicant was convicted of a nonviolent crime. Expedited Pardon Reviews commenced in November of 2016. During Fiscal Year 2017/2018, the Board reviewed approximately 445 cases in accordance with the regulation.

Parole Hearings Division

In Fiscal Year 2017/2018, the Board implemented an electronic referral process for Problem Sexual Behavior Evaluations in coordination with the Center for Treatment of Problem Sexual Behavior. The Board implemented a procedure in conjunction with the Department of Correction to review female offenders released to Halfway Houses for parole hearings and in April 2018, began a pilot for reviewing non-violent female offenders for transfer parole.

The Board continued to work with Yale Law School regarding research and findings that were conducted by Samuel Jacobs Criminal Justice Clinic of the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization regarding the parole revocation process. A final report on the process was released by Yale in September 2017, and in November of 2017, the Board implemented a new procedure for revocation and rescission hearings. In April 2018, the Board also began a pilot program for providing legal counsel to parole violators based on competency evaluations.

Interstate Compact Unit

Combined efforts between Parole and Community Services (PCS) and the Interstate Compact Unit continues to be effective; this is a result of the streamlined process that was achieved collaboratively between agencies. The Unit oversees all the duties of all Compact action requests/responses, progress reports, case closure notices, early termination reports and any correspondences between states. In Fiscal Year 2017/2018, there was almost 100% compliance rate with the Compact.

Planning, Research and Development Division

The Planning, Research and Development Division continued to assist in facilitating all agency training for new and existing staff including Structured Decision-Making (SDM,) Statewide Collaborative Offender Risk Evaluation System (SCORES) workshops and handled all quality assurance for the agency. Members of the Division also represented the Board in the ongoing CJIS (Criminal Justice Information Sharing System) project and Department of Corrections Offender Management Information System (OMIS) replacement project. The Division is currently in collaboration with Ralph Serin from the Criminal Justice Decision Making Research Lab, Department of Psychology, Carleton University to conduct a follow-up study to assess the utility of the SDM framework in predicting paroling outcomes and continues working the University to evaluate the effectiveness of the SDM Framework.

The Board and The Parole and Community Services Division of the Department of Correction continued with joint involvement in a technical assistance grant under the Second Chance Recovery and Re-Investment Act by working with the Council of State Governments, University of New Haven and the National Parole Resource Center. Dr. Richard Stroker from the NPRC is working with both agencies to develop a revised graduated sanctions matrix and implementation plan to reduce technical parole violations and revocations.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The Governor appoints members of the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Board members are chosen to reflect the racial diversity of the State. Members are appointed with the advice and consent of either house of the General Assembly, and their terms are coterminous with the appointing Governor or until a successor is chosen, whichever is later. All members are appointed and serve on both parole release panels and pardon release panels.

The Chairperson, Carleton Giles of Middletown (appointed as Chairperson 05/13/14, appointed as full-time board member September 2013,) serves as the Board's chief executive and administrative head. In addition to the Chairperson, the Board of Pardons and Paroles is comprised of the following members:

Full-Time Parole Board Members: Ms. Rufaro Berry of Naugatuck (appointed 10/17/14); Patricia Camp of Bloomfield (appointed 10/17/14 as a Part-Time Board Member & as a Full-Time Board Member 02/19/16); Ms. Joy Chance of Bloomfield (appointed 10/17/14); Mr. Stephen Dargan of West Haven (appointed 06/21/17); Ms. Jennifer Zaccagnini of Oakville (appointed 05/27/2008 as Part-Time Board Member & Full-Time Board Member 05/13/14); Jeff Hoffman of Madison (appointed 02/19/16, deceased 10/04/17); Christopher Lyddy of New Haven (appointed 02/19/16); Carmen Sierra of New Britain (appointed 02/19/16); Nancy Turner of Groton (appointed 06/21/17.) *As of 06/30/18 there is (1) vacant Full-Time Board member position.*

Part-Time Parole Board Members: Mr. Terry Borjeson of Newington (appointed 10/07/14), Mr. David May of East Hampton (appointed 08/19/08, resigned 05/01/18); Ms. Pamela Richards of Ivoryton (appointed 05/27/08); and Ms. Kelly Smayda of Ellington (appointed 11/07/08.) *As of 06/30/18, there are two (2) vacant Part-Time Parole Board member positions.*