

Work Release Program: How it is used and for what purposes (R-64, 1998)

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The report examines the use of work release in the Correctional Service of Canada as part of the five-year review of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA).

Work release provides opportunities for offenders to work away from the institution, but generally requires a return to custody or a halfway house each day. Work releases are granted by the Correctional Service of Canada and may be used for projects that directly meet the needs of the offender or for projects that provide services to the community. Unlike other jurisdictions, where work release is an early form of parole or statutory release, within the Correctional Service of Canada it may be granted at any time in the sentence and the offender generally returns to full custody when the work period is completed.

Work release appears to be associated with an increased chance of being granted day parole. While 24% of the work release population who applied for a day parole *prior* to their first work release were granted a day parole, 73% of those who applied for day parole *after* their work release were granted day parole. Slightly more than half of the work release offenders were released on their statutory release date with the balance receiving full parole. After their full release (full parole or statutory release), 35% of offenders granted a work release were readmitted and one-fifth were readmitted for a new offence. The recidivism rates for work release cases were slightly higher than for offenders released on day parole.

Work releases provide an opportunity for offenders to be engaged in productive activities outside the prison. The results suggest that work release meets the general goals of the CCRA, including providing preparation to offenders for their eventual release. In addition, experience on a work release is associated with increased likelihood of a day parole release.

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