Why we did this study

A Research report completed in 2009 examined the characteristics of federal offenders who waived, postponed, and withdrew their application to appear before the National Parole Board for a parole review. A finding of interest from this research suggested that a relatively small group of offenders - less than ten percent of the total number of offenders who had delayed or cancelled their parole hearing - accounted for almost one-quarter of all delays and cancellations for 2007-2008. This follow-up study focused on offenders with multiple delays and cancellations and sought to determine whether there were characteristics specific to this group that might help better understand high volume users.

What we did

Information was obtained from the Offender Management System (OMS) on all offenders who had at least one waiver, postponement or withdrawal from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2009. Offenders with one to three delays or cancellations comprised the low volume user group while those with four or more comprised the high volume user group.

Brief individual case examples were also presented to help illustrate the timeline and circumstances under which some multiple delays and cancellations took place.

What we found

The outcomes of the profile of high volume users revealed that there were many similarities with offenders who had three or fewer delays or cancellations. However, some differences between the groups were noted.

First, offenders with higher levels of risk and need appear to be more likely to cancel a parole review than delay their hearing repeatedly.

Second, multiple consecutive postponements appear to be linked to factors that have not been resolved and that may impact the Board's decision to grant parole (e.g., difficulty finding placement in a community-based residential facility, incomplete programs, psychological or other reports not submitted to the Board and pending court decisions).

Third, high volume users were more likely to have two delays or cancellations recorded for one scheduled hearing. That is, offenders were eligible for both a day parole review and full parole review, therefore a delay or cancellation was recorded for each of these for the scheduled hearing date.

Finally, some regional and institutional variations in the numbers of high volume users were noted.

What it means

Given the range of factors contributing to delays and cancellations, there is no single response or strategy that will reduce the number of waivers, postponements, and withdrawals. By recognizing the number of delays and cancellations generated by high volume users, and by being cognizant of the double-counting of delays and cancellations for scheduled parole hearings, the factors impacting these trends can be better understood and, when possible minimized to reduce the frequency of multiple delays and cancellations.

For more information


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