This comprehensive study examines the relationship between temporary absence (TA) program participation and discretionary (day or full parole) release. As well, these offenders were followed up to explore postrelease outcome.

A research sample was assembled of 47,146 TAs taken by 7,368 offenders (male and female) from April 1, 1993 to March 31, 1994. From this sample, 13,112 medical TAs were excluded. A total of 3,389 offenders (almost one half) were subsequently released from a federal institution. Of these, 2,975 had been granted an escorted temporary absence (ETA) and 1,002 had been granted an unescorted temporary absence (UTA). All these offenders were followed up for a period of at least two years (until March 31, 1996).

The TA follow-up sample was subdivided into five separate groups (ETAs; UTAs; ETA and UTA; ETAs and no UTAs; UTAs and no ETAs) and a series of comparative analyses were conducted in relation to three outcome measures (Temporary Absence Failure, Discretionary Release, Returned to Federal Custody).

This study yielded important information on the TA program and the impact of participation on release and community adjustment. As an indicator of reduced offender risk, having had an ETA is insufficient to warrant the granting of discretionary release. On the other hand, having had UTAs does warrant further consideration.