

Day parole outcome

The safe and effective re-integration of offenders into the community is a goal of most correctional systems. The Correctional Service of Canada offers a wide variety of programs to help in this process, including substance abuse treatment, educational training, cognitive skills training and counselling.

These programs are important to the eventual re-integration of offenders, but gradual release programs are also crucial to the rehabilitative process, as they provide offenders with progressively less restricted community living.

Gradual release programs range from supervised temporary absences (which last only a few hours) to full parole and statutory release, which allow offenders to serve a portion of their sentence in the community under supervision. Offenders may also be placed on day parole before full parole or statutory release to permit them to work or learn in the community while living at a halfway house or correctional institution.⁽²⁾

Day parole allows the Service to carefully monitor offender behaviour and ensure low risk to the community while permitting offenders to adapt to community life in a manner that is conducive to successful full release.

The purpose of day parole is to prepare offenders for eventual full release on parole or statutory release.⁽³⁾ Success on day parole should, therefore, indicate potential for success on full release. The following article summarizes the results of a recent study that tests this proposition.

Day parole outcome

As part of a 1992 review of the Correctional Service of Canada day parole program, data were collected on several factors associated with day parole success and failure.⁽⁴⁾ Follow-up data were then collected for offenders from the study to determine whether day parole performance was associated with their outcome on full release.

The original study group was composed of one third of the offenders who completed day parole in 1990-1991. A subset of male offenders on "ordinary" day parole (the offender lives in a halfway house or correctional facility) was then selected for follow-up.⁽⁵⁾ This sample included about 681 offenders, but 126 were not released after day parole or had not completed their sentence by the end of the study period (March 31, 1994) and were, therefore, excluded from the post-release follow-up analyses.

Before 1992, offenders were eligible for day parole after serving one sixth of their sentence. Today, most offenders are eligible for day parole six months before they are eligible for full parole. About 6% of the sample received day parole on the earliest possible date, 40% received day parole before their full parole eligibility date, and 54% received day parole after they became eligible for full parole.

However, other data indicate that only 8% of day parole releases occurred between the end of one sixth of an offender's sentence and six months before eligibility for full parole,⁽⁶⁾ suggesting that comparatively few cases were affected by the recent change in eligibility date.

Roughly 80% of offenders released on day parole before their full parole eligibility date completed their day parole successfully (see Table 1).⁽⁷⁾ This number dropped to 70% for offenders released on day parole after their full parole eligibility date. Most offenders released after their full parole eligibility pose a greater risk to the community, which partially accounts for their higher failure rate.

Table 1

Success and Failure on Day Parole and Timing of Release			
Day parole completion	Time of Release		
	Day parole date	Between day parole and full parole dates	After full parole date
Successful	74.4%	79.8%	70.5%
Failure	25.6%	20.1%	29.5%
Number of offenders	39	263	376

Type of subsequent release

The preceding section used a general definition of day parole success that focused on whether offenders completed day parole without incident. Another measure of success is the type of release that follows day parole. An offender released on day parole during the period of eligibility for full parole should progress to full parole after successfully completing day parole. Similarly, an offender released on day parole close to his or her statutory release date would normally be transferred to statutory release on the appropriate date.

Table 2

Type of Release after Day Parole	
Type of Release	Number of offenders
Full parole	44.7%
Statutory release	19.2%
Full parole after subsequent day parole(s)	3.4%

Statutory release after subsequent day parole(s)	2.2%
Full parole after incarceration	7.0%
Statutory release after incarceration	23.5%

An examination of the type of release following day parole completion indicated that 45% of the offenders were released on full parole after completing day parole, while another 19% reached their statutory release date during or immediately after completing day parole (see Table 2). Approximately 6% of the offenders were given at least one additional day parole before release on either full parole or statutory release.

Roughly 30% had to remain in custody longer before full release (77% of these offenders were released on their statutory release date). Most offenders (82%) who returned to custody after day parole remained incarcerated for more than two months.

Release outcome

To determine the relationship between day parole performance and full release outcome, new admissions to custody were monitored until the end of the offenders' sentences. However, several cases were not included in the follow-up because the offenders were not released after day parole (2%) or did not complete their sentence (17%). The following results apply to the remaining 581 cases.

The average follow-up period was 21 months (with a median of 19 months), with a range between 4 and 46 months (with a median of 19 months). More than 75% of the offenders had follow-up periods of more than 12 months.

Overall, 77% of the offenders who were released on day parole were not re-admitted to a federal correctional institution before the end of their sentence. However, 84% of offenders who completed day parole successfully completed their sentence without re-admission, while only 56% of offenders who did not complete day parole successfully completed their sentence without re-admission (see Table 3).

An offender may be re-admitted to federal custody for a technical violation⁽⁸⁾ of conditional release (parole or statutory release) or for committing a new criminal offence. Of the 16% of offenders who successfully completed day parole but were eventually re-admitted to federal custody, about 8% were re-admitted for a technical violation and 10% were re-admitted for a new offence (an offender could be re-admitted for either a technical violation or a new offence, or both). Of the 44% of offenders who were unsuccessful on day parole and eventually re-admitted to custody, 20% had their release revoked for a technical reason and 30% committed a new offence (again, the groups are not mutually exclusive).

Table 3

Post-day Parole Failures by Day Parole Outcome and Type of Failure				
Day parole outcome	Re-admission	Technical violations	New offence	New violent offence
Successful	15.5%	8.5%	10.0%	3.4%
Unsuccessful	44.2%	20.3%	30.0%	8.0%
All day parole cases	22.7%	11.5%	15.0%	4.5%
The failure groups are not mutually exclusive. An offender can be represented in more than one group				

These rates indicate that offenders who are unsuccessful on day parole are twice as likely to fail on full release because of a technical violation and three times more likely to commit a new offence than offenders who complete day parole successfully.

The results also indicate that only 3% of the offenders who completed day parole successfully committed a violent offence before the end of their sentence, while approximately 8% of offenders who failed on day parole committed a violent offence later in their sentence.

Motivation

Motivation can be an important mediating factor in dealing with problems associated with a criminal past. Therefore, the offenders were assessed as to their motivation for program participation during day parole. This assessment was then analyzed to determine how much motivation contributed to the successful outcome of both day parole and the completion of the sentence.

Results indicate that motivation at the time of release on day parole was highly related to day parole success (see Table 4). Only 16% of offenders rated as motivated failed, compared with 48% of those classified as unmotivated. This relationship is not as strong for post-day parole outcome, but is still evident -- 21% of those classified as motivated were re-admitted to custody after full release, compared with 30% of offenders who were unmotivated.

Table 4

Failures Compared with Motivation and Day Parole Outcome		
Outcome	Motivated	Not Motivated
Day parole failure	16.3%	48.0%
Post-day parole failure	20.6%	30.1%
* = Any re-admission		

Discussion

The results suggest that day parole outcome (whether day parole was completed successfully or not) is associated with an offender's post-day parole outcome. While other factors certainly operate, this finding suggests that day parole is an effective way to prepare offenders for eventual release into the community. Failure on day parole may be used as an indicator of the potential for failure on future conditional releases. An offender who cannot meet the conditions of a day parole is likely to have more serious problems meeting the requirements of daily life without the support of the community residence in which offenders on day parole reside.

Selection factors ensure that lower-risk offenders are released on day parole, but the data also indicate that day parole is not just for the lowest-risk offenders. It provides an opportunity to test offenders' ability to live effectively outside prison with a minimal level of supervision. During the day parole period, problematic behaviour patterns can be addressed and, if they cannot be dealt with effectively, offenders can be easily returned to an institution to ensure societal safety.

Day parole provides a safe way to determine whether an offender's behaviour has been affected by various types of programming. The confinement of an institution reduces potential external influences, and may, therefore, provide fewer distracting factors than the community. The skills and behaviour patterns learned in cognitive skills and substance abuse programs are most effectively tested by the offender in an environment that is supportive, but that approximates the "real world" as closely as possible. Day parole provides opportunities to use the skills learned in correctional programming, which helps reduce risk to the community.

(1) 340 Laurier Avenue West, Second Floor, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9. Please note that Moira Law and Chris Beal coded the follow-up data used in this study.

(2) The length of day parole varies, but most day paroles last about six months.

(3) *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, R.S.C., C-20, 1992.

(4) B. A. Grant, L. Motiuk, L. Brunet, P. Courturier and L. Lefebvre, *Day Parole Program Review* (Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada, 1996).

(5) Results for female offenders are included in Grant, Motiuk, Brunet, Courturier and Lefebvre, *Day Parole Program Review*.

(6) Grant, Motiuk, Brunet, Courturier and Lefebvre, *Day Parole Program Review*.

(7) Success is defined as completion of the day parole period without a new offence or revocation of release for violation of a day parole condition.

(8) A technical violation is a violation of the conditions of release. These conditions may include abstaining from alcohol, not associating with known criminals, and participation in treatment programs.