

Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles



At a Glance

ERIKA TINDILL Esq., Chair

John DeFeo, Executive Director

Established - October 1, 2004

Statutory authority – Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 54-124a, 54-131k

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

Number of employees - 85

Organizational structure: Chairperson, Executive Director and Parole Managers Who Oversee the Pardons Unit, Parole Orientation and Hearings Unit, Parole Revocation and Rescission Unit, and Interstate Compact Unit. The Board of Pardons and Paroles is an autonomous agency, which is connected to the Department of Correction for administrative purposes only (Conn. Gen. 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 utilization of evidence-based practices in our decision-making;
- In maximizing resources; and
- That community safety is achieved through multi-agency collaboration

Statutory Responsibility

Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 54-124a states, "There shall be a Board of Pardons and Paroles within the Department of Correction, for administrative purposes only."

The Board of Pardons and Paroles has the independent decision-making authority to (1) grant or deny parole, (2) establish conditions of parole or special parole supervision, (3) rescind or revoke parole or special parole, and (4) grant commutations of punishment or releases, conditioned or absolute, in the case of any person convicted of any offense against the state and commutations from the penalty of death. The Members of the Board are appointed exclusively to either pardon panels or parole release panels. The Chairperson may serve on both pardons panels and parole release panels.

The Board shall consist of twenty members, six of whom, including the Chairperson, shall be full-time. The Governor shall appoint all members of the board with the advice and consent of both houses of the General Assembly. The five full-time members plus seven part-time members shall serve exclusively on parole release panels, seven of the part-time members shall serve exclusively on pardons panels and the Chairperson may serve on both parole release and pardons panels. The Governor shall specify the member being appointed as Chairperson, the full-time and part-time members being appointed to serve on parole release panels and the members being appointed to serve on pardons panels. The members of the Board shall 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. No panel of the Board of Pardons and Paroles shall hold a hearing to determine the suitability for parole release of any person unless the Chairperson of the Board has made reasonable efforts to determine the existence of and obtain all information deemed pertinent to the panel's decision and has certified that all such pertinent information determined to exist has been obtained or is unavailable. Administrative review of parole cases was eliminated.

Public Service

In 2010/2011, the Board of Pardons and Paroles conducted approximately 6,000 case reviews for the purposes of granting a pardon, parole, or revocation or rescission of parole.

Victim Services Unit

- Victim Advocates from the Office of Victim Services are available to assist crime victims who choose to participate in the decision-making processes of the Board.

Pardons Unit

- The Pardons Unit receives and reviews petitions for all forms of clemency, whether absolute or conditional, from both current and former offenders, as well as applications for sentence commutation. The Pardons Unit maintains a case file on all individuals who have applied for a pardon and acts as a liaison with the public for information inquiries and correspondence. Officers assigned to the Pardons Unit review all applications and prepare and distribute dockets as well as conduct investigations on each application, which include criminal record queries and interviews with witnesses and victims.
- The pardons process in Connecticut helps to remove barriers to employment for various applicants who are successful in being granted a pardon by the Pardons Board. The Board may grant a provisional pardon or a full pardon to an ex-offender. A provisional pardon specifically addresses the removal of barriers to employment but does not erase a person's record. A full pardon, if granted, completely erases a person's criminal record. All types of pardons may be issued with various conditions attached as specified by the Pardons Board. Being granted a pardon may increase chances for employment for the individual since the stigma of having a criminal record is removed, in the case of a full pardon, and mitigated in the case of a provisional pardon.
- Being granted 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, who are granted pardons for felony convictions are able to respond on the loan application document that they have never been convicted of a felony or crime in Connecticut.
- Connecticut's pardons process is exceptional in the nation. Persons granted full pardons can lawfully say that they have never been convicted in Connecticut for a crime nor arrested for any conviction that has been pardoned. Persons who have completed their sentences (including parole and probation) and have shown themselves to be rehabilitated can become whole again in a true spirit of forgiveness for the crimes committed in the State of Connecticut.

Parole Orientation and Hearings Unit:

- The Board may release an inmate on 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." Conn. Gen. Statutes Sacs. 54-125 and 54-125a. Any offender serving a total effective sentence of more than two years (with the exception of certain statutory and policy exclusions) is eligible for parole. Although there is no right to a parole, the Board must grant a review when the inmate has served 75 % of their period of incarceration if they are designated as a non-violent offender. The Board also must grant a review when an inmate has served 85% of

their period of incarceration if they are designated as a violent offender.

- The Parole Orientation Unit of the Board of Pardons & Paroles provides general information to newly sentenced parole eligible offenders regarding the laws and policies regarding parole release, calculation of time-served standards, general conditions of release, supervision practices, revocation and rescission policies, and panel hearings. Parole officers in the Orientation Unit work with the Department of Correction Assessment staff to develop an offender accountability plan. Once offenders are scheduled for parole hearings, parole officers assigned to the correctional facility are available to answer questions from Department of Correction personnel and inmates regarding all aspects of the parole process.
- The Parole Officers in the correctional facilities interview all applicants 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 then present cases to a panel of the Board to determine suitability for parole release. If the offender is paroled, the summaries form the basis on which parole officers from the Department of Correction, Division of Parole and Community Services develop case management, treatment and supervision plans.
- The Parole Orientation Unit reviewed 2,526 parole eligible offenders 2010 /2011. The Orientation Unit is designed for statewide intake and assessment of newly sentenced parole eligible offenders.
- The parole officers assigned to this unit initiate parole summaries for all eligible offenders, identify violent offenders for 85% designation, and gather all statutorily-mandated documentation. During fiscal year 2010/2011, the unit reviewed approximately 950 cases that were presented to the Board for designation as violent offenders.
- Parole hearings were conducted for 3,281 offenders during 2010/2011. These hearings were conducted by panels of the Board via video conference and live at various correctional facilities.
- The certification process adopted in 2008 remains in effect and has dramatically increased the amount of information available to Board Members at Parole Hearings.

Parole Revocation and Rescission Unit:

- Inmates who have been granted parole and who violate their parole conditions face revocation of their parole. Rescission of parole can be based on conduct or new adverse information obtained after the inmate is granted parole and prior to their release to the community. All such inmates are afforded due process.
- A fact-finding hearing is conducted by a Board parole officer 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. The parole officer develops a

recommendation based on their finding of the conduct or new information and presents their findings and recommendation(s) to a panel of at least two Parole Board members. The panel makes a final decision regarding revocation or rescission of parole and an appropriate disposition.

- In 2010/2011, the Parole Board issued a total of 1,163 warrants for re-imprisonment for which parole officers subsequently conducted hearings and reviews. Of these, 435 were for technical violations, 598 were for criminal parole violations, and 130 were for parolees who absconded from supervision.

Interstate Compact Unit:

- The Interstate Compact Unit works in conjunction with the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision, 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 victims' rights. It also provides for inmates to be paroled to other state, federal and immigration detainers.

Improvements/Achievements 2010-11

Pardons Unit:

- Approximately 925 pardons applications were received by the Board of Pardons and Paroles in 2010. The Board heard 800 cases, 400 of which were granted either a provisional or full pardon.
- There was a significant increase in the number of pardons applications in 2010. Pardons Unit staff reduced the time from application to review from four months to three. The Board will continue to streamline and improve the application process.
- The implementation of the New Pardons Application Tracking System has allowed Pardons Unit staff to more efficiently process and store information in ways previously not available. Changes are being made to the database as new ideas and methods are developed, but we are currently able to process applications more efficiently, while including and managing much larger amounts of information, as it relates to petitioners' applications.
- An amendment to the Connecticut General Statutes in 2010 increased the number of Board of Pardons and Paroles members from eighteen to twenty, specifically adding two new members to serve exclusively on pardons panels.

Interstate Unit

- Parole consideration of inmates with ICE (deportation) detainees was reduced from 75% to 50%. This resulted in an increase in cases paroled to these detainees from 15 to 30 per month, and in an increase in the number of deportations.

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 also coterminous with the appointing Governor.

The Chair, Erika Tindill, of New Haven, serves as the Board's chief administrative officer. In addition to the Chairperson, the Board of Pardons and Paroles is currently comprised of the following members:

Full-Time Parole Panel Members: Mr. Eric Crawford of Hartford, Mr. Robert Murphy of Madison, Mr. John O'Connor of West Haven, Mr. David McCluskey of West Hartford, Ms. Foye Smith of Hartford.

Part-Time Parole Panel Members: Mr. Remi Acosta of Waterbury, Mr. David May of East Hampton, Ms. Pamela Richards of Ivoryton, Ms. Kelly Smayda of Ellington, Ms. Julia Wasserman of Sandy Hook, Ms. Jennifer Zaccagnini of Watertown, and one vacant position.

Pardons Panel Members (all are part-time): Joseph Elder of Hartford, Joseph Milardo of Middletown, Robert Smith of Southington, Russell Palmer of Berlin, Victoria Wills of West Hartford, Kevin long of Glastonbury and Nicholas Sabetta of Burlington.