

PAROLE SUPERVISION

Importance of Supervision

This Report has emphasized the concept of parole as a fair and rational measure for public protection. Whether it is such a measure will be determined by the effectiveness of the supervision provided. We consider supervision as the most important function of a parole system. It is the aspect of parole through which the resources are mobilized to control the offender and to assist him in becoming a law-abiding member of the community.

Supervision permits parole authorities to determine how each paroled inmate is meeting their expectations and to assist him in overcoming problems. Should the parolee fail to respond to expectations, the parole supervisor can intervene either by assisting, if the difficulties are not of the parolee's own making, or by having him arrested if his behaviour has led to more encounters with the law.

Supervision is also the process whereby the parolee continues the correctional plan which he undertook while in detention. He can make use of community resources to reestablish himself according to this plan. His parole supervisor maintains contact with him to ensure that he carries out his social and legal obligations.

The parole supervisor has twin roles in this process: he is the authority who controls and the therapist who treats and counsels. How he blends these roles depends on his knowledge and experience and the needs of his client. We are not suggesting that one role is more important than the other – both are necessary for the smooth functioning of the system and for public protection. The more frequent the direct contact between the supervisor and the parolee, the more likely the supervisor will be aware of the problems and needs of his client and take appropriate action. If he is deskbound and paper oriented, he will lose this contact and the result is less public protection and less assistance to the parolee.

Direct contact can be defined in various ways, e.g., contact by phone, office interviews, interviews at home, at work, etc. It can also take place prior to release and after reincarceration when a parole has been suspended or revoked. In his testimony before the Committee, Dr. Ciale said that research in other jurisdictions suggests that the amount of time a supervisor spends with his parolees has a significant impact on the outcome of their paroles. The more time spent with them the less serious are their difficulties on parole, they commit fewer offences while on parole and they are able to remain longer under parole supervision in the community.¹ This confirms our view that the parole system should be designed to maximize the number and length of contacts between supervisor and parolee.

A study of attitudes of prisoners toward parole showed that seventy-five per cent of the prisoner sample considered that supervision helps a parolee go "straight". The most positive aspects were judged to be guidance, support and material aid.² These constitute the core of direct contact supervision. Witnesses before our Committee were substantially of the same view.³