

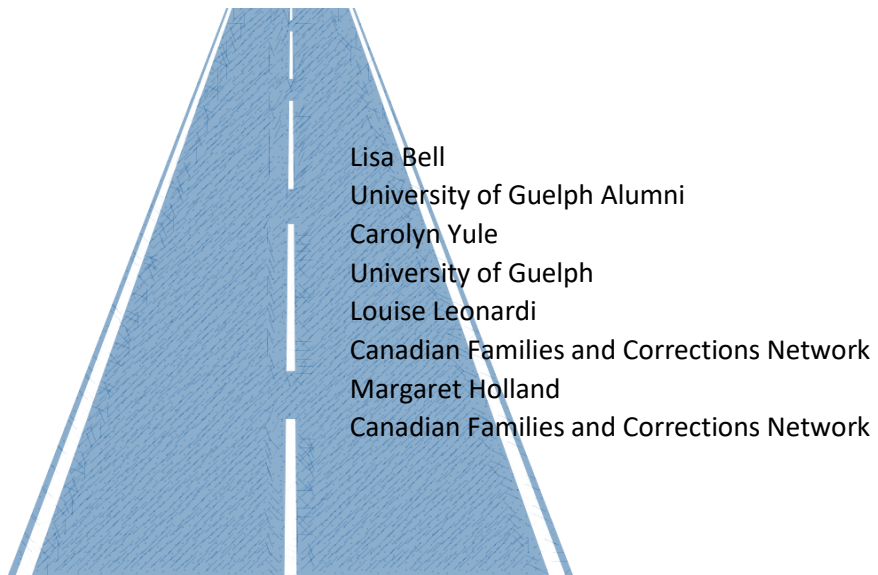
**Parole – The Next Step of the Journey**  
**Information for family, friends, support workers, and those in prison**

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Canadian Families and Corrections Network is grateful to each of you for your assistance in helping us achieve our goals of explaining the parole system, encouraging those inside our prisons to apply for parole as a way to increase public safety, and supporting families and community members as part of the parole process.



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## Introduction

Families and friends frequently ask Canadian Families and Corrections Network through our toll-free line, our Visiting Resource Centres, or our Family Support Groups, about how they can help a person who is serving time in prison with the parole process. This booklet is a direct result of those questions. We hear you.

Applying for parole can be a big decision. The application process and the many steps involved can feel overwhelming, as some say it is the 'least understood' part of the justice system. While we have outlined information and offered ideas to think about when considering applying for parole, it is important to understand that each person's situation is unique, and the authorities involved make decisions based on the individual case.

Important information to know is that the **Parole Board of Canada (PBC)** is an independent body that makes parole decisions. There is a full definition below. The Parole Board of Canada is not the same as the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). CSC is the department of the government which is responsible for the custody of those given a sentence of two years or more in Canada. Their Parole Officers also supervise those released from prison in the community and assist with reintegration.

In this booklet, the terms **"inside person"** and **"those on the inside"** are used to describe individuals who are in prison or who have served time in prison (usually referred to as offenders or inmates in the law). **"Potential parolee"** and **"parolee"** refer to those who are on the parole journey. While some use **"prison"** to discuss the federal system and **"jail"** to talk about provincial corrections, both words are used in this booklet interchangeably to mean "held in a correctional facility".

## Explaining a few things

A **Case Management Team (CMT)** is a group of people who oversee a person in prison and look after their case. The team may generally include Parole Officers, Health Care staff, Chaplains, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, *etc.*

A **Certificate of Release (Parole Certificate)** is an official document from the Correctional Service of Canada that shows that a person has been released from prison to the community. It outlines all the conditions and rules, should be signed by the person being released, and must be kept with them at all times.

A **Community Assessment (CA) or Community Strategy** is a report that provides information about the potential support, and the quality of the support in the community, for the inside person. This helps to address their risk of re-offending or of harming someone upon their release. This information is gathered from the community, analyzed, and then used in a person's short or long-term release plan. (For more, see the '*How can I help an inside person prepare for parole?*' section below.)

**Conditional Release** is a release from prison that has rules, or conditions, attached. There are several types (Full Parole, Day Parole, Temporary Releases, and Statutory Release). See the '*What is parole?*' section below.

A **Correctional Plan** is a document that outlines the approach the Correctional Service of Canada will take to manage an inside person's risk of re-offending. It contains information about programming, education, employment, and supervision information that connects the person's crime, criminal history, and their risk of re-offending. Each plan is created for their individual needs when a person enters prison.

The **Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)** is the federal government agency responsible, under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), for managing court sentences of two years or more. CSC is responsible for Canada's prisons of various security levels and supervising people under conditional release in the community.

A **Dangerous Offender** is the term given to someone who is considered a threat to the life, safety, or physical or mental well-being of the public. They may be given an indeterminate sentence (see below).

A **Halfway House** is a place where people who have been in jail can live in a neighbourhood again. It is halfway between being in jail and in the community, as you can attend a job, school, or appointments during the day but have to sleep in the halfway house at night. Halfway houses have house rules and are a chance to learn the skills necessary for reintegration. They are run by the Correctional Service of Canada or a volunteer organization and are also called Community-based Residential Facilities (CBRFs).

A **Long Term Supervision Order (LTSO)** is an option available at sentencing to extend the length of time that the Correctional Service of Canada will supervise and support someone in the community. It begins at the Warrant Expiry Date (see below), may include a residency (housing) condition, and cannot be more than 10 years.

**Parole (Day Parole and Full Parole)** are two types of Conditional Release for which the Parole Board is responsible. They are controlled, gradual, and supported reintegration steps from a prison to the community before the end of a criminal sentence. Parole does not shorten a person's sentence.

➤ **Postponing Parole** – The inside person asks in writing to delay a Parole review.

MYTH: "I want parole because it means my sentence will be shorter."

FACT: Parole does not shorten the sentence but means part of it can be completed in the community.

- **Waiving Parole** – The inside person gives up their legal right to a specific Full Parole review in writing. The timing of being offered another opportunity depends on the specific case.
- **Withdrawing Parole** – In writing, a person removes their application for a review from the Parole Board.
- **Parole Adjournment:** A decision is made by the Parole Board to delay a review, either before the scheduled date, or after it has begun.
- **Granting Parole** – Day Parole or Full Parole is given to an individual.
- **Denying Parole** – Day Parole or Full Parole is not granted for an individual.
- **Suspending Parole** – A decision is made to suspend (stop) parole because the person is no longer able to be managed in the community. They may have re-offended or broken one of their conditions ('breached' their parole). An investigation and a post-suspension interview are held with the individual.
- **Revoking Parole** – Parole is taken away by the Parole Board and the person is returned to prison, perhaps because they are not following their conditions or have re-offended. This can happen even if there is no suspension of parole first. The inside person will remain in prison until their next release date, if applicable. Their Statutory Release date is recalculated.

The **Parole Board of Canada (PBC)** is an independent agency made up of Board members who are trained Canadian men and women from all different backgrounds. They are given power through the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), to make decisions for conditional releases including parole. (They also make Record Suspension decisions and Clemency recommendations.) The Parole Board is in charge of release decisions for men and women in federal prisons (serving 2 years or more). They also make decisions for those in most provincial and territorial prisons (serving less than 2 years). The Parole Board of Canada is not responsible for provincial jails in Quebec and Ontario, as they have their own Parole Boards.

**Regional Communications Officers (RCOs)** are the men and women who work for the Parole Board of Canada, under Victim Services, to provide information and services to registered victims of crime.

**Parole Officers** work for the Correctional Service of Canada.

- An **Institutional Parole Officer (IPO)** is responsible for handling an inside person's case until they are released.
- A **Community Parole Officer (CPO)** is someone who supervises the parolee in the community. The community parole officer is usually assigned shortly before the inside person's release.

**Probation** is a sentence, or part of a sentence, a judge can give someone in court. (*e.g. 2 years probation, 1 year of jail time followed by 6 months probation, etc.*). The person lives in the community, is supervised (by a Probation Officer) and must follow conditions. **Probation is not the same as parole.** Parole is a conditional release and probation has to do with sentencing.

**Sentencing** - When a person is convicted of acting in a harmful way in our community and breaks the law, they receive an act of judgement (*e.g. fine, probation, or sent to jail*). The purpose of sentencing is to make a person accountable for their crime, deter others from creating harm, and to assist the convicted person with rehabilitation.

- A **Determinate** sentence has a fixed timeframe, set by the court.
- An **Indeterminate** sentence has no fixed timeframe and no end date. This sentence is for those with a Life sentence or Dangerous Offenders. The Parole Board of Canada reviews the case after seven years and every two years after that. They are under correctional supervision for the entire timeframe.

- **Life** sentences are given to those who commit either first or second degree murder, or other very serious crimes. They may be eligible for parole although some sentences are ‘life without parole’. Whether eligible for parole or not, those with a Life sentence will be under the supervision of the Correctional Service of Canada for their entire life.

**Statutory Release** is a release allowing the inside person to serve the final third of their sentence in the community. (For a full explanation, see the ‘*Types of Conditional Release/Parole*’ section below.)

A **Victim Statement** is a document written by a registered victim. It outlines the ongoing impact of the harm they are experiencing that was caused by the crime, and any concerns that they have for their safety. These statements are used in court for sentencing and are called a ‘Victim Impact Statement’ then. They can be presented to the Parole Board of Canada (and can be updated for any Parole Hearing) by audio, video, or in person to assist with decision-making.

A person’s **Warrant Expiry Date (WED)** is the last day a person can be held in custody or under supervision. The warrant for an inside person’s sentence, set by the court, is complete and they are no longer the responsibility of the Correctional Service of Canada. Exceptions are those serving an Indeterminate Sentence (they do not have a WED as they are under supervision for their entire life) and those with a Long-term Supervision Order.

## What is parole?

While there is a lot of information about parole in this document, we start with a straightforward definition. Parole is a release from prison where an inside person is allowed to serve part of their sentence in the community. It does not mean their sentence is shortened. Research shows that the best way to protect society is to release someone from prison into the community through gradual, supportive, supervised steps, called Conditional Releases. Day and Full Parole are two of these steps.

The long-term goal of a person in the correctional system is to get out of prison by showing that they can be trusted and that their risk of re-offending is manageable when they leave prison. They need to prove they can live in the community, keep people safe, and be a good citizen. This is done through various steps (Conditional Releases) such as Temporary Absences, Day Parole, and Full Parole. These are very serious ‘steps of trust’ – chances for an individual to prove they can handle each step successfully and be accountable for their actions before they are allowed to move to the next step.

Parole does not mean total freedom from prison without supervision or responsibility. It means that those who are granted parole are supervised by a Community Parole Officer and must follow the specific conditions, or rules, of their release. These conditions are decided by members of the Parole Board of Canada. If these conditions are not met, the Parole Board has the power to return a person to prison and revoke the release (cancel their parole). All this information is outlined in detail in this booklet.

### How do I know if my person is in the federal or provincial/territorial system?

As explained in the definition above, the Parole Board of Canada makes decisions for those who are serving time for a sentence of two years or more in a federal prison in Canada. The Board makes decisions for those serving time in any provincial or territorial jail other than Ontario or Quebec as these two provinces have their own Parole Boards.

If you are unsure if an inside person is in a federal or provincial/territorial prison, you may contact Correctional Service Canada's (CSC) national headquarters through regular mail or by telephone. You must provide CSC with the inside person's full name and date of birth. Although CSC can confirm whether they are under federal custody, the specific location of the person is confidential (under Canada's Privacy Act).

**To contact CSC to see if a person is in a federal prison write or call:**

**Address:** Correctional Service Canada  
National Headquarters  
340 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9

**Phone:** (613) 992-5891

**Fax:** (613) 943-1630

### Provincial/Territorial Parole

While most of this document is written for parole from a federal prison, as mentioned, parole can be from a provincial/territorial jail as well. For provincial/territorial cases, usually one Parole Board of Canada member makes the decision after a review of the information in their file and there is no face-to-face hearing. A Community Parole Officer will prepare the case within 3 months of the parole application. The Parole Board is not required to review a case with a sentence of less than 6 months or if a person applies so late that there is not enough time for a decision.

### Types of Conditional Release/Parole

There are several types of conditional release, some decided by the Parole Board of Canada and some by Correctional Service of Canada. Day Parole and Full Parole are two of these types.

#### Temporary Absences (TA)

- These absences allow an inside person to go into the community for a short period of time.
- Reasons for a TA could be medical (*e.g. surgery*), administrative (*e.g. court*), personal growth (*e.g. job or school*), community service (*e.g. volunteering*), family contact (*e.g. visiting, parenting course*), or compassion (*e.g. death of a family member*).
- TAs are usually the first type of release granted to those on the inside.
- TA decisions for those serving a sentence of less than 2 years are made by the province or territory.
- TAs are often viewed as important steps towards being granted Day and Full Parole.
- These types of release from prison can be either Escorted or Unescorted.

#### Escorted Temporary Absence (ETA)

- The inside person is allowed to leave the prison with a trained escort.
- While most individuals are eligible to apply for ETA at any time, some may only be allowed for medical reasons.
- Depending on the type of sentence, the Parole Board or a Correctional Service of Canada Warden makes the ETA decision.

#### Unescorted Temporary Absence (UTA)

- The inside person is allowed to leave the prison on their own.
- Those serving sentences between 2 and 3 years may apply after serving 6 months of their sentence.
- Those serving a sentence of 3 years or more may apply after serving 1/6 (one sixth) of their sentence.
- Those serving Life sentences may apply 3 years before their Full Parole eligibility date.
- Those under maximum security are not eligible for UTAs.
- The Parole Board or a Correctional Service of Canada Warden makes the UTA decision.

## Statutory Release (SR)

- After serving 2/3 (two thirds) of their sentence, most of those inside who have not been granted parole or have not applied for parole are automatically released into the community to serve their remaining time.
- There are release conditions a person must follow in the community.
- SR is supervised and may include a condition of having to live in a halfway house.
- **This release is by law**, not a decision made by the Parole Board of Canada.
- Those serving Life or Indeterminate sentences are not eligible for SR.
- SR may be denied in certain circumstances (through a Detention Order) and the person kept in prison (*e.g. if the person is likely to commit an offence causing death or serious harm, to commit a sexual offence involving a child, or to commit a serious drug offence, before the end of their sentence*).

## Accelerated Parole Review (APR)

- After serving either 1/6 (one sixth) or 6 months of their sentence (whichever is greater) a person in prison is eligible for an earlier Day Parole date (which will lead to an earlier Full Parole date).
- APR only applies to those who do not have a sentence for violence and are sentenced to a federal prison for the first time.
- This only applies to those who were sentenced to jail in court before March 28, 2011.
- It also includes those in the Pacific Region of Canada who committed an offence before March 28, 2011 and were sentenced on or after that date.

## Day Parole (DP)

- An inside person is released on Day Parole to give them a chance to participate in community-based activities during the day and to prepare them for Full Parole.
- They must return each night to a halfway house or a (Correctional Service of Canada supported) private house placement.
- They have rules and must report regularly to a Community Parole Officer.
- They must tell their Community Parole Officer about changes in employment or personal situations (*e.g. relationships, moving to a new place, etc.*).

## Full Parole (FP)

- An inside person serves what is left of their sentence in the community.
- They can live and sleep at night in a private home.
- This step normally follows Day Parole.
- They have rules and must report regularly to a Community Parole Officer (*e.g. stay away from alcohol, no contact with the victim, etc.*).
- They must tell their Community Parole Officer about changes in employment or personal situations (*e.g. relationships, moving to a new place, etc.*).

## What is parole eligibility?

Eligibility is the earliest date an inside person can **receive** some kind of release (although they can apply in advance of their dates). There is **no guarantee** that when they apply for conditional release, it will be granted.

This section is for Day and Full Parole; for other types of Conditional Release, see the eligibility information in the chart in the last section.

MYTH: "It's better to forget parole and just wait for the Statutory Release date."

FACT: Research shows that people who are released in gradual steps under supervision are less likely to re-offend. They will also have access to community supports and programming to help them.



**When can an inside person apply for parole?**

An inside person can only apply for parole *after* they have been sentenced by the courts. Those who are serving time in prison but have not yet been given a sentence (remand) are *not* eligible for parole. Once a person is sentenced, they receive an information sheet that includes the dates they are eligible for Day and Full Parole as well as their Statutory Release date. If they do not receive the sheet, the inside person should ask their Institutional Parole Officer.

**To determine a typical parole eligibility date**, notice how the sentence is divided into 3 sections. At 1/3 (one third) of their sentence they are eligible for Full Parole. (Day Parole can be calculated from this.) Statutory release is at 2/3 (two thirds) of the sentence and Warrant Expiry is the last day of the sentence.

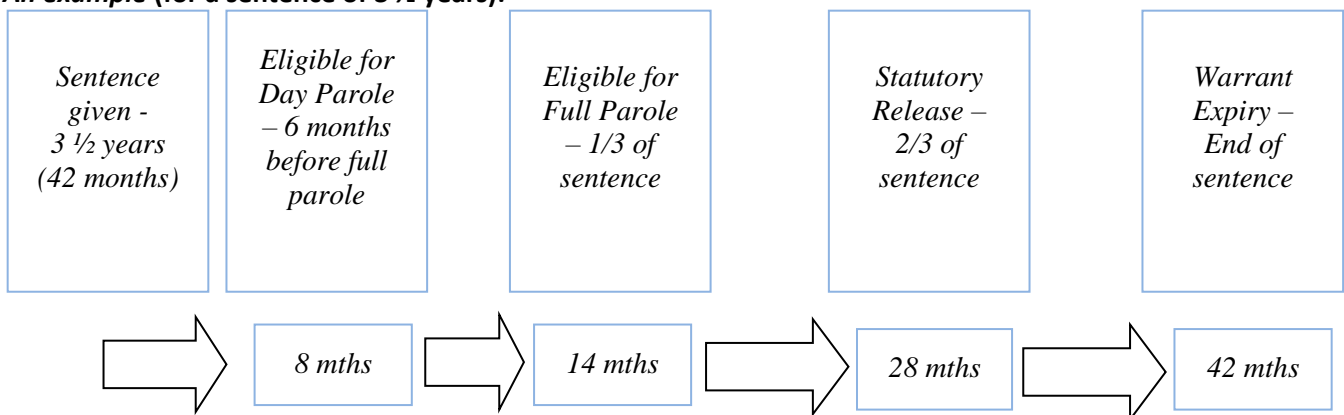
This chart is another way to look at parole eligibility and shows common outcomes. Remember that the court always has the final say in any sentencing.

Sentence	Eligible for Day Parole	Eligible for Full Parole
Life sentence for <b>first degree murder</b> *	3 years before they are eligible for Full Parole	After serving 25 years in prison
Life sentence for <b>second degree murder</b> *	3 years before they are eligible for Full Parole	After serving 10-25 years in prison, as set by the court
Life sentence *	3 years before their Full Parole eligibility date	Set by the court at the time of sentencing
Sentence is 3 or more years (but not a Life sentence)	6 months before their Full Parole eligibility date	After serving 1/3 of their sentence OR 7 years in prison (whichever is less)
Sentence is between 2-3 years	After 6 months of their sentence	
Sentence is under 2 years	After 1/6 of their sentence	

\*This is for Life sentences with a possibility of parole. If a sentence is 'life without parole', the chart does not apply.

**An example (for a sentence of 6 years):** Day Parole eligibility at 18 months, Full Parole eligibility at 2 years, Statutory Release at 4 years, Warrant Expiry at 6 years

**An example (for a sentence of 3 ½ years):**



### When should an inside person apply for parole?

A person has the **RIGHT to apply for parole before their eligibility date**; however, the Parole Board will typically review the case about 2 months before the Day Parole eligibility date. Full Parole reviews do not need to be applied for as they happen automatically.

**It is important for those in prison to feel READY to apply and WANT to be released on parole.** If you wish to become involved in the inside person's parole process, talk to them about how they plan to re-enter the community, and whether they wish to apply for parole. If family members work together with their inside person to plan for the potential release, sharing the facts from this booklet, it will help strengthen everyone's understanding of parole.

**Applying for parole is not a guarantee that a person will BE GRANTED parole.** Things to consider:

- The inside person should begin discussing the application process with the Institutional Parole Officer six months prior to the eligibility date. Topics of conversation are outlined below (any outstanding fines, what has happened in prison, what needs to be done to be successful in their release, *etc.*). If the Parole Officer is not supportive of going before the Parole Board, the inside person needs to ask themselves why. Is there something else that needs to be done, are they not ready, are there steps that still need to be taken? Or do they feel they are prepared and should go ahead without the Parole Officer's support?
- The Institutional Parole Officer gives the Parole Board information about a person's criminal history, behaviour while in prison, and successes achieved while in custody.
- A Community Parole Officer will complete a Community Assessment about the items below that should be considered.
- There is a lot of other information that also goes into a person's case for parole, such as Support Letters, Victim Statements, *etc.* for the Parole Board to consider.
- The Parole Board of Canada uses all this information to make the decision around a person's risk to those in the community, whether that risk can be managed or not, and whether parole should be granted or not.

Many of those in prison feel that the first time they go before the Parole Board, they will be denied. But the truth is that parole decisions about a person's risk of re-offending are based on many factors. If the Parole Board turns down someone, they will explain why the person's risk is not manageable in the community at this time. This gives the inside person an understanding of what they need to think about, plan for, and act on before they apply again.

MYTH: "The first time you try for parole, it's always a NO!"

FACT: Potential parolees should apply for parole when they are **eligible** and are **prepared** for release.

Before applying for parole, it is very important for the inside person to show that they understand their past behaviours, including why they committed the crime(s), and how they have changed. A person can help change their behaviour by:

- Attending programming in prison. It is best for an inside person to apply for parole **after** they have started to move toward changing their criminal behaviours. Talk to the Institutional Parole Officer even if not **all** the programming has been completed (perhaps some can be taken in the community). The parole decision will be made depending on the seriousness of the criminal offences(s), the risk factors involved, the programming that has been taken, *etc.*

- Avoiding new criminal charges while in prison (institutional charges) as they may negatively affect whether someone is granted parole. If they have committed a crime in prison, the inside person will need to convince the Parole Board that they have made significant changes in their behaviour since then and are no longer likely to break institutional rules or Canada's laws.
- Those on the inside must be able to safely re-enter the community in a stable environment. Establishing strong community support can help them avoid past criminal behaviours and stay on the right path.
- The potential parolee needs a stable Release Plan, including items such as their employment plan, their housing plan, community support information, and plans to enter a treatment program, if applicable. (See the information below about preparing for parole).

## How does an inside person apply for parole?

To be considered for **Day Parole**, those on the inside must apply to the Parole Board of Canada. The inside person can ask their Institutional Parole Officer for an application form and their suggestion on when to apply. It is good if their Parole Officer supports their decision to apply. This implies that the inside person has done what's expected and required of them. Their Institutional Parole Officer may help them complete the form and then it needs to go to the Parole Board.

For **Full Parole**, individuals will automatically be given a parole review within 6 months of their Full Parole eligibility date (unless they are serving Indeterminate or Life sentences).

## How can I help an inside person prepare for parole?

### What happens after they have applied?

Shortly after an application is received and the inside person is in a good position for a possible release, the Institutional Parole Officer asks to have the case assigned to a Community Parole Officer. This Parole Officer will work with the Case Management Team and Institutional Parole Officer to create a **Release and Supervision Plan** for the inside person, which takes some time. This plan goes to the Parole Board and may include such things as participating in community-based programs, living in a halfway house, continuing their education, getting a job, *etc.* The Release Plan is part of the information used by the Parole Board of Canada in their decision about a conditional release and if the inside person's risk for re-offending in the community is manageable. (See the '*How does the Parole Board make their decision?*' section below)

Read over the '*Becoming involved in a Release Plan*' section below and have a talk with your inside person, if you want to be involved in their Release Plan. If you decide to move forward on this idea, you can call or write a Support Letter to the inside person's Institutional Parole Officer, telling them about your part in the inside person's parole. Include your own contact information in the letter and address it to:

Parole Officer of [*Put the full name of the inside person here*]

*Address of the institution the inside person is in*

### Becoming involved in a Release Plan

**The inside person is responsible for their own needs in their Release Plan. While you do not have to do so, you can decide to help them.** How much you want to be involved in their release is up to you. Everyone needs to have realistic expectations. You need to balance your offers of support with letting them be accountable for their own plan. You should not base your decision on guilt or pity, but on what you **want** to do and can realistically **manage** in your own life.

Here are some things to consider:

### 1. **Giving a parolee a place to live**

Those who apply for parole must have a place to live that is approved by their Community Parole Officer. For Day Parole, this is almost always a halfway house. For Full Parole, the Community Parole Officer will make sure that the owners of the house agree to have the inside person live there.

Where an inside person lives while on parole is very important to their success. Parolees should avoid places and people who may negatively affect their ability to live crime-free or where drugs are available. Their home should promote good behaviour, not tempt them to get involved in criminal or inappropriate behaviour that will affect their parole success.

Having the inside person live with you when they are released is a big decision. You do not have to provide housing. If the inside person has harmed you, your children, or a family member, having them return to live with you may not be the best option for everyone.

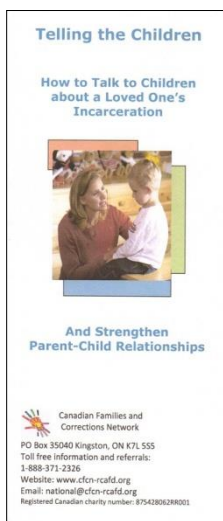
If you think you want to have the inside person stay with you as they reintegrate, make sure that you have had honest conversations with them, before release, about their crime and the ways they want to improve. Helping them avoid criminal and harmful behaviours is important – but both parties have a role to play. Routines may have changed on the outside, and it may become difficult for parolees to fit back into the regular schedule. Childcare, household chores, and even grocery shopping may be challenging for the parolee. Everyone must work together to make a realistic plan and manage expectations. **You must all agree to this.**

Whether you choose to have the inside person come and live with you or not, you should let them know well before their release. You should also write to their Institutional Parole Officer or speak to the Community Parole Officer if you know them. Those applying for parole need to make **realistic** and **stable** plans well ahead of time.

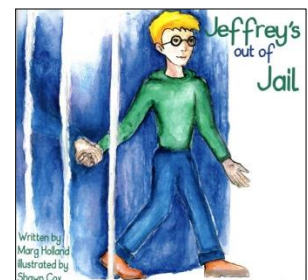
### 2. **Children**

If there are children involved in the relationship, they should participate in the Release Plan too. Canadian Families and Corrections Network has a 'Telling the Children' pamphlet about open and honest talks with children about prison. Check it out on our website or call our toll-free line to receive a printed copy in the mail. Our contact information is at the back of this booklet.

Do not promise a child that a loved one is coming home. Explain that there is a CHANCE this may happen.



Inside and outside family members should consider talking to their kids about what it means to apply for parole and what might happen if they are released. Canadian Families and Corrections Network's storybook 'Jeffrey's Out of Jail' can help with this. It will give them information on the job of a Parole Officer, what a halfway house is, etc. It is very important for the inside person to be involved in discussions around what the children hope might happen when the inside person comes



home, to express what they might want to change in the family, and to give them a sense of connection to the decisions that will be made.

### 3. Community Assessments (CA)

The Institutional Parole Officer writes a report about what has happened so far in the inside person's journey which may include any Temporary Absences, contact with family and friends through prison visiting and phone calls, their correctional plan programming, psychological assessments, etc.

The hope is that the journey will continue in the community, so a Community Assessment report is normally prepared by a Community Parole Officer, to analyze the risk factors involved in this decision. (Note that even though a Community Assessment will have been done when the person arrived in prison, it may need to be updated, or the person may be releasing to a new location.)

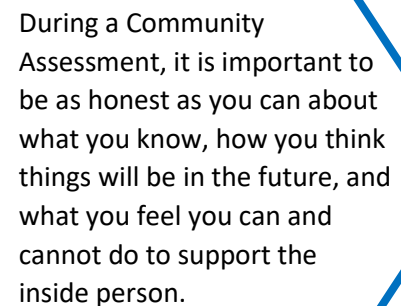
Both the Institutional and Community Parole Officer's reports are reviewed by the Parole Board when assessing the potential Release Plan and overall risk of re-offending.

The Community Assessment report usually includes information on the success of Unescorted Temporary Absences to the community so far, Day Parole (if applicable), family relationships, community support, community housing situation and halfway house information, victim concerns, input from the police, ability to reintegrate, special condition recommendations, and an evaluation of the Release Plan. The main focus is on the person's risk of re-offending, and answers to questions like, "Should the inside person come to this community?"; "What are the risks and can they be managed?"; and "What is available here to help them lead a positive, crime-free life?"

If you agree to be involved in an inside person's Release Plan, a Community Parole Officer will contact you for a Community Assessment and may come to your home. They will call to make an appointment before coming. They are there to learn about your inside person, to gather information about the risks involved in releasing them to the community, your understanding of those risks, and if they are manageable. Talking to someone who understands the process or has been at a hearing may help. When the Parole Officer asks questions remember that it is important to give factual, straightforward answers. Be very clear with your answers.

While the Community Parole Officer will ask several questions, the areas they will want to know about are:

- Housing
  - Whether the inside person is going to live with you or not
  - If Day Parole, will the inside person visit you at your home
  - If the home is positive for the inside person (no drugs or crime)
- Criminal History
  - What you know about the inside person's crime(s)
  - If the inside person's behaviour has changed since incarceration
  - If you understand the risk factors involved
- Supports
  - What supports you are willing to offer the inside person
  - What supports there are nearby in the community to help the inside person
- Activities
  - Where the inside person might work or attend school
  - Other social and productive activities they might get involved with (*e.g. church, bowling league, etc.*)



During a Community Assessment, it is important to be as honest as you can about what you know, how you think things will be in the future, and what you feel you can and cannot do to support the inside person.

#### 4. Writing community support letters

Community support is assessed by both Institutional and Community Parole Officers. However, the Parole Board has the final decision. It is helpful when community members show their support for an inside person's release by offering insight in a reliable, persuasive manner. Family members, significant others, friends, church groups, previous or future employers, community leaders, and others who feel they have something valuable to say can all write letters. Letters are also accepted from children or grandchildren.

Support Letters can be written for File Reviews or Parole Hearings (see the '*Types of hearings*' section below).

**Letters are generally written to go with an application for Escorted Temporary Absences and/or Day Parole.**

For Day Parole, include any and all of your plans to be involved in the inside person's release in your Support Letter. Here is a sample format you can follow:

**Address the letter:** To the Parole Board of Canada

**Introduction:**

- Who you are and your relationship with the inside person
- What kind of person are you? Do you have a stable job, and home?
- Do you have a criminal history? Do you use drugs? Is there violence in the relationship?

**Body of the letter:**

- How long you have known the inside person
- Visits, telephone calls, and written letters you have had with the inside person, helping them to develop and maintain community ties to prepare for their return to the community
- What you know about the person's crime and if you feel they have been honest with you
- If you feel the inside person is sorry for their crime and have a sense of why they did it
- If the inside person understands what they have done to their victim and their family, their own family, and their community and if they have they spoken about how they might repair some of this harm
- What kind of person is the inside person? What positive qualities do they have? Have they made significant contributions to their family, community, or those in prison?
- Have they changed positively since they have been in jail? Give specific examples of how they have grown.
- If they understand that things have changed on the outside and within their family
- Explain why they will do well on a temporary absence or parole and your thoughts on their risk of re-offending.
- Your choices about what you might do for the inside person upon release (also see the '*Other ways to provide support to the inside person*' section below):
  - If you want the inside person to live with you when they are released and for how long
  - If you know any contacts or plans for employment, addiction treatment, or housing
  - If you will be helping with food, clothing, or other items
  - If you will be driving them to their parole appointments
  - If you plan to be involved in their social life
  - If they will be part of your church, sports team, or group

Be as clear as you can about what you will and will NOT do for the potential parolee in your Support Letter.

**Conclusion:**

- Mention if you are working together to plan for reintegration as it shows community support.
- Thank the Parole Board for considering your letter and your thoughts about this important decision.

**Print and sign your name and give your contact information.**

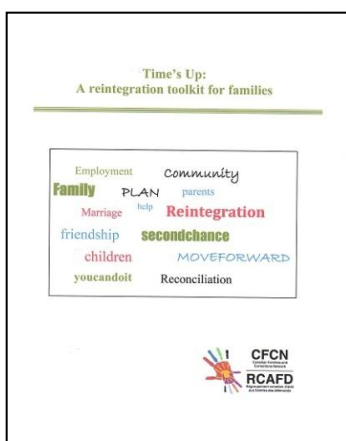
Anyone (family, victim, community, etc.) can write to the Parole Board about an individual to express their comments.

Support Letters should be just a page or so and written with a positive tone. They could be mailed to the Institutional Parole Officer so they can review your comments and offer feedback. Once complete, ensure final copies go to the inside person, the Institutional Parole Officer, and the Parole Board of Canada well in advance (15-30 days) of the hearing.

## 5. Other ways to provide support to the inside person

While **the inside person is the one responsible for release planning**, there are other things family and friends can do to assist their person being released. Being on parole can be overwhelming for a person as they try to juggle programs they may have to take, employment, Parole Officer check-ins, psychiatric appointments, etc. It can be hard to do all this while reintegrating with family responsibilities, raising children, household chores, and community relationships. Think about the ideas listed here, and other ideas you may hear about, and discuss them with your inside person. See where the needs are and discuss what you are comfortable with. Some ideas include:

- Helping with important documents needed for release (*e.g. helping them fill out forms to reissue a birth certificate, medical card, or driver's license*)
- Offering them employment (*Please include on company letterhead: name of inside person, position being offered, job description, hours and wages, expected start date*)
- Helping find a job, volunteer work, or applying for school
- Offering clothes, food, or money as a start in the community
- Helping with financial planning (*e.g. setting up a bank account, putting together a budget, helping to fill out any paperwork for social assistance, providing information on tax returns, etc.*)
- Helping find a doctor (especially in situations where prescriptions are required)
- Driving them to appointments with their Parole Officer
- Providing positive connection and support; *for example:*
  - *Helping prepare for the Parole Hearing by asking questions and listening to them practice their answers*
  - *Encouraging them to make a realistic Release Plan, to stick to it, and helping them **manage their expectations***
  - *When they are released, helping them support a crime-free life, reminding them that they can do it, and that it's worth it*
  - *Once in the community, sharing a meal, going out for coffee, being a listening ear, or helping them to be mindful of their risk factors*
  - *Sharing time with them if they are granted weekend visiting or travel passes*



Canadian Families and Corrections Network has two books for those inside our institutions and their families, for reintegration help. They outline the issues that men and women uniquely face to assist them in planning a successful family reintegration after prison. They help families to understand the difference between offering support and allowing the inside person to remain accountable for their Reintegration Plan. They can be downloaded from our website or requested on our toll-free line.



## Types of hearings

**Four common examples of when a person's case may be reviewed by the Parole Board are when they have applied for Escorted Temporary Absences, Unescorted Temporary Absences, Day Parole, and Full Parole.**

### File Review (Paper Decision)

- The Parole Board of Canada makes a decision after reviewing the information in a person's file.
- No face-to-face meeting (hearing) is necessary.
- Provincial and Territorial parole applications are almost always by File Review.
- File Reviews may also happen if parole has been previously granted but has been suspended or revoked, or if the conditions (or rules) of parole are being reviewed and/or changed.

### Parole Hearing

- A face-to-face meeting takes place between the Parole Board and the inside person where the decision will be made. This may be by video conference.
- Others may be present (see below).

### Elder-Assisted Hearing (EAH)

- A culturally sensitive face-to-face meeting takes place with the Parole Board, the inside person, and an Aboriginal Elder/Cultural Advisor where the decision will be made. Elders are not involved in the parole decision.
- This process is for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people or those following this way of life.
- The inside person should talk to their parole officer or a member of their Case Management Team about a conditional release under Section 84 (Release to an Aboriginal Community).
- Forms need to be submitted at least 21 days before the hearing.
- Others may be present (see below), including the possibility of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Community Development Officer, and a Community Parole Officer.
- A smudge, song, or prayer opens the hearing.
- Some hearings are held in a circle.
- The Parole Board of Canada (or Correctional Service of Canada) Elder or Cultural Advisor provides information about the inside person's specific community, culture, experiences, and traditions.
- To see what an EAH looks like, see the '*Videos to assist you*' section below.

### Community-Assisted Hearing (CAH)

- A culturally sensitive face-to-face meeting takes place with the Parole Board, the inside person, and community members. Only the Parole Board is involved in the parole decision.
- This hearing is for those who want to be released to an Aboriginal community. (Section 84 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act gives Aboriginal communities the opportunity to become active partners in the release planning and supervision of Aboriginal people.)
- The hearing is usually held in the Aboriginal community where the inside person is hoping to be released.
- The inside person needs to discuss a Conditional Release under Section 84 with their Case Management Team at least 2 months before the hearing.
- Others may be present (see below) including an Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Community Development Officer, Community Parole Officer, and other community members.
- A smudge, song, or prayer opens the hearing.
- Some hearings are held in a circle.
- The Parole Board of Canada (or Correctional Service of Canada) Elder or Cultural Advisor provides information about the inside person's specific community, culture, experiences, and traditions.



## Who can attend the parole hearing?

### Who are the people at a Parole Hearing?

The people who attend Parole Hearings are usually there for two reasons – they have a role in the hearing or they want to observe. Observers might be interested in this particular hearing (*e.g. family member*) or may want to learn about Parole Hearings (*e.g. student*). Having community members in the room helps the Parole Board of Canada stay open and accountable, accessible to the public, and allows people to understand the parole process.

### Who might be in the room with the inside person?

- Two Parole Board members, usually
- A Hearing Officer from the Parole Board to assist the Board Members
- The inside person's Institutional Parole Officer
- A Correctional Officer
- Victim(s) involved in the case
  - Their supports
  - Parole Board Regional Communications Officers (see the 'About victims and parole hearings' section below)
- The inside person's approved Assistant (see below in this section)
- Approved Observers and their supports (see below in this section)
- Media
- A translator (paid for by the Correctional Service of Canada)
  - The potential parolee can request the hearing in either French or English.
  - If the potential parolee does not understand English or French, they will be given a translator in their language.
  - The victim will be given an English or French translator, if necessary. If they require a different language, they may bring a support person to the hearing to assist them.

People attending the hearing must be 18 years of age and older but there may be exceptions.

### The Assistant

**While they do not need to have one, the person requesting parole has the right to have an Assistant present.** The Assistant is a very important part of the Parole Hearing and works with people in the correctional system, and the inside person, to help create a plan that will reduce the risk of re-offending. **The Parole Board needs to approve the Assistant.**

An Assistant can play a primary role before, during, and after the Parole Board hearing. An Assistant may be a family member, a friend, or a partner, a lawyer, a contact from a community organization (*e.g. John Howard Society*), an Elder or a spiritual advisor. It is up to the inside person who they feel would be able to best help them present their case to the Parole Board.

**Before the Parole Hearing** the Assistant can support and advise the potential parolee, hold a question/answer period using the questions below, talk about the Correctional Release Plan, and discuss any concerns. The Assistant can gather any Support Letters for the inside person, reference letters, offers of work, or other

MYTH: "I know my inside person's case best. I can be the Assistant!"

FACT: A family member or friend can be an Assistant if they are able to present clear and factual information about the case.

paperwork belonging to the inside person. (**Remember to keep a copy of all information before you send it to the Institutional Parole Officer and the Parole Board well before the hearing.**)

**During the Parole Hearing** the Assistant can provide advice to the potential parolee through conversation or written notes. The inside person is allowed to ask for a time out to have a quiet discussion with the Assistant for a few moments about a certain issue. The Assistant cannot answer questions asked by a Parole Board member to the inside person. **The Board members may ask the Assistant direct questions.**

The Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board may use wording that you do not understand at the hearing. **As the Assistant, if there is something that is said that is not clear to you, ask the Parole Board members to please explain.**

The Assistant may prepare a brief speech that they will present (usually during the last 15 minutes of the Parole Board hearing). Talking to someone who has been through a hearing will help. This is not like a court case, nor is it time for an emotional plea, or to challenge the Parole Board. Clear, factual information that the Board will take into consideration should be presented calmly. The growth and change of the potential parolee should be highlighted and any concerns the Parole Board may have should be addressed. Although there are no specific pieces to this speech, Assistants may want to discuss:

- How the inside person takes responsibility for their offence
- How the inside person shows an understanding of their wrongdoing and if they show they are sorry (remorseful)
- How the Release Plan will assist the insider person successfully return to the community
- How the risk of re-offending can be managed in the community
- Any opportunities for employment, programs, training, and education
- The community support that has been offered by the family and friends
- Supportive documents (letters, reports, programming completed, the Community Assessment, *etc.*)
- Anything mentioned in the hearing that may need further comments

**If you wish to be an Assistant, you should talk to your inside person.** If they agree, they need to discuss this with their Institutional Parole Officer and the necessary paperwork can be completed. If there is no Assistant, often the Institutional Parole Officer will assist the inside person with their hearing preparation.

#### Observers may be:

- Family members and supporters of the inside person
- Victim(s) and their supports
- Media
- Students or anyone from community who may have an interest in attending a hearing

**The Parole Board needs to approve all Observers.** Note that **Observers cannot speak at the hearing**, even if they do not agree with what is said.

**Observers should apply to attend the hearing as soon as possible** (*i.e.* when the Parole Hearing date is known). **Applications usually need to be submitted at least 30 days before the hearing.**

#### Can I attend a hearing?

Yes, family members and friends are allowed at Parole Hearings as Observers or Assistants.

MYTH: Anyone can talk during a Parole Hearing, especially the family!

FACT: Only Parole Board members, the inside person, their Assistant, and any registered victims or their representatives may speak.

Having access or being on an Approved Visitor List at a prison does not mean you will be allowed into the hearing automatically. **If you would like to attend a Parole Board of Canada hearing, you must fill out a 'Request to Observe a Parole Hearing' form (listed in the 'Forms you may need' section below) and mail, scan, or fax it to the office where the hearing will take place.** If you do not know where this is, call any Parole Board Regional Office to ask where the hearing will take place. (To find the Regional Offices, see 'Parole Board of Canada' in the 'People to contact' section below.) This must be done as soon as possible but should be sent in at least 30 days before the hearing so the application can be processed, and the person cleared by security.

Some community organizations in your area may have a **supportive person who will attend the hearing with you**. It may be good to have someone to sit with or have a coffee with afterwards to discuss what the hearing was like for you. Check the 'People to contact' section below for ideas of who to ask for support.

Many family members are also the direct victim of the crime. If you are a Registered Victim and would like to attend a hearing, see the 'About victims and parole hearings' section below.

### Things to keep in mind

- If you need any special considerations (e.g. to bring in medicine, accessibility issues, etc.), there is a place to mention these on the application form.
- If you want to see what the inside of the prison where the hearing is to be held looks like, see 'Pictures of Federal Institutions' in the 'Resources to help' section below.
- The only travel funding available to go to a parole hearing is for victims (and an accompanying support person for the victim) through the Department of Justice Victims Fund.
- **Sometimes hearings are cancelled unexpectedly. Call the institution before leaving your home to be sure it is going ahead as planned.**
- Hearings may take several hours. You should plan on being at the institution most of the day.
- Dress:
  - Should be appropriate for a prison setting (e.g. a low-cut top or shirt with liquor branding may not be perceived as professional.)
  - Limit your jewellery to essential items.
  - Bags or purses should be locked in the trunk of your car or will go into a locker.
  - Prisons generally do not have air conditioning.
- Smoking is not permitted on prison grounds and you cannot bring tobacco into the prison.
- **Only bring in your photo identification and car keys.** You may be asked to put these in a locker.
- Cell phones, recording equipment, cameras, and portable computers are **NOT** allowed inside the prison.
- You will be security cleared at the principle entrance of the prison. This may include an x-ray machine for your belongings, a metal detector, an ion scanner, and a drug dog. Security staff will tell you what you need to do. Remember not to touch the drug dog; it is not like a friendly neighbourhood pet, but rather a working dog there with a job to do. These security measures are meant to reduce the risk of prohibited items entering federal prisons in an effort to keep them safe and drug-free.
- No food is available on site.
- You may not be able to connect or touch your inside person. Ask the Board members in the hearing before you move to connect with your inside person.
- You can choose whether or not you wish to speak with the media afterwards, if they are there. If you wish to answer, stay calm and answer directly. If not, say 'I do not wish to talk with you' and walk away.



## About victims and parole hearings

Families take on different roles in the parole process. It is more common for a crime to be committed by someone known to the victim than by a stranger. There are many times when the family member is the direct victim of the crime or may be responsible for a child who has been harmed by a family member who is now in prison. This section is for them.

Victims of a crime can be informed of and become involved in the parole decision-making process; however, they must register with the Parole Board of Canada to receive information as a victim. **The Victim Information Line for questions and information** is listed below in the *'People to contact'* section and there is a video available (see the *'Videos to assist you'* section below).

### Who is considered a victim?

Under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, a person is considered a victim if:

- you have been harmed as a result of a criminal offence. This could be a family member. (Being harmed means suffering physical or emotional harm; property damage; or financial loss.)
- the victim is deceased, ill, or unable to act. You may represent the victim if:
  - you are a spouse, conjugal partner, relative, or person legally responsible for the victim.
  - you have custody of, or are responsible for, dependants of the victim (a child).
- the person who harmed you has not been prosecuted or convicted of that act, but you have made a complaint to the police or Crown Attorney's office.

If you are not sure if these conditions match your situation, you may apply to the Parole Board of Canada to register as a victim and they will decide.

### Getting informed

If you wish to receive information about the person who has harmed you, **you must first register as a victim.** The Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of Canada offer similar but different information. You only have to apply with one or the other and check off the boxes for both on the *'Request for Victim Registration'* form in the *'Forms you may need'* section. Mail it to the Parole Board Office, or the Correctional Service of Canada office closest to you. (See the *'People to contact'* section below.) Upon being registered, Victim Services will contact you and you can decide exactly what information is best for you.

The Parole Board of Canada's *'Victim's Guide to Information Services'* is listed below in the *'Resources to help'* section. If they wish, victims can request information on the person who has harmed them including:

- Their name
- The offence and the court where they were convicted
- Their sentence start date and length
- Their eligibility dates for Unescorted Temporary Absences, Day Parole and Full Parole, and Statutory Release
- Potential hearing dates for parole

Victims may also request and receive additional information if the Parole Board decides that the victim's needs outweigh the inside person's privacy. This includes but is not limited to the inside person's:

- Prison location
- Date of Parole Board review
- Date of release if the Board has approved parole

- The conditions imposed by the Parole Board if parole has been approved
- Destination where they will be released from prison on parole
- If the inside person asks for the parole decision to be appealed and the outcome of the appeal

Upon registering with the Parole Board of Canada as a victim, you will be put in contact with a Regional Communications Officer (RCO) who will answer questions and help you through the parole process.

You can also register online through the Victims' Portal:

[www.canada.ca/en/services/policing/victims/federalcorrectionsparole/victims-portal.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/services/policing/victims/federalcorrectionsparole/victims-portal.html)

Once you are registered, you can send and receive information on-line if you choose.

Once you have registered as a victim, you will continue to receive any new information about the inside person. (You should let the Parole Board know if any changes are made to your contact information.) **The information being sent can be stopped at any time at the victim's request** (and restarted again if requested).

**Anyone can request a written copy of a Parole Board decision by completing a 'Request for Registry Decision' form** in the 'Forms you may need' section and handing it in to the closest Parole Board of Canada office. (See the 'People to contact' section.)

#### Attending the Parole Hearing as a victim

As a victim, you may want to come to a Parole Hearing, but you do not have to. The inside person will know that a victim is attending, although the victim's name will not be released. Victims may go to hearings as Observers or as a Registered Victim. A victim may also bring a supportive person with them to the Parole Hearing.

A Victim Statement is a statement that describes the harm to, or loss suffered by a victim of crime. It also outlines any concerns that the victim has for their safety and the community. **To provide the Parole Board with a Victim Statement, you do not have to be registered with the Board. However, to present a Victim Statement in person at a hearing, you must register with the Parole Board of Canada as a victim.** These statements allow the Board to assess an inside person's Release Plans and the potential risk to community safety. If you choose to write one, none of your contact information is shared, but the potential parolee will receive a copy of the statement. During the hearing, Victim Statements may be presented by reading them in person, by video recording, or by audio recording. Even if you do not want to attend the hearing in person your Statement will be read beforehand by the inside person and the Board members.

Whether you wish to present a statement or not, all victims who want to attend a hearing must fill out a 'Request for Victim to Observe a Parole Hearing and/or Present a Victim Statement' form (in the 'Forms you may need' section) and mail it to the closest Parole Board Office or where the hearing will take place. (See the 'People to contact' section.)

#### Ideas when writing a Victim Statement

There are some ideas here, but you can also visit the Parole Board of Canada website (in the 'People to contact' section) or see the 'Victim Statement' checklist in the 'Forms you may need' section below.

- Address the Board members, *not* the inside person.
- Topics that may be written about:
  - Your safety – What risk does the inside person pose to you or your community if they are released?

- Are there any protections you need? (e.g. *You do not want contact with the inside person, you do not want the inside person to live near you, etc.*)
- The effect of the crime on your daily life
- The harm done to family and/or personal relationships
- The financial harm you've suffered
- If you are supportive of the inside person coming back to the community
- Limit the statement to a few pages or about 10 minutes when read aloud.
- If you want to submit an audio or video statement:
  - A written statement must be submitted in addition to the recording.
  - Ensure that the recorded statement matches the written version.
  - Keep the recording simple – do not include music or images.

**Victim statements will be shared with the inside person before the hearing.** Any information that should not be seen by the inside person, or heard by those who may attend the hearing, should not be included.

Signed Victim Statements must be sent the Parole Board of Canada's regional office, in either French or English, at least 30 days before the hearing. (If it needs to be translated from French to English, or English to French, it should be sent in 45 days before the hearing.) If the victim cannot present the statement in one of these languages, they may bring a support person to the hearing to present the statement on their behalf.

Through the Department of Justice Victims Fund **registered victims may be eligible for financial assistance to attend a hearing.** This may include travel costs, hotels, meals, and childcare. Victims may apply for financial assistance by completing the Application Form and submitting it online (see the 'Forms you may need' section). This form can only be completed after the 'Request for Victim to Observe a Parole Hearing and/or Present a Victim Statement' form has been completed. For more information, call the Victim Travel Fund number in the 'People to contact' section.

## The parole hearing

A parole decision can be made by a paper File Review or in person, at a Parole Hearing. This section looks at an in-person hearing, but the Parole Board looks at the same criteria no matter which process they use.

### What to expect when attending a hearing

Parole Board hearings usually take place in the prison where the inside person is in custody. To be prepared, review the 'Things to keep in mind' paragraph in the 'Who can attend the parole hearing?' section above.

### The potential parolee

**All the information to be considered by the Parole Board must be shared with the inside person at least 15 days before the hearing.** (If this information is not provided within this time frame, the hearing may be rescheduled.) The inside person can share the material with their Assistant (if there is one).

The information to be considered at the hearing must be in the official language of the potential parolee's choice. If the inside

MYTH: The Board can bring up information a potential parolee has not seen.

FACT: The Board must share all information with the potential parolee or there are grounds for an Appeal.

person cannot speak in French or English, a translator will be provided, before the hearing, to go over the paperwork to ensure everything is understood.

The inside person is allowed to bring in a file of their own information (*e.g. documents they were sent, letters written on their behalf, programs taken, work reports, etc.*). This information should be filed safely over time and sent to the Parole Board for the hearing. Do this well ahead of time as **the inside person can use this information during the hearing**. It is good to have paper and a pen as well. Preparation is important!

The inside person will know who is coming to the hearing. They may not be given the names but they will know who to expect (Victim, Observer, *etc.*).

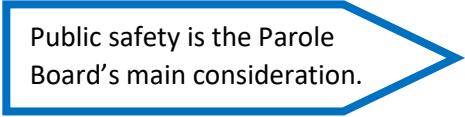
Anxiety can run high for an inside person as they prepare for the hearing. Practicing some of the questions below with someone else to help prepare factual, clear, full answers can really help. Dress well and start with a brief, honest introduction. It is good to sit straight, look at whoever is speaking, and discuss the important changes that have been completed while in prison. If there is nervousness, mention this to the Board as it is completely understandable. Individuals need to be positive, confident, calm, and well-prepared. Criticizing Corrections or other people, having a negative attitude, or feeling anger will not help. Taking a minute to talk to the Assistant, having a sip of water, or writing down thoughts can help calm overwhelming feelings. The Board is looking to understand who the inside person has become, if they are trying to change their life, and if they will re-offend in the community. The inside person is given the last word at the hearing and this is a chance not to be missed. It is a time to re-affirm the changes and positive actions taken, address any concerns the Board members have mentioned, and bring to light anything that has not been noted.

**If there is something that is said that is not understood, ask the Parole Board members to please explain. Do not leave not knowing what has happened.**

### The hearing process

1. All hearings are recorded.
2. Observers will be escorted from the prison entrance into the hearing room. The Parole Board members and the Hearing Officer will already be in the room.
3. If you are a registered victim with the Parole Board, a Regional Communications Officer will accompany you. You will normally be seated behind the person applying for parole.
4. A correctional officer will bring the inside person, the Assistant, and the Institutional Parole Officer into the hearing room. Everyone, except the Observers, will be introduced, the rights of the person applying for parole will be discussed (including the right to appeal) and the process will be explained. The correctional officer may stay in the room during the hearing.
5. The inside person's Institutional Parole Officer will summarize their case and provide a recommendation.
6. When the Parole Board asks, the Victim Statement may be read aloud by the registered Victim or shared through audio or video recording if the Victim prefers.
7. Board members will ask the inside person several questions about their past and their future. (See some of the possible questions below.) Assistants cannot answer these questions but may advise the inside person.
8. The Assistant may make a brief presentation (usually up to 15 minutes) after the Board members have completed their questioning. (See the 'Can I attend a hearing?' paragraph in the 'Who can attend a parole hearing?' section above.)
9. Others in the room, if not mentioned above, do not speak, even if they do not agree with what is said.
10. The inside person is given the last word at a parole hearing.

11. Board members will ask everyone to leave the room while they discuss whether to grant or deny parole or other forms of conditional release. This typically takes 10 to 30 minutes.
12. If you are a victim, the Regional Communications Officer will bring you to a separate waiting area.
13. Everyone is invited back into the room to hear the Board's decision and reasoning. After the hearing, this decision is shared with the inside person in writing.



Public safety is the Parole Board's main consideration.

There are videos available on the hearing process in the 'Videos to assist you' section below.

### Things to keep in mind

- You may be asked to leave the hearing while sensitive information is discussed.
- Some hearing rooms are small, and victims may be sitting close to the potential parolee.
- Hearings may be changed to a later date at the last minute, without warning.
- Bathrooms are usually locked. You must request an escort to go with you to the bathroom.
- You will not be allowed into a hearing after it has already started.
- The question and answer part of the hearing is the most important. The Parole Board may ask questions that are very uncomfortable to hear but they need to understand everything completely to make their decision.
- You may be asked to leave a hearing if your behaviour is considered disruptive.

## How does the Parole Board make their decision?

**Parole is an extremely serious judgment. The Parole Board has two basic principles when they make conditional release decisions:**

**1. That the protection of society be the paramount consideration in the determination of any case**

Questions such as this come to mind: Is the risk of granting the inside person conditional release or parole manageable in the community? Has the inside person shown an understanding of their crime and how they are moving forward? Can they be safely supervised by the Correctional Service of Canada in society? Is there enough support in the community so they will not commit another crime or hurt anyone?

**2. That the Board make the least restrictive determination consistent with the protection of society**

(If there is more than one option that will still protect society the Board will choose the one that will restrict the parolee the least.) Questions such as this come to mind: Will a gradual release of the inside person be safer for the community? Is it the best decision for the inside person? Will giving them a chance to live in the community help them become a citizen who follows Canada's laws?

The Parole Board looks at many pieces of information to help them make a conditional release decision. Before a hearing takes place the Board members look at the documents in an inside person's file (*e.g. a person's employment history; the pre-sentence report; the official record of conviction, psychiatric report; reports submitted by prison staff or police; the Release Plan; the Community Assessment; Victim Impact Statements from court; Victim Statements submitted to the Correctional Service of Canada or the Parole Board of Canada; any community Letters of Support, etc.*). In addition to these documents, the Board members have extensive training, tools, and information on how to determine if the risk of re-offending can be managed in the community and to assist them in their decision.

After a review of this information, a hearing is conducted with the Parole Board and the inside person. The Parole Board members will explore the inside person's readiness for parole and what happened around the time



of the crime, using intense, repetitive, questions which may seem uncomfortable. They must ask all the questions and bring up information they think is necessary to determine the risk or re-offending. Factual information that the Board will take into consideration should be presented in a calm manner. The Board's objective is to get a full picture and forthright answers about what has happened in the past and what the future will look like, before making a decision.

Some of the possible questions and topics for discussion may be:

**1. About the inside person's social and criminal history, including:**

- The inside person's crime(s), what was happening at that time, were there drugs/alcohol involved, *etc.*
- Why the inside person committed the crime, what led to their choices, *etc.*
- What kind of life the inside person had growing up, did they get along with their family, what is their education and employment history, *etc.*

**2. About the inside person's victims, including:**

- If the inside person understands what they did wrong, why they are in prison, *etc.* This needs to be backed up by actions. (*e.g. If the inside person has a drinking and driving charge and is found with alcohol while in prison, their actions do not back up the fact that they are sorry for their crime.*)
- If the inside person realizes the impact of the crime on their victims' lives, has remorse or regrets the crime, *etc.* (*e.g. Does the inside person realize a victim may be affected by the crime every day and fear the day of the inside person's release?*)

**3. About the inside person's behaviour and attitude during incarceration, including:**

- What did the inside person do in prison in terms of education, jobs, free time activities; if they are following their Correctional Plan; if there are any institutional charges laid against them; how they behaved during a previous Conditional Release; *etc.*
- Programs taken in prison; what the inside person learned; how they have applied what has been learned; changes they see in themselves; *etc.*
- Relationships with others in prison; how they got along; any crimes committed in prison; *etc.*

**4. About the inside person's Release Plan, including:**

- How the programs they took in prison will help the inside person when they are in the community; how they will deal with stress; what happens if drugs, alcohol, or former crime contacts become a temptation; *etc.*
- What supports they have in the community; what those supports will help them with; are there established boundaries, *etc.*
- How they will work with their Community Parole Officer to keep them on track; will they be able to meet the conditions of their release; *etc.*
- What are the inside person's plans to reconnect with their family, children, and friends; what steps will they take to be responsible and trustworthy again; *etc.* (Family and friends of those inside also feel the effects of the crime. The inside person's prison life has an effect on family, children, and friends in many ways such as less household money, school bullying, loneliness, being labeled by the community, *etc.*)

Success is based not only on what people do while they're in prison but by the decisions they make on the outside when confronted with life's challenges.

- What steps might the inside person take to give back to their community; how can the inside person help the community feel safe? (Those in the community are also affected by the crime. *e.g. An entire community is changed when someone is murdered.*)
- What are the inside person's goals, plans for restorative healing, personal growth, and a crime-free life?

If a person has applied for parole before and has been denied (or they have been granted parole before, are back inside prison, and are now seeking parole again) the Board members will want to know what is different this time. What new actions have been taken? How have the plans set up last time changed? Why are supportive people involved now that were not there before? What will be done differently to achieve success?

***A Parole Example:*** The inside person's file shows a history of alcohol abuse. To show the Parole Board that they are making changes, the inside person may explain how their alcohol abuse has led in part to their criminal behaviour.

They may show remorse and be sorry for their crime. They may also show how the programs they took in prison have helped them understand this risk factor and how they have a plan for relapse prevention. The inside person may also discuss how their Release Plan includes further substance abuse programming in the community that will help them build on the skills they have learned and remain alcohol free.

## What happens when an inside person is granted or denied parole?

### After the hearing

Once the hearing is over, everyone is aware of the final decision and, if parole is granted, any conditions to be followed. The inside person will receive a written version of the Parole Board's decision and their reasons for granting or denying parole.

**Anyone can request a written copy of a Parole Board decision by completing a 'Request for Registry Decision' form** in the 'Forms you may need' section and sending it to the closest Parole Board of Canada office. (See the 'People to contact' section.) You will need to say why you are interested in this case.

As of June 1, 2016, registered victims who do not attend a Day or Full Parole Hearing in person or by video conference are eligible to listen to an audio recording of the most recent hearing afterwards.

### If the inside person is granted parole

Even though parole is granted, leaving the prison on parole may not happen immediately (*e.g. Sometimes there is not a Day Parole bed available in the halfway house the inside person is going to*). If the inside person does not behave well in prison during this wait time, Day Parole may be cancelled.

Once parole is granted there is a great feeling of happiness for everyone. But **things have changed on the outside**, within the family, and now is the time to think back and keep talking about all the conversations you had while preparing for parole. New routines within the family, how children have grown and changed, expectations from family, community, and the Correctional Service of Canada all must be considered. Now is the time for the family and friends that offered help in their Support Letters to follow through by making plans to have the inside person move in with them (if Full Parole), helping them fill out forms so they have the proper identification (birth certificates, health cards, social insurance numbers, *etc.*), plans for employment help, supportive friendship, Release Plan assistance, *etc.* **The parolee needs to let other people help them through**

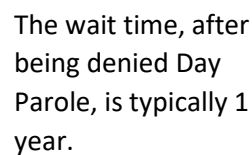
**this process.** CFCN's 'Time's Up' or 'A New Time' resources are very valuable during this time (available online or by calling CFCN).

Being granted parole comes with several expectations to reach success. When the inside person is in the community they must:

- follow all the standard conditions set out by the Parole Board (*e.g. obeying all laws, not having or owning a weapon, remaining in a certain area, etc.*)
- follow any special conditions set out by the Parole Board that are related to the inside person's risk factors (*e.g. no alcohol or drugs, no contact with their victim, staying away from people who had something to do with their previous criminal behaviour, staying in a halfway house, etc.*)
- meet regularly with their Community Parole Officer and listen to them. (*e.g. If they say to stay away from someone, do not call, meet, or talk to that person.*)
- be open and honest with the Community Parole Officer. Tell them about feelings of depression, feeling overwhelmed, job frustrations, *etc.* This shows that the inside person is being accountable and is trying to work out problems they may have in order to be successful.
- **Tell the Community Parole Officer about any major changes in their life** (*e.g. changes to employment, housing, relationships*).
- Carry their Parole Certificate (which shows they are allowed in the community) with them at all times.

#### If the inside person is denied parole

If the inside person is not granted parole, the Board members will give specific reasons explaining why the risk is too great at the present time. If an application is denied, usually another application cannot be submitted for Day or Full Parole for one year.



The wait time, after being denied Day Parole, is typically 1 year.

Being denied parole is not a failure but indicates that there is more work to be done. The information in the decision for not granting parole leads to understanding changes expected in the behaviour of the inside person in order for the Parole Board to determine that the inside person will not pose a risk to society if released.

#### Appealing the decision

If the inside person wishes to apply to have the Parole Board's decision reversed (appeal the decision), 'An Appeal of PBC Decision' form (see the 'Forms you may need' section below) must be filled out within 2 months of the decision and be sent to:

Parole Board of Canada  
c/o Appeal Division  
410 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R1

The Appeal form sets out some of the possible grounds for appeal that should be mentioned on the form. (*e.g. Parole Board failed to provide reasons for their decision; false information was presented; information was not shared with the inside person before the hearing; the Board acted with bias towards the inside person, etc.*) Appeal results could be: no change (the appeal was denied), a new hearing/review, or parole with a change to the conditions. While there is no deadline for a decision, appeal applications are usually reviewed in a timely manner in the order they are received.

### What if something goes wrong while on parole?

Being on parole can be challenging and sometimes it does not work out as expected. The inside person may not do well and the risk in the community becomes a concern. Even **before** something actually happens, a family member may have a concern that something is not going well.

If this happens, talk to the parolee about what you are thinking and how serious the situation is. Family and friends should not be expected to take on the role of a Parole Officer, but safety is important for everyone. While there is no obligation to do this, you might feel so strongly that you decide to say that either the parolee should explain the risk to the Community Parole Officer or you will. Another crime will mean a longer sentence, but the safety of your family and the community is of vital importance.

### Revoking or suspending parole

The Case Management Team can suspend parole if conditions are broken, to prevent the conditions from being broken (before something happens), or if new crimes are suspected. Once a person's parole is suspended, the facts and risks are examined. Then the suspension is either cancelled (the person is returned to the community, usually with further or stricter conditions) or the case is referred to the Parole Board of Canada.

If the case goes back to the Parole Board, a member of the Parole Board can then decide, based on information from the Parole Officer or the police, to revoke (take away) parole and send the parolee back to prison. This decision may be made in a Parole Hearing or by File Review and may be appealed. This process can take up to 90 days.

## People to contact

### Canadian Families and Corrections Network

- Support and assistance for families of potential parolees  
[www.cfcn-rcafd.org](http://www.cfcn-rcafd.org)
- Toll-free telephone line across Canada for family assistance and referrals  
(888) 371-2326

### Community Chaplaincy

- Faith-based organizations that support offenders and their families with community reintegration across Canada. They usually include a chaplain and several volunteers providing connections and a wide variety of assistance.
- (613) 996-9580 or [ChaplaincyG@csc-scc.gc.ca](mailto:ChaplaincyG@csc-scc.gc.ca)

### Correctional Service of Canada

- Contact information for national offices, regional offices, and federal prisons across Canada  
[www.csc-scc.gc.ca/institutions/001002-0001-eng.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/institutions/001002-0001-eng.shtml)
- National Office Ottawa, Ontario  
(613) 992-5891

### Elizabeth Fry Society

- Support and assistance for those in the justice system (primarily women)  
[www.caefs.ca](http://www.caefs.ca)
- Contact information for regional or local offices  
(800) 637-4606

### John Howard Society

- Support and assistance for those in the justice system (primarily men)  
[www.johnhoward.ca](http://www.johnhoward.ca)
- Contact information for regional or local offices  
(613) 384-6272

### Ontario Parole Board

- For those in Ontario provincial jails  
[www.slasto.gov.on.ca/en/OPB/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.slasto.gov.on.ca/en/OPB/Pages/default.aspx)
- Regional office, Kingston, Ontario  
(613) 634-3857

### Quebec Parole Board

- For those in Quebec provincial jails  
[www.cqlc.gouv.qc.ca/la-commission](http://www.cqlc.gouv.qc.ca/la-commission)
- Regional office, Quebec City, Quebec  
(418) 646-8300

### Parole Board of Canada

- National and regional offices  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board.html)
- National office, Ottawa, Ontario  
(613) 954-7474

### Salvation Army

- Community organization which has a corrections division  
[www.salvationarmy.ca](http://www.salvationarmy.ca) (see 'About Us' to find your province)
- Contact information for local or regional offices  
(800) 725-2769

## St. Leonard's Society

- Support and assistance for those in the justice system (primarily those reintegrating)  
[www.stleonards.ca](http://www.stleonards.ca)
- Contact information for local or regional offices  
(519) 759-8830

## Victim Information

- Victims and the parole process  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/services/victims.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/services/victims.html)
- Toll-free telephone line for victim information and parole  
(866) 789-4636
- Victim Travel Fund  
(866) 544-1007

## Resources to help

### Decision Making Policy Manual for Board Members

- How the Parole Board makes its decisions  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/decision-making-policy-manual-for-board-members.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/decision-making-policy-manual-for-board-members.html)

### Frequently Asked Questions for Correctional Service Canada

- Straightforward answers to correctional questions  
[www.csc-scc.gc.ca/media-room/009-0002-eng.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/media-room/009-0002-eng.shtml)

### Parole Board of Canada

- Information about the Parole Board  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board.html)
- Provincial and territorial parole  
[www.canada.ca/content/dam/pbc-clcc/documents/publications/5707\\_PBC\\_pamphlet\\_eng\\_WCAG.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pbc-clcc/documents/publications/5707_PBC_pamphlet_eng_WCAG.pdf)
- Information about attending a hearing  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/fact-sheets/attending-a-hearing-in-a-federal-institution-fact-sheet.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/fact-sheets/attending-a-hearing-in-a-federal-institution-fact-sheet.html)
- Information about observing a hearing  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/fact-sheets/observing-parole-board-of-canada-hearings-fact-sheet.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/fact-sheets/observing-parole-board-of-canada-hearings-fact-sheet.html)

### Parole Information

- Information about parole  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/services/parole.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/services/parole.html)
- How does parole help public safety?  
[www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/001/093/001-3000\\_en.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/001/093/001-3000_en.pdf)

### Parole Officer Description

- What is the job of a Parole Officer?  
[www.csc-scc.gc.ca/careers/003001-1000-eng.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/careers/003001-1000-eng.shtml)

### Pictures of Federal Institutions

- What is it like inside the prison you may be going to for the Parole Hearing?  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/federal-institutions.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/federal-institutions.html)

### Types of Conditional Release

- Types and eligibility for conditional releases made by the Parole Board  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/fact-sheets/types-of-release-fact-sheet.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/corporate/publications-and-forms/fact-sheets/types-of-release-fact-sheet.html)

## Victim Information

- Information about victims and the parole process  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/services/victims.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/services/victims.html)
- Victim's Guide to information services  
[www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/services/victims/victim-s-guide-to-information-services.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/parole-board/services/victims/victim-s-guide-to-information-services.html)

## Forms you may need

### Parole Board of Canada

- Request to observe a hearing  
[www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/forms/pbc0037e.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/forms/pbc0037e.pdf)

### Parole Decisions

- To find out a decision made for someone at a Parole Hearing (*Request for Registry Decision*)  
[www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/009/093/pbc0040e.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/009/093/pbc0040e.pdf)
- Form to appeal the decision made by the Parole Board  
[www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/001/093/pbc0032e.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/001/093/pbc0032e.pdf)

### Victims

- For Victim Registration and to request information about an inside person through the Parole Board  
[www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/002/093/pbc0031e.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/002/093/pbc0031e.pdf)
- For Victim Registration and to request information about an inside person through the Correctional Service of Canada  
[www.csc-scc.gc.ca/victims/index-eng.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/victims/index-eng.shtml)
- To request to observe a hearing and/or present a Victim Statement  
[www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/forms/pbc0037e.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/forms/pbc0037e.pdf)
- A checklist for what to put in a Victim Statement  
[www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/002/093/002-0012-en.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/parole-board/migration/002/093/002-0012-en.pdf)
- Online form to apply for Victim Travel  
[www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/victims-victimes/form/jus700.html](http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/victims-victimes/form/jus700.html)

## Videos to assist you

### Parole Board Hearings

- [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)  
Search 'Your Guide to Parole'  
Search 'Parole: contributing to Public Safety'  
Search 'What You Need to Know About Parole If You're in Provincial/Territorial Custody'

### Parole Elder-Assisted Hearings

- [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)  
Search 'Parole Elder Assisted Hearing'

### Victims

- [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)  
Search 'Parole Board Victim Services'

## **Parole – The Next Step of the Journey**

**It's a fact that almost all of those serving a sentence inside our provincial jails and federal prisons will be released back into our communities. They will become our neighbours once again.**

Research has proven that a gradual, controlled, supervised approach is best for those returning to our communities. It helps them become citizens who are law-abiding, safe to be around, and who do not re-offend. Conditional Releases and especially Parole are set up to assist with this process. Releases are a chance for the person to apply the programming and knowledge they have been given in prison and to connect with the support that they need in our communities before the end of their sentence.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network is grateful to those who have assisted us with this booklet and shown their enthusiasm for it. Our goal is to offer information, encourage people to apply for parole, and to offer support to those in our prisons and their families.

**Parole is a chance to move forward on the journey towards a crime-free life.**

Canadian Families and Corrections Network is a Canadian registered charity.  
Our mission is to build stronger and safer communities by assisting families affected by criminal behavior, incarceration and community reintegration.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network  
PO Box 35040 Kingston ON K7L 5S5  
Toll-free information and referral line: 1-888-371-2326  
Email: [national@cfcn-rcafd.org](mailto:national@cfcn-rcafd.org)  
Web site: [www.cfcn-rcafd.org](http://www.cfcn-rcafd.org)

