

# STRUCTURING PAROLE DECISIONMAKING

Lessons from Technical Assistance  
in  
Nine States

August 1987

This project was supported by grant number GG-9 from the National Institute of Corrections, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

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## **PREFACE**

Parole decisionmakers perform a number of crucial and often unrecognized functions in the criminal justice system. Among these is the role of the gatekeeper at the end of the correctional system--making decisions about when offenders will be released and under what conditions. In overcrowded and under-funded correctional systems, that function bears enormous pressure. **In**, recognition of this and other difficult roles, the National Institute of Corrections has made available over the last two years a program of technical assistance to provide support to parole decisionmakers in their own jurisdictions.

The report which follows is a final summary of the activities sponsored under that program of technical assistance and an assessment of its outcomes. COSMOS Corporation, in collaboration with the Center for Effective Public Policy, designed and provided the technical assistance in nine states. The results of the efforts are the fruits not just of these organizations and the project staff, but also of a large pool of expert consultants, as well as the efforts of the staff of the National Institute of Corrections.

Although technically a grant, the project was envisioned as a cooperative agreement, where the efforts of the grantee--in this case COSMOS Corporation--and the National **Institute** of Corrections would both be brought to bear upon the task at hand. The authors of this report would like to give special recognition to Mr. Kermit Humphries of the **NIC's** Community Corrections Division. As grant monitor and team member, Mr. Humphries was an invaluable resource in guiding the project and in completing the work. As a member of the team, Mr. Humphries made the effort a "cooperative" one in every sense of the word.

Other individuals who should be recognized for their contribution to this effort are the many parole decisionmakers in the states which participated in technical assistance. In each instance, all of the members of the parole boards involved made their time and talents available as the technical assistance proceeded. They were genuine in their desire to make good use of the technical assistance resources, candid and open as they participated in problem assessments, and untiring in their participation as managers decisionmakers and policymakers. Our heartfelt thanks go to them.

Al 1 of the above assistance notwithstanding, the authors alone are responsible for this report. **It** is the final task of a 21-month long technical assistance effort funded under Grant GG-9 from the National Institute of Corrections.

**STRUCTURING PAROLE DECISIONMAKING**  
**LESSONS FROM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN NINE STATES**  
 (Executive Summary)

What are the needs faced by parole decisionmakers as they undertake efforts to introduce more structure into their decisionmaking procedures? What kind of impact can technical assistance efforts have in this field? What lessons can be learned about future needs and future approaches to technical assistance?

These questions are addressed in the following document which is the result of a 21-month program of technical assistance made available to state parole boards around the country by the National Institute of Corrections **(NIC)**. Nine state paroling authorities (Alaska, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) received assistance. The assistance was designed and delivered by COSMOS Corporation in cooperation with the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP). Some examples of the types of technical assistance provided include:

Initial assessment and evaluation after a site review with decisionmakers and key staff:

Training for board and staff members as new decision guidelines policy was being implemented;

Advice about the technical aspects of empirical research being conducted as the basis for new risk-prediction instrument;

Design and facilitation of policy development seminars involving parole board members and staff; and

Design and presentation of goal-setting "retreats" for parole board members as a prelude to developing release decisionmaking policy.

Several major issues faced boards as they began the task of introducing more "structure" into their decisionmaking:

- A lack of good “models” of structured decision-making, aside from the “matrix” approach first implemented by the U.S. Parole Commission, made it difficult for boards to envision precisely what their own decisionmaking policy might look like;
- The heavy demands on boards for individual case decisionmaking evidenced by extremely demanding hearing schedules, made it difficult for boards to focus upon basic issues such as the goals they were trying to achieve through release decisionmaking;
- Board members typically saw themselves primarily as individual decisionmakers. The concept of a board as also a policymaking body involved in the articulation of goals, the development of consensus and the operationalizing of policy, was a relatively new and untested concept with most parole boards participating in the project;
- The idea of empirically-based risk prediction tools as aids to decisionmaking sparked a great deal of interest. On the one hand, parole decisionmakers were wary of such tools, seeing them as a threat to the human factor in decisionmaking. On the other hand, some decisionmakers were quick to embrace the tool without a critical understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and certainly without widespread understanding of the role that policymakers must play in their development and use; and
- In a field which is becoming increasingly sophisticated, one can no longer assume that the informed lay-person is adequately equipped for membership on a state paroling authority. Yet most boards experience frequent turnover as overlapping terms expire and vacancies are filled with new appointees. Particularly in the absence of decisionmaking policy it is difficult to maintain continuity and institutional memory. Training of new parole board members is badly needed.

In terms of the grant's impact, the experience of this project suggests that technical assistance is a viable tool for effecting change within state paroling authorities. Among the states participating in this program, there are specific, verifiable changes in progress that can be reported. These include the existence of operating decisionmaking systems based upon explicit policy which did not exist prior to the inception of this project. They also include the existence of draft policy statements working groups, and interim products which indicate movement toward operating policy. Several lessons about the stimulation of change emerged:

- The process of change--if it is to involve parole boards themselves--is a slow one, due at least in part to the heavy hearing schedules of working parole boards. Securing time when all members of a board are available to work together on issues is difficult. A reasonable timeframe for major policy change would be at least one year;
- Technical assistance is best delivered over a period of months with episodes of on-site work interspersed with agency work and consultant provision of written documentation. Staff continuity is important--with a single person responsible for the planning and delivery of technical assistance. That individual may well call in others to participate as resources, but that individual becomes the technical assistance manager--knowing the needs of the agency, the technical assistance goals, progress made, and providing a point of contact for agency staff;
- Provision of useful technical assistance depends heavily upon a needs assessment carried out with the decisionmakers. Often an agency requesting technical assistance has difficulty defining precisely what its needs are;
- One of the most powerful forms of assistance for parole boards is the opportunity to hear from colleagues in other states and to share common problems and ideas for change. There seem to be few opportunities for such interchange to take place, particularly among parole practitioners; and

- The intense interest in empirically-based risk prediction instruments suggests the need for sane "state-of-the-art" summary which provides --in a form accessible and understandable to the policymaker - information on what such tools can and cannot do, how they are developed, what role the policymaker should play, and how they can be used and updated in practice.

## CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	ii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	iii
Section	
I. INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT OF THE PAROLE DECISIONMAKER AND THE NIC RESPONSE .....	1
II. PROJECT OVERVIEW .....	3
A. Goals .....	3
B. Design .....	4
C. The Technical Assistance Process .....	5
D. Workplan .....	8
III. STATE VIGNETTES .....	9
A. Alaska .....	11
B. Massachusetts .....	14
C. Missouri .....	17
D. Nebraska .....	20
E. Ohio .....	23
F. South Carolina .....	26
G. Tennessee .....	28
H. Texas .....	31
I. Virginia .....	34
IV. PROJECT OUTCOMES .....	34
A. Outcomes for Participating States .....	35
B. A Better Understanding of Parole Issues .....	36
C. Lessons for the Delivery of Technical Assistance .....	38
v. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE .....	A-I
Appendix	
A. Project Organization .....	B-I
B. Project Staff, Consultants, and State Teams .....	C-1
C. Project Brochure .....	
Exhibit 1. States Requesting and Receiving Assistance .....	7



## I. INTRODUCTION

The decade of the 1980s has to date brought enormous turmoil to the field of criminal justice. For corrections, change has been rapid, basic and difficult. Philosophical debate about the purpose of criminal sanctioning--desert vs. rehabilitation vs. incapacitation--continues to rage. Public attitudes toward crime and criminals have become increasingly harsh. Prison populations have continued to grow at staggering rates.

Parole decisionmakers find themselves at the very center of this controversy and change. Despite the fact that parole has traditionally received little public attention and proportionately fewer resources to accomplish its mission, it too is heavily influenced by changes in the field.

In recognition of these changes and in response to numerous requests from the parole community, the National Institute of Corrections chose to fund a program of technical assistance for parole decisionmakers beginning in 1985. The assistance was conceived as a vehicle to bring the best state-of-the-art knowledge and techniques to parole decisionmakers.

In the spring of 1985, the National Institute of Corrections published its Supplemental Funding Plan for Fiscal Year 1984. In that plan it announced its intention to fund a program of technical assistance aimed at members of state paroling authorities. The purpose of the technical assistance was to assist state paroling authorities "in establishing consistent, responsible, and objective parole decisionmaking processes at the state level." In response to that announcement COSMOS Corporation, with the Center for Effective Public Policy as subcontractor, assembled a team of individuals with a variety of experience in the parole area, prepared a proposal, and, after a competitive selection process, was awarded a grant to undertake a program of technical assistance. The grant period extended from November 15, 1985 through August 30, 1987.

The following chapters provide an overview of the project, including information on activities undertaken during the course of the project by

state, a discussion of project outcomes and an outline of implications for future assistance to state paroling authorities.

## II. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### Project Goals

The major goal of the project was to assist state paroling authorities in introducing more structure into their release decisionmaking practices. Release decisionmaking was defined to include both the initial decision to release on parole as well as the parole revocation decision. In short, the technical assistance was conceived as a resource for parole boards who were interested in developing explicit policy (or revising existing policy) to guide individual release decisions. For purposes of this project, a number of characteristics of "structured decisionmaking" were identified:

1. Explicitly stated goals for decisionmaking practices (e.g., just deserts, rehabilitation, risk management, etc.);
2. Explicit, written policy covering topics such as release, offender eligibility for parole, setting terms, conditions of parole release, supervision levels;
3. Explicit decisionmaking tools (e.g., rating sheets, risk prediction devices);
4. Revocation policy;
5. Explicit rules for overriding policy;
6. Tracking systems to document decisionmakers' compliance with policy; and
7. Systems for periodic review and revision of policy.

While the the goal of the technical assistance was to help agencies to move toward more structure in their decisionmaking procedures, there was no "optimum" level of structure assumed, and in fact it was assumed that agencies would be found at al 1 points along the continuun. The project anticipated assisting state paroling agencies to move at different rates and for different distances along that continuum.

### Project Design

No "Model" Approach. The technical assistance team did not have a single "model" approach to releasing policy which it was offering optimal. The underlying assumption was that decisionmaking policy--its specific content and format--must reflect the goals of the decisionmakers involved. For instance, the team did not assume that a "matrix" approach to decisionmaking policy was appropriate for all or any of the states involved.

Involvement of Decisionmakers. The technical assistance was directed at the decisionmakers themselves, and secondarily, to staff. Each member of a paroling authority was expected to participate and the boards needed to be willing to make time available to participate in the technical assistance activities.

On-site Assistance. In the past, resources for parole decisionmakers had been provided in terms of training and seminars available on a regional or national basis. One important characteristic of this effort was to be its on-site delivery. This would ensure that all members of a paroling authority could participate and that both the needs assessment and the provision of assistance could reflect the organizational and resource conditions existing in the recipient agency.

Implementation Emphasis. The goal in each instance was to effect change within the organizations, not simply to provide information or opportunities for discussion. Technical assistance plans were geared to help the organizations articulate their goals and translate those into operational policies and the systems to implement and support those policies.

Documentation. For each instance of technical assistance a written technical assistance plan was developed--sometimes in the form of an agenda for on-site work--as well as a technical assistance report documenting the delivery of technical assistance and looking ahead to next steps for the agency. The purpose of the documentation was twofold. First, it was a way of emphasizing to the recipient agency the assistance provided and to be used as a tool for future work. Second, it was a way of documenting for NIC and for others interested in the field what issues were addressed, what methods were used, and what results achieved.

Project Organization. The project staff was organized along two dimensions. First, there was a core staff responsible for conducting needs assessments in the states, and then planning, delivering, and reporting on the assistance. That core team was supplemented by a pool of over twenty expert consultants drawn from among parole practitioners, university-based researchers, and individuals working in the private sector. Appendix A shows the project organization. Second, the project staff was grouped into state teams. Each state team was headed by a member of the core project staff, and drew upon other core staff and selected consultants based upon the specific needs of the state assignment. Appendix B lists the project staff and consultants. It also lists the composition of each of the state teams.

#### The Technical Assistance Process

The process of providing technical assistance to a state included four primary steps. First was an on-site needs assessment to determine in some detail what problems were perceived by the parole decisionmakers and how the project could be of assistance. Second was the preparation of a technical assistance plan specifying goals for the effort, activities, time frames, team members, and rough level-of-effort. The parole decisionmakers--usually with the board chair as a spokesperson--were asked to approve the plan before work began. Third, technical assistance was provided. A discussion of specific technical assistance provided by states can be found in Chapter III below. Typical types of assistance included design and facilitation of board seminars and retreats, assembly of resource material, provision of advice on policy and technical issues, and design and facilitation of board/staff working group activities. Fourth, a written report was prepared concerning each on-site instance of technical assistance.

#### Workplan

During the first sixty days of the grant period, the project team focused upon ways to make the resources of the project known to parole decisionmakers. A project brochure was developed (included as Appendix C) and mailed, along with a cover letter from the Director of the

National Institute of Corrections, to every member of a state paroling authority in the nation, as well as to each board's executive director. Project staff attended the 1966 mid-winter conference of the American Correctional Association and briefed the membership of the Association of Paroling Authorities International who were meeting concurrently with ACA. In addition, notification about the project was included in NIC's update section of Corrections Today. Boards were instructed to request assistance through a letter to the project from the chairman of the relevant paroling authority .

In all, formal requests were received from nineteen states, informal inquiries from four other states. Ultimately, the project provided technical assistance to nine states. The other states either received assistance from other sources, could not participate because of scheduling problems, or did not receive assistance because project resources were limited. Exhibit 1 lists the states from which requests were received and those which eventually participated in the technical assistance project.

## Exhibit 1

## STATES FORMALLY REQUESTING AND RECEIVING\* TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

*Alaska	*Missouri
California	*Nebraska
Colorado	*Ohio
District of Columbia	Oklahoma
Florida	*South Carolina
Hawaii	*Tennessee
Iowa	*Texas
Maryland	*Virginia
*Massachusetts	Washington
	Wisconsin

\*States marked with an asterisk actually received technical assistance.

### III. STATE VIGNETTES

The following sections of the report provide background information on each of the states that participated in the project. In addition, a brief summary specifies the technical assistance issues which emerged in such states, the activities completed, and the outcomes of the assistance.



## A. The Alaska Board of Parole

### Background

The Alaska Board of Parole is a five-member, part-time body appointed by the Governor to five-year overlapping terms. Its small staff is headquartered in Juneau, although hearings are held at facilities around the state. The Board is responsible for release and revocation decisionmaking, setting supplemental conditions for mandatory releasees, executive clemency functions, as well as commutation release reviews--the emergency mechanism which responds to population crises. During calendar year 1985, the Board held 884 hearings in support of those functions. During 1986 the Board held 1471 hearings. Field supervision of parolees comes under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Corrections.

The Alaska Board had been through a major guidelines development effort in the late 1970s and at the time of its technical assistance request was operating with a parole guideline matrix modeled after the matrix first developed by the U.S. Parole Commission. The Board had some concern over the validity of its risk instrument--which formed one axis of the matrix--and had undertaken some efforts to review the instrument using a database of more recent releasees.

### **Technical Assistance Issues**

Although performance data had been collected upon a cohort of recent parolees, and the data had been entered into an automated database\* initial analysis indicated that none of the characteristics of the parolees appeared to be significantly related to parole performance. The analysis had been suspended because of a lack of resources. The task, as agreed to by the technical assistance project staff and the Alaska Board, was to determine whether the new data could be used to revise the existing risk instrument.

### Technical Assistance Activities

Because the original request of the Alaska Board was focused upon a task of such specific dimensions, the project team elected to proceed

with assistance without conducting an on-site assessment. Questions of cost and accessibility clearly played a part in this decision. The database which had already been collected through previous Board efforts was to be provided to the technical assistance team for analysis. The goal was to provide an assessment of its usefulness for revising the Board's risk instrument. After numerous exchanges of information in the form of computer diskettes, documentation of coding structure, telephone discussions, etc., the analysis began. It involved first a complete re-keying of the hard copy data, and recoding of sane factors. A series of bivariate analyses were conducted to determine if any significant relationships between outcome and crimes, criminal histories, prison adjustment measures, socio-economic factors, or substance abuse could be established.

### **Outcomes**

The conclusion of the analysis was that a better risk scale could be developed using the existing data set. This recommendation along with supporting analysis was forwarded to the Alaska Board for its future planning and policy development work. Having a strong desire to develop a viable risk instrument, the Alaska Board contacted NIC for continued technical assistance. NIC agreed to have a consultant from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency come to Alaska to assist the Board in finalizing a new risk tool based upon the progress made by the Board in recent months in formulating concrete goals for developing parole guidelines. With this assistance, the Board adopted a revised risk assessment tool in August 1987 and will put the instrument into use at its next hearings.

## B. The Massachusetts Parole Board

### **Background**

The Massachusetts Parole Board is an independent seven-member body, appointed by the governor to overlapping five-year terms. It is responsible for parole release and revocation decisionmaking, supervision of paroled offenders, and also serves as the Governor's advisory group for pardons and commutations. It has a staff of approximately 200, holds more than 8,000 hearings per year, and during 1986 supervised a total of 7,683 parolees. In recent years, Massachusetts, like many other states, has experienced dramatic growth in its inmate population (just over 3,800 inmates in 1975 to over 10,000 inmates in 1987). As a result the Board has been faced with an increasing number of hearings as well as with an increasing number of parolees under supervision (a 260 percent Increase in hearing workload and a 123 percent increase in supervision workload over the last ten years).

The Massachusetts Parole Board requested technical assistance from this project early in the grant period. While the Board had developed for itself a parole matrix in the early 1970s which was designed as a "descriptive" model of past releasing practices, the current Board found the matrix less than helpful in its own decisionmaking. Board members wanted to examine alternative means to introduce structure into their decisionmaking process. They saw such structure as a vehicle to introduce some consistency into decisionmaking, as a basis to defend and justify release decisions, and as a vehicle for communicating standards to a staff of hearing examiners who conduct in-person hearings and make decision recommendations for a portion of the Board's caseload.

### **Technical Assistance Issues**

A needs assessment was conducted on-site through interviewing each of the Board's members individually, reviewing background information, and conducting staff interviews. As a result of the assessment, the Board concurred that two basic issues would have to be addressed before work could begin on developing specific decision policy. First, the Board wanted the opportunity to address as a group the, implicit goals

which they each held for making release decisionmaking, to come to some consensus about what the Board as a whole wished to achieve and secondly, to come to some consensus about the proposed policymaking role of the Board. Board members had traditionally viewed themselves as individual decisionmakers and there were no formal mechanisms--and few informal ones--for the Board to articulate its collective standards for release decisionmaking.

#### **Technical** Assistance Activities

The project team worked with the Massachusetts Parole Board over a period of fifteen months. During that time, the project provided assistance in a variety of forms:

- Two two-day retreats for the five Board members were designed, staffed, and delivered, along with preparation of agenda materials, reference materials, exercise materials, and written documentation of each session;
- Two one-day working sessions involving the five Board members and selected staff were designed, staffed, and delivered, along with preparation of agenda materials and a written report on each;
- A package of illustrative material representing alternative approaches to parole decisionmaking policy was provided to the Board. This package contained material from eight different states; and
- A briefing was conducted for a quarterly Board staff meeting, outlining the technical assistance effort and providing the staff with an opportunity to comment on decisionmaking practice.

Throughout the fifteen-month period, advice was offered to the Board and its staff regarding membership of working groups and development of workplans for the Board as it drafted and revised its initial policy.

**Outcomes**

There are two outcomes associated with the technical assistance effort in Massachusetts. The first is the existence of a draft policy statement issued in March of 1987, which states explicitly the goals which the Board seeks through its operations, and which spells out the factors which the Board views--both positively and negatively--in making release decisions. This fills a gap which had existed prior to its existence of any public statement of specific standards for decisionmaking. Secondly, in a major strategic planning effort which the Board began in the spring of 1987, it has identified the development of release decision guidelines governing both releases and revocation as one of the three major strategic objectives of the Board.

In a less tangible sense, it is also possible to describe outcomes which the technical assistance has effected. First, and most importantly, the Massachusetts Parole Board has, as a group and on record, done more than simply state its goals. It has debated and grappled with the issue of goals and has come to a deeper understanding of the conflicts inherent in the parole process and in some of the operational implications of conflicting goals. In addition, it has recognized and embraced the role of policymakers, a role in which it did not previously engage. It has accepted the need to articulate commonly held standards for decisionmaking and the desirability of articulating and communicating them in written policy.

### C. The Missouri Board of Probation and Parole

#### Background

The Missouri Board of Probation and Parole has five full-time members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate. It is an autonomous body administratively located within the Department of Corrections and Human Resources. The Board makes decisions about parole release and revocation and is responsible for all probation and parole services for adult felons and misdemeanants, including field supervision. As of this writing, the Board has roughly 4,000 parolees under supervision.

Missouri has been using parole release guidelines in the form of a decision matrix for many years. Under these guidelines, Board policy indicates expected time to be served as a range of months associated with risk and offense security levels (assuming that minimum eligibility has been reached). Under the Board's published procedures, the Board also considers an offender's institutional conduct, prior parole violations, mental competency, parole release plan, whether release would depreciate the seriousness of the offense, whether release is in the best interest of society , as well as other factors.

#### **Technical Assistance Issues**

The technical assistance request included the following:

- Assistance in improving the currently used risk assessment device (a salient factor score) and risk prediction, in general;
- A need for more information to assist in parole release decisionmaking;
- Methods to deal with the increasing number of parole revocations; and
- The development of strategies to respond to the pressures of overcrowding.

As a technical assistance plan was developed, it became clear that the Board also wished to explore and clarify its goals for release

decisionmaking as well as its role in policymaking.

**Technical** Assistance Provided

The project team concentrated its efforts in Missouri over a five-month period. During that time, the project provided the following assistance:

- One two-day meeting of the Board and the Chief State Supervisor was designed, staffed, and delivered along with preparation of agenda materials and written documentation of the session;
- One two-day meeting of the Board, including regional administrators, the Chief State Supervisor, and research staff was designed, staffed, and delivered along with preparation of agenda materials, reference materials and written documentation of the session; and
- Analysis of the salient factor score and current data base and assessment of staff's ability to participate in the development of a "new" risk tool.

At each of the two-day sessions, participants worked on defining the purposes of parole release decisionmaking. This, of course, necessitated a discussion of the current use of the salient factor score. While Parole Board members place varying degrees of emphasis on several different goals for criminal sanctioning, the management of risk still remains an important issue for all of them.

In support of the Board's conclusion that its salient factor score should be re-assessed, a project consultant spent one day reviewing the existing database, working with staff, and assessing the predictive powers of the salient factor score. A report documenting his findings was shared with the Board.

Periodically during the five-month period, advice was offered to the Board and the Chief State Supervisor regarding techniques for building consensus in support of the Board's policymaking role.

## Outcomes

As a result of each of the two-day sessions, the Board has grappled with the question of goals for release decisionmaking. Because of their interest in both risk management and rehabilitation, the Board is considering a structure which includes both a risk assessment scale and a needs assessment scale. In this regard, the Board is interested in examining decisionmaking policy in which release decisions are tied very closely to conditions and level of supervision. Members also expressed an interest in looking at revocation policies in this context.

As a result of the technical assistance, the Board is committed to re-assessing its salient factor score. Certain limitations to the score have been identified and work is proceeding toward improvements. As part of the effort, plans are for Board staff to have training in specific statistical analysis techniques. The Board has also brought a researcher in from the field to act as project director of the risk management development.

It is anticipated that the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole will continue the work they have begun in the coming year. They have divided themselves into three informal workgroups, developed a workplan and set times for meetings. This is a working structure they are familiar with and have had success with in the past.



## **D The Nebraska Parole Board**

### **Background**

The Nebraska Parole Board is comprised of five members appointed by the Governor, three of whom are full-time employees. The Board is responsible for all release and revocation decisionmaking and makes recommendations to the Board of Pardons regarding pardons and commutations.

About 2,100 reviews were held by the Board in fiscal year 1985-1986. Of the 2,100 reviews, approximately 600 hearings were granted: 380 paroles were granted; 125 paroles were denied; and about 90 considerations were deferred. The number of revocation hearings over the past six years has increased by about 50 percent.

In any discussion of Nebraska the size of system must be taken into consideration. Nebraska has about 2,000 offenders in institutions statewide. The Board always meets as a full board and holds in-depth personal interviews with each of fender on several occasions prior to parole. In this regard, Board members often know offenders by their first name and are intimately familiar with items in the inmates' files. The Board members operate as individual decisionmakers.

The original request for technical assistance was to assist the Board in developing more objective decisionmaking criteria to increase their accountability to themselves, the Governor, inmates, the legislature, and the public.

### **Technical Assistance Issues**

The Board had very little in the way of explicit policy governing its release decisions prior to the project's involvement. What existed was a 24-item list drawn directly from state legislation which outlines the factors which the Board is required to consider. Board members felt uncomfortable with this situation. Issues identified at an initial site assessment included the development of more objective decisionmaking criteria for the following reasons: the need for more consistency in decisionmaking and more openness and accountability to the public; the need for a basis for justifying decisions; and the need for a tool to

predict risk of failure on parole. In addition, the Board concluded that assistance to help the members in sorting out their policy goals and objectives would be helpful.

A second issue was more technical in nature. It involved the development of a risk prediction tool. In order to develop the tool, however, an assessment of available resources--staff and data--was required.

#### Technical Assistance Provided

The project team worked with the Nebraska Board over a fourteen-month period. During that time the project provided the following assistance:

- Three two-day retreats for the five Board members and executive of rector were designed, staffed and delivered, along with preparation of agenda materials, reference materials and written documentation of each session;
- Workplans were prepared, delivered and monitored from time to time;
- A strategy session was held regarding potential funding of the development of a risk prediction tool;
- An assessment of existing data bases was conducted and recommendations made about what would be required to develop a Nebraska-based validated risk prediction tool; and
- Additional reference materials were provided to Board members as requested.

Throughout the fourteen-month period, advice was offered to the Board regarding the development of the risk prediction tool. Nebraska represents one state that was starting from scratch, in that nothing in the way of structured decisionmaking had existed in the state prior to the technical assistance. For this reason, the project team was in close contact with the Board throughout the planning and early development stages.

## **Outcomes**

As a result of the three two-day meetings; the Board has articulated more clearly the goals and objectives for its decisionmaking. Members have also articulated more clearly the criteria they use for decisionmaking. They have determined that they want to pursue the development of a risk prediction tool for release decisionmaking and possibly look at the relationship of this tool to risk management while on supervision.

Because the Board has fewer resources at its disposal, it became necessary to include discussions about potential funding sources. After an assessment of existing resources and databases was completed, a more realistic determination of resource needs was made. The Board developed a concept paper to distribute to in-state universities (for work collaboration) and in-state foundations for funding. In addition, a technical assistance request was sent to NIC for potential assistance. The Board developed three possible scenarios of the work to be done dependent on the amount of resources available.

As of this writing, the Board is in the process of developing a workplan for the data collection and analysis phase of the risk tool development. Several conversations have been held with the University of Nebraska-Omaha and, in fact, faculty from the University attended one of the two-day meetings. The University has expressed interest in participating in the effort. One Board member has been named project director of this effort. She has been working to complete the initial steps of the project.

The Nebraska Board is committed to the development of a risk prediction tool as well as to continuing the policy work that was begun. They will need financial and technical assistance in the coming year, however, if they are to progress in this area.

The legislature recently made the two part-time positions of the Board full-time. As the terms of the part-time members end, full-time members will be appointed by the Governor. This has implications for the work that has begun in Nebraska. New members will have to be brought on board and work done to integrate the policy decisions already made into their decisionmaking process.

## E. The Ohio Parole Board

### **Background**

The Ohio Parole Board operates under the authority of the Division of Parole and Community Services within the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. All seven Board members are civil service employees meeting qualifications specified by statute. Nine hearing officers, an administrative assistant, and support staff complete the staffing complement for the Ohio Parole Board. The Board is authorized according to standards set by statute to release offenders from imprisonment through parole or furlough. It is also empowered to act in incidences of parole revocation.

The Chief of the Division of Parole and Community Services submitted an early request for technical assistance to pilot test, train and implement newly devised parole guidelines. A committee of Corrections and Parole officials including legal and research staff had formed in 1985 to draft a preliminary proposal for guidelines. Working from an agreed-upon workplan, the Ohio Parole Board was at a stage of pilot testing when their request for technical assistance was accepted by the project.

### **Technical Assistance Issues**

Based upon the Ohio Board's request and following a two-day site visit with the Ohio Parole Authority conducted in April 1986, the technical assistance team identified the following issues to be addressed:

- Review of the proposed guidelines matrix with Specific review of the construction of the risk factors which formed a portion of one scale in the matrix;
- Revise the current workplan and assist leadership to update;
- **Involve** and orient Parole Board members and hearing officers, who had, up until this time, only minimal orientation to the proposed guidelines which had been developed by a

committee of corrections officials in which the Parole Board was only represented; and

- Develop a strategy for responding to the legislature, the Governor's Task Force on Crowding, and the public at large. In terms of external relations, the paroling authority had been under very close scrutiny from the state legislature.

From May through December 1986, the project worked with Ohio officials to address the above listed Issues.

A training workshop was held in July which included:

- An overview of national changes and trends in parole;
- A discussion of paroling purposes using an exercise designed to highlight the group's orientation to various philosophies of criminal sanctioning; and
- A session in which the Board and staff actually applied the proposed guidelines to sample parole cases both as a way to "practice" but also as a tool to raise concerns about the guidelines.

Before closing the session, remaining issues were identified and a "next steps" workplan was outlined. Peer consultants described parole guideline developments in their states and served as small group facilitators during break-out sessions.

In October, a 1-1/2 day meeting was conducted to review the first phase of pilot testing of the guidelines. Research staff had collected information on release decisionmaking as performed with and without the benefits of guidelines. The group Identified problems with the guidelines, and plans for the second phase of pilot testing were modified based on the input of this meeting. Everyone agreed upon the need to involve institutional staff who would be asked to fill in the risk assessment sheet.

In addition, the project responded to Ohio parole leadership by

reviewing a draft of their brochure, guidelines proposal and administrative regulations, and provided written feedback. In response to a request for information on legal challenges related to parole guidelines, the project provided referrals and fact-finding research.

#### Outcomes

The following outcomes were accomplished with regard to issues identified and included in the Ohio parole technical assistance plan.

- There is now a revised draft of a brochure and public information packet regarding the guidelines under review for final drafting;
- Language in some parts of the guidelines has been modified to avoid possible legal challenges as advised by other states and national consultants; and
- Parole Board members, hearing officers, staff, and institution staff became more involved in the process of policy development and, in particular, in the plans for implementing and using the guidelines. There is definitely a deeper level of support for the use of guidelines among those who are expected to use them than there was before.

In terms of future activity, tasks which lie ahead for the Ohio Board include:

- Examination of the performance of the policy/guideline matrix;
- Further training with members, hearing officers, and staff on any areas causing problems in the use of guidelines;
- Revision to existing policy guidelines and further delineation of policy (i.e., rules covering exceptions) where needed; and
- Examination of the extent of variance in release decisionmaking and re-establishment of goals for guidelines compliance.

## F. South Carolina Parole and Community Corrections Board

### **Background**

The Parole and Community Corrections Board is an independent seven-member part-time Board. The seven members are appointed by the Governor, with consent of the Senate, one from each of the congressional districts, with one member at large. The Board is responsible for parole releaser probation and parole revocations and supervision, granting pardons, and the operation of the Parole and Community Corrections Department.

The Board had begun moving toward more structured decisionmaking during 1985 with the development of a risk assessment tool based upon an empirical analysis of South Carolina parolees. The Board requested technical assistance to examine the next steps in moving toward more structured decisionmaking. Specifically, the Board wanted assistance in establishing the policy framework in which to continue using the risk assessment tool.

### **Technical Assistance Issues**

As a result of an initial site assessment visit, two technical assessment issues were identified. First was the need to assess more completely the recently-developed risk assessment tool.

A second issue was the task of developing decision rules or guidelines to clearly articulate Board policy with respect to release decisionmaking. This would assure that both decision rules and the risk prediction tool were integrated into a cohesive policy for the Board's use. Board members felt they were ready to take the next step and explicitly articulate the purpose(s) of release decisionmaking. Training of staff regarding the new policies was also necessary once the Board identified their policies.

### **Technical Assistance Provided**

The project team worked with the Board over a period of seven months. During that time, the project provided the following assistance:

- A two-day retreat for Board members and executive staff was designed, staffed and delivered along with preparation of agenda materials, reference materials, and written documentation of the session.

After the two-day retreats, project team and executive staff of the Board realized that many skills that would be required on the project existed in-house. Therefore, the Board was capable of further work on their own with staff support. In this regard, executive staff met and developed draft guidelines based on the work and direction set at the two-day retreat. The resulting guidelines were presented to Parole Board members for consideration. Lastly, a two-day training session was held with parole examiners. Executive staff planned and conducted this meeting, and technical assistance project staff attended as a resource.

Throughout the seven-month period, advice was offered to executive staff regarding the process of preparing guidelines for the Board's approval and the training of staff. Specific feedback was also given to executive staff regarding next steps, development of workplans and ways to improve staff - Board working relations.

### **Outcomes**

The one specific outcome that can be identified in South Carolina is the existence and use of decision rules. These rules consist of policy statements regarding release decisionmaking as well as a grid for release-no release decisions dependent upon the offender's risk score and violence level. The guidelines also include mitigating and aggravating circumstances. The Board views these guidelines as voluntary. Preliminary data seems to indicate, however, that the Board is concurring with the decision rules about 90 percent of the time.

Another outcome was the opportunity for a joint training session of the Board, parole examiners, and staff. This session represented the first time that Board and staff have met together. It was an opportunity not only to discuss the application of the decision rules, but for staff and Board to articulate more clearly the expectations they have of each other.



While the Board and executive staff had requested assistance with data analysis and validation of the risk prediction tool, they made a later decision to do this work in-house. As a result of the resignation of both the executive director and research director of the agency, however, the work was not completed.

Discussions with the new director have been very positive. It is likely that the South Carolina Board will take up the next steps in the use and development of the decision rules, including sane discussions about the impact of the decision rules on prison population as well as revocation guidelines. It is also possible that the risk prediction tool will be validated and its use monitored over the coming year.

## G. The Tennessee Board of Parole

### Background

The Tennessee Board of Parole, a five-member board appointed by the Governor, decides both parole release and revocations, provides parole supervision, and makes executive clemency recommendations to the Governor. In 1986 the Board conducted nearly 9,000 hearings. Currently, there are approximately 10,000 offenders under parole supervision.

The Tennessee Department of Corrections is under a federal court order to limit the size of the prison population. The Parole Board plays a major role in controlling the size of the prison population. Under the Comprehensive Corrections Improvement Act of 1985, the Department of Corrections can advance every inmate's parole eligibility date under emergency conditions declared by the Governor. In order to handle the increased workload, the Tennessee Paroling Authority nearly tripled in budget and staffing over a two-year period, 1986-1987.

### **Technical Assistance Issues**

During the initial site assessment visit, most Board members expressed an interest in grappling with the issue of decisionmaking purposes. It became clear that the risk instrument was one of many factors that each Board member considered in making release decisions. The Board wanted to develop a decisionmaking structure which incorporated the risk instrument and provided consistency in Board decisions.

In addition, the Board was strong in its view that the current risk instrument needed revalidation because they had lost confidence in its reliability.

### Technical Assistance Provided

The primary focus of assistance was on helping the Board reach consensus around the purposes of release decisionmaking and the development of a structure to reflect those purposes.

A series of four two-day meetings were planned and directed for field staff including parole officers, supervisors, hearing officers and key central office staff. After the first meeting, the group divided

into five committees which worked between meetings of the full group. A total of 25-30 people participated in the process.

### **Outcomes**

The Board has decided that Incapacitation will be the dominant purpose of both its release and revocation decisionmaking. It has developed a proposed structure which reflects that purpose. A major consequence of that decision is that the Board will use the bulk of its community and supervision resources to manage higher-risk parolees. Thus, under this scheme dramatically fewer supervision resources would be assigned to those parolees who are defined as minimum risk.

Similarly, the Board has decided to develop a risk instrument that will predict risk of serious crime (yet to be defined) with the intent that institutional resources should be used primarily for that group of offenders. Revocation guidelines will also be predicated on risk so that parole violators will not automatically be returned to prison but will instead be put under more intense risk management. Thus, only those under the most intensive supervision will be returned to prison for violations.

The development of a new risk assessment instrument is beginning, but the Board will receive additional technical assistance before that work can proceed further. A clear definition of success and failure on parole must also be agreed upon to guide the research.

The Board's decision to include field and central office staff in the work of this project has been very beneficial. There is now a great deal of enthusiasm for the effort, and ownership of its outcomes is clearly broad-based among Board members and staff.

## H. The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

### Background

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles is an independent body consisting of six full-time members appointed by the Governor to overlapping six-year terms. The Board is the administrative head of the agency and is legislatively empowered to provide its rules and policies. The Board is supported by a staff of 1,000, including nine parole commissioners who assist the Board in hearing and voting on certain types of release decisions. The Board has responsibility for making release and revocation decisions, setting conditions of parole, and for managing field supervision of parolees. In addition, it is responsible for supervision of releasees of the Department of Corrections who are released to mandatory supervision. During fiscal year 1985, the Board completed 26,305 reviews to determine parole actions (e.g., release, revocation, reinstatement). At the end of fiscal year 1985, the Board had 47,471 releasees under its jurisdiction, of whom 34,800 were on active supervision. The Board is headquartered in Austin with eight regional offices and forty-two district offices throughout the state. The Board also acts as adviser to the Governor with respect to pardons.

At the time the Texas Board requested technical assistance in early 1986, it was utilizing a risk instrument modeled upon the salient factor score developed by the U.S. Parole Commission. The instrument, known as the Pablo Scale, incorporated risk elements as well as factors which modeled past decisions of the Board. There was a great deal of ambivalence on the part of Board members regarding the instrument, as well as an interest in increasing the confidence and usefulness of any future decisionmaking tool. Several factors external to the Board also were relevant to its request for assistance. Both a federal court order and state legislation had created pressures to maintain prison populations within specific and decreasing limits. Major responsibility for responding to those mandates had fallen to the Board of Pardons and Parole. In addition, the State's Sunset Commission was preparing recommendations that the Board make organizational changes and develop standard guidelines for parole decisions. Given this set of internal and

external factors, the Texas Board requested assistance to re-examine its risk instrument and to reopen the entire question of decisionmaking guidelines.

#### Technical Assistance Issues

Three major issues emerged in defining with the Board its needs for technical assistance. First, it became clear that under then-current practice, the Board had no mechanism for examining its decisionmaking practice or communicating among one another regarding what their individual standards for making release decisions were. Nor was there any formal vehicle for communicating those standards to parole commissioners and other staff involved in preparing information and in conducting hearings or voting on cases. Second, the risk instrument then in use was not clearly understood by the Board, nor did it adequately address the Board's concerns regarding desert or rehabilitation. Third, the Board had not had the opportunity to consider its goals for release decisionmaking. Hence, the assistance required clustered in two areas. It was clear that sane advice on the technical aspects of risk instrument design and use was appropriate. Even more basic, however, the Board requested assistance to consider goals for decisionmaking and to examine whether and how it might proceed to develop explicit policy for parole decisionmaking.

#### Technical Assistance Activities

Technical assistance activities included:

- Development of a technical assistance approach based upon extensive interviews with each Board member as well as with Parole Board staff and upon review of background material provided by the Board;
- Design and facilitation of a two-day retreat for Board members and commissioners which was aimed at providing an opportunity for the participants to consider the goals of criminal sanctioning, how their own decisionmaking responsibilities served such goals, which were most important to individuals as well as to the

group as a whole, to re-examine the current risk instrument, to consider how a new instrument might be developed and used, and to have experience in the process of drafting parole release policy ;

- Off-site advice to the committee created to write new decisionmaking policy on process and technical issues; and
- On-site work with the policy committee on the technical and policy implications of a parole score approach being developed by the committee.

### **Outcomes**

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles has taken action on each of the three technical assistance issues which emerged as a result of their request. First, the Board has explicitly addressed the question of their goals for release decisionmaking and in the process has recognized the importance of defining goals in policy development. As a board they lean toward the goals of desert and risk management rather than to other possible sanctioning goals.

Second, the Board has developed an instrument to address the limitations they perceived in their past instrument. That instrument takes the form of a "parole score" which, through a mathematical formula, assesses the parole readiness of potential parolees. The concept of readiness includes factors related to risk as well as to desert. A policy-threshold would be established to determine at what level of score a release would be appropriate. This would allow the instrument to be used during times of population crisis as well as during routine Board operations. As of this writing, the Board has formally adopted the concept of a parole score as well as a statement of purpose for such a score. Plans call for pilot testing of the proposed score over a three-month period beginning in November 1987.

Third, the Board has clearly embraced its role as a policymaking body in addition to its role as a group of decisionmakers who consider individual cases. The development of this parole score has been an undertaking of a joint committee of Board and staff and was commissioned by its chairman.

## I. The Virginia Parole Board

### **Background**

The Virginia Parole Board is a separate, autonomous body that reports to the Governor through the Secretary of Public Safety. It is comprised of five full-time members who serve six-year terms. The Governor appoints one of the five members as Chair. Except for one member who has been there for fifteen years, all members have served on the Board since 1982. The Board is responsible for parole release decisionmaking, pardons, and parole revocation decisionmaking.

At the beginning of the project, the Parole Board received word that they had received a substantial Justice Assistance Act. grant. In addition, the legislature had appropriated funds over two years to support the development of more structured decisionmaking. A data collection effort had been completed; however, data had not been analyzed or checked in terms of quality control.

A request for technical assistance from the Parole Board Chair stated that the Board had started the process of developing more structured decisionmaking, but would find assistance in the planning and development of that project helpful. In addition, the Chair requested assistance in the assessment and improvement of its current information system.

### **Technical Assistance Issues**

The major technical assistance' issue identified during a site assessment was the need for the Board to clarify its goals both for the guideline development effort and for its release policies generally.

Since the Virginia Parole Board had just received substantial funds for the development and implementation of parole guidelines, it was agreed that the project would assist the Board in start-up activities, make recommendations regarding qualifications of a project director, assist in the preliminary assessment and analysis of the data, and monitor the progress of the Virginia project in general.

### **Technical** Assistance Provided

The project team worked with the Board over a thirteen-month period. During that time, the project provided the following assistance:

- A one-day meeting with the Board, parole examiners, and executive staff was designed, staffed, and delivered along with preparation of agenda materials and written documentation of the session;
- Preliminary analysis of the data on offender characteristics, including compilation of frequencies and recommendations for next steps, was provided;
- Additional recommendations for analyses of the data and a final “check” of the data work was provided after ten months of work; and
- Suggestions for potential consultants were provided as well as initial contact with those consultants.

At the one-day organizational meeting, project staff helped Parole Board members, parole examiners, and executive staff define their roles and responsibilities relative to the guidelines project, assess potential uses of the existing data, clarify project goals and begin the development of a workplan.

Throughout the thirteen-month period, advice was offered to the Board and project director regarding consultants, the process by which board members come to consensus on difficult issues, data analysis, other potential sources of technical assistance, information about specific issues, and what other states were working on that was similar to Virginia.

### **Outcomes**

As a result of the one-day organizational meeting, a workplan was developed and shared with all participants. In addition, participants came away with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the project and an agreement about decisionmaking roles. A less tangible outcome of this meeting was the agreement of all Board members



to work toward consensus regarding the development of structured decisionmaking as well as toward clear policy statements and goals vs. the individual decisionmaking they had participated in to date.

As a result of assistance with data analysis, Board staff were able to move more quickly through the analysis phase of the project.

The Virginia Parole Board has received funding for continuation of its structured decisionmaking project. In addition, the state legislature is also continuing its support. As of this writing, the Board is entering into Phase **II** of its project. It is anticipated that the Board will work toward and complete a validated risk assesament tool as well as policy for use of this instrument in the caning year.

#### IV. OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the project can be grouped into three categories: specific outcomes for participating states; a better understanding of issues pertaining to parole and to parole decisionmaking policy; and lessons learned about the delivery of technical assistance.

##### Outcomes for Participating States

Clearly, the most important measure of success for this project must be the degree to which it has been a catalyst in moving state paroling authorities toward explicit decisionmaking policy. A description of project activities and outputs by state is presented in the preceding chapter. In summary, however, it can be said that, as of this writing, each of the paroling authorities that participated in the project has a significant on-going effort aimed at developing, refining, implementing or operating with decisionmaking policy. The participating states are at varying stages in the process, which can be characterized as follows:

- Two states are currently operating with decisionmaking policy in place which was not in place prior to the technical assistance project (South Carolina and Ohio);
- Two states are undertaking revision of guidelines systems which predated the technical assistance project (Missouri and Alaska);
- One state has developed an innovative instrument to assess parole readiness and will begin pilot testing it in November of 1987 (Texas);
- One state is engaged in an internal effort to develop policy not just on release decisionmaking, but on supervision and on revocation decisionmaking using risk management as its central theme (Tennessee);
- One state is part-way through a two-year, grant-supported effort to develop guidelines, with a heavy investment in empirical research to assist in risk assessment (Virginia).

- One state has identified the development of decisionmaking guidelines as one of its three strategic objectives, and is using special legislative funding to support planning for guidelines (Massachusetts); and

Still another state has made the decision to shift from entirely unstructured decisionmaking practice to a more structured approach, and is currently developing its policy framework and approach to risk assessment (Nebraska).

Beyond these specific activities which indicate movement toward more structured decisionmaking, each state participating in the project (with the exception of Alaska, since no on-site work was undertaken there) has the opportunity to:

- Engage in within-board discussion on the purposes for parole release decisionmaking; and
- Consider and (sometimes for the first time) engage in policymaking, rather than focusing exclusively on individual decisionmaking.

#### A Better Understanding of Parole Issues

Following are some of the specific issues which emerged in the course of the technical assistance project:

Policy vs. Technical Aspects of Parole Decisionmaking. Perhaps the most significant issue that emerged; from the experience of providing technical assistance to these paroling authorities is that it is perilous at best to try to separate the technical aspects of parole decisionmaking tools from their policy aspects. Unless the technical aspects are chosen, designed, and implemented with the full knowledge and support of policymakers and decisionmakers, one of two outcomes is virtually certain. Either the tools will be ignored, or they will be used and eventually frustrate the goals of the policymaker.

Risk assessment instruments are a prime example of this problem. Many agencies--and parole agencies are not alone in this--have moved quickly to adopt risk assessment instruments, often without a clear

understanding of their usefulness or their weaknesses.

The Policy Making Role. Parole board members typically view themselves as individual decisionmakers. When a paroling authority takes upon itself the task of developing policy to guide individual decisions, it also takes on a new role. This role requires board members to articulate their individual goals and to build consensus among their membership so that a common area for policy development can be defined. This is the first and perhaps most important task in developing decisionmaking policy. Many boards do not have an existing forum for discussions of this sort, but it is essential that opportunities for this exchange be built into guideline-development efforts.

Beyond Tools. The existence and use of tools such as risk assessment devices, needs assessment devices, or tools for ranking offense severity do not, in and of themselves, constitute decisionmaking policy. When well-designed, these tools can become part of policy. However, unless they are complemented by some expression of a Board's expected action under certain conditions, they can only be viewed as aids to decisionmaking.

Board and Staff Roles. While policy development is primarily the responsibility of members of paroling authorities, experience suggests that involving staff in the process is helpful in three ways. First, it broadens the base of support for the policy in the organization. Second, policy development benefits from the experience and knowledge of staff. Third, it expands the pool of time and talent available to do the necessary work.

#### Lessons for the Delivery of Technical Assistance

Time Frame. The real import of developing and implementing decisionmaking policy is that it seeks to change the way an organization operates with respect to a central role. That is, by definition, a slow process. Technical assistance resources should be structured in such a way as to be available over a rather long time horizon--at least one year and preferably two or three years.

Ownership. For change to take place in how an organization operates, individuals with a stake in the change must take ownership of

the goals to which the change aspires as well as to the process. This means early involvement of the entire board, careful attention to the goals and needs of the group, and a clear definition of what the role of the group will be in bringing the change to fruition.

Location. Given the ownership issue outlines above, it is extremely important that some part of technical assistance be provides on-site, with the full participation of board members and key staff.

## V. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

During the period in which this project was on-going, it became clear that parole practitioners as a community have few support systems avail able to them. They had an incomplete picture of what their colleagues in other states were doing with respect to parole release policy, few opportunities to share information with those colleagues, limited time and occasion to discuss decision policy with members of their own boards, and few training and development resources to call upon.

As parole agencies begin to take on different and challenging roles--policymaking, management of complex and growing organizations, design and use of automated data systems, utilization of research-based tools, participation in state-level policy groups--they require various types. of support resources. Examples of such resources include:

- An active, well-financed professional organization that can foster communication among the parole community;

- A regularly-published survey of parole agencies, their members, authority, and organizational structure;

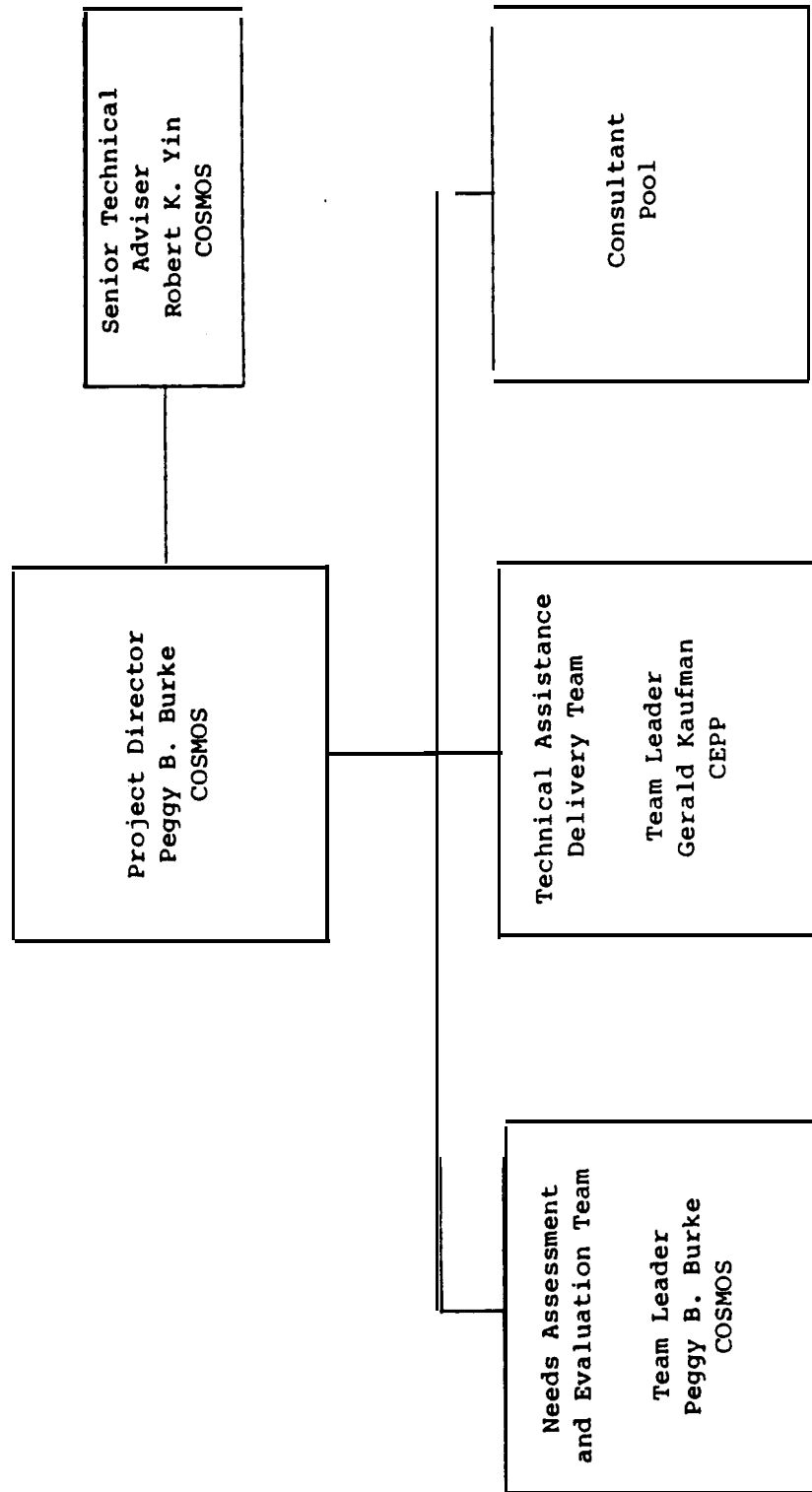
- A vehicle for information exchange on decisionmaking and other important issues such as routine conferences and a professional publication; and

- Training for parole board members, especially new members, on the historical context and philosophical base for parole, interview techniques, case law, administrative procedures, decisionmaking tools, and policy development.

Appendix A

PROJECT ORGANIZATION

## PROJECT ORGANIZATION



Appendix B

PROJECT STAFF, CONSULTANTS,  
AND  
STATE TEAMS



PROJECT STAFF, CONSULTANTS, AND STATE TEAMS

**Project** Staff

Peggy B. Burke, Project Director, COSMOS  
Debra Rog, COSMOS  
Robert Yin, COSMOS  
Gerald Kaufman, CEPP  
Linda Adams, CEPP  
Becky Ney, CEPP  
Peggy McGarry, CEPP  
Nancie Zane, CEPP

Project Consultants

Christopher Baird, Isthmus Associates  
John Byrd, Executive Director, Texas Board of  
Pardons and Paroles  
Alvin Cohn, Administration of Justice  
Services, Inc.  
Todd Clear, Rutgers University, School of  
Criminal Justice  
Ron Christiansen, Entropy Limited  
Pat Garris, former Assistant Administrator,  
Oregon Corrections Division  
Don Gottfredson, Rutgers University, School  
of Criminal Justice  
Stephen Gottfredson, Temple University,  
Department of Criminal Justice  
Leslie R. Green, former Chairman, Minnesota  
Corrections Board  
Kay Harris, Temple University, Department of  
Criminal Justice  
Hazel Hayes, former Chairman, Oregon Board  
of Parole  
Ronald Jackson, Commissioner, Texas Board of  
Pardons and Paroles  
Mary Mande, Research Director, Colorado  
Division of Criminal Justice  
Rae McNamara, former Parole Commissioner,  
State of North Carolina  
Vincent O'Leary, President, State University  
of New York at Albany  
Frank Sanders, former Executive Director,  
South Carolina  
Nevin Trammel, former Chair, Tennessee Board  
of Parole

**State** Teams

Alaska : Peggy Burke and Chris Baird

Massachusetts: Peggy McGarry, Peggy Burke, Nancie Zaner  
Stephen Gottfredson and Leslie Green

Missouri : Gerald Kaufman, Peggy Burke, Stephen  
Gottfredson, Becky Ney

Nebraska : Becky Ney, Peggy Burke, Stephen Gottfredson,  
Pat Garris, Kermit Humphries

Ohio: Linda Adams, Ron Christiansen, Ron Jackson,  
Vincent O'Leary, Hazel Hayes

South  
Carolina: Becky Ney, Vincent O'Leary, Nancie Zane

Tennessee: Gerald Kaufman, Todd Clear, Peggy  
Burke, Ron Christiansen

Texas : Peggy Burke, Linda Adams, Vincent  
O'Leary, Stephen Gottfredson

Virginia: Becky Ney, Peggy Burke, Ron Christiansen

Appendix C

PROJECT BROCHURE

PROJECT BROCHURE

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Corrections



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***Technical  
Assistance  
for Parole  
Decisionmaking***

A Project of the  
National Institute of  
Corrections conducted by  
COSMOS Corporation and  
The Center for Effective  
Public Policy

January 1986

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## *Project Summary*

### **Parole Decisionmaking-Critical Issues**

Parole decisionmakers throughout the country confront tremendous challenges in carrying out their responsibilities. Correctional resources are strained; institutional capacities are stretched beyond their limits. Public visibility of parole is higher than it has ever been. Ideas about the purposes of criminal sanctions-particularly of incarceration-are in flux, and often in conflict within single communities. The purposes of parole itself are being re-examined and, in some instances, called into question.

The National Institute of Corrections has initiated a program of technical assistance designed to respond to the needs of parole decisionmakers. COSMOS Corporation, in collaboration with the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP), has been awarded a grant to provide this assistance. A central goal is to help parole decisionmakers advance the design and implementation of structural decisionmaking. Within that framework however, the goal is to assist parole decisionmakers to achieve their *own objectives*, rather than to advocate any particular approach to decisionmaking as desirable in all jurisdictions.

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### **Technical Assistance Strategy**

- Parole decisionmakers will be involved in all phases of the technical assistance-defining the need for assistance, the potential solutions, and implementation steps.
- Assistance will be provided primarily on-site, so that all decisionmakers and other key actors in the correctional system can be fully involved.
- Assistance will be tailored to the specific needs and goals of a particular jurisdiction. No “packaged” solutions will be promoted
- Consultants and advisers will be drawn from among a cadre of experienced practitioners, policy makers, and researchers assembled from all facets of parole decisionmaking.
- Each technical assistance assignment will be completed by a team of project staff and consultants put together specifically for the task at hand. A unique technical assistance plan will guide the technical assistance based on an initial needs assessment.
- Emphasis will be placed on implementation of the technical assistance recommendations. The goal will be to effect change in the decision-making process, not to provide theoretical advice.

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## Assistance Available in These Areas

### Policy

- Consensus building regarding parole decision-making objectives-working with parole decisionmakers to develop a clear understanding of roles and objectives; or
- Organizational development-training and development for decisionmakers and staff on operational implications of parole policy.

### Management and Operations

- information systems--assistance in using existing systems more fully, in assessing needs for improvements in such systems, or in developing procedures and staff guidance for system improvements; or
- Staff development-assistance in training staff in the implementation of policy, use of procedures and decision-making tools.

### Technical Aspects of Structured Decisionmaking

- Objective decision-making tools-assistance in examining the tools that are available, in reviewing the practical and theoretical implications of various tools, and developing a strategy for refining and using selected tools:
- Risk prediction and offense severity-available techniques, strengths and limitations, strategies for developing instruments for decisionmaking; or
- Responses to pressures to deal with population management procedures for release decision-making, revocation policies, etc.

These are only a few examples of the needs that paroling authorities may experience and of the types of assistance that can be provided. Any request from a paroling authority designed to enhance structured decisionmaking will be given careful consideration.

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## The Project Team

Expert consultants will provide a range of skills for specific assignments. Heavy emphasis is placed on the practical skills of these consultants, many of whom hold or have held policy and operational positions within parole and corrections agencies. This cadre of consultants will be expanded as the project progresses; however, those committed to participating in the project now include:

- one current and one former parole board chairperson;
- one former parole board member.
- two executive directors of parole boards representing both a small and a large state:
- one former commissioner of corrections;
- one parole field supervisor.
- one researcher from a state criminal justice agency who is an expert in designing and validating risk prediction instruments:
- five well known members of the criminal justice academic community with extensive knowledge of theoretical and practical experience in structured parole release decision-making issues.

All of the above know well the problems of parole board members and the issues and problems involved as parole boards move toward more structured release decisionmaking.

The director of the project is Peggy Burke of COSMOS Corporation. Other members of the team include Gerald Kaufman, Linda Adams, Becki Ney, Peggy McGary, and Nancie Zane of the Center for Effective Public Policy.

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## Requesting Assistance

What should the request include? The request should be in the form of a letter that gives a short summary of your need for technical assistance. It should outline the problem to be addressed and include the name of the person to be contacted in the event there are questions about the request. If you find it difficult to define the precise nature of your technical assistance need, say so in your request. Each technical assistance assignment will begin with a problem definition step. You may also call for guidance in preparing your request. Contact Peggy Burke or Kermit Humphries at the numbers listed below.

Who should request the assistance? A letter should be sent from the Chairperson of the state paroling authority. The parole decisionmakers themselves must be willing to participate in the technical assistance.

When should the request be made? The request should be received by January 27, 1986. Requests received through July of 1986 will be considered as resources permit. However, for your request to be considered among the first group of jurisdictions seeking assistance, your request must be received by January 27.

Where should the request be sent? Please send requests to: .

**Peggy B. Burke**  
**Project Director**  
**COSMOS Corporation**  
**1735 Eye Street, N.W.**  
**Suite 613**  
**Washington, D.C. 20006**  
**(202) 728-3939**

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*Where can I call to get more information or assistance in preparing my request?* Feel free to call Peggy Burke at the above number. Further information may also be obtained from:

**Kermit Humphries**  
**Community Corrections Division**  
**National Institute of Corrections**  
**320 First Street, N.W.**  
**Washington, DC. 20534**  
**(202) 724-7995**

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COSMOS Corporation was founded in 1980 to promote the use of social science knowledge in management and policy settings. The Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) is a non-profit corporation with a major focus on the task of public policy reform. COSMOS and CEPP have joined together in a collaborative effort for the purpose of implementing a program of technical assistance for parole decision-makers for the National Institute of Corrections.

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