

Getting through the Michigan Parole Process

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Contact:
Natalie Holbrook or Peter Martel
1414 Hill Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734-761-8283 ext.5 or 2

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I. FOREWORD

Penny Ryder and Kay Perry wrote the original version of this booklet to help individuals navigate their way through the parole process. These two women and the organizations they represent (AFSC and MI-CURE, respectively) have spent many years trying to improve the parole system in Michigan. In their shared experience of advocacy and policy work on parole, they found they could be most effective by teaching individuals how to fend for themselves instead of trying to advocate on each individual's behalf. This booklet explains the parole process, what individuals can do to position themselves for a positive parole board action, and what individuals should consider after the parole board's decision. It also includes a list of helpful resources for those who want to understand the process more fully or need additional help getting through the process.

Some things have changed since Kay and Penny wrote the third edition of this booklet in 2000, so we have updated it with current information and advice. We emphasize the significance of the Parole Eligibility Report (PER), the Parole Guideline Score Sheet Grid, public hearing proceedings, and most importantly, the best way to spend your time up to the parole date. While the policy directives and operating procedures are vital to the process, as is advice on how to present yourself during the interview, there is really no substitute for actually doing the right thing during your incarceration and developing your own solid character. Admittedly, there is no silver bullet to gaining a parole, yet there is one for staying out when we are released: spend your time doing what is right. Practice it over and over during the time you are incarcerated, until it becomes second nature. At that point, you will have made good on your time and reduced your chances of returning to doing what is wrong.

Natalie Holbrook, Marissa Hanna, and Peter J. Martel
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II. LEADING UP TO THE PAROLE PROCESS

By Pete

Your institutional conduct is a large factor the parole board will consider while reviewing you for parole. With that in mind, the sooner you begin making your prison sentence a positive experience, the better your chances for parole and, ultimately, the better your chances for success upon release. Having served fourteen years (ten of it in the box), I can attest to the importance of making your sentence a positive experience. At some point in the future, you will look back upon the time you've spent in prison and you will either find it was a horrible waste of time or a productive experience. The choice is yours, and it is a choice you make every day.

I spent my time in the hole not only exercising and playing chess ("13 to 29"), but also reading a lot of those books that everybody tends to think we should read. In addition to the books that are listed in this booklet, I would highly recommend reading some of the classics (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee; *Les Miserables*, by Victor Hugo; *Crime and Punishment*, by Fyodor Dostoevsky; *Anna Karenina*, by Leo Tolstoy; and *East of Eden*, by John Steinbeck come immediately to mind). These books aren't simply stories that entertain us while we read them, but works that can make us ask questions about our lives that we might not have contemplated before. If we think over ideas such as what we hope to accomplish with our lives, what principles are most important to us, and how (and *why*) we should go about living our lives, we cannot help but to grow intellectually and develop in terms of our own humanity. If you can find some others who are interested, I encourage you to start book clubs centered on the reading and interpretations of these books. Consider proposing a reading group to your special activities coordinator, in order to reserve a quiet place where you can keep the group focused on the topic.

Many self-help books seem to offer quick-fixes for problems that might not be that simple to fix, but in this genre I recommend Stephen Covey's book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey discusses how people have become less concerned with "character" and more concerned with "personality." I feel as though many of you on the inside will understand that concept more readily than a lot of people out here, but to state it quickly, character is who you really are; personality is your presentation to other people. The first is being, while the other is acting. Covey attempts to re-focus his readers on character and encourages us to worry less about personality. It's pretty interesting material and should be available in your library.

Obviously, another thing you need to do is avoid misconducts. That doesn't mean quit getting caught; it means quit doing things that you could get in trouble for if you were caught. Think about things before you do them. Give yourself time to think and breathe before acting. Count to ten. Take a few deep breaths. Ask yourself, "If I get caught doing this, and end up in the hole, or with a misconduct on my record, will it have been worth it?" Stupid things cannot only cost you a parole, but also reinforce bad habits. The board wants to see that you've developed the habit of following rules and controlling your behavior. The best way to convince them of that is to actually develop that habit.

Another important factor is completing your R&GC recommendations (substance abuse, AOP, SOP, etc.). If you are not in your recommended programs, submit kites to the proper staff to be placed on a waiting list. You should keep copies of these kites, along with any responses you

receive. Once you are admitted into the program, it is important that you approach it with an open mind and engage the program with the intention of getting something out of it more than just the certificate. While certificates and positive reports are helpful to show that you have successfully completed these programs, it will be just as important to show that you actually learned the lessons that these programs have to offer and processed the materials that were discussed. These programs will offer you some tools that will help you improve yourself—it is important to appreciate the opportunity and make the most of it.

Many of you need to complete SOP, VPP, Cage your Rage, Thinking for Change, or AOP. We all know there are waiting lists for all of these classes. Unfortunately, it appears that for the most part individuals are not being allowed into these groups until after they reach their earliest release date. The department has compiled a list at central office that is arranged strictly by release date—the earlier your release date, the closer to the top of the list your name will be. How quickly you move up that list is not in your (or our) control—it's simply a matter of the department having enough psychs on staff to run enough of these groups. What you can control in this matter, however, is being in a low enough security level to be able to participate in the group when your name comes up on the list. Most of these groups are being held in level I and II facilities. If you're sitting up in a level V facility, you will probably not get in. If you're in an appropriate security level when your name comes up on the list, you should be transferred to the facility that is conducting the next group.

Work and school are also important. Not only do work or school opportunities offer chances to get a little schooling in and earn some money, they also result in reports submitted by the MDOC officials. These are the people who spend the most time with you (your teachers or work supervisors) during your incarceration and it helps if they have good things to say about you. It is important that you apply yourself earnestly in these endeavors and give them reason to say something good about you. If your work reports are not 37-39, you need to put more effort into your work.

If there are other programs available that are not R&GC recommendations, you should try to involve yourself in those as well. Participating in program is a better way to spend your time than sitting around eating Little Debbie's or playing dirty hearts all day.

All documentation from these activities needs to be organized in a file so you can locate them easily. It may be needed for completing your PER, for correcting your parole guideline score sheet, or for correcting information at your parole interview. Be sure to keep it all together, in a convenient place. If you have support in the free world, you may want to send copies of these documents to that person for safe-keeping and also to help your support network understand your progress, work ethic, and program completion.

III. PREPARING FOR THE PAROLE OR LIFER INTERVIEW

In addition to your institutional conduct, other things you need to consider well before the process is initiated are things such as developing a realistic parole plan, tending to outstanding warrants, and lining up support services in the world.

Check Outstanding Warrants If you suspect you have outstanding warrants, submit a kite to the Records Coordinator at your institution to confirm their status. Work with the Records Coordinator to resolve the charges as soon as possible. These warrants cannot be removed from your MDOC file without documentation from the originating court. You will not be paroled until they are cleared up.

Get Involved in Pre-Release Programming Involve yourself in a pre-release program if one is available at your institution.

Save As Much Money As Possible You will need it when you are paroled. This is especially important if you are planning on a commercial placement.

Own Your Shortcomings Be honest about your weaknesses in your case – what recommendations have your therapists and supervisors given you? Have you had prior parole or probation experience? If so, and you failed, what steps can you take to avoid making the same mistakes in the future? In what ways might your transition to the free world be difficult? How will you address these difficulties?

Arrange for Treatment If you have a history of **substance abuse**, make arrangements for programming in the free world. Arrangements should include written commitment to accept you into the program or to serve as your sponsor. Such programming might include any or all of the following: in-patient or out-patient treatment, Narcotics Anonymous, or Alcoholics Anonymous. If you need in-patient treatment in order to remain successful upon parole, it is totally okay to be honest with the parole board and your loved ones about this need. It will not count against you. It demonstrates that you are taking responsibility for yourself so you do not harm yourself or others.

If you are serving on a **sex offense**, make arrangements for programming in the free world. Arrangements should include a written commitment to accept you into the program or to serve as your sponsor. Programming might include the following: Individual and Group Therapy, Sex Addicts Anonymous, or Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous.

Sex offender therapy (SOP/SOT) may be one of your parole requirements and you may be have to attend MDOC-approved

therapy. We know of many released prisoners who have found this therapy helpful.

Get Offers in Writing

If you have a job offer, get it in writing. If you are planning to attend a vocational or educational program, ensure that you will be accepted into the program. Get the acceptance in writing.

Check Your Home Placement

If you have a home placement, be sure it is adequate. If you served on a sex offense where the victim was a minor, you should not plan on living in a household with children present. You will not be allowed to live there, so make other more realistic plans. Sex offenders may not be allowed to live in a home with internet access.

If your family background has been difficult, and you plan to live with a family member, be prepared to explain what will be different this time. Parole is very difficult. Finding a job and supporting yourself will be tough work. Do not overburden yourself with family responsibilities.

Stay Busy!

The pace in the free world can be hectic. The transition will be easier if you keep active. Stay mentally and physically active at least 8 hours per day. For example, read a book or write a letter during count time instead of napping.

If you know that you will be receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) (very few prisoners are eligible), be prepared to explain how you will remain busy enough to avoid drugs, alcohol, or other problems that may have contributed to your criminal behavior.

Address Your Relapse Prevention Plan

If you have problems with substance abuse or are serving on an assaultive or sex offense, be certain that you have addressed all elements of your Relapse Prevention Plan.

IV. YOUR PER AND PAROLE GUIDELINE SCORE SHEET

The Parole Eligibility Report (PER) and Parole Guideline Score Sheet are vital documents in the parole process. Each has a policy directive written specifically about it and much of the review will center on the information in these documents. We cannot stress enough how important it is to understand the process for completing these documents and ensuring that the information included in them is correct.

The PER is used to complete the Parole Guideline Score Sheet, and the Parole Guideline Score Sheet determines whether you are high-, average-, or low-probability for parole. If you are high-probability for parole, there is a presumption parole will be granted. If the board denies you parole when you screen high-probability, they have to articulate “compelling and substantial reasons” for departing from the guidelines in writing. If you screen average-probability they must interview you during the decision-making process. They cannot deny you parole without conducting an interview. If you screen low-probability for parole, however, the board can flop you for 12, 18, or 24¹ months without interviewing you. Further, if you screen low-probability, you need to tighten up, quit catching tickets, and start doing what you’re supposed to be doing – you’re not a kid anymore.

We encourage you to read P.D. 06.05.103 Parole Eligibility/Lifer Review Reports. Within this policy is most of the instruction you need to make sure your PER has been completed correctly. This policy directs that your PER is completed seven months before your earliest (or next) release date. Before it is completed, however, you should receive a copy of “20 Questions of Parole” (a small booklet on the parole process) from your ARUS and he or she should review the parole process with you. Additionally, you are allowed to review your file (Paragraph J) and “present letters, offers of employment, and other information supporting parole to the PER preparer” (Paragraph K). Once your questions about the process have been answered and you have had the opportunity to review your file, correct errors in the PER, and submit letters of support and certificates you have earned, you sign the PER. Request a copy of the PER for your personal file.

The Parole Guideline Score Sheet Grid is completed by the Case Preparation Unit in the Office of the Parole Board. P.D. 06.05.100 governs the process for completing this document. While the policy states that you are to be provided a copy of this document, it does not provide a deadline by when you must receive it. If you do not receive your copy prior to your parole board interview, it is not something you want to argue about during the interview. Focus on the questions asked in the interview (see Part V, below) and worry about the guidelines when you do receive your copy. In the event that any of the information in the guidelines is inaccurate, you will need to contact the appropriate office or individual as follows:

¹ In some cases, the board can – and will – issue a 60-month flop. See P.D. 06.05.104, paragraph X.

Issue	Who to Contact
“Instant Offense”	This includes all offenses for which you are currently serving. Contact the Parole Board Case Preparation Unit
“Any Injury”	Means any force, injury or threat of force or injury (including threats to use a weapon). Contact the Parole Board Case Preparation Unit.
“Total time will have served”	This is calculated using the difference between the review date and the commitment date, excluding time spent on parole, escape, writ, or bond. Contact the Central Time Computation Unit.
“Age”	Contact the institutional record office.
“Program Performance”	Contact the Parole Board Case Preparation Unit.
“Mental Health Score”	Contact the Parole Board Case Preparation Unit.
“Errors in the Pre-Sentence Investigation Report”	Corrections must be ordered by the sentencing court.
“Errors in the PER”	Contact the administrator who prepared the PER.

If correcting errors in your guideline score sheet will not result in the improvement of your probability (changing you from “low” to “average” probability, or “average” to “high” probability), you shouldn’t worry about having them corrected. If they will result in the improvement of your probability, you want to get it corrected.

V. PREPARING FOR THE PAROLE OR LIFER INTERVIEW

The parole/lifer interview is very important. Do not treat it lightly. Do not assume that it does not matter, or that the decision has already been made. A good interview can result in parole. A bad interview can lead to a flop.

The reasons we often see for denying parole are “lacks remorse,” “lacks empathy,” “minimizes the crime,” “fails to take responsibility,” and “lacks insight into crime.” While you’re serving your sentence the board wants you to think about the crime and the victims often. Think about why you chose to commit the crime and what things you could’ve done differently to prevent the crime from happening. They don’t like the “young and dumb” thing—we’ve heard them say that everybody goes through adolescence, but not everyone commits crimes, so they’re looking for something more insightful.

Remember that most lifers and some non-lifers will be scheduled for an interview with very short notice. Therefore, it is very important to think about these issues even if you do not know exactly when you will be interviewed.

Organize the documents you plan to take to the interview. The following suggestions are based on an informal parole board memo dated September 22, 1994:

- If your PER or parole guideline score sheet is incomplete or inaccurate, bring documents that will fill in the gaps or correct mistakes.
- Take your latest psychological report if it was prepared recently and you are not certain that a copy has been placed in the Central Office file.
- Remember that the parole board considers criminal behavior, institutional adjustment, readiness for release, and personal history when making parole decisions. Any documents you take should relate to these factors and should not duplicate any material covered in the PER or guideline score sheet.
- Documents should offer concrete evidence. For example, a job offer is relevant. A letter from a relative saying you should be able to get a job easily is **not** relevant. A letter from a work supervisor commending your performance **may** be relevant if good work performance is not described in your PER. A letter from a friend saying you worked hard is **not** relevant.
- A few short, thoughtful personal letters of support are more effective than a lengthy petition. Request letters from staff when appropriate. (An example letter is included with the handouts that accompany this booklet.)
- Talk with other prisoners who have been interviewed by the parole board. Find out what questions were asked.
- If you had a previous interview, think about what questions were asked.
- If you were a parole board member responsible for the decision, what questions would you ask yourself?

- Practice answering questions. Ask a friend to play the role of a parole board member and practice interviewing. Ask your friend to critique your performance. Practice to improve your answers, your body language, your diction, etc. Keep practicing.
 - Carefully consider whether to ask someone to represent you at the parole interview. It is not essential to have a representative. A well-chosen representative could help; a poorly chosen representative may hurt. If you decide to have a representative, select a person who knows you well, remains calm under stress, and does not deny your guilt or make excuses for you. The representative is there to offer support, not to carry the interview. Share your parole plan and your Relapse Prevention Plan with your representative.
 - You are responsible for letting your representative know where and when your interview will be. Generally, interviews involving representatives are scheduled on the morning of the first day of interviews at your institution.
 - Groom yourself. Get a haircut. Trim any facial hair so that it is not scruffy-looking.
 - Exercise, eat well, and rest well the day before the interview.
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VI. HOW FAMILY AND FRIENDS CAN HELP

Your family and friends should not minimize the offense or make excuses for you. They should offer support and encourage you to participate in as much programming as possible while in prison. It can also be very helpful if they're able to send in self-help and educational materials (which must be purchased from and sent by approved vendors). Some other things that might be helpful include:

- Helping with parole planning by providing contacts in the free world. They should provide only the name and address—you should make the contact and arrangements after that.
- They may write a letter of support on your behalf, noting any positive changes they've seen take place. They should send the original (addressed "Dear Parole Board") to the Office of the Parole Board and one copy to you in advance of your interview.
- If they are willing to provide a home placement, job, financial support (for a limited period of time), or moral support, they should submit that offer in writing to the parole board prior to the interview.
- Being prepared to work on family issues. Be honest with yourself. If the circumstances of your crime are a reflection of family problems, try to work on those problems before being released. You and your family should continue working on things after you are released.

VII. MAKING THE MOST OF THE INTERVIEW

Nothing in the criminal justice process prepares you for the parole interview. From the time you were arrested until you were convicted, you were probably advised to say nothing about the offense. During your incarceration, there is little incentive to talk about your offense or the victim(s). The rules for parole interviews are just the opposite. It is important that you take responsibility for your actions. It is also appropriate to express concern for the harm done to the victim(s) as well as the victims' family, friends, and community.

Even though your preparation for the interview has been extensive, the actual interview will be short. Be brief, clear, and precise.

During the interview:

- Do not minimize the seriousness of your offense.
- Do not blame others for your offense, incarceration, or tickets.
- Work to remain clam. Do not react angrily to parole board members, regardless of their behavior or questioning.
- Listen carefully to the questions asked. Take your time to answer each question thoughtfully. Give complete answers, but do not ramble or give long-winded answers.
- Where possible, focus on your accomplishments and your plans to avoid future problems.
- Be honest and realistic. For example, do not say that your family needs you to support them when you never supported them prior to your incarceration. Do not state that you must get home to care for an ailing family member. The parole board may not look positively on too many burdens weighing you down.
- You will be given an opportunity, after questioning, to make a statement. Think about what you want to say. You may want to include comments such as:
 - How you feel about the crime and victims today.
 - What you have accomplished since going to prison.
 - How you have prepared for your release.
 - How you are different today.
 - Why you would be a good community member.
 - Do not say you have done enough time.
- Ask that letters of support and whatever other documents you have brought to the interview be added to your file. If the parole board member refuses to take any or all of the material, he or she should make a note in your file as to what was offered and refused.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR LIFERS AND COMMUTATIONS

By Natalie

Here's the deal: the public hearing matters. It matters big-time. We have heard former Chair Sampson talk in detail about what she (and the entire board) expects from people who make it this far in the process. You have probably already figured out for yourself what this section will address, but reminders are always helpful. Reminders and gentle guidance are especially helpful when you are approaching something so huge and you may have not had the time or energy, due to nervousness, anxiety, or intellectual fatigue, to take a step back and think about all of this from a more neutral perspective.

What to expect in the hearing room: You will be brought into a hearing room at either Cotton or MTU (or if you are really sick DWH). The board member/s will be sitting at a long table up near the front of the room. One board member will be running the whole thing. An Assistant Attorney General (AAG) will be sitting next to the PB member running the meeting. There may be another board member or two sitting with the PB member running the hearing. There will also be a court recorder at the table. He/she will be transcribing the proceedings on a laptop. Note: While a PB member is supposed to be running the hearing, it may seem as if the AAG is running the hearing by the amount of time he/she spends directing the questions at you and the fact that he/she may actually control the hearing.

You will be brought into the room in leg irons, hand-cuffs and belly chains. You will sit with your back to the audience and be placed directly in front of the panel of questioners. All of the "security" devices will be left on your body for the entire proceedings. The "audience" will be behind you. If your attorney is in attendance he/she will be sitting behind you, not next to you.

You will have a mini-microphone clipped to your blues for recording purposes.

The Players: You, one or two parole board members, the AAG, and the court recorder.

There may also be those in support of your release, such as your friends and family, your attorney, or other members of the public. Those who are opposed to your release, such as the prosecutor, the victim(s), friends and family members of the victim(s), and other members of the public may be there as well.

How it runs: The PB member running the hearing will introduce the process and the people sitting up at the table. This PB member will also swear you in. Then the AAG will go over the MCLs governing the hearing, followed by his or her questioning regarding the offense. You should know ahead of time that the current Attorney General (Bill Schuette) has ordered a blanket objection for all commutations and paroles that make it to public hearing, so don't take it personally when they object to your release. Please also note that some of the AAGs who might be questioning you can be harsh.

You need to know what kinds of questions to expect from the AAG. Questions will revolve around:

- All details of the crime, whether broad or minute.
- Your explanation of the crime.
- What you might have been thinking at the time of the crime.
- What you feel for the victim of the crime.
- Explanations of your entire institutional conduct. And by entire, we mean *entire*. You may even be asked about tickets from way back, like as far back as 1977.

The AAG may tend to ramble on and use flawed logic to try to trip you up. You might end up sitting there thinking, “what is wrong with him?” or “where is this coming from?” or “that’s not how it went down at all; not at all. And, that is not what I said.” It is critical that you keep your composure and don’t lose your temper.

Remember, the work you’ve most likely done inside is unique to any self-reflective work that humans are capable of. You have been growing and changing and becoming the best person you can be amidst difficult circumstances that the AAG has not one iota of understanding about. You have grown as a person without easy access to higher education and good therapy. Some of you have done it with little or no support from people in the free world. Some of you have been down so long that your loved ones have passed on and you have lived through deep loss and lonely circumstances. Still you have worked on transforming yourself into a better person, different from the one that committed the offense for which you are serving.

In order to best prepare yourself for the line of questioning that will come at you from the AAG, make sure you study your Pre-Sentence Investigation report inside and out. If you have a co-defendant, make sure you have as much understanding of your co-defendant’s version of events as possible.

The board expects you to admit full responsibility for the crime you were convicted of. They expect honesty and forthrightness, and they expect you to feel empathy for the victim(s). Please understand the definition of victim is not just the person you killed or injured. Everyone connected to that victim, the person’s family, community, and friends, are all victims as well.

Once the AAG is done questioning you, the parole board member(s) will question you. This questioning may revolve more around your personal growth while in prison, your institutional record, your placement plans upon release, your program and work reports, and the crime. You should be well versed in your entire misconduct history and be ready to answer questions regarding your entire institutional record. We understand that officers sometimes write bogus tickets and prisoners are not believed and still get found guilty. However, if you sit before the public hearing panel and blame others for negative institutional conduct, it is not going to sound good.

Try to completely avoid blaming language within the context of the public hearing. Some people might be partly to blame for where you are now, but it does not serve you well to dwell on those events or people during the public hearing.

Once the board members are done questioning you, the public will have a turn to testify before the panel. The people in attendance who are there in opposition to your release will be able to testify first. If you have a highly publicized case the prosecuting attorney may show up and testify in opposition to your release. Family members of the victim/s may show up to testify. People may state terrible things about you, but please understand that while the board listens to the opposing testimonies, they are not the deal sealer. You were given a public hearing because the board is deeply interested in your case and potential release.

After the opposition speaks, people who are there in support of your release will be given a chance to testify on your behalf. It is critical that your loved ones do not minimize your involvement in the commission of the crime. Your support group should be able to clearly articulate your release plan and the kind of support network you will have once released to the community.

If you have an attorney, make sure the attorney is able to speak very clearly to the facts of the case. Your attorney can speak during the support of release time and can also clear up any of the misinformation the AAG may have created or articulated during the earlier questioning. You should strategize with your attorney before the hearing. It is really important that you and all of your supporters (attorney included) are on the same page. You should have discussed your ideas and speculations about the proceedings with your support group before the hearing.

Some other important things to focus on:

- The week before the hearing try to exercise daily (walks are good), eat a well balanced diet, and get plenty of sleep.
- Remember body language counts. Look the board members and AAG in the eyes. Hold your head high. Sit upright. Speak clearly. Speak with confidence.
- Understand that empathy goes a long way.
- Make sure you have said out loud many times before the hearing the details of the crime. Many people have never spoken out loud what they did that landed them in prison, it is really important that you are able to effectively articulate what happened. Being uncomfortable with talking about the crime can be interpreted as minimization, so prepare yourself well.
- Focus on telling them the story of the person you have become.
- The AAG or PB member may use language you are not very familiar with. Some examples: Please explain your **relapse prevention plan**; or please describe your **support system upon release**. You may have not had access to the programs that help you develop a relapse prevention plan or your support system. We encourage you to work with a counselor in the prison to develop a relapse prevention plan and a support plan. You should spend time lining up work, education, living arrangements, and therapy in the free world. You should be able to articulate all of this to the panel.

Please note: AFSC staff and volunteers may be attending some public hearings throughout the next many months. So, if some strangers show up to the hearing, it may be us.

IX. IF PAROLE IS APPROVED

- Until your actual release, you will still be in prison. Respect the people around you who are not looking forward to a pending release. Staying quiet about your parole may be a wise decision.
 - If you are going to a private home placement, notify the people who live there that a parole agent will be visiting.
 - Remain ticket-free. Your parole can be revoked.
 - Follow through on your post-release arrangements. Getting out is only the first step in making the transition to the free world. Work hard on your rehabilitation, training, and employment.
 - Remember that parole is only a conditional release. You are responsible for following your parole conditions and reporting to your parole agent. A parole violation could get you sent back to prison.
 - The board may require you to complete some sort of programming or placement in the world before you're freed on parole. Some of these programs may be frustrating or restrictive, but it is important that you participate and complete them—everything you've worked for rides in the balance.
 - For more information, see our pamphlet, "Thoughts on Getting Out."
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X. IF PAROLE IS DENIED

Was the denial appropriate? Be honest with yourself. The continuance may be warranted under the following circumstances:

- If your parole guideline score is not in the high probability range, you must work to improve it. You can do this by avoiding misconduct tickets and improving your program and work performance.
- If you have not completed all R&GC recommendations, kite for services. We realize that many of you are waiting on SOP or AOP. While there is nothing we can do to help you jump places in the waiting list line, it is important that you remain misconduct-free and get to a level I or level II facility (where most of these groups are offered).
- If you have a history of substance abuse and/or sex offenses and your parole plan does not include any follow-up programming, work to locate such programming before your next interview.
- If your proposed home placement is not adequate, work to located an alternate placement, or request a commercial placement.

- If you have never been gainfully employed in your life, and you still do not have a GED and/or vocational training, get busy. Complete your GED and/or request placement in a vocational training program. Then work at it.
- If you did not complete your R&GC recommendations because the programming was not available:
 - Immediately request transfer to an institution where the programming you need is offered.
- If your parole was denied, yet all R&GC recommendations are complete, your parole guideline score is in the high probability range, all program reports are positive, *and* your parole plan is reasonable, write to us with the following documents:
 - Pre-Sentence Investigation Report
 - PER
 - Parole Guideline Score Sheet
 - Program Termination Reports
 - COMPAS test results
 - Parole Board decision
 - A summary of your parole plans
 - A summary of the parole board interview
- Stay busy. Focus on positive activities. Associate with positive people. Try to remain optimistic. Do not give up. Continue to take advantage of all available programming. Think about the parole interview. What went well and what might have been better? Decide how you might do a better job in the next interview.
- Please note that in cases where parole denial was unjustified or arbitrary, we know of very few instances where the above actions led to immediate success.
- Grievances: According to Policy Directive 06.05.100, *Decisions by the Parole Board, including the scoring weights and ranges utilized in developing parole guideline scores, are not grievable. However, a prisoner may challenge the calculation of his/her parole guideline score, including the accuracy of the information used in calculating the score, by filling a grievance pursuant to PD 03.02.130...* See subsections Z and EE for more detail.

APPENDICES: IMPORTANT GENERAL INFORMATION

POLICIES, DOM'S, AND ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

We cannot stress enough how important it is for you to go to the library and read the relevant Policy Directives, Administrative Rules, and Director's Office Memoranda for the parole process. Listed below is a non-exhaustive list of those for 2010 (the DOM's will certainly change, others may be updated):

- Policy Directives 06.01.110 through 06.06.120 all relate to parole in some form or fashion, but you should especially make sure you review and understand PD's 06.05.100 (Parole Guidelines), 06.05.103 (PER/Lifer Reports), 06.05.104 (Parole Process), and 06.05.130 (Community Resources).
- The current DOM's that relate to parole are 2010-1, 2010-5, and 2010-11.
- Administrative Rules R 791.7715 and R 791.7716 are important.

HELPFUL ADDRESSES

Parole Board: Grandview Plaza, P.O. Box 30003, Lansing, MI 48909

State Senators and Representatives: State Capitol, Lansing, MI 48909

MDOC Director: Grandview Plaza, P.O. Box 30003, Lansing, MI 48909

Legislative Corrections Ombudsman: P.O. Box 30036, 124 W. Allegan, Lansing, MI 48909

American Friends Service Committee: 1414 Hill St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104

MI-CURE: P.O. Box 2736, Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2736

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Here are some booklets and pamphlets we have on hand that we'll send out upon request:

- **Thoughts On Getting Out** – A few things to consider if you are about to be released from prison, or if you love someone who is about to be released.
- **Advocating With the Incarcerated in Michigan** – A collection of lessons we've learned about advocating within the MDOC.
- **To the Imprisoned Sex Offender**
- **To the Family Member or Friend of a Sex Offender**
- **Advocating with the Incarcerated Sex Offender**

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The following list of recommended books may be available in your library or on Inter-Library Loan (if your facility participates in the ILL).

Title	Author
Go Tell It on the Mountain	James Baldwin
The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sex Abuse	Ellen Bass & Laura Davis
How Can I Stop? (sex offenders)	Laren Bays & Robert Freeman-Longo
Co-Dependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself	Melody Beattie
Beyond Co-Dependency: And Getting Better All the Time	Melody Beattie
It Will Never Happen to Me (children of alcoholics)	Claudia Black
Broken Boys/Mending Men: Recovery from Childhood Sexual Abuse	Stephen Grubman-Black
Creating Love	John Bradshaw
Family Secrets: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You	John Bradshaw
Healing the Shame that Blinds You	John Bradshaw
Why I Love Black Women	Michael Eric Dyson
Obsessive Love: When It Hurts Too Much to Let Go	Susan Forward
Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them	Susan Forward
Toxic People: 10 Ways of Dealing with People Who Make Your Life Miserable	Lillian Glass
Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples	Harville Hendrix
Keeping the Love You Find: A Guide for Singles	Harville Hendrix
Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery	Bell Hooks
I'll Quit Tomorrow: A Practical Guide to Alcoholism Treatment	Vernon Johnson
Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man	Sam Keen
The Gendered Society	Michael Kimmel
The History of Masculinity	Michael Kimmel
How to Forgive When You Can't Forget	Charles Klein
Listening to Prozac (depression and medication)	Pete Kramer
The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing Patterns of Intimate Relationships	Harriet Lerner
The Dance of Intimacy: A Woman's Guide to Courageous Acts of Change	Harriet Lerner
The Dance of Deception: Pretending & Truth-Telling in Women's Lives	Harriet Lerner
When Anger Hurts (family issues)	Matthew & Judith McKay
Makes Me Wanna Holler	Eric Payne
The Road Less Traveled: Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth	M. Scott Peck
Unfinished Business (Women & Depression)	Maggie Scarf
Intimate Partners: Patterns in Love & Marriage	Maggie Scarf