

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations  
2016-2017 Performance Report  
Pardon and Parole Board

**AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT:**

The mission of the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board is to perform the duties as set forth in Article VI, Section 10, of the Oklahoma Constitution, statute, and administrative rule. It is the duty of the Pardon and Parole Board to conduct impartial investigations and reviews of applicants requesting commutations and pardons, as well as those eligible for parole. In addition, the Board must hold and make a recommendation to the Governor for persons regarding clemency.

The Board makes decisions regarding the parole of non-violent offenders and makes recommendations to the Governor regarding the parole of violent offenders. Only the Governor may grant parole for violent offenders, pardons, and clemencies after a favorable majority recommendation by the Pardon and Parole Board.

As an integral part of the Oklahoma criminal justice system, the Board serves the citizens of Oklahoma by ensuring public safety, protecting victims' rights, and providing offenders with the opportunity for positive change through careful and informed decisions. The Pardon and Parole Board addresses risk management and impacts public safety with every decision. Decisions must be carefully balanced against the cost of incarceration; however, public safety must be the ultimate consideration.

As a part of the decision making process, it is critical to consider the timing of an offender's release from prison as this can be vital to their rehabilitation. An offender's risk for recidivism is highest in the weeks and months following release from prison. Without appropriate resources and support, an offender who is not ready to make changes will leave confinement and return to the life of crime that brought them to incarceration in the first place. In order to reduce recidivism, it is imperative that, once released, the offender has a multitude of appropriate support mechanisms in place to encourage their transition to becoming a productive citizen. Such support includes family members that support an offender's new life, housing opportunities, and job skills. In addition, as a part of parole considerations, the Pardon and Parole Board has the authority to utilize *stipulations* (programs which an offender must complete prior to discharge from the Department of Corrections (DOC)) and *conditions* (programs, services, limitations and/or restrictions) which the offender must complete or participate in while on parole.

As per statute, the Pardon and Parole Board employs administrative staff and parole investigators to effectuate the duties and responsibilities of the Board. The Executive Director, Deputy Director, and other executive staff of the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board are responsible for managing the day to day operations of the agency, allocating resources to achieve mandated and strategic objectives of agency, ensuring long term sustainability and effectiveness of the agency, ensuring activities and operations are performed in compliance

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with local, state, and federal laws and administrative rules, working collaboratively with the Board of Directors and other criminal justice agencies to ensure the overall agency goals and objectives are met or exceeded.

The administrative staff assist in the processing of all pardon and commutation applications, parole and clemency dockets, compiling the information for the board, preparing the dockets, coordinating with victims and/or victim representatives and delegates for the offenders, coordinating with the District Attorneys and other state agencies, reporting the board results, and sending the recommendations to the Governor.

The field staff is comprised of supervisors and parole investigators are embedded within 53 correctional facilities throughout the state. Parole Investigators provide the investigations and reports which are used by the Board and the Governor in making their decisions on pardons, paroles, and commutations. These reports include a summary of the crime, history of previous convictions, a drug and alcohol use history, and programs taken while incarcerated to improve their knowledge and behaviors a history of any misconducts while incarcerated, a narrative from the District Attorney's regarding the crime, among other information. Supervisors are coordinating the efforts of the investigators and ensuring the accuracy of the information provided.

The Pardon and Parole Board recognizes that:

- Public safety is best achieved if both punishment and rehabilitation are taken into account;
- Reductions in recidivism is associated with the targeting of evidence-based interventions according to the offender's risk and criminogenic needs;
- Maintenance of partnerships and collaborative efforts with other criminal justice agencies is essential;
- Victims should have an active role and an opportunity to participate throughout the offender's pardon, parole, clemency and commutation process;
- Dignity, respect, and fairness are paramount in the process;
- Adherence to the due process rights of individuals is vital;
- Programs and services for offenders are essential in order for them to become rehabilitated and thus become productive citizens; and,
- Offenders are responsible, to the extent possible, to repair harm done to victims and the community.

**LEAD ADMINISTRATOR:**

DeLynn Fudge, Executive Director, 405-521-6600

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**GOVERNANCE:**

The Agency is governed by a five-member Board. To be eligible for appointment as a Pardon and Parole Board member, a person shall possess at least one of the following minimum qualifications:

- A bachelor's degree in the social sciences from an accredited college or university and five (5) years of experience in the criminal justice field;
- A master's degree and four (4) years of experience in the criminal justice field; or,
- A juris doctorate and three (3) years of experience in the criminal justice field.

Three (3) members of the Board are appointed by the Governor, one (1) by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and one (1) by the presiding Judge of the Court of Criminal Appeals. The Board holds office coterminous with the Governor. Current Board Members are Mrs. Vanessa Price, Chairman, Ms. Patricia High, Vice-Chairman, Judge Thomas Gillert, Mr. Robert "Brett" Macy, and Mr. William Latimer.

**GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY:**

The Board meets for three to four days each month. Meetings are recorded on a recorder and administrative staff takes written minutes of the Business Meeting and Regular Pardon and Parole meetings. The first one-half day of the meeting includes the Business Meeting portion. Once adjourned, Regular Parole Meetings occurs on the remaining days. The Board maintains a paper copy of each and every ballot voted on by the Board.

Title 57 O.S. Section 332.4(C) covers Board Member attendance for meetings. The statute states that "Failure of any member to attend one Board meeting in any calendar year, except for justifiable excuse as determined by the Chair pursuant to written policy established by the Board, shall preclude the right of the member to receive his or her monthly compensation established by subsection A or B of this section. Any member who fails to attend two or more Board meetings in any calendar year except for extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Chairman pursuant to written policy established by the Board shall be deemed to have committed official misconduct as such term is defined by Section 93 of Title 51 of the Oklahoma Statutes. To initiate a removal from office pursuant to this paragraph, the Board shall pass a resolution by a majority of the members of the Board detailing the alleged misconduct. Such removal shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 3 of Title 51 of the Oklahoma Statutes. Failure to attend meetings of the Board, pursuant to the policy established by the Board, shall constitute cause for removal." This statutory requirement is being followed."

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**MODERNIZATION EFFORTS:**

The Pardon and Parole Board has gone through several significant transitions over the last several years; however, the agency is beginning to stabilize. With a new board and agency leadership, a substantial review of all agency functions is in process, including technological needs, duties and responsibilities, processes, policies, procedures, and administrative rules.

The Agency began the revision of duties and responsibilities in an effort to formalize the handling of duties to improve overall agency efficiency, as well as the quality of outputs to other state agencies and to the general public. In addition,

The Agency is in the process of modernization efforts and technology upgrades. The first phase of the modernization has already started and it is anticipated to be completed in the first quarter of 2016. The Pardon and Parole Reporting System will allow for more efficiency and be a less time consuming in the report preparation process.

One of the key functions of the agency is to provide comprehensive accurate reports on offenders being considered for parole, pardons, commutations and clemency hearings. In the last two years the process has been implemented to improve the reporting system. This system will not only be a warehouse for information and data in the processing of investigation reports, it will also provide critical data on caseloads and organizational functioning.

This required a complete redesigning of the computer reporting system to incorporate information which is valuable to the Pardon and Parole Board in determining the current status of offenders, prior behaviors and programs while incarcerated, risk to the public, and any community-based programs which would be beneficial to the offender as they reenter communities across Oklahoma.

This computer-based technology system was designed on input from investigative field supervisors, administrative staff, Board Members, and the vendor, Oklahoma Interactive. The utilization of a state registered vendor was not only a cost savings to the agency, but also enabled the Pardon and Parole Board staff to work with someone that was already familiar with how state agencies operated.

Once phase one is complete, the Pardon and Parole Board anticipates improved accuracy with reporting and efficiency in report preparation. This will, in turn, assist the Board in determining what conditions and stipulations will be necessary to assist offenders in successful transition into the community.

The second phase of this project will begin once the first phase has been concluded. The second phase will benefit the administrative staff processes regarding certificate preparation, victim tracking and notification, and docketing process. For example, there are 16 letters that could be

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sent to victims at various key points of the pardon, parole, commutation and clemency processes and 8 different types of certificates. It is anticipated to computerize these processes.

Prior to this board and administration, the agency appeared to operate as three very distinct components: 1) the Board Members; 2) the administrative staff; and, 3) field services. A disconnect existed between the three components. Staff was not recognized for their professionalism and dedication to the agency. To build relationships and improve the overall functioning of the agency, a field programs officer was hired to manage field services and serve as a liaison between field staff and the administrative staff as well as coordinate reporting concerns from members of the Board.

Additionally, field supervisors no longer carry caseloads and focus on the supervision aspect of field operations. This has had two primary benefits which help to increase agency outputs. The first benefit is the ability to support field staff when caseloads which are large and assist with the submission of reports that have unchangeable deadlines. Next, the supervisors are able to focus on the accuracy of reports for submission to the Board.

As has been indicated, the Pardon and Parole Board is in a process of transforming both technologically, through an in-depth review of its processes and procedures, and in the collaboration, coordination, and communication with various other criminal justice agencies, including the Office of the Attorney General, the District Attorneys Council, and the Department of Corrections to improve communication and collaboration. It is anticipated that these revitalizations will continue to improve to deliver the mandates of the Pardon and Parole Board but also to serve the victims and the public.

**CORE MISSION:**

There are no services provided outside of the core mission. There are no duplicative services that this Agency provides that another agency also provides. The PPB has provided all core services.

**PRIVATE ALTERNATIVES:**

Services provided by the Pardon and Parole Board are not performed in the private sector. There have been no privatization efforts with regards to this Agency.