

Pardons and Parole: Program Improvements and Statutory Changes

Report highlights

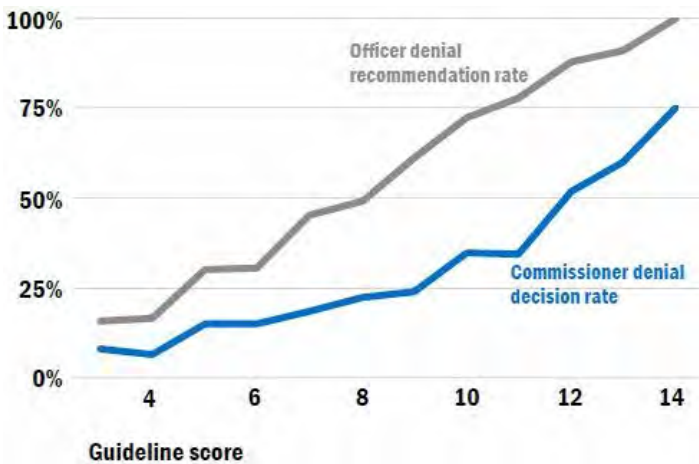
October 2018

New leadership at the commission has changed archaic practices in data management. They developed automated systems that reduce inefficiencies and help ensure fair treatment of offenders.

The commission developed a database application that standardizes and automates many commission functions. The application reduced errors caused by manual data manipulation and inconsistencies in hearing officer reporting.

The commission developed a guideline tool that assigns parole recommendation scores to offenders. Scores are based on criminal history, risk assessment, behavior while incarcerated, and completion of programs. They range from 0 to 20. When a score is 8 or less, parole is generally recommended.

In 2016–2017, **commissioners** were less likely to deny parole than what was recommended by parole hearing officers or indicated by guideline scores.

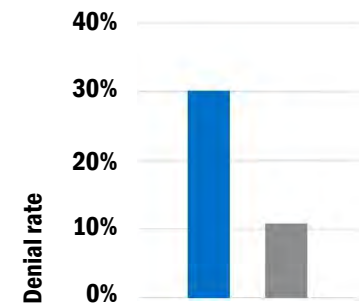


The number of commissioners was increased from 5 to 7. This increase has reduced the workload of individual commissioners.

Statute now allows for two-commissioner panels to make decisions on parole violations and three-commissioner panels to make decisions to grant or deny parole. The new panels allow fewer commissioners to make decisions that previously required a full panel. Decisions must be unanimous.

Video technology has increased the efficiency of hearings. Using video to conduct hearings reduces travel time and costs for hearings in Orofino and Pocatello.

Hearings **without the offender present** had higher rates of denial than those with the offender present.



Note: Hearings based on hearing officer reviews. Data were limited to nonviolent crimes with the same range of guideline scores.



Recommendations

Conduct a validation analysis of the guideline scale after three years. Adjust the weighting and recommend cutoffs for granting parole as needed.

Track and compare parole decisions for hearings conducted in person and those done via video to identify potential systematic differences.

Investigate differences in denial rates between hearings where the offender is present and those where the offender is not present.

View the report:
www.legislature.idaho.gov/opec/

