

Parole News

The Massachusetts Parole Board's Quarterly Newsletter

Winter, 2009



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A Fun Way to SERV!	2
Chairman's Corner	3
Employee Profile: Bob Jackson	7
BJS: Re-Incarceration Rate Below National Average	8
A Board Member's Perspective	11

Georgia and Massachusetts: Collaborating Towards a Common Goal- *Evidence Based Practice*

By Donald Giancioppo, Executive Director



Pictured from left to right, Donald Giancioppo, Danny Hunter, Beth Oxford and Mark Conrad.

On December 21st, in the midst of a major snowstorm, Beth Oxford, the Executive Director of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Parole, and Danny Hunter, the Chief of Field Operations, flew to Massachusetts to provide training through the National Institute of Correction's (NIC) technical assistance award we recently received. As the Chairman has noted in prior newsletters and Agency memos, we applied for, and were awarded, a technical assistance grant to help us enhance our community supervision practices based on national best practices. NIC selected Georgia to work with us and we were very excited since most practitioners in the field will agree that the Georgia Parole Board has been on the leading edge regarding the development and implementation of Evidence Based Practices (EBP) for some time. And, it's actually quite interesting, and fun, to compare Georgia and Massachusetts and look for similarities, links and differences.

- Regarding common issues: both Massachusetts and Georgia were part of the original thirteen colonies that declared independence from British rule; we are both Atlantic coast states; both major cities (Atlanta and Boston) have just over half a million residents; and the Appalachian Mountain range goes through both states.

(Continued on page 5)

A Fun Way to Servo!

By Janice Dean, Assistant Director of the Victim Service Unit



Pictured from left to right, Janice Dean, Richard Vernick, Kira Dunn, Sheila Coley and Julie DiCenzo.

On November 14th, 2008, I had the opportunity to participate in the Boston Food Bank drive being conducted by radio station WAAF. When asked if I wanted to volunteer as part of the Commonwealth's SERV (State Employees Responding as Volunteers Programs) Program, I did not hesitate as I had previously volunteered for an afternoon at a Red Cross blood drive. It was a great way to help an organization, and a minimal time commitment. It also gave me an opportunity to connect with co-workers in a different setting.

When I arrived at the radio station, I joined fellow Parole employees Julie DiCenzo, Richard Vernick, Kira Dunn and Sheila Coley in a small room with five telephones as we all were going to be taking song requests on air. I had "prepared" by listening to WAAF on the ride in to Brighton where I was pleasantly surprised to hear Jason Varitek call in to make a pledge. It was explained that anyone who wanted to hear a particular song would place a bid to hear it on air. Depending on the song, a decision would be made by WAAF DJ's what the minimum bid would be. The further from the station's regular airplay (hard rock), the costlier the song. Needless to say the Muppets rendition of *Manamana* cost a few hundred dollars, and a Barbra Streisand song drew a thousand dollars!

Over the four hours, I have no idea how much money we helped raise but the experience was an extremely positive one. The station appreciated our being there (even gave a "shout-out" to Parole that was heard by many) and it felt great to be part of this yearly endeavor that works so hard to replenish the Boston Food Bank for the holidays. I think I can speak for everyone who volunteered that we can not wait to do it again next year! Maybe Matt Cassell will call in?!



Chairman's Corner

Happy New Year to everyone! It has been a remarkable year, not only for the Parole Board and our Agency, but for those in our nation who have been affected by what is going on in the human condition. This past year, we have witnessed the most unsteady and unpredictable times which are unprecedented since the Great Depression. We witnessed national pride in the historic voting turnout during our Presidential election, we weathered an unstable and fluctuating stock market and we watched helplessly as those in our country experienced a record number of job losses.

In terms of our Agency, this past year has given me the unique and exciting opportunity to lead this amazing statewide organization which maintains a stellar reputation. I personally would like to thank our Executive Director as well as all the Senior Managers. All of them have been an extremely supportive and effective team throughout my tenure as Acting Chairman. I would also like to thank each Parole Board Member for their encouraging support, their commitment and for their dedicated service to the Commonwealth.

*"It is my
fundamental belief
that we are not
only tasked with
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During the last five months, the Agency has received national recognition by the National Institute of Correction (NIC) by being one of five states to assist in establishing national guidelines for Parole Board Member training. Additionally, we were recognized and sponsored by NIC to collaborate with the State of Georgia in developing a better Evidence Based Practice (EBP) model as is detailed in the article written by Executive Director Donald Giancioppo in this newsletter (the Agency hosted representatives from the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Parole for a two-day seminar in order to assist us in our efforts). Additionally, to strengthen our collaborative and coordinated effort, representatives from the Department of Correction (DOC) attended on the second day. As a result of the Agency's commitment to this initiative, I was honored with the "Committed to Professionalism" award from the State of Georgia.

In addition to the NIC project, I have been asked to participate on the Executive Committee of Association of Paroling Authorities International (APAI). The APAI is responsible for coordinating Board Member training across the nation. Most recently, they have included training for other staff members, including Executive Directors, Hearing Examiners and General Counsels. None of these achievements would have been possible without the steadfast devotion of every member of our team.

It is my fundamental belief that we are not only tasked with maintaining our reputation but that we will continue to exceed expectations. If we continue on our current path, the result will be continued success and more national recognition in 2009. I also believe that even our most ardent detractors would agree that we are moving parole into an established discipline. It is my charge to be aware of some of the pitfalls in these uncertain times and to be fiscally conscientious. However, we will continue to be mindful that our philosophy of parole is *to parole*. We have chosen to work in a field which is often misunderstood by the public. Still, I believe that we must take every opportunity to enhance our vocation by demonstrating our willingness to ensure public safety while balancing the needs of the individuals we serve.

(Continued on page 6)

Parole Board Highlights Reintegration at Annual Conference

By Nelson Simao, Reentry Housing Program Coordinator

Last November, the Correctional Association of Massachusetts (CAM) held its annual training conference in Worcester. Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Undersecretary Mary Elizabeth Heffernan provided the opening remarks and touched on the hard work provided by the public safety officials in attendance as well as statewide. The Parole Board hosted a workshop entitled; *Innovative and Effective Partnerships with Community Based Reintegration Programs*.

I spoke about the Parole Board's Transitional Housing Program (THP) which has, in over 3 years, helped place over 1,500 parolees and ex-offenders into long

term residential program and sober beds. One THP program, Hampden County Sheriff's Department's Foundation House, brought staff and current clients to the workshop to talk about its successful program. Jeff Scott, Parole Officer from Region 5 Springfield, who covers Foundation House, gave the attendees an interesting supervision perspective. Finally, Region 4 Worcester Reentry Supervisor Michael Bird explained the services offered at the eight statewide Regional Reentry Centers (RRCs) including obtaining identification cards, access to substance abuse and mental health counseling as well as assistance with resume building and job searches.

Chairman Participates in Turkey Giveaway



Press and Photo Credits: [Boys & Girl's Clubs of Boston](#) webpage

Parole Board Chairman Mark Conrad (pictured at left in far back row) volunteered his time to help support the Boys & Girl's Clubs of Boston and the Nexus Alliance give away nearly 400 turkeys to Dorchester residents the weekend before Thanksgiving. The Nexus Alliance, which fosters a network of African-American male professional mentors, recruited other sponsors to join the effort, including Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Tremont Credit Union, Robert White Associates and the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts.

The Boys & Girl's Clubs of Boston is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help young people, especially those in need, build strong character and realize their full potential as responsible citizens and leaders.

Georgia and Massachusetts: Collaborating Towards a Common Goal- *Evidence Based Practice*

(Continued from page 1)

- Regarding some links (which seem to be focused in sports): their baseball team, the Braves, was founded in Boston; the current star rookie quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons comes from Boston College; and the Red Sox just signed John Smoltz from the Braves.

- Regarding notable differences: the average daily high temperature in Atlanta in January is 52° vs. 36° in Boston; Georgia has 150 counties, we have 14; snowstorms are an uncommon event in Georgia and...I probably don't need to finish this one!

But what is perhaps the strongest connection between our states that brought us together is our shared goal of improving how we do business and elevate the professional standards in the field of parole.

The training was conducted on December 22nd and 23rd and we were provided with an overview of Georgia's history and experience in enhancing community supervision operations. Whereas the Georgia Parole Board has a similar structure to ours, there was a great deal of information, insight and practical applications we were exposed to that we feel can be utilized. The focus of the training was to develop and implement a strategy to utilize available operational data to assess supervision activities and measure outcomes.



Both Agencies at work

As we all know, our Agency essentially has two main functions: to conduct parole release hearings and to supervise parolees in the community. While there are countless other daily activities that go on within the Agency, they are all designed around these two main functions. Therefore, it's important to assess how we are managing these responsibilities and make improvements as needed.

Moving forward, we will be working with the Field Supervisors in an effort to incorporate what we have learned. What should be made clear, though, is that this initiative has not been developed because of any indication of poor performance. In fact, our initial outcome measure assessment indicates we are doing very well and, are well above national averages in several key areas. However, we firmly believe there is always room for improvement in all facets of what we do. In addition, we are continuing to strive towards standardizing case management strategies based on EBP, reliable data and validated instruments, and we look forward to providing more details as the project progresses.

One last note, we are very grateful for Beth and Danny's dedication to this project. As previously noted, they flew up here in a major storm that left us with nearly a foot and a half of snow, something they are not used to dealing with in Georgia. Regardless of nearly 10-hours of delayed flights, they committed themselves to assisting us with this

(Continued on page 9)

Massachusetts Parole Board

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Statistically Speaking ...

By Stephanie Geary, Research Analyst

The New Year marked a new and improved data collection system for the Agency's Substance Abuse Coordinators (SACs). Starting on January 1st the SACs began using the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services' Enterprise Service Management (ESM) Client Data Management System. For the past 2 years the SACs have used the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services' Management Information System (MIS), and although this database laid the case management and statistical groundwork for this initiative, the Agency is eager to move forward with the new ESM application.

With this new application the SACs can look forward to:

- Simplified client enrollment and referral
- Configurable assessments
- Improved service planning and case management
- Enhanced referral throughout continuum of care

This new product will also advance research capabilities and the ability to collect and analyze data by:

- Maintaining uniform collection of demographic information
- Providing access to dynamic data collection and reporting
- Developing more accurate and in-depth client reports

As you read the Chairman's Corner this edition, you clearly see Evidence Based Practice as a priority. Being able to more astutely gather and examine statistics through ESM will aid the Parole Board in evaluating the answer to: *Does placing a Substance Abuse Coordinator in each of Parole's Regional Offices interrupt the cycle of substance abuse, and more importantly, the cycle of reincarceration?*

Chairman's Corner

(Continued from page 3)

The business of parole is not one that typically receives positive coverage in the media. It is important to be mindful that statistics will prove through empirical data that we are conducting our business *better* than most in our field. While we engage daily in risk assessment and risk management, we are also tasked with showing the Commonwealth a return on their investment. We will accomplish these goals through the use of Evidence Based Practice. The measurement of success in parole today is no longer a soft science, but instead one that is factually accepted and that can be gauged and compared. What does this mean in terms of how we operate? We simply evaluate what works and what does not work!

Finally, I would like to thank everyone in the Agency who assisted Connie Allen and her family. It struck me the other day that in our field we are exposed to a harsh side of human behavior; yet, the Agency's outpouring of support to this family in need was an incredible example of the indomitable spirit of the human race.

Employee Profile: Bob Jackson Field Parole Officer

By Stephanie Geary, Research Analyst



Many of us in the Agency do not typically use the words *informant*, or *controlled narcotics purchase* or even *takedown* as part of our typical “work” vocabulary. Not only are these words part of Bob Jackson’s everyday language, but activities he and his Task Force are involved with each day. Bob currently is a Field Parole Officer assigned to the Warrant Unit, but since January of 2006 he has had the special privilege of working for the Southeastern Massachusetts Gang Task Force.

Mr. Jackson started his career with the Parole Board in 1985 as a Junior Parole Officer (JPO) at MCI-Concord. He has also worked as an Institutional Parole Officer (IPO) and as a Field Parole Officer (FPO) in the Region Eight New Bedford Office before being assigned to the Parole Board’s Warrant and Apprehension Unit. It was during his time in the Warrant Unit when he was first approached about becoming a member of the Southeastern Massachusetts Gang Task Force by an FBI Agent already assigned to the Task Force. It did not come as a surprise to the Agency that Bob was selected for this role. His current Chief, George Valentgas, describes him as a hard-working, dedicated Officer. George also acknowledged that Bob is someone who takes his job very seriously, and is willing to educate other agencies about how the Parole Board operates.

The goal of the Gang Task Force is to takedown and dismantle disruptive street gangs in the major Southeastern cities of Massachusetts, including New Bedford, Taunton, Fall River and Brockton. This particular Force consisting of ten Officers (five State Troopers, two FBI Agents, two New Bedford Police Officers and Parole Officer Jackson) considers their first and foremost task of any operation, the ability to develop a hierarchy of the gang and its respective members. By any stretch, this is no easy task for any Force. I was surprised to learn from Bob that this is mainly done through the use of informants and controlled narcotics purchases (an officer who purchases drugs undercover as part of an operation).

Since Bob has been a member of the Gang Task Force he has been involved in two major takedowns, the first being in May of 2007 involving the Latin King street gang in the greater New Bedford area. The New Bedford chapter of the Latin Kings organization has been responsible for a tremendous amount of the drug trafficking and firearm violence in this city. The Task Force was able to distinguish the leadership of the gang and then began to conduct undercover narcotics purchases during a period of several months. As a result of the Force’s investigation and efforts, 37 individuals were arrested (15 federal charges; 22 state charges). Law enforcement officials stated that the arrests of these gang members will directly result in significant decreases in street violence and drug activity for the city of New Bedford.

Additionally, Mr. Jackson and the rest of the Southeastern Massachusetts Gang Task Force were able to target and apprehend 22 (15 federal charges; 7 state charges) members of the Monte Park street gang also of New Bedford in May of 2008. Bob stated that the Task Force pursued the Monte Park street gang because of its long history of drug and firearm trafficking, as well as for its violence against rival gang members. “This gang terrorized the streets of New Bedford” said Bob, “it made me feel good to apprehend these guys and help make New Bedford a safer community

As an Agency, we should be proud of Bob’s accomplishments. He has demonstrated that he has the skill and ambition to play such a fundamental role in a Task Force that prides itself on making the communities of Southeastern Massachusetts a safer place to live.

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Report Shows Massachusetts Parole Board's Re-Incarceration Rate Below National Average in 2007

By Stephanie Geary, Research Analyst

A recent press release (dated December 11, 2008) from BJS announced that more than 7.3 million men and women were under correctional supervision in the nation's prisons or jails, or on probation or parole, at yearend 2007. This correlates to 1 in every 31 adults in the United States being under supervision at the end of 2007.

National releases to parole supervision (555,900) exceeded national exits from parole (531,400) during 2007. This produced a total of 1,180,469 parolees being at risk of being re-incarcerated, of which 183,253 (15.5%) parolees were re-incarcerated in 2007. BJS defines re-incarceration as parolees who are sent back to incarceration after receiving a sentence for a new offense, in addition to parolees sent back to incarceration after their sentence to parole is revoked.

The Massachusetts Parole Board's re-incarceration rate in 2007 was 11.1%- nearly 5% less than the national average (the statistics for Massachusetts were based on the 8,387 parolees at risk of re-incarceration in 2007, and the 931 parolees from this population who were actually returned to incarceration in 2007). Table 1 below, which was taken from this BJS report, shows that the Massachusetts Parole Board had a relatively lower re-incarceration rate in 2007 than most other states in the Northeast Region. **Table 2 containing the re-incarceration rates of states nationwide will be inserted at the end of the article.*

Table 1.

Region and jurisdiction	Total population at-risk of re-incarceration ^{a,b}	Returned to incarceration	
		Number	Percent
U.S. total	1,180,469	183,253	15.5%
Federal	132,070	10,573	8.0%
State	1,048,399	172,680	16.5
Northeast	156,866	23,125	14.7%
Connecticut	4,886	1,463	29.9
Maine	33	0	0.0
Massachusetts	8,387	931	11.1
New Hampshire	2,330	569	24.4
New Jersey	23,910	2,757	11.5
New York	78,468	11,880	15.1
Pennsylvania	36,535	5,243	14.4
Rhode Island	847	111	13.1
Vermont	1,470	171	11.6

These statistics are important to the Massachusetts Parole Board, but may be even more integral to the state of Massachusetts itself. The estimated annual cost of incarceration in Massachusetts is 35,000 per offender in county houses of correction and \$43,000 per offender in state prisons. The estimated annual cost of parole supervision is \$2,500. Due to the Parole Board having a comparatively low re-incarceration rate, Massachusetts is saving money by keeping these offenders on parole supervision versus correctional supervision. In addition, offenders who commit new offenses are incurring more costs to local and state police departments, as well as to the court system. The Parole Board's low re-

incarceration rate also helps the state avoid many social costs, such as lost labor-market productivity, loss to families of having a member away from home and the loss to communities of having a resident removed.

(Continued on page 14)

Parole Board Teams up with Spectrum Health Systems to Battle Substance Abuse

By Nelson Simao, Reentry Housing Program Coordinator

In an effort to offer an alternative to re-incarceration for parolees experiencing a relapse due to substance abuse, The Massachusetts Parole Board and Spectrum Health Systems are working in partnership in an effort to place parolees into primary care detox beds.

Last November, Parole Board Chairman Mark Conrad, Executive Director Donald Giancioppo and Chief of Field Services George Valentgas toured the Spectrum Health Systems campus located in Westborough. The purpose of the visit was to see their facilities and operations of the highly regarded program. Not only does Spectrum offer detox services but they also have a unique Women and Children's facility that offers substance abuse programming and parenting education. Children under the age of 24 months are eligible to reside in the program with their mother. Mothers who have a relationship with children up to the age of 10 years old are also appropriate for the program.

If you are interested in placing an active parolee into one of these programs, please call me at (508) 650-4559.

Georgia and Massachusetts: Collaborating Towards a Common Goal- *Evidence Based Practice*



Pictured above is George Valentgas (left) and Danny Hunter.

(Continued from page 5)

project and their professionalism and experience made it a valuable training experience from which we will benefit.

With colleagues like Beth and Danny in the field, we believe that there is unlimited potential for parole agencies to excel and much to learn from them, particularly knowing we have so much in common. Except of course how to root for champion teams. After all, we have won six professional sports titles in the past seven years while by my count, Georgia hasn't won any...now that's a distinction we are proud to recognize!

Administrative Services Unit Updates

Suppressing Your Pay Advice is a Win for the Environment and Saves money!

Check out SPIRIT's helpful documents! New HR and Fiscal forms are available on-line! Let us know if a form should be posted.

Visit PayInfo Today: [PayInfo Login](#)

Reminder: Contact IT to reset your password @ 508-650-4534 or 508-650-4535.

Tax Year 2008 W-2 Forms for employees, along with the "Comptroller's W-2 Form Instructional Brochure," will be mailed to each employee's "home" address on or before February 2, 2009.

Group Insurance Commission Reminder

Annual enrollment will take place April 13-May 15, 2009 for changes effective July 1, 2009. Annual enrollment gives you the opportunity to review your benefit selections and make changes if you desire, or to enroll in benefits if you are GIC eligible. See your [Benefit Decision Guide](#), mailed in April, for any important changes. *If you want to keep your current [GIC health plan](#), you do not need to fill out any paperwork.* Your coverage will continue automatically. During annual enrollment, we encourage you to take the opportunity to think about what you and your family need in the way of health care and other benefits. Once you choose a health plan, you cannot change plans until the next annual enrollment, unless you move out of your health plan's service area. Visit www.mass.gov/gic/gicplans for more details.

Percent Dues for Alliance/Local 509 - SEIU

Effective for the pay period ending 1/17/09, eligible employees in (BU 8 & 10) Alliance/Local 509, SEIU will have

(Continued on page 14)



This month the Agency donated their surplus body armor vests to the National Guard. These vests will be making their way down to Paraguay, South America to National Guard troops stationed there.

Pictured here are Field Services staff member Tom Jenkins (at left) and Master Sergeant Steve Ravesi of the National Guard (at right) loading the vests for transportation.

Federal Probation and State Parole Collaborate

By Tom Merigan, Board Member

This past October, Parole Board Chairman Mark Conrad, Parole Board Member Tom Merigan and Chief United States Probation Officer for the District of Massachusetts John Bocon, met to discuss collaborating with each other to better serve our clients and to enhance public safety. Chairman Conrad shared with Chief Bocon that our Agency had recently applied for a technical assistance grant from the Justice Department's National Institute of Corrections (NIC). This grant is designed to assess and improve our community supervision operations. NIC assistance will allow State Parole to explore and possibly adopt the concept of Evidence Based Practices for post conviction supervision. This will require a philosophical shift in the way we currently supervise clients. Chairman Conrad stated that our Agency, in cooperation with NIC, believes that the new concept of supervision will help reduce recidivism and will have a positive impact on public safety. We assured Chief Bocon that we will keep him apprised of our progress once the initiative begins.

Chairman Conrad also spoke of a healthcare program that he had been working on during the past few months. The goal of the program is to provide our clients with healthcare coverage during their

transition period back into the community. He also agreed to share information on this program with Chief Bocon once the project has been implemented.

Chief Bocon talked about several of the initiatives that his Agency has been involved with during the past few years. One of the more interesting projects was the implementation of the CARE program. This is the Court Assisted Recovery Effort for clients with substance abuse issues. It is a collaborative effort with the Court, Federal Probation, Federal Public Defender's Office and the United States Attorney's Office. The goal of the program is to help substance abuse offenders by offering a creative blend of treatment and sanctioned alternatives to effectively address the offender's behavior and rehabilitation. Chief Bocon invited Chairman Conrad and myself to attend an upcoming CARE Court session to actually observe the program in action. Chairman Conrad agreed to attend the December 3, 2008 Court session.

At the conclusion of our meeting, we concurred that public safety and our clients will best be served through our collaboration whenever possible. Since our initial meeting, members of Federal Probation, State Parole and other criminal justice agencies have

(Continued on page 12)

The Agency is pleased to announce the selection of Ina Howard-Hogan (pictured at left) as the new General Counsel of the Parole Board. Ina comes to us from the Attorney General's Office where she held the position of Assistant Attorney General. She has vast legal and operational experience in the criminal justice system including several years as a Federal Probation Officer, an Assistant District Attorney in Essex County and an Adjudication Officer with the Department of Justice.

In addition, Timothy Dooling (pictured at right) has been selected as the Agency's new Deputy General Counsel. Tim previously worked as an Assistant General Counsel at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. Tim also has a notable background in the field which includes serving as an Assistant District Attorney, civil experience in the private sector and experience as the Director of Operations for a disability claims management company.

Welcome Ina and Tim!



A Board Member's Perspective

By Leticia Muñoz, Psy.D., Board Member

As a newly appointed psychologist on the Massachusetts Parole Board my contributions to parole decisions derive from the broad application of knowledge in behavioral science. My psychological training influences the type of questions I ask during parole hearings to assess a potential parolee's insight into what caused them to commit their crimes, particularly as it may relate to their mental health or addiction histories. A background in psychology is also helpful in understanding a person's progress in the various treatment programs available in prisons to address patterns of violence and anger, including sex offenses and domestic violence. The members of the Parole Board see an overwhelming need for treatment to address drug and alcohol abuse as these problems frequently contribute to an individual's poor judgment and aggressive conduct in the community. As a former psychotherapist and supervisor of treatment programs, I use my experience of observed success in treatment to judge an inmate's readiness and motivation to change their conduct and to behave in a lawful and prosocial manner if released on parole.

An individual's mental health status and recovery from addictions are part of a complex set of considerations to evaluate probable success on parole. On the Parole Board we are fortunate to have periodic trainings on research related to risk to re-offend by specific populations (e.g. sex offenders) and research updates on the importance of housing, education, treatment and employment to future success as a productive member of

society. As a psychologist I am accustomed to using my analytical skills to absorb multi-sources of information related to an individual's case history. This enables me to weigh the significance of various risk factors versus the behavioral indicators of positive change. Parole cases that involve crimes committed while a person is in a severely decompensated mental state are of special interest to me. The assessment of dangerousness to self or others is an integral skill of a psychologist's training, whether it is in prison settings or in community health care settings. A potential parolee's demonstrated ability to accept his or her mental health diagnosis and to function well with psychological and psychiatric intervention for an extended period of time increases my confidence that they can succeed in the community.

My tenure on the Parole Board has engendered a deep respect for all the agencies responsible for maintaining public safety. I have the opportunity to learn from the commitment and collaborative efforts of the parole and corrections staff as they strive to implement a progressive system of justice and rehabilitation in Massachusetts. My new colleagues have been tremendously supportive and informative about their respective areas of expertise. It is my hope that moving forward I will be able to share more fully with my fellow Board Members and the Parole Board staff the unique contributions of psychological study to the challenging job of parole release and supervision.

Federal Probation and State Parole Collaborate

By Tom Merigan, Board Member

(Continued from page 11)

attended a nationally recognized "Ex-offender Employment Specialist" program that was hosted by our Agency and facilitated by the staff of the National Institute of Corrections. As a result of this training, a National Employment Certification was awarded to the thirty-seven attendees who successfully participated in this program.

On December 3, 2008, Chairman Conrad did attend the CARE Court session. He was impressed by the commitment of all participants to work with offenders who are in need of services. He intends to explore the possibility of our Agency adopting some of the aspects of this program to better help serve our clients.

We look forward to fostering this partnership with our Federal counterparts. Together, we can make Massachusetts a model for community supervision that can become a standard for other states to emulate.

National Institute of Corrections Training

By Christopher Foster, Job Specialist



Pictured from left to right are Dave Sullivan, John Rakis and Francina Carter.

This past October, the Massachusetts Parole Board was fortunate enough to receive a three day, no cost training from the National Institute of Corrections (NIC); a training made possible by the Chairman's advocacy with this organization. The training, conducted by both John Rakis and Francina Carter of NIC, is called the *Offender Employment Specialist Training*. The focus of this event was to educate service providers and practitioners, such as parole officers, to better facilitate employment opportunities for the ex-offender population.

Nearly fifty invitations to the training were extended to Parole staff and many of Parole's partners. Agencies that accepted these invitations included: the Massachusetts Department of Correction, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Hamden County Sheriff's Office and the United States Probation Office. Individuals from these Agencies enthusiastically attended the training along with Field and Institutional Parole Officers.

The facilitators spoke of various employment topics throughout the three days, yet what stood out most was their focus on employer outreach, offender preparation and group exercises pertaining to employment specialization. Additionally, the NIC offered the attendees of this training access to free products. An example of such products is a kiosk program which enables offenders to practice with a computer simulating a typical kiosk employment application program used by many large corporations today. If an offender becomes comfortable with this program, then they likely will be more eager and comfortable to fill out an application online at various job sites. The Agency is currently looking into the idea of developing a pilot program using this technology. If accepted, the Agency's next step would be to place these kiosks within each of Parole's Regional Reentry Centers (RRCs). This way, individuals whom are waiting to meet with Parole staff could practice with the system within the waiting area.

In addition to the skills and beneficial tools that the NIC established for Parole, there has been further excitement which has stemmed from this training. Many participants signed up to take part in a quarterly Advisory Group for the Reemployment Initiative in Massachusetts. Headed by our Agency, the meetings are expected to take place four times a year, discussing better methods to serve the ex-offender population in Massachusetts. Participants will be comprised of Field and Institutional Parole Officers, Career Center Case Workers, United States Probation Officers and other providers in the field. The expectation for this group is to increase knowledge on the subject matter of reemployment, with the end result being to better serve this ex-offender population.

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Report Shows Massachusetts Parole Board's Re-Incarceration Rate Below National Average in 2007

(Continued from page 8)

It is key that as the Massachusetts Parole Board looks ahead to 2009, the operational factors and programming that led to such a low re-incarceration in 2007, are mentioned in this article:

- Graduated sanctions
- Transitional housing
- Substance abuse counselors on-site at each regional office
- Intensive parole supervision
- Consistent drug testing
- Re-employment initiatives
- Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) collaboration
- Electronic monitoring
- Providing parolees direct access to health care and medical options

As the Parole Board moves ahead with maintaining the above mentioned protocols and initiatives, the Agency will also strive for improvement in the future with new tools and initiatives, such as:

- Instituting Agency use of a risk assessment tool
- New re-employment initiatives
- Mentoring program
- Proactive healthcare strategies
- Spectrum Health Systems halfway back program
- Non-profit and faith-based housing options for parolees

(Continued on page 16)

Administrative Services Unit Updates



(Continued from page 10)

their current dues deductions converted to a new deduction code that will calculate employees' dues deductions at 1.5% of bi-weekly earnings. Dues and agency fee deductions will be capped at \$30.40/pay period, objector fees at \$27.65/pay period.

National Institute of Corrections Validation Team

By Tom Merigan, Board Member

A few months back, Chairman Conrad asked if I would represent Massachusetts on a Validation Team for the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). I immediately accepted the challenge and joined the team. Prior to meeting with my teammates, I received a variety of documents for review to prepare for my upcoming meeting.

In December I traveled to Alexandria, Virginia to meet with other members of the Validation Team: Jasper Clay from Maryland, Dwight Holden from Delaware and Benita Murphy from West Virginia. Collectively, we had well over one hundred years of experience in the field of Parole and Probation.

The overall goal of the initiative was to develop, field test, and if necessary, revise a training curriculum for both new and experienced Parole Board Members.

Prior to the validation phase of the project, a tremendous amount of work was done by National Institute of Corrections staff, selected contract facilitators and several Parole Board Members from across the country. The following is a brief

outline of the project.

PHASE I

During this phase, NIC staff and contract facilitators interviewed Board Members from twenty states across the country. The objective was to learn about the different training received by Board Members and what other type of training they felt would be helpful.

They also reviewed and analyzed the different tools that Board Members used to aid them in making their decisions.

PHASE II

NIC staff and contract facilitators completed on-site visits to four states and monitored Board hearings. Their observations enabled them to determine what type of training would be most helpful for new and experienced Board Members.

PHASE III

NIC staff and contract facilitators joined with seven Board Members from across the country. Together this group:

1. Created an occupational definition of a Parole Board Member.
2. Identified eight primary duties of a Parole Board Member.
3. Listed distinct tasks for each of the identified duties in order of importance.

Upon completion of this phase, the project was handed over to the Validation Team. It was our job to review, analyze and assess the findings of our counterparts, NIC staff and the contract facilitators. This was an exhausting process that turned out to be very informative and rewarding. As a result of our validation, the data presented to us will be incorporated in future Parole Board Member training sessions.

I would like to thank Chairman Conrad for the opportunity to participate in this project. It was an honor for me to work with the staff of NIC, the contract facilitators and the three Board Members that were selected with me to work on this project.



Pictures taken at the annual Parole Board Christmas Party



Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Report Shows Massachusetts Parole Board's Re-Incarceration Rate Below National Average in 2007

(Continued from page 14)

Table 2.

Region and jurisdiction	Total population at-risk of re-incarceration ^{a,b}	Returned to incarceration ^c	
		Number	Percent
U.S. total	1,180,469	183,253	15.5%
Federal	132,070	10,573	8.0%
State	1,048,399	172,680	16.5
Northeast	156,866	23,125	14.7%
Connecticut	4,886	1,463	29.9
Maine	33	0	0.0
Massachusetts	8,387	931	11.1
New Hampshire	2,330	569	24.4
New Jersey	23,910	2,757	11.5
New York	78,468	11,880	15.1
Pennsylvania	36,535	5,243	14.4
Rhode Island	847	111	13.1
Vermont	1,470	171	11.6
Midwest	167,826	24,985	14.9%
Indiana	17,422	1,110	6.4
Iowa	6,078	774	12.7
Kansas	10,164	1,494	14.7
Michigan	31,659	4,095	12.9
Minnesota	10,160	2,286	22.5
Missouri	32,929	8,213	24.9
Nebraska	1,812	278	15.3
North Dakota	1,156	168	14.5
Ohio	27,610	1,876	6.8
South Dakota	4,612	870	18.9
Wisconsin	24,224	3,821	15.8
South	332,387	29,780	9.0%
Alabama	9,942	687	6.9
Arkansas	27,139	2,843	10.5
District of Columbia	7,809	920	11.8
Florida	11,826	1,804	15.3
Georgia	34,893	4,491	12.9
Kentucky	17,700	3,101	17.5
Louisiana	37,484	2,688	7.2
Maryland	21,473	1,599	7.4
Mississippi	2,920	209	7.2
North Carolina	6,788	198	2.9
South Carolina	3,365	209	6.2
Tennessee	14,138	1,606	11.4
Texas	133,950	9,009	6.7
West Virginia	2,960	416	14.1
West	391,320	94,790	24.2%
Arizona	21,325	2,934	13.8
California	296,753	81,431	27.4
Colorado	18,640	4,361	23.4
Hawaii	3,002	313	10.4
Idaho	4,421	501	11.3
Montana	1,613	195	12.1
Nevada	7,477	509	6.8
Oregon	31,241	2,823	9.0
Utah	5,866	1,648	28.1
Wyoming	982	75	7.6

^aIncludes 685,175 adults on parole on January 1 and 495,294 who entered parole between January 1 and December 31, 2007; see table 3.

^bExcludes an estimated 174,422 at risk of re-incarceration for which the total returned during 2007 was not reported, including Pennsylvania counties (estimated at 65,851), Illinois (estimated at 68,400), Delaware (910), Oklahoma (estimated at 4,100), Virginia (9,046), Alaska (2,236), New Mexico (5,530), Washington (18,319), and one locality in Alabama (30). See *Methodology*.

^cExcludes persons who may have been returned to incarceration but were reported as unsatisfactory (8,834), absconder (53,981), other (9,452), or unknown (4,133). See table 7 for state data. May also exclude some persons reported as having completed parole for whom outstanding warrants were executed immediately upon exit from parole.