AN EVALUATION OF OHIO'S FURLOUGH PROGRAM: 1972-1977

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Three reports have been prepared on the Furlough Program. The shortest is a five page summary of key findings and resultant recommendations. This report - our second - is about twenty five pages long, describes the Furlough Program and the evaluation, outlines the analysis and findings of the study, and explains the basis for our recommendations. The third study, over 100 pages long, has been prepared for those who want considerably more detail about the program. Any of these reports are available from Steve Van Dine of the APA Research Section at 466-6413.

OVERVIEW OF THE FURLOUGH PROGRAM

According to Jerry Hillelson, Director of the Furlough Program:

> "Furlough can best be explained as a pre-parole procedure for the convicted felon. In lieu of serving his total sentence in prison, a portion is served in the community. Generally, the portion served in the community is the last six to nine months prior to parole... An individual goes from the general prison population to honor status in prison to furlough to parole .... The furlough stage is important because an inmate is placed in the community in a halfway house. During his stay in the halfway house he has time to untangle his particular problems before reuniting with his family. Hopefully during his stay he can obtain in the halfway house the training or skills he needs to lead a crime-free life. It is during this time he can earn money and save it for parole.... We credit the success of the furlough program to a simple fact -- easing people back to society." (unpublished paper)

In sum, furloughees are prison inmates, placed in a halfway house just prior to parole and scheduled for work, education, or training, in hope that this brief interval of very concentrated supervision and assistance will facilitate successful return to society.

The Furlough Program began in 1972 and continues to the present. From its inception through June 1979, there have been over 2,600 persons released from Ohio prisons on furlough. Slightly under half of these, 1,240 persons, were furloughed in the interval under study, July 1972 through December 1977. We were able to gather and use the files of 1,216 of the furloughees in this study.

There were three distinct periods in the history of the Furlough Program. The first ran from mid-1972 through March 1973. The second was from April 1973 until October 1975. The third is from November 1975 to the present. In brief, the periods are characterized by differing requirements for release and differing levels at which furlough decisions were made. During the middle of the three intervals, the Parole Board did not select those who would be placed on furlough. Instead, a committee at each institution made the selection. During the first and third periods, the Parole Board selected those who should be placed on furlough. Our analysis of the Furlough Program yields separate statistics for each interval.

NATURE OF THE FURLOUGH EVALUATION

There are two aspects of this evaluation. The first is a statistical description of the furloughees and activities of the Furlough Program. This portion of the study would have been unnecessary had there been an adequate information system monitoring the program. Unfortunately there was not. Thus, while program managers have intuitive impressions as to who was furloughed and how they did on furlough and parole, specific information was simply not available.

In describing the program by developing this data, even though well after the actual activity, program managers and supervisors now have an opportunity to check their intuitions against the numerical summary.

The other aspect of the evaluation is more critical in the determination of whether the Furlough Program is successful or not. In general, the Furlough Program can be considered successful if furloughees do better when finally paroled than they would have done without furlough. Since it is impossible to let the same group out of prison twice, once through furlough and once without, just to compare results, other ways of making the comparisons must be used.

The accepted method for determining whether a program works requires a comparison between two groups. The groups should be examined under similar conditions and, if possible, composed of persons with very similar backgrounds. The group of persons who go through the program, in this case the furloughees, are known as the program or experimental group. The other group is usually known as a comparison group. Under very strict conditions of random assignment, the group which does not go through the program is known as a control group. While it is very desirable to use control groups, we were unable to meet the rigorous conditions for that type of study. Instead we used two comparison groups from among those who did not enter the program: 1) persons who were denied furlough, although they were eligible (all were later paroled), and 2) a sample of persons released through regular parole procedures.

The disadvantage of the particular procedures used in the furlough evaluation is that it seems likely that there are "biases" in the data. To explain, these comparisons are designed to measure the changes due to program activity. It is hoped that only the program will product the sought after results. However, when there are reasons other than the program for different results between the program

and comparison groups, there are said to be biases in the comparison. When data is biased, it is difficult to determine whether the program produced the results or whether it was other factors.

The potential bias that concerned us most in this study was the possibility that furloughees were a select group of inmates who would be expected to do better on parole than non-furloughees. This would be true whether or not the group ever received the benefits of furlough. In other words, if those selected for and completing furlough did better than those not selected for furlough, the furloughees might have done better even without furlough. Without compensating for this bias, it becomes difficult or impossible to conclude that the furlough program is beneficial.

There were indeed reasons to believe that furloughees are better street risks than the comparison populations. Furloughees met requirements of minimum custody or honor status in the institutions and had no more than a single commitment for a violent offense. Further, several decision-makers decided that the furloughees were especially good cases. Thus the furloughees might represent the "cream of the crop" of the prison population.

It is possible to complete the evaluation, even if the analysis is complicated by biases in the data. To do this, it is most important to exercise care in examining the results. In this case, furloughees must be clearly more successful on parole to demonstrate that the better results are due both to the more favorable backgrounds of the furloughees and also to the impact of the furlough program. If the results are similar for the furloughees and a comparison group, then the evaluator can be properly skeptical that the Furlough Program had a positive impact. If the furloughees do worse, then the Furlough Program almost certainly had no positive impact.

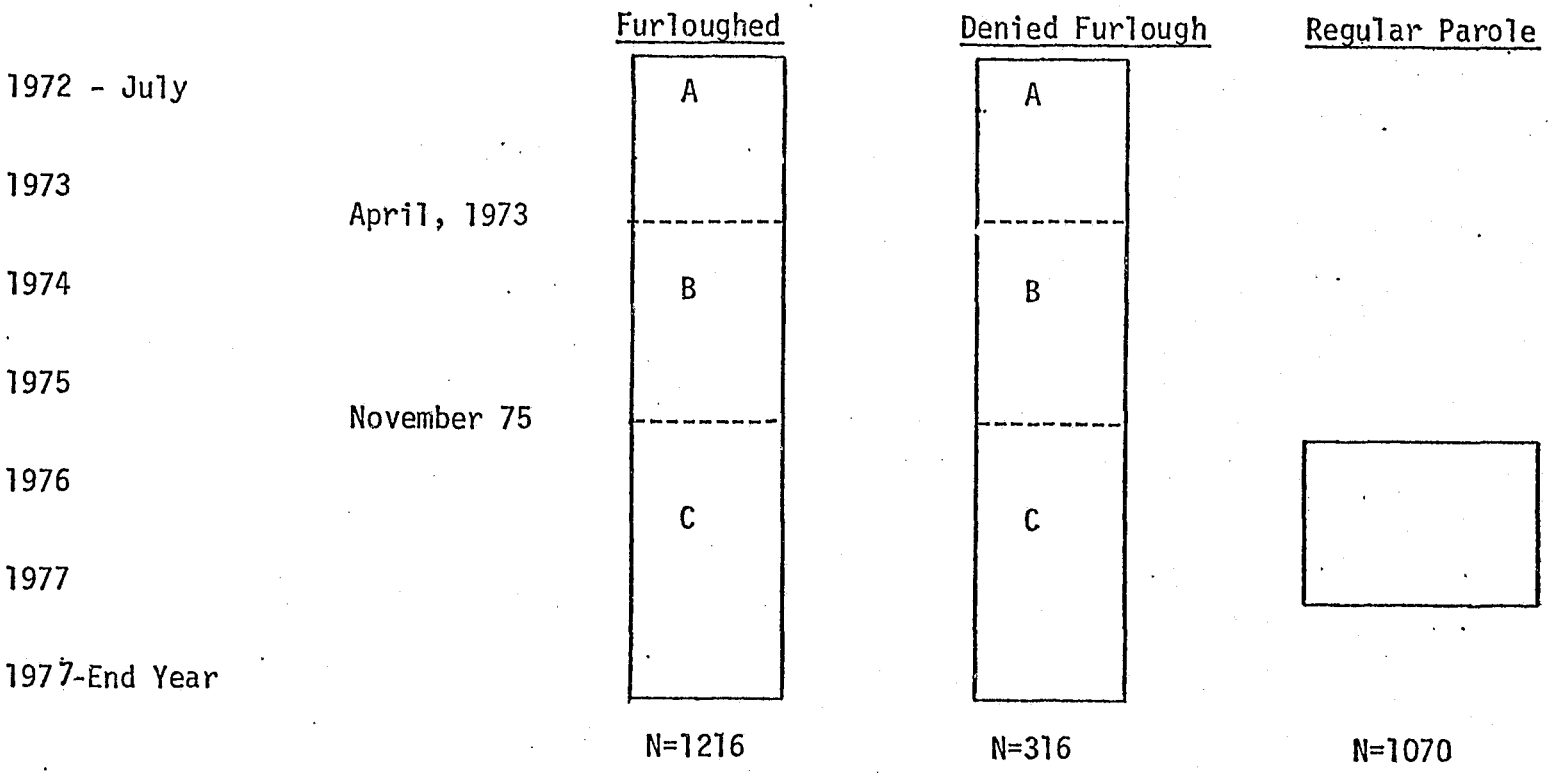
There are other special aids for completing an analysis when there are potential biases. For example, it is often helpful to examine the program and comparison populations in regard to particular background characteristics related to recidivism. Sometimes it can be estimated how much poorer one population will perform than the other group. A second device is to use some of the more complicated statistical techniques, notably analysis of covariance. However, the use of analysis of covariance and the results will be explained only in the full series of furlough reports.

SUMMARY OF FURLOUGH PROGRAM ACTIVITY

A vast amount of information was gathered for the furlough evaluation. The information included personal and criminal characteristics of furloughees and the two comparison populations. Follow-up data concerned activity on furlough for the program group and in the parole period for all three populations.

Diagram 1 should be helpful in understanding the design of the evaluation. As has been mentioned, three groups were studied: the furloughees, the "denied furlough" group, and "regular" parolees. Each of the groups is represented by a rectangle on the diagram. Dotted lines separate the furlough and "denied furlough" blocks into three parts, representing the three time periods of the furlough study. These are mid-1972 through March 1973, April 1974 through October 1975, and November 1975 through December 1977. All comparisons between groups are made within these time periods, since there were changes in the Furlough Program from one time period until the next. The regular parole group was available only for the time from November 1975 through December 1976. Comparisons involving the regular parolees are made only to the furlough or the "denied furlough" groups in the third time period.

DIAGRAM 1 Illustration of the Three Study Groups in the Furlough Evaluation Including Time Periods of Each Group.



1972 Until March 1973: Furloughees and "Denied" Furlough Groups

Table 1 summarizes both the furlough and "furlough denied" populations in the first time period of the study. There are clearly some marked differences between the two groups. Furloughees were much more likely to be white and from rural counties. They were much older on the average, five years older at admission and seven years older at release. Those denied furlough were less likely to be married at arrest, but more likely to be employed full-time. Those denied furlough were slightly less well educated.

More important were the criminal variables. Those denied furlough had considerably worse criminal histories than did those receiving furlough. Far more of those denied were committed to prison for a violent offense. The group

denied furlough had twice as bad a record as the group of furloughees on four key variables associated with future parole behavior: 1) prior felony convictions, 2) prior prison incarcerations, 3) prior parole or probation violations, and 4) the existence of a juvenile criminal record. The picture with alcohol and drug abuse is mixed. Furloughees were more likely to have a drug record, while those denied furlough were more likely to have previous alcohol abuse. Finally, those denied furlough spent almost 2-½ years longer in prison than the furloughees. (It should be noted that much of this extra time is prior to the furlough hearing.) In summary, the furloughees had much better personal and criminal histories, which should indicate a considerably better chance to succeed on parole than those denied furlough. Only the relative youth and drug histories of the furloughees would be negative variables.

Twenty-three of the 108 furloughees, a rate of 21.3 percent, failed furlough; most of those were returned to prison. Two of the furloughees committed new felonies and were returned; eighteen were returned for furlough violations. Material on the furlough program itself is summarized in a later table.

The bottom portion of Table 1 summarizes the parole adjustment of both the furlough group and the "denied furlough" group. After only a year on parole, differences between the two groups were slight, indeed almost neglibigle. Only 1.5 percent more of the furloughees had entirely favorable adjustment, the "Not Arrested or At Large" category. Furloughees were "Returned to Prison" only ½ percent less frequently than were those denied furlough. ("Return to Prison" rates for both groups were less than half the return rates of normal parole populations.) Employment was a bright spot, with about 20 percent more furloughees being employed after a year. The differences between the two groups increased at the time of final parole outcome, i.e., final release or return to prison.

Furloughees were about ten percent better with regard both to clean arrest record and return rate. Only persons whose paroles were completed included in the final parole tabulations.

April 1973 Until October 1975: Furloughee and "Denied Furlough" Group

As in any study, we had problems gathering reliable data. Our greatest difficulty stemmed from our inability to develop a complete comparison group of persons denied furlough in the April 1973-October 1975 period. Furlough decisions were made then by institutional committees, and by the time of the evaluation, records of the furlough committees had been destroyed in all but London Correctional Institution (LOCI) and Chillicothe Correctional Institutie (CCI). These are minimum and medium security prisons, respectively, and inmates there cannot be considered representative of the entire prison population. Thus for the middle time period, our analysis of furlough is based on a comparison of inmates from LOCI and CCI who were furloughed or denied furlough. Generalization about all institutions is impossible during this period, although it is still possible to use this data to get some ideas about the value of the program. This material is in Table 2. Material on all furloughees is included in the table, but those totals should not be compared to the "denied furlough" population for two prisons only.

Examining Table 2, it is obvious that most of the patterns observed in the first time period were reversed. Indeed, it could be strongly argued that the persons selected for furlough at LOCI and CCI during the second time period were more likely to fail on furlough and parole than those who were denied furlough. While the differences were not great, on almost every criminal variable the furloughees had worse backgrounds, on the average, than did those denied furlough. This was true of prior felonies, prior imprisonments, juvenile criminal records, prior supervision violations, and histories of drug and alcohol abuse. Only in the category of violent

crimes committed (26.6 percent for furloughees versus 54.4 percent for those denied furlough) did the furloughees have better records. Of course, we can only speculate whether these patterns were unique to the two prisons examined, or whether all the institutional furlough committees had the same decision-making patterns during this period.

During the furlough interval, 20 of the 94 furloughees from LOCI and CCI did not complete furlough, a program failure rate of 21.3 percent. Of the 20, three were recommitted for new felonies, while 14 were returned for furlough violations. Examining all 573 furloughees for the period, 26.0 percent of the group failed furlough. This included 21 who committed new felonies and 118 who were returned to prison for furlough violations.

As noted above, the furloughees selected during the April 1973 to October 1975 period may well have had a greater likelihood to fail on parole than those denied furlough. Nonetheless the parole outcome statistics were about the same during the second time period as during the first. The difference between the two group return rates after one year, 5.4 percent for the furloughees and 8.3 percent for those denied furlough, reflected more favorably on the furlough program than was true for the earlier time period. However, the differences in return rates for final parole outcome was not as favorable as during the first time period. In this period the final outcome return rates were 7.1 percent for furloughees and 14.1 percent for those denied furlough. The employment situation at one year was the same in both time periods, with about 20 percent more of the furloughees employed full-time at the end of a year. In all this discussion of the second period, however, it must again be emphasized that we really only know how the furloughees from LOCI and CCI did when examined against a comparison population.

November 1975 Until December 1977: Furloughees, Parolees, and "Denied Furlough" Group

The third time period, November 1975 through December 1977, probably gives us the most valuable data in the evaluation. There are a large number of cases and a "Furlough Denied" comparison group from all institutions. Further, inmate files compiled in this interval are only rarely missing, and the personal and criminal histories of the inmates were gathered more thoroughly for the files than before. Finally, a second comparison group of regular parolees is available for part of this time period, from November 1975 through December 1976. With this second comparison group, we found that both furloughees and those denied furlough do much better on parole than do the regular parolees.

The results for this third period are shown in Table 3. The comparison patterns between furloughees and those denied furlough evident in the first period were reestablished, though noticeably reduced. With regard to personal characteristics, there were few differences between the two populations. Only the proportion of persons from the six largest counties showed a difference of more than four percent. The two groups were very similar as to sex, ethnic background, education, age at admission and release, and marital and employment status at arrest.

The two groups were also similar when compared on criminal histories. However, on most of the variables the furloughees would be considered slightly better than those denied furlough. Seven percent fewer of the furloughees were incarcerated for a violent offense on the current crime. Furloughees averaged .17 fewer felonies and .11 fewer incarcerations. Six percent fewer furloughees had juvenile records and two percent fewer had prior supervision violations. In contrast, furloughees were slightly more likely than those denied furlough to have a history of alcohol and drug abuse. Finally, furloughees served only a little less time in prison on the average than did those denied furlough, 1.9 and 2.3 years, respectively.

Of the 535 furloughees from the third period, 125 failed to complete furlough, a program failure rate of 23.4 percent. Only seven were returned to prison for a new felony, while 108 were returned as technical violators and ten failed in other ways. Another 36 persons who completed furlough and were paroled are excluded from the analysis at this point because they had not completed a year of parole by April, 1979.

As was the case with the background characteristics, the Parole Outcome statistics were very similar for the two groups. About six percent more furloughees than those denied furlough had clean parole records at the end of the first year, but this difference had dropped to just two percent at final parole outcome. The twenty percent differences in employment statistics that had been so favorable to furlough diminished to a 6.5 percent favorable margin during this period. Finally, the furloughees had a return rate at the end of one year that was 2.1 percent lower than those denied furlough, but this difference diminished to .5 percent at final parole outcome.

Since the furloughees and those denied furlough were so very similar, it is difficult to determine which group most closely matched the group of regular parolees. Indeed, regular parolees were closer to the denied population on eight background and criminal variables and closer to the furloughees on the other eight. Several items are of interest. Furloughees during this period had the same proportion of persons from the big urban counties as regular parolees, 57.6 percent. Furloughees were almost identical to regular parolees in regard to prior felonies and prior prison terms. Regular parolees had more juvenile criminal involvement than either of the other two groups, but better records than the other two groups in regard to prior supervision violations and alcohol and drug abuse. Furloughees and regular parolees served the same amount of time before release, 1.9 years.

Clearly both the furloughees and the denied furlough group did better on parole than did the regular parolees. Twelve and 19 percent more of the furloughees and of those denied furlough, respectively, had clear records at the end of the year of parole. Return rates for the three groups showed the furloughees lowest at 8.6 percent, the "denied furlough" group next lowest at 10.7 percent, and the regular parolees at 13.1 percent. Employment statistics showed the same pattern, with parolees 16 and 21 percent less frequently employed than the other two groups. At final parole outcome, about twenty percent fewer of the parolees had clean parole records than either the furloughees or the denied furlough group. The return rate for regular parolees was over ten percent greater than the rate of either of the other two groups.

ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOME VARIABLES

While some confusing patterns arise from this data, some firm conclusions also emerge. The first and most important of these is that admittance to the furlough program does not markedly enhance an inmate's chances of completing parole successfully. This conclusion is based primarily on a comparison of furloughees and those denied furlough in all three periods. The return rates at the end of one year differ between the two groups by slight margins of 1.2, 2.9, and 2.1 percent (return rates are highlighted in Table 4). The differences in return rates between the two populations increases from the one year mark until the end of the parole in the first two periods, but diminishes during the third. The third interval statistics are probably the most reliable because of the large number of cases and because the furloughees represent all eight institutions.

Furloughees have an edge on those denied furlough according to all other measures of success, but the differences are small.

During all intervals the furloughees have more persons in the "no problems" category after a year. The differences range from 2-6 percent. At final parole outcome these differences spread to eight percent from the first two intervals, but decrease to only two percent during the third interval. For employment figures, which were gathered only at one year after parole, furloughees were about twenty percent more likely to have jobs than were members of the comparison population during both the first and second time periods. During the third time period only six percent more furloughees than those denied furlough had jobs after one year. Overall then, despite the edge to furloughees over those denied furlough in every measure, the margins were not enough, especially during the third period, to consider the furlough program a success.

This conclusion is strongly buttressed by data showing the rate at which persons still on furlough status are returned to the institution for new crimes or furlough violations. The rates of furlough failure (see Table 4) are 21.3, 26.0, and 23.4 percent in the first, second, and third periods, respectively. Almost all of these cases are returnees. When these failures are considered with furloughees who later fail on parole, the rate of furloughees who returned to prison either under furlough or parole is several times greater than the rate of return for those denied furlough. This suggests either that those denied furlough are far better risks during supervision or that an unwise furlough policy is being followed. The first possibility does not seem likely. The second will be discussed below.

A second major finding of the study is that, to the degree that the furlough program was effective, it did better earlier in its history than it did later. As noted above, the differences between the outcomes for the furloughees and the comparison populations were greatest on each measure during the first two periods, while those differences were smallest during the third period. In this same vein, there was

obviously more stringent sorting of candidates earlier in the program than there was later. On most variables related to a return to crime, generally criminal history variables, the differences are fairly prominent during the first period, less evident during the second (although it must be remembered that second period data is from two institutions only), and almost non-existent during the third period. One would not expect the two populations to have very different return rates during the third period, after examining the prediction variables.

Third, our data show that furloughees do better on parole than regular parolees. When the outcome variables for the regular parolees are also considered, then it would appear that what occurs in the furlough program is a phenomenon known as "creaming", or selecting candidates for an early release program who are more likely to succeed than the average releasee, with or without any special assistance. This is supported by the fact that furloughees in the third study period did better than the regular parolees by every outcome variable, in some instances, extraordinarily better.

The basis for the choosing between those more and less likely to succeed does not seem to be based on institution or Parole Board decision-making, but rather on the rules of eligibility for furlough. If it were effective decision-making that separated the good from the average risks, then the prime difference in outcome rates would be between the furloughees and those denied furlough. Instead both groups of persons eligible for furlough have relatively similar outcome results, while there is a considerable difference between the two groups and the regular parolees. These differences can be seen in the size of the "no problems" group, both at one year and end of parole, the return rate at one year and end of parole, and employment at one year after date of parole. The basic rules setting up eligibility for furlough appear to be much more important in selecting good risks for supervision than is the

skill of the furlough decision-making body. It seems proper to conclude that exceptions to those rules should be kept to a minimum.

COSTS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS OF THE FURLOUGH PROGRAM

Table 5 contains a summary of the direct costs and direct benefits to state and local jurisdictions of Ohio which result from the furlough program. Information on two categories, expenditures on the program and benefits returned to the state from furloughee earnings, were gathered from the bookkeeping systems of the Parole Authority, where they were kept on a fiscal year basis. The remaining category, savings due to the reduction in incarceration time, is calculated on the basis of the research data. As a result it is done in the three time intervals of the furlough program.

The categories are relatively straightforward. Furlough program costs include salaries of furlough personnel and the cost of support for their activities, but the primary cost is housing the furloughees in furlough centers or halfway houses. Federal grants are not included. The furloughee earnings category includes only those earnings which are a benefit to the program or the state. This includes state and local taxes paid on earnings while on furlough, partial reimbursement to the furlough program for the costs of room and board, payment for expenses which otherwise might have been covered by the furlough program, reimbursement to the state and courts for particular obligations, and family support payments (which may have reduced welfare costs to the state).

The third category is that of reduced costs to the state due to a reduction in the length of incarceration. This is computed by determining the degree to which the prison population is reduced (measured in years) and then multiplying the number of years of reduction by the cost of incarceration per year. In this case we used both an average and marginal cost of incarceration per year for the estimate.

The average cost figure is calculated by dividing the total expenditure on prisons by the number of inmates. The marginal cost of incarceration is the degree to which the cost of incarceration will change when a single inmate is added to, or removed from, the prison population. For any large population the marginal cost is usually far smaller than the average cost, due to economies of scale. That is true in this case. For more details on the computation of average and marginal costs in this study, the reader is referred to Furlough Report I.

Furlough program total costs to the state over the five and one-half year period were $2,395,920.67. This figure does not include federal money which may have been channeled through the state to the program; it also does not include support which individual furlough centers raised to supplement the state-supplied per diem.

Costs of the program were offset to some degree by earnings of furloughees. Included in the category are those deductions from furloughee salaries which were returned to the furlough program or the state government in some manner. Personal savings by the furloughees, while an attractive feature of the program, are not of any particular benefit to the program economically. The furloughee earnings category showed a net gain of $460,240.32 to the state over the period of the study.

Reduction in prison time served is generally considered the primary economic asset from an early release program. The net reduction in prison time served for the furlough program from July 1972 - December 1977 was 439.89 years, or an average of almost exactly 80 years each year. While the gross reduction in time served was 678.89 years, this reduction was offset by 240.0 years served by persons who committed furlough violations. Since these are violations which would not have resulted in a return to prison had the inmate been on regular parole, then they must count as extra returns, or a necessary cost of the program.

This net reduction in the time of imprisonment was then multiplied by the yearly cost of imprisonment. Two different estimates are used. Using average cost figures, the program resulted in a savings of $2,279,102.36 to the department. Using the marginal yearly cost of imprisonment, the department saved $301,887.92. It should be noted that the estimate based on the marginal cost is the more accurate of the two figures. With a prison population of several thousand and a relatively high proportion of prison costs which are fixed, then marginal cost calculations provide a far more accurate estimate.

When all figures are totalled, we see that savings of the furlough program is $2,739,342.68, using the figures for an average cost of incarceration. Using marginal cost estimates, the savings to the state is only $762,138.24. Both of these savings figures are matched against the $2,395,920.67 cost to the state of the furlough program. Using the average cost figures, the furlough program resulted in a $343,422.01 saving to the department over the 5½ year period. Using the much more accurate figures based on marginal costs of incarceration, the furlough program resulted in a net cost to the state of about $1,633,782.43. Restating this point, if the state had never used the furlough program, it would have spent, in net, $1.6 million less during the 5½ year period, even after paying for the extra costs of housing persons who were not furloughed.

Certain qualifications must be made on this analysis, particularly in regard to prison population. Since the prison population was at an all time low during the early years of the program, population is a concern only during the last interval. It is fair to argue that during 1976 and 1977 when the prison population was approaching and then exceeding capacity, the costs of providing alternate housing for 80 inmates should be counted. The alternative would be new prisons at capital costs exceeding $40,000 per cell. In contrast, a release program like furlough, a net loser to the department when considered against operating costs alone, may still be cheaper. When

matched against the costs of new construction, or against law-suits generated by populations which are above capacity, then furlough may be economically defensible.

A second qualification involves the use of marginal cost estimates for the furlough program. Once the program matures and some costs are constant, then benefit-cost calculations using marginal cost estimates would reduce but not eliminate the disparity of costs over benefits. This is because the major furlough cost is the per diem expense, clearly part of the marginal cost. This factor will be pursued in more detail in the extended benefit-cost study.

In sum, though, when examining the furlough program strictly in terms of an operating budget, then furlough costs the department money, rather than saving the department money.

POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section is written in the light of the two primary conclusions of the study. First the program is expensive, costing the department more in operating costs than would be spent if the inmates had been kept in the prison until the next hearing. This is offset by the possibility of new capital costs during times of prison overcrowding. Second, the furlough program is not particularly effective. If the furloughees had been paroled directly instead of being furloughed, the evidence suggests that the failure rate would have increased only slightly. On the positive side we note that both groups, furloughees and those eligible for, but denied furlough, did noticeably better on parole than those released directly to parole.

To complete the evaluation of the furlough program, the analysis on the program must be summarized in recommendations for the group. Several possible futures, or options, for furlough are discussed below. The options can be placed on two spectrums: a range of operating costs, and a range of population (or potential capital) costs. There is no policy option which is best in both areas.

OPTION I -- ELIMINATE THE FURLOUGH PROGRAM

This option would minimize the operating costs of the department. Even if there was no way to advance the parole release dates of those presently furloughed, the department would still save money just by keeping the persons in prison instead of on furlough. If that had been done during this period, prison population of the eight institutions would have gone up about 80 persons a year. The increase would not have been damaging during the early years of the furlough program but it would have been highly undesireable during 1976 and 1977, periods of population stress. Savings from the program's elimination could be channeled to other programs which might facilitate parole adjustment to society.

OPTION II -- REVISE THE OPERATION OF THE FURLOUGH PROGRAM

If prison population stresses are great, and it seems desireable that furlough be retained, then certain changes in the program will enhance its operations. These changes fall in two areas. First, stringent policies should be developed to control the number of persons returned as furlough violators. This is based on our finding that of those denied furlough only a small number return as technical parole violators. By comparison about one fifth of all furloughees are returned on violations. This clearly shows that the furlough program is too rigid in the demands that it makes of furloughees. Certainly the existing return policy is costly, resulting in a thirty percent reduction in the gross prison time saved by early release. More important, the high furlough failure rate seems to have little effect on parole return rates.

The second aspect of a revision in furlough policy would be to select furlough candidates only from certain groups within the prison population. No person should be furloughed if that person meets the eligibility standards for furlough and is eligible for parole. They will probably do as well on the outside if they go directly

to parole instead of going first to furlough and then parole. This would suggest that furlough is a logical program only for those who have not yet reached first hearing. For those who have passed first hearing and go up for furlough consideration, perhaps some procedure can be devised whereby recommendation for furlough brings an automatic special review.

OPTION III -- RETAIN THE FURLOUGH PROGRAM AS IT PRESENTLY OPERATES

This does not seem to be a very wise option, but it might be the most desirable one in the face of prison overcrowding and if the particular recommendations in Option II cannot be implemented.

OPTION IV -- EXPAND THE FURLOUGH PROGRAM

This option seems desirable only if there are very great population stresses in the institutions, if no new prison space is available in the near future, and if the administration, aware of the very high costs of the program, decides that the reduction in the prison population is worth the expense.

Of all the options, we recommend that Option II -- revision of the furlough program -- be pursued. This is because of the serious population pressure in the institutions. However, this option is very costly. When institutional population stresses are relieved, either through a decrease in inmates or through expanded capacity, then serious consideration should be given to Option I. That decision should be made not simply by eliminating furlough, but by comparing the cost of furlough with the cost of other programs which are designed to reduce the return rates and to improve adjustment on release from the institution.

SUMMARY

The furlough program was studied over the period July 1972 - December 1977. Three groups were studied; all 1,216 furloughees, all 316 persons denied furlough, and 1,070 persons receiving regular paroles (a twenty percent sample of those released from November 1975 - December 1976). In the first comparison between furloughees and those denied furlough, we found that those denied furlough did about as well on parole as those who received furlough. A far smaller percentage of those denied furlough than furloughees were returned to the prison when the furlough failure rate was included. We concluded that furlough does not improve an inmate's chances of success on parole.

In the second comparison, restricted to late 1975 and 1976, it was apparent that those released on regular parole did quite a bit worse than those furloughed or even those eligible for, but denied, furlough. This suggests that the furlough criteria do select persons more likely to succeed on parole than the average parolee, although once the eligible population is selected, decision makers are unable to improve the chances of the group by a second level of selection.

In a cost study of the furlough program, it was determined that the program had a new cost to the department over the 5½ years of $1.6 million above what expenses would have been if inmates had been kept in the institutions. There was a reduction over the 5½ years in prison population of 439.85 inmate years, or an average reduction of 80 persons per year. Using the best estimates of the cost of incarceration, the costs of the furlough program exceeded the savings from reduced incarceration and from furloughee earnings by $1.6 million.*

* This figure will certainly be debated, since estimates of savings from the program are much greater if the cost of imprisonment is reckoned on an average cost basis. However, there are great weaknesses in using average cost calculations, and our best estimate of economic impact is a $1.6 million cost to the department.

Given all this, the study recommends that the furlough program be retained only if significantly revised and only if there continues to be major problems with prison overcrowding. Changes should include drastic reduction in the number of persons returned to prison for furlough violations and selection of furlough candidates primarily from groups not yet eligible for parole release. Persons eligible for parole release should be paroled, if any release seems appropriate.

TABLE 1 Comparison For Several Variables of Furlough Group and Denied Furlough Group, for Period Mid 1972-March 1973

Category Background	Furloughees N=108	Denied Furlough N=28
% of Group Male	98.1%	96.4
% of Group Black	32.4%	46.4
% from Six Largest Counties	50.9%	75.0
Average Age at Admission	26.9 years	32.0
Average Age at Arrest	29.6 years	37.1
% Married at Arrest	28.7%	18.5
% Employed at Arrest	35.2%	46.4
Average Years Education	11.1 years	10.1
% Committed for Violent Felony	47.2%	71.4
Average # Prior Felonies	.58 felony	1.11
Average # Prior Incarcerations	.44 term	1.04
% with Juvenile Criminal Activity	33.9%	64.3
% with Supervision Violation	25.0%	50.0
% with Drug Abuse History	41.7%	14.3
% with Alcohol Abuse History	22.2%	32.1
Average Years Served before Release	2.68 years	5.09
One Year Parole Outcome	**N=85**	**N=28**
% Not Arrested or At-Large	69.4%	67.9
% Returned to Prison	5.9%	7.1
(Technical Returns)	(1.2)	(3.6)
(New Felony Returns)	(4.7)	(3.6)
% Employed Full-Time	63.5%	42.9
Final Parole Outcome	**N=76**	**N=22**
% Not Arrested or At-Large	71.1%	63.6
% Returned to Prison	7.9%	18.1
(Technical Returns)	(1.3)	(9.1)
(New Felony Returns)	(6.6)	(9.1)

TABLE 2 Comparison for Several Variables of Furlough Group and Denied F lough Group, for Period April 1973 - October 1975, LOCI and CCI only. Data for All Furloughees, This Period.

Category Background	All Furloughees N=573	LOCI & CCI Furloughees N=94	LOCI & CCI Denied Furlough N=90
% of Group Male	95.5	100.0%	100.0%
% of Group Black	51.8	58.5%	51.5
% from Six Largest Counties	57.6	47.9%	65.6
Average Age at Admission	26.3	31.3 years	31.8
Average Age at Release	28.1	33.0 years	36.1
% Married at Arrest	29.7	33.0%	27.8
% Employed at Arrest	40.5	53.2%	38.9
Average Years Education	10.4	10.0 years	9.7
% Committed for Violent Felony	36.8	26.6%	54.4
Average # Prior Felonies	.48	.95 felonies	.84
Average # Prior Incarcerations	.28	.67 terms	.59
% with Juvenile Criminal Activity	48.0	43.6%	42.2
% with Supervision Violation	36.1	59.4%	47.8
% with Drug Abuse History	42.2	34.0%	31.1
% with Alcohol Abuse History	32.5	42.6%	35.6
Average Years Served before Release	1.8	1.7 years	4.3
One Year Parole Outcome	**N=422**	**N=74**	**N=84**
% Not Arrested or At-Large	69.9	70.3%	64.3
% Returned to Prison	10.5	5.4%	8.3
(Technical Returns)	(6.9)	(5.4)	(7.1)
(New Felony Returns)	(3.6)	(-)	(1.2)
% Employed Full-time	52.8	64.9%	42.9
Final Parole Outcome	**N=400**	**N=70**	**N=71**
% Not Arrested or At-Large	70.5	74.3%	67.6
% Returned to Prison	17.0	7.1	14.1
(Technical Returns)	(4.0)	(5.7)	(12.7)
(New Felony Returns)	(6.0)	(1.4)	(1.4)

TABLE 3 Comparison on Several Variables for Three Groups: Furloughees and Persons Denied Furlough for Period November 1975-December 1977, and Regular Parolees for Period November 1975-December 1977

Category Background	Furloughees N=535	Denied Furlough N=198	Regular Parolees N=1070
% of Group Male	91.0	94.4%	94.4
% of Group Black	51.4	54.5%	53.0
% from Six Largest Counties	57.6	66.2%	57.6
Average Age at Admission	27.7	27.8 years	26.3
Average Age at Release	29.6	30.8 years	28.1
% Married at Arrest	33.3	29.3%	23.8
% Employed at Arrest	39.3	37.9%	33.3
Average Years Education	10.3	10.2 years	9.9
% Committed for Violent Crime	35.5	42.9%	29.4
Average # Prior Felonies	.65	.82 felonies	.64
Average # Prior Incarcerations	.44	.55 terms	.46
% with Juvenile Criminal Activity	50.5	56.6%	60.1
% with Supervision Violation	43.9	46.0%	39.8
% with Drug Abuse History	44.9	41.4%	40.9
% with Alcohol Abuse History	43.9	37.9%	34.1
Average Years Served before Release	1.9	2.3 years	1.9
One Year Parole Outcome	**N=374**	**N=169**	**N=1067**
% Not Arrested or At-Large	71.9	65.7%	53.9
% Returned to Prison	8.6	10.7%	13.1
(Technical Returns)	(1.9)	(3.6)	(4.9)
(New Felony Returns)	(6.7)	(7.1)	(8.2)
% Employed Full-Time	57.0	51.5%	35.8
Final Parole Outcome	**N=318**	**N=137**	**N=982**
% Not Arrested or At-Large	75.8	73.7%	55.8
% Returned to Prison	12.6	13.1%	23.9
(Technical Returns)	(3.5)	(4.4)	(7.2)
(New Felony Returns)	(9.1)	(8.8)	(16.7)

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF FURLOUGH FAILURE RATES,
PAROLE ONE YEAR RETURN RATES, AND END OF PAROLE
RETURN RATES, FOR ALL STUDY GROUPS IN ALL PERIODS

PERIOD	NUMBER IN GROUP	FAILED FURLOUGH		CASES COMPLETING ONE YEAR ON PAROLE			CASES WITH PAROLE ENDED		
					RETURNED			RETURNED	
	N	N	%	N	N	%	N	N	%
MID 72 - MARCH 73									
FURLOUGHED	108	23	21.3	85	5	5.9	75	6	7.9
DENIED FURLOUGH	28	N/A		28	2	7.1	22	4	18.1
APRIL 73 - OCT 75									
FURLOUGHED - ALL	573	149	26.0	472	44	10.4	400	68	17.0
FURLOUGHED (LOCI & CCI)	94	20	21.3	74	4	5.4	70	5	7.1
DENIED FURLOUGH (LOCI & CCI)	90	N/A		84	7	8.3	71	10	14.1
NOV 75 - DEC 77									
FURLOUGHED	535	125	23.4	374	32	8.6	318	40	12.6
DENIED FURLOUGH	198	N/A		169	18	10.7	137	18	13.1
REGULAR PAROLE	1,070	N/A		1,067	140	13.1	982	235	23.9

TABLE 5

DIRECT COSTS AND DIRECT ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO STATE OF THE FURLOUGH PROGRAM, USING MARGINAL AND AVERAGE COSTS OF INCARCERATION, JULY 1972 - DECEMBER 1977

PERIOD OF COSTS	FURLOUGH PROGRAM DIRECT COSTS	BENEFITS * FURLOUGHEE EARNINGS	FURLOUGH PERIOD	YEARS SAVED	AVERAGE COST INCARCERATION	AVERAGE COST SAVINGS	MARGINAL COST INCARCERATION	MARGINAL COST SAVINGS
FY 1973	291,247.00	24,505.18	July, 72-Mar., 73	44.01	4,810.33	211,702.62	666.89	29,349.83
FY 1974	768,488.00	115,147.00						
FY 1975	288,618.66	100,008.15	Apr. 73-Oct. 75	225.25	5,809.10	1,291,072.48	680.16	151,165.56
FY 1976	431,931.27	104,984.15						
FY 1977	239,343.93	78,072.95	Nov. 75-Dec. 77	170.63	4,549.77	776,327.26	711.32	121,372.53
July-Dec. 1977**	376,291.81	37,522.89						
TOTAL	2,395,920.67	460,240.32		439.89		2,279,102.36		301,887.92

* Includes payments for 1) state and local taxes, 2) personal and medical expenses, 3) court and state repayments, and 4) family support. Each category seems likely to have offset a cost to state or local government.

** 1/2 of FY 1978 totals.

TOTAL BENEFITS COMPUTATION

Prison Time Savings (marginal rate)	$301,887.92
Furloughee Earnings	460,240.32
Total Benefits (marginal rate)	$762,138.24
Prison Time Savings (average rate)	$2,279,102.36
Furloughee Earnings	460,240.32
Total Benefits (average rate)	$2,739,342.68

COST OR SAVINGS COMPUTATION

Benefits (w/marginal rate)	$ 762,138.24
Costs	2,395,920.67
Costs Exceed Benefits	$1,633,782.43
Benefits (w/average rate)	$2,739,342.68
Costs	2,395,920.67
Benefits Exceed Costs	$ 343,422.01

END