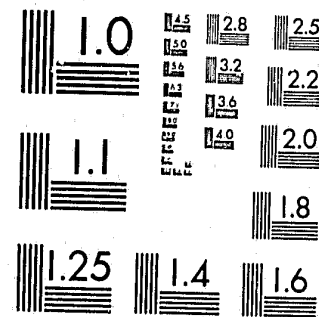


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COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS  
AND THE ISSUE OF THREAT

**NCJRS**

NOV 21 1983

**ACQUISITIONS**

Terry H. Murphy  
Program Bureau  
Michigan Dept.  
of Corrections

July 12, 1983

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Residential Programs (CRP) provide structured settings within the community where support, guidance and supervision are provided for eligible residents. In addition, these programs are also seen as a screening device for parole readiness.

The major purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which community corrections centers and resident homes present a threat to community safety. A second objective was to provide information on general program "processes".

The population examined consisted of all residents released to the community between January 1, 1978 and June 30, 1978. The population was stratified according to whether persons were released to community programs or directly to parole, and a proportional random sample was drawn. The study sample consisted of 1117 cases or 38% of the population.

A comparison of descriptive statistics showed that persons released to community programs were less likely to be serving on a violent crime, have a prior prison commitment, juvenile history or serious institutional misconduct than persons released directly to parole.

The analysis of program operations showed that no CRP participants were considered Very High Risk cases. When compared to those persons released directly to parole, the CRP cases also had significantly fewer persons classified as High Risk on property crime. CRP residents also had a substantially higher probability of being cited and returned for rule violations that did not involve criminal behavior than the parolees. These findings indicate that CRP participants are subject to a more rigorous screening and monitoring process than persons released directly to parole.

A comparison of persons released to community programs with persons released directly to parole in terms of criminal involvement within one year of release resulted in the following findings:

1) CRP participants commit significantly fewer violent felonies than those persons released directly to parole.

2) The involvement of CRP releases in violent crime while on CRP status is almost nonexistent (.6%). Of the 590 residents released initially to CRP, only four committed a violent felony while on CRP status. A substantial decrease was also observed for nonviolent felonies.

3) In terms of criminal felony involvement in general (combining violent and nonviolent), residents released to CRP programs do better than their parolee counterparts over the same time period.

These observations support the conclusion that CRP participants do not present an undue risk to the community and are subject to substantial regulation.

## PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

### Introduction

During the last decade, considerable interest in corrections has been directed towards developing community support programs. In contrast to the traditional emphasis on total institutionalization, community corrections emphasizes a positive approach to the offender and the community. Although proponents of the approach agree that dangerous offenders should remain incarcerated, they feel that a substantial number of nonviolent offenders can benefit from a "decompression" period upon re-entry into the community. Community programs are designed to provide a method of transition that will benefit both the offender and the community.

Another reason for the growth of community corrections, especially community residential programs, has been the inability of traditional programs to deal effectively with many of the problems confronting the ex-offender. As Miller and Montilla have observed, most correctional programs that have produced favorable results "are located either in or are strongly oriented toward the community" (1977:XVI).

Community programs provide the offender with the opportunity to reestablish family and community ties, seek employment, and receive vocational training prior to his or her release from correctional supervision. Problems in these areas are often cited by offenders as the greatest obstacles to successful community adjustment (Duffee and Duffee, 1981).

Among the benefits traditionally attributed to community programs are cost-effectiveness, reduced unemployment and recidivism, and increased respon-

sibility on the part of the offender.

Although a number of studies have attempted to evaluate the benefits of community programs, the results have been inconclusive (Sarri, 1981, Blackman, 1981). These studies have been primarily concerned with the relationship of community programs to subsequent parole behavior to see whether support programs, however successful otherwise, reduce recidivism (e.g., Beck, 1981). However, a general consensus appears to indicate that community programs "are at least as effective as institutional programming" (Sarri, 1981).

One of the most controversial issues with the public in establishing a community corrections program is the perceived threat of the offender. Because community support is considered essential for the success of these programs (Goetting, 1974), a substantial effort is directed towards ensuring the public safety through extensive screening of potential participants. A major consideration is often the offender's potential for violence. Consequently, participants are selected on the basis of their probable risk to the community.

Although a number of evaluations have been conducted on the effectiveness of community programs, few have focused on the threat that community programs present to the public. A major purpose of this study will be to empirically examine that issue.

#### Community Corrections in Michigan

In Michigan, the Community Residential Program (CRP)<sup>1</sup> provides structured settings within the community, where support, guidance and supervision are

<sup>1</sup> In order to facilitate discussion, the terms CRP, community programs and community residential programs will be used interchangeably to represent the concept of community corrections.

provided for eligible residents. In addition to these traditionally cited benefits, these programs are also seen as a screening device for parole readiness. Since these programs operate in most of Michigan's major cities, an offender can usually be placed in the community that he or she will be returning to.

In keeping with the Department's commitment to public safety, participants are screened on several factors before placement. Among the factors considered are:

- Violence Risk Potential: All offenders are classified on the Department's Violence Risk Classification instrument. The risk instrument was developed in 1977 and was replicated in a later study. Property risk is also a factor.
- Departmental Policy Restrictions: These exclude persons who are drug traffickers, "professional" criminals or who have been involved in organized crime.
- Criminal History: An eligible offender cannot have a history of predatory sex crimes, patterns of assault or serious mental disturbances.

In addition to providing assistance to offenders, it has been mentioned that the CRP programs also serve as a screening device for parole readiness. All residents are subject to numerous program rules and are expected to seek employment and/or improve their vocational skills. Violation of CRP rules can result in the offender being returned to the institution.

In short, community placement and participation is subject to an ongoing process of screening and evaluation geared towards the reintegration of the offender and ensuring the safety of the community.

#### Statement of Problem

The major purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which community corrections centers and resident homes present a threat to community safety. A second objective of this study is to provide information on general program "processes."

As stated earlier, most advocates of community programs assume that these programs pose minimum risk to the public. This assumption is presumably based on the screening process designed to ensure that dangerous persons remain confined in secure settings. Although the assumption appears reasonable, recent public concern suggests that it should be demonstrated empirically.

One means of determining the extent to which community participants present a threat to the public is to compare their performance with another group of offenders released to the community under different conditions. In Michigan, most inmates are released to parole supervision prior to their termination from the Department's jurisdiction. However, as compared with residents of community programs, parolees are subject to less supervision and fewer restrictions. The primary reason for this difference is that persons in community programs are still legally prisoners and subject to institutional control. Thus, community programs are the transitional phase between total institutional confinement and parole.

Parole is the generally accepted practice of release to the community after the expiration of the minimum sentence. Because parole has a long history of acceptance, and, except by a few vocal critics, is not seen as presenting an unusual threat to the public, a comparison of violent behavior between those persons released directly to parole with persons released to community programs provides an empirical test of the "threat" issue. That is, parolee behavior will be used here as an empirical referent or standard of criminal behavior against which that of community program participants can be measured.

Since community programs "screen out" behavior problems and determine an offender's readiness for parole, one would expect that community program participants would be involved in fewer violent offenses than offenders released directly to parole. Since the vast majority of offenders will eventually be paroled, the comparisons also offer an opportunity to evaluate the differences between those persons released to a highly structured community setting and those persons released to a less structured setting.

The major hypothesis to be examined in this study can be stated as follows:

Persons involved in community residential programs will commit less violent crime than those persons released directly to parole during the first year in the community.

Because the major placement concern is an offender's risk of violence (the threat issue), one would not necessarily expect that community program participants would differ on other types of crime. In terms of crime in general, the following hypothesis can be stated:

Persons released to community programs will perform as well or better than those persons released directly to parole, in terms of the overall crime rate.

The first hypothesis is a special case of general performance in that it directly assesses the threat issue. The second hypothesis is concerned with the issue of new crime of any type.

The study will also look at a few selected issues and expectations relating to program operation. First, if community programs follow policy, one would expect few, if any, participants to be classified as Very High Risk on violence. According to Departmental policy, no person classified as Very High Risk can participate in community programs unless he has demonstrated exceptional institutional behavior and has special approval from the Assistant Deputy Director in Charge of the Community Programs Division. Second, if community corrections performs a "screening function," one would expect participants to be cited more often for technical violations of a non-criminal nature than would be true of those persons released directly to parole. This should result from the higher level of supervision and the greater number of restrictions and the emphasis on community adjustment. One would expect as a result that the community programs group would experience a greater return rate for non-criminal behavior.

These measures all directly or indirectly assess the issue of whether community programs pose a threat to the community. To summarize, to the extent that community programs function according to expectations, the results should indicate that:

- 1) Few (if any) offenders classified as Very High Risk on violence do in fact participate in community programs.

- 2) Community program participants experience a larger number of technical (rule) violations and returns for non-criminal behavior than parolees.
- 3) Community program participants are less likely to become involved in violent crimes during the first year of release than persons released directly to parole.
- 4) Community program participants perform as well or better than parolees in terms of general criminal behavior.

#### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

##### Population and Sample

The population sampled in this study consisted of all residents released from Michigan prisons to the community between January 1, 1978 and June 30, 1978.

This population was stratified according to type of release (parole and residential) and a proportional random sample was drawn. The sample consisted of 1,117 cases or 38% of the population.

##### Data Collection

Data were collected on over 50 variables per individual from Central Office files. Each case was followed up for one year from prison release, or termination from community status, whichever occurred first. A pilot test of the variables was conducted on twenty files representing each of the release

groups. The results of the preliminary coding were used for purposes of variable specification. Once coding problems were resolved, an additional set of files was randomly selected to establish coder reliability. In most instances, variable reliability was greater than 95% with a minimum of 95% considered acceptable.

#### Variables

**Descriptive/Background:** These variables provide information on certain inmate characteristics prior to incarceration for the current offense. Among the variables included were: Marital history, sex, juvenile history and prior correctional history.

**Institutional:** These variables are concerned with behavior that occurred subsequent to incarceration but prior to the offender's release to the community. These variables include institutional misconducts, amount of time served, institutional placement, work pass experience, prior corrections center experience and the type of community release.

**Recidivism:** A behavioral measure of recidivism was used to determine the outcome of persons released to the different conditions (e.g., parole, community programs). This behavioral outcome scale was developed and used by the Department in a series of parole prediction studies. The scale consists of five levels of behavior:

1. No Illegal Activity
2. Technical Violation
3. Misdemeanor
4. Nonviolent Felony
5. Violent Felony

This scale codes the offender's most serious behavior while in the community. For example, an offender who committed a minor technical violation and nothing else, would have been coded a "2." A person committing both a misdemeanor ("3") and a violent felony ("5") would have received a "5." Coding criteria were based upon written descriptions from police and the probation agent's Pre-sentence Reports of the behavior involved in the criminal activity. That is, the criteria do not rest upon charges or convictions but reflect as closely as possible the actual reported behavioral description of the offender's activity.

Several additional variables relating to criminal behavior were also included: Official arrest charge (violent versus nonviolent), time to arrest, and conviction information. Since a substantial number of arrests do not result in convictions, the behavioral analysis offers a liberal interpretation of criminal behavior which is less likely to underestimate threat to the community.

#### Analysis

The examination of sample characteristics, correlations and cross-tabulations was conducted with SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Because of the relatively straightforward comparisons, as well as the limitations of the data, comparisons were evaluated with the chi-square statistic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Chi-square examines the equality of the distributions of the groups on any particular variable to determine if the observed differences are due to chance. In certain instances it would have been preferable to examine the impact of time in the community on several variables using a co-variate technique. However, the data violate many of the assumptions required for co-variate analysis. Although recidivism can be dichotomized to create a metric dependent variable, the skewness due to the relatively infrequent occurrence of violence severely restricts the appropriateness of the procedure. In this instance, co-variate analysis would appear to overpower the data. However, the problem of time at risk does not present a serious problem for most of the issues addressed in this study.



The format for conducting and presenting the analysis will be as follows:

1. Sample Characteristics: The sub-groups (community programs vs. parolees) will be compared on several personal and institutional characteristics. Because community program participants are subject to an intense screening process, significant differences should emerge in terms of criminal history and other behavioral indicators.
2. Community Program Operations: This section will focus on certain issues of policy. It will look at the number of Very High Risk cases placed in community programs as well as the rate of technical violations and returns. Community programs should have fewer Very High Risk cases and a greater frequency of technical violations and returns.
3. Time at Risk: A brief section will examine and discuss the issue of time at risk in the community. For the most part, the samples will be compared on average time in the community and the percentage remaining under supervision at the end of the follow-up period. The relevance of time at risk will also be discussed in terms of expected findings.
4. Criminal Behavior: This phase of the analysis will directly assess the extent to which community program participants present a threat to the public as compared with parolees. In addition to comparing the rate of criminal behavior between groups during the first year of release, this section will also examine CRP participants' behav-

ior while on CRP status. That is, because a certain number of CRP participants will progress to parole during the one-year follow-up period, a separate analysis will examine the amount of crime committed during the time actually spent in community programs.

5. Additional Issues: Several variables will be examined in terms of their impact on recidivism. Specifically, the relationships between minor violations and subsequent felony involvement, risk classification and recidivism, and time of release and recidivism will be explored. These variables may provide additional insight into criminal involvement.

#### Limitations

As the preceding discussion indicates, the process of selection and ongoing screening is designed to identify those candidates for community programs that present the least likelihood of significant problems in the community. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect that these persons, as a group, will perform better than a group subject to less severe restrictions. It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate empirically that such a process does, in fact, produce the expected results.

However, as one proceeds to extend the findings beyond the major purpose of the study, several limitations become apparent. First, a study of program process can establish that community program participants are subject to more rigorous expectations but it is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the process whereby decisions to return for violations are made. The perceived seriousness and frequency of violations that result in sanctions



could only be evaluated through a field study. Also, whether persons returned to prison for noncriminal violations would have continued in crime if they were not returned could not be addressed without invoking ethical considerations and possibly jeopardizing public safety. Second, the comparison of persons released to community programs with persons released to parole over a period of one year can directly assess the issue of threat, but whether persons who progress from community programs on to parole perform better thereafter than those persons without such experience requires a different study design.

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

##### Descriptive Comparisons Between Samples

The samples were compared on selected personal and institutional characteristics. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Several of the characteristics are considered in the Department's risk screening procedures. Although the risk level is derived from a configuration of variables, and no single variable is necessarily indicative of post-institutional behavior, the screening criteria for potential community participants suggest that persons released directly to parole would have a history of more severe behavioral problems. This expectation is confirmed for the juvenile criminal history variables and adult institutional behavior.

Similar numbers in both groups have experienced a drug problem and/or had been married prior to their incarceration for the current offense. Because drug use is associated with nonviolent behavior and is common throughout criminal populations, the finding is not surprising.

During the sample time/frame, a significantly greater proportion of females were released by way of community programs than is true for male offenders. This may reflect the low potential for violence among female offenders.

The observations concerning prior commitment history and seriousness of the instant offense (Table 2) indicate that persons released to community programs are less likely to be serving on a violent crime or have a prior prison commitment. In terms of the instant offense, community program participants are more likely to have committed a property crime. These findings confirm that CRP participants are subject to more rigorous screening criteria.

TABLE 1  
Comparison of Sample Characteristics

Variable	CRP Residents	Parolees	Result(1 df)	Significance*
<u>Sex</u>				
Male	432	460	$x^2 = 34.2$	$p < .001$
Female	158 (26.8%)	67 (12.7%)		
<u>Prior Marital History</u>				
Yes	214 (36.3%)	189 (35.9%)	$x^2 = .02$	$p < .89$
No	376	338		
<u>Drug Problem</u>				
Yes	212 (35.9%)	206 (39.1%)	$x^2 = 1.2$	$p < .28$
No	378	321		
<u>Juvenile Felony</u>				
Yes	162 (27.5%)	180 (34.2%)	$x^2 = 5.9$	$p < .02$
No	428	347		
<u>First Arrest &lt; 15</u>				
Yes	91(15.4%)	111 (21.1%)	$x^2 = 5.97$	$p < .02$
No	499	416		
<u>Serious Institutional Misconduct</u>				
Yes	55 (9.3%)	170 (32.3%)	$x^2 = 91.0$	$p < .001$
No	535	357		
<u>Previous Commitments</u>				
None	353 (67.0%)	462 (78.3%)	$x^2 = 17.5$	$p < .001$
One or More	174	128		

\*The results were evaluated against an .05 level of significance.

TABLE 2  
Current Offense by Type of Release

Current Offense	Type of Release			
	Community Programs		Parole	
	N	%	N	%
Person	130	22.0	206	39.1
Property	361	61.2	235	44.6
Victimless	99	16.8	86	16.3
Total	590	100.0	527	100.0

$x^2 = 41.3$  df. = 2  $p < .001$

In summary, CRP participants are less likely to have a serious juvenile history, prior prison commitment, serious institutional misconduct or be serving on a violent offense than those persons released directly to parole.

A final expected difference between the groups is in time served prior to release to the community. Because community programs are technically an institutional setting and CRP participants are more likely to be serving on property crimes, the amount of time served prior to placement should be significantly shorter than for persons released to parole.

TABLE 3

## Time Served Prior to Community Placement by Type of Release

Type of Release	Time Served									
	0-6 Mo.		7-18 Mo.		19-36 Mo.		37-72 Mo.		> 72 Mo.	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Community Programs	213	36.1	260	44.1	89	15.1	27	4.6	1	0.2
Parole	14	2.7	190	36.1	206	39.1	86	16.3	31	5.9

$$\chi^2 = 288.0 \quad df = 4 \quad p < .001$$

The data indicate that CRP placements have served significantly fewer months in a secure institution prior to their release to the community.

Program Policy and Application

As stated earlier, program operation can only be assessed through indirect measures. The measures examined in this context are violence risk classification and the severity of sanctions for rule violations.

According to policy, individuals classified as very high risk must receive special approval based on exceptional behavior. In addition, the lower a person's risk on violence potential, the earlier the eligibility for community programs. The distribution of risk level by type of release is presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Violent Risk Level By Placement Status<sup>3</sup>

Release Status	Risk Level										TOTAL
	Very Low		Low		Middle		High		Very High		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
CRP	82	19.0	144	33.3	199	46.1	7	1.6	0	--	432
Parole	64	13.9	108	23.5	232	50.4	41	8.9	15	3.3	460

$$\chi^2 = 48.1 \quad df = 4 \quad p < .001$$

The results show that no person classified as very high risk received a community program placement. On the other hand, 3.3% of the parolees were very high risk. Similarly, CRP placements have a substantially higher number of very low and low risk cases (53%). These results are consistent with policy and indicate that a more rigorous screening process occurs for CRP residents than their parolee counterparts.<sup>4</sup>

Although a person's property risk classification does not eliminate a person's eligibility for community placement, it does affect the eligibility date. The distribution of property risk classification by type of release is presented in Table 5. Community program participants are significantly less likely to be classified as High Risk on property and more likely to be

<sup>3</sup> The risk classification applies to males only. Consequently, the analysis excludes females. For the most part, females are less likely to become involved in violent crime. Such an observation may explain the greater proportion of females released to community programs as compared with females released directly to parole.

<sup>4</sup> In the original risk study, the proportion of persons classified as very high risk was 4.9%. Upon replication, the proportion was 4.2%. Consequently, the proportion of very high risk cases in the population being released is probably between 4-5%. These figures suggest that although very high risk cases are effectively eliminated from CRP, risk screening also occurs at the Parole Board level. However, for parole, the amount of time served in relation to the earliest legal release date must also be considered along with several additional factors. The relationship between time served and earliest release date will be discussed later in the report.

classified as Low Property Risk. However, the differences between groups are not as substantial as those found for violence risk potential. That finding is consistent with the greater emphasis placed on reducing the potential violence or "threat" to the community.

TABLE 5  
Property Risk by Type of Release

Risk Level	Community Programs		Parole	
	N	%	N	%
Low	205	47.5	178	38.7
Middle	143	33.1	154	33.5
High	84	19.4	128	27.8
TOTAL:	432	100.0	460	100.0

$$\chi^2 = 10.6 \quad df = 2 \quad p < .01$$

A second aspect of program operation is the extent of supervision. The structured setting and increased restrictions result in a wider range of behavior in CRP that is subject to sanctions. If adherence to rules is one criterion of program participation, then CRP cases should have a larger number of technical violations than parolees. Consequently, one would expect that community program participants would have a larger number of technical violations cited as their most serious behavior in the community and be more likely to be returned for program violations.

As shown in Tables 6 and 7, substantial differences occur between groups. Whereas 50.7% of the CRP participants are cited for technical violations as

TABLE 6  
Comparison of Parolees and Community Placements  
or Technical Violation as Most Serious Behavior in Community

Technical Violation	CRP N (%)	Parole N (%)
No	291 (49.3)	477 (90.5)
Yes	299 (50.7)	50 (9.5)
	590 (100.0)	527 (100.0)

$$\chi^2 = 219.8 \quad df = 1 \quad p < .001$$

TABLE 7  
Return Rates for Technical Violations by Placement Status

Technical Violation	CRP N (%)	Parolees N (%)
Not Returned	167 (55.9)	37 (74.0)
Returned to Prison	132 (44.1)	13 (26.0)
	299 (100.0)	50 (100.0)

$$\chi^2 = 5.1 \quad df = 1 \quad p < .03$$

their worst behavior in the community after one year, only 9.5% of the parolees are cited for technical violations. More importantly, almost half of the CRP rule violators are returned to prison. Of the total number of persons released to CRP, 22.4% are eventually returned for rule violations after one year compared to only 2.5% of those released to parole.

These behaviors (rule violations) involve no criminal activity. Consequently, they are consistent with the expectation that CRP participants are subject to greater supervision, more restricted behavior and more severe sanctions. However, the data cannot address whether those persons cited and returned for technical violations would have committed more serious behavior if not returned. Although the relationship between minor violations and subsequent felony involvement will be discussed in more detail elsewhere, it should be noted that the high rate of return for CRP participants may have represented excessive sanctioning.<sup>5</sup>

#### Time at Risk

One issue that should be considered when comparing the CRP and parolee groups is the length of time at risk in the community. As discussed earlier, co-variate analysis was not appropriate given the nature of the data. However, an examination of the average time in the community during the one-year follow-up period shows a negligible difference between groups. The average time in the community for parolees was 10.3 months compared to 9.7 months for those released to community programs, a difference of less than three weeks. At the end of the 12-month follow-up period, both groups had a similar number of active cases. Of those released directly to parole,

<sup>5</sup> Since the time under study here, return policy has been changed; now the only technical violations leading to return are those suggesting involvement in new criminal behavior.

349 or 66.2% remained active as compared to 385 or 65.3% of those persons originally released to community programs.

#### Criminal Behavior

The major purpose of this study is to determine if community program participants present an unusual risk to the community. In order to operationalize the concept of threat, the behavior of those persons paroled directly to the community was selected as an empirical referent.

The overall performance for those released in the sample is shown in Table 8. The data indicate that persons released to CRP status commit fewer violent felonies than those residents released directly to parole. Small differences occur in the nonviolent rate. As discussed earlier, CRP releasees commit a larger number of non-criminal technical violations than parolees. The table also indicates that few people are directly released to extended furlough.

TABLE 8  
Recidivism By Type of Initial Community Placement  
During First Twelve Months

INITIAL PLACEMENT												
Recidivism	Correction Center		Resident Home		Extended Furlough		Total CRP		Parole		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Illicit Activity	115	28.5	53	31.5	12	63.2	180	30.5	320	60.7	500	44.8
Technical Violation Only	207	51.4	88	52.4	4	21.1	299	50.7	50	9.5	349	31.2
Misdemeanor	14	3.5	9	5.4	1	5.3	24	4.1	30	5.7	54	4.8
Nonviolent	58	14.4	15	8.9	1	5.3	74	12.5	83	15.7	157	14.1
Violent Felony	9	2.2	3	1.8	1	5.3	13	2.2	44	8.4	57	5.1
TOTAL	403(100.0)		168(100.0)		19(100.0)		590(100.0)		527(100.0)		1117(100.0)	

Because CRP programs are designed for those residents who do not constitute an unusual risk of violence to the public, it was hypothesized that these persons would commit significantly less violent crime than those persons released directly to parole. The results are presented in Table 9.

TABLE 9  
Comparison of Violent Criminal Involvement for Persons  
Released to Parole and Specific Types of Community Programs

	Resident Home <sup>6</sup>	Corr. Center	CRP Total	Parole
No Violent Felony	183 (97.9%)	394 (97.8%)	577 (97.8%)	483 (91.7%)
Violent Felony	4 (2.1%)	9 (2.2%)	13 (2.2%)	44 (8.3%)
TOTAL:	187 (100.0)	403 (100.0)	59 (100.0)	527 (100.0)

$$\chi^2 = 21.7 \quad df = 2 \quad p < .001$$

Table 9 shows that those residents released to CRP status do significantly better than their parolee counterparts in terms of violent felony involvement. These results are supported regardless of the specific type of program they are involved in.

In terms of nonviolent felony involvement, CRP participants committed fewer nonviolent felonies than persons released directly to parole (see Table 8). However, the differences were not statistically significant. CRP residents committed 74 nonviolent felonies (12.5%) compared to 83 nonviolent felonies (15.7%) committed by those released directly to parole.

These observations on violent and nonviolent felony involvement support the hypothesis that residents released to CRP programs do as well or better than their parolee counterparts.

The foregoing analyses are based on a one-year follow-up by type of release. An additional concern addressed in this study was the behavior of CRP

<sup>6</sup> Because of the small number of persons released to extended furlough, they were included in residential homes. However, the exclusion of these cases from the analysis would not affect the results.

releases while on community residential status. This concern is based on the observation that a substantial number of residents released to community programs are placed on parole within a year. The relationship between initial CRP placement and actual placement at the time of involvement in felony crime is addressed in Tables 10 and 11.

TABLE 10  
Initial CRP Status and Placement at Time of Violent Crime

Initial Placement	Placement at Time of Violent Felony		
	Extended Furlough	Corrections Center	Parole
Extended Furlough	1	0	0
Corrections Center	2	1	6
Resident Home	0	0	3
TOTAL:	3	1	9

TABLE 11  
Initial CRP Status and Placement at Time of Nonviolent Crime

Initial Placement	Placement at Time of Crime			
	Extended Furlough	Resident Home	Corrections Center	Parole
Extended Furlough	1	0	0	0
Resident Home	3	7	0	5
Corrections Center	6	2	26	24
TOTAL:	10	9	26	29

Substantial differences occur in both violent and nonviolent felony involvement. Of the thirteen persons released to community programs who committed a violent felony during the follow-up period, only four did so while on CRP status. The remaining nine were on parole at the time.

In terms of nonviolent felonies, more than a third (40%) were committed by CRP subjects while on parole. The rate of nonviolent crime for CRP participants decreases from 12.5% during the one-year follow-up period to 7.6% while on CRP status.

These findings suggest that the involvement of CRP releasees in violent crime while on CRP status is almost non-existent (.6%). Of the 590 residents released initially to CRP, only four committed a violent felony while on CRP status. A substantial decrease is also observed for nonviolent felonies.



Comparing the behavior of CRP residents while on CRP status with that of persons released directly to parole is not possible because of differences in time at risk. It is a fact, however, that only four persons out of the 590 released to community programs were detected in a violent felony while on CRP status.

The preceding discussion supports the following conclusions:

- 1) CRP participants do not present an undue risk to the community. This conclusion is supported by the findings that show CRP participants commit significantly fewer violent felonies than those released directly to parole.
- 2) It is also supported by the fact that the involvement of CRP residents in violent crime is almost nonexistent while they are actively involved in CRP programs. Only .6% of those persons released to community programs committed a violent felony while on CRP status.
- 3) In terms of criminal felony involvement in general (combining violent and nonviolent), residents released to CRP programs do better than their parolee counterparts over the same time period.

#### Additional Findings

Minor violations and subsequent felony involvement: A relationship between minor criminal involvement or rule violation and subsequent felony involvement has often been postulated as representing the gradual escalation of involvement in crime. More importantly, such a relationship, if it exists,

has practical application to the extent that minor violations can identify later criminal involvement. Whether a person is in community programs or on parole, rule violations and minor criminal activity (misdemeanors) require that the supervising agent make a decision as to whether to return an individual to the institution or continue him/her in the community.

It has already been shown that persons in community programs are subject to a wider range of rules and sanctions in that a substantial number are returned to prison for rule violations. However, the differences between types of release and subsequent return to prison for misdemeanors is not as dramatic. In both groups, only a small number of offenders committed a misdemeanor as their most serious behavior within one year of release. Table 12 contrasts misdemeanors with the previous data on rule violations for each group according to the decision to return or not.

TABLE 12

Commission of a Misdemeanor or Rule Violation as the Most Serious Behavior and Subsequent Decisions to Return By Release Group

	<u>Misdemeanor</u>		<u>Rule Violation</u>	
	CRP	Parole	CRP	Parole
Not Returned	15	20	167	37
Returned	9	10	132	13
TOTAL:	24	30	299	50

Although 35% of those persons committing a misdemeanor are returned, few persons in either group commit a misdemeanor as their most serious behavior

during the one-year follow-up period. However, the data in Table 12 does provide information on the number of persons who commit a minor violation, are not returned, and do not become involved in subsequent felony activity.

Police records and agent reports were also examined to determine the number of persons who committed a felony in the sample who had a prior misdemeanor and/or rule violation. The results indicate that only one person in each group had committed a minor violation prior to their felony involvement.

Risk factors and recidivism: The Department's violence and property risk factors are two criteria considered in community placement and parole. Although risk classification, particularly violence potential, is given greater emphasis in screening for community programs, Parole Board decisions are also influenced by these factors.

The relationship of risk potential to actual involvement in felony crime is difficult to assess without considering the impact of risk factors in decision-making and the length of time in the community. To the extent that release decisions and subsequent supervision is influenced by a person's classification or violence potential, the probability of actually engaging in violence may be reduced. In addition, the risk factors were developed and validated on samples using a three-year follow-up period.

The relationship of violence risk potential to actual involvement in violent crimes is shown in Tables 13 and 14. For persons released directly to parole, the violence risk factors discriminate between Very Low and Very High Risk cases. The factors fail to discriminate between the Low, Middle and High Risk groups. It is possible that those persons most likely and

TABLE 13

Violent Risk Level for Persons Released to Parole  
By Involvement in Violent Felony

Recidivism	Risk Level									
	Very Low		Low		Middle		High		Very High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Violent Felony	61	95.3	98	90.7	211	90.9	38	92.7	10	66.7
Violent Felony	3	4.7	10	9.3	21	9.1	3	7.3	5	33.3
Total	64	(100.0)	108	(100.0)	232	(100.0)	41	(100.0)	15	(100.0)

Base Rate = 9.1 Excluding Females

TABLE 14

Violence Risk Level for Persons Released to Community  
Programs By Involvement in A Violent Felony

Recidivism	Risk Level									
	Very Low		Low		Middle		High		Very High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Violent Felony	79	96.3	141	97.9	194	97.5	6	85.7	--	--
Violent Felony	3	3.7	3	2.1	5	2.5	1	14.3	--	--
Total	82	(100.0)	144	(100.0)	199	(100.0)	7	(100.0)	15	(100.0)

Base Rate = 2.8 Excluding Females

least likely to commit a violent felony exhibit such behavior within a short time on parole whereas less extreme groups exhibit various degrees of violence over a longer period of time. Verification of that explanation would require a more elaborate research design and a longer follow-up period.

For persons released to community programs, the risk factors discriminate between High Risk cases and all others. Of course, Very High Risk cases were excluded from CRP participation. The failure to discriminate between Very Low, Low and Middle groups may indicate the impact of increased supervision. Again, the ability to account for the results is limited by the available data. Also, the extremely small number of cases in certain groups restrict further statistical analysis.

The relationship of the property risk factors to actual nonviolent felony involvement is shown in Tables 15 and 16.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the violence risk factors, the property factors discriminate between all groups of parolees in the expected direction from a low risk rate of 6.2% to a high risk rate of 27.3%. Whether these findings are indicative of the more restrictive screening process for violence potential requires more specific data. However, the results of the property risk predictions suggest that the relationship between parole decisions, risk classification, supervision and subsequent behavior deserves additional research.

The results of the property risk classification for community program participants are similar to those reported for violence in that discrimination occurs only for high risk cases. These results suggest that increased supervision may not deter high risk cases as effectively as those classified

<sup>7</sup> The property risk factors were developed after violent offenders were excluded for methodological reasons. The results reported in this study followed the same procedure.

# Property Risk Level by Nonviolent Felony Involvement

TABLE 15

Parole

Involvement in Nonviolent Felony	Risk Level					
	Low		Middle		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	152	93.8	118	80.8	80	72.7
Yes	10	6.2	28	19.2	30	27.3
Total	162	(100.0)	146	(100.0)	110	(100.0)

Base Rate = 16.3

TABLE 16

Community Programs

Involvement in Nonviolent Felony	Risk Level					
	Low		Middle		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	175	88.8	121	86.4	67	80.7
Yes	22	11.2	19	13.6	16	19.3
Total	197	(100.0)	140	(100.0)	83	(100.0)

Base Rate = 13.6

as middle and low. However, a comparison of CRP participants with parole subjects show that high risk CRP cases have a much lower property crime rate.

Time served and recidivism: The relationship between time served and recidivism has been explored in several studies (Babst, et al, 1976). This study compared groups on the amount of time served with recidivism. The results shown in Tables 17 and 18 indicate that no distinct or clear pattern emerges for those persons released to either parole or community programs. For persons released to parole, those offenders who served the most and least amount of time had the lowest felony rates. The highest violence rate is found among persons who have served more than three years.

As shown earlier, CRP participants have served less time in secure institutions. The most noticeable difference with respect to recidivism is that, like parolees, those who served the most time have the highest rate of violence. However, the overall felony rate is quite similar for those persons who served the least amount of time (16.5%) and those who served the most time (18.5%).

The absence of a relationship between time served and recidivism is consistent with previous research. At the same time, the relationship between the variables may be "masked" by arbitrary cutting points. However, an examination of the correlation coefficients between the time served and recidivism appears to support the previous discussion. Although the correlation for persons released to parole was significant, it was extremely weak (.07). For persons released to CRP, the correlation was not significant ( $p > .18$ ).

TABLE 17  
Time in Institution Prior to Release to Parole by Recidivism

Recidivism	Time in Institution (Months)									
	0-6		7-18		19-36		37-72		73 or Greater	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Illegal Act	9	64.3	108	56.8	127	61.7	53	61.6	23	74.2
Technical Violation	0	-	19	10.0	17	8.3	10	11.6	4	12.9
Misdemeanor	3	21.4	13	6.8	13	6.3	0	-	1	3.2
Nonviolent Felony	1	7.1	37	19.5	36	17.5	9	10.5	0	-
Violent Felony	1	7.1	13	6.8	13	6.3	14	16.3	3	9.7
Total	14	(100.0)	190	(100.0)	206	(100.0)	86	(100.0)	31	(100.0)

TABLE 18  
Time in Institution Prior to Release to Community Programs by Recidivism

Recidivism	Time in Institution (Months)									
	0-6		7-18		19-36		37-72		73 or Greater	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Illegal Act	55	25.8	83	31.9	30	33.7	12	44.4	0	
Technical Violation	117	54.9	129	49.6	43	48.3	9	33.3	1	100.0
Misdemeanor	6	2.8	11	4.2	6	6.7	1	3.7	0	
Nonviolent Felony	31	14.6	31	11.9	9	10.1	3	11.1	0	
Violent Felony	4	1.9	6	2.3	1	1.1	2	7.4	0	
Total	213	(100.0)	260	(100.0)	89	(100.0)	27	(100.0)	1	(100.0)

Time between placement and earliest release date<sup>8</sup>: Multiple criteria are used to determine a person's readiness for parole. However, a major constraint is the offender's Earliest Release Date (ERD)<sup>9</sup>. In the majority of cases, the Parole Board will release an individual on the earliest date of jurisdiction if there has been no evidence that he or she is a threat to others or the public. The Parole Board delays release if such a threat is present. In a few instances, the Parole Board will request court permission for an earlier release than the ERD for exceptional behavior.

The decision-making process in most instances reflects the Parole Board's perception of the offender's expected performance in the community. Among the items considered by the Parole Board are a person's risk factors. The relationship between those persons paroled on or before their earliest release date and those released after in terms of recidivism is presented in Table 19.

<sup>8</sup> Data on CRP residents is not presented because of the relatively short period of time served prior to release. Only 30 of the 590 community program participants were released after the Earliest Release Date.

<sup>9</sup> Earliest Release Date (ERD) refers to the earliest date that the Parole Board has legal jurisdiction to release a person on parole. Technically, the Parole Board has jurisdiction from the offender's Special Good Time minimum to the expiration of the maximum term.

TABLE 19  
Time to Earliest Parole Date and Recidivism

Recidivism	Time of Release	
	On or Before ERD	After ERD
No Illegal Acts	151 (70.2)	169 (54.2)
Technical Violations	17 (7.9)	33 (10.6)
Misdemeanors	10 (4.7)	20 (6.4)
Nonviolent Felony	27 (12.6)	56 (17.9)
Violent Felony	10 (4.7)	34 (10.9)

$$\chi^2 = 15.4 \quad df. = 4 \quad p < .005$$

Those persons released by their earliest release date do significantly better in terms of violent and nonviolent crime when compared with persons released after the earliest release date. The rate of violence for persons released after the ERD is more than twice the rate for those released at their ERD. Also, 70.2% of those released by their earliest release date commit no rule violations or criminal behavior as compared to 54.2% of those released after the earliest release date.

#### Summary

Community corrections is based on a screening and monitoring process that attempts to minimize threat to the community. The findings reported in this study support the conclusion that CRP participants do not present an undue threat to the community.

Indirect measures of selection and monitoring showed that no CRP participants were considered Very High Risk for violence and the majority were Very Low or Low Risk cases. When compared to a group of persons released directly to parole, the CRP cases also had significantly fewer persons classified as High Risk on property crime.

CRP residents had a substantially higher probability of being cited and returned for rule violations that did not involve criminal behavior than parolees. Such a finding is indicative of the greater restraints, supervision and sanctions that CRP participants are subject to. Finally, a comparison of the CRP participants with those persons released directly to parole indicates that CRP participants became involved in significantly fewer violent crimes. When data on CRP residents were examined for the time period they remained active on CRP status, violent criminal involvement was almost non-existent. The rate of nonviolent crime also decreased substantially.

These findings show that CRP residents present minimal risk of violence in the community and are subject to substantial regulations. However, the degree to which the high rate of return for technical violations represents a reduction in future criminal involvement as opposed to excessive sanctioning cannot be determined with the available data.

Additionally, this study failed to find a relationship between those citations for minor conduct violation that were not returned and subsequent felony involvement. Neither was any relationship found between the length of time served and community performance. However, the data do indicate

that persons released to parole on or before their earliest release did significantly better than persons released after their Earliest Release Date.



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