



From the President

In Person VS Video

The debate has only intensified in recent years. As technology advances and improves while costs for on-site hearings increase, our profession is in a tough spot. A difficult choice has to be made and parole boards have come to a true crossroads.

Until the 1990s, video conferencing was at best a rarity, but more often a dream. Expensive, unreliable, and frequently inoperable with other systems in operation. This way of conducting hearings was not a viable option, however, much has changed in the last 25 years.

Now, nearly all state prisons and many local detention facilities have these systems. Further, they interconnect with mostly all other units worldwide. What once seemed a fantastic concept is now not only commonplace, but also bordering on a necessity. Technology has allowed real time communication between two or more points, no matter how far removed from each other.

For our profession this has helped create a taxing dilemma. No one can argue from a budgetary point of view the cost savings concerning travel (fleet), meals, or lodging. This accountability of time management allows agencies to exercise control as the commissioners, hearing officers, or assorted staff are only steps away rather than at correctional institutions. The intimacy of face-to-face interviews however, is being lost. No longer can you look someone in the eyes, observe their body language directly, or get a true feeling of the sense of the room.

Frequently parties are cutting each other off or unintentionally interrupting. Quite simply the intimacy is not compromised, it is actually totally absent.

We all realize that the keeper of our budgets are huge proponents of the video conferencing system. The funds saved can be diverted to other areas or worse yet to another agency or department, that is the new reality. Try as we might to explain the inherent advantages of being up close and personal, this argument frequently falls on deaf ears. In a random survey of our fellow practitioners, I have found a majority would rather sacrifice the inconvenience and time associated with in person hearings for the ability to conduct an old-fashioned, non-video interaction. Sadly, for this group, it appears this will shortly be a thing of the past, as the age of science and budget constraints continue to advance and at times overwhelms the "old way" of doing things. The debate whether that constitutes progress will continue to rage long after any of us have conducted our last hearing.

David Blumberg
APAI President

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT	2
INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE	3
OHIO PAROLE BOARD	4
CRIME VICTIMS COMMITTEE	6

TO-DO IN 2020

- RENEW APAI MEMBERSHIP
- SERVE ON APAI COMMITTEE
- URGE FELLOWS TO JOIN APAI
- MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THE 2020 ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE IN NASHVILLE APRIL 4 - APRIL 8, 2020

MEMBERSHIP FEES*

INDIVIDUAL	\$65
ORGANIZATIONAL	
(UP TO 8 MEMBERS)	\$375
(9 TO 13 MEMBERS)	\$475
(14 TO 20 MEMBERS)	\$575
ALUMNI	\$40
ASSOCIATE	\$40
STUDENT	\$15

*Fees are on a per year basis.

Member Spotlight

Alicia Handwerk, Ohio Parole Board

by: Ashley Koonce, Executive Director, APAI

APAI would like to congratulate Trayce Thalheimer on her retirement from the Ohio Parole Board and thank her for her many years of service and dedication to our association. Trayce was excited to announce to us the appointment of the new Chair of the Ohio Parole Board, Alicia Handwerk.

Alicia joined the Ohio Parole Board in 2013, following several years in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction's Bureau of Community Sanctions. During her tenure with the Bureau, she worked to implement evidence-based practices in all levels of community corrections and to expand services for special needs offenders in the community. An integral part of being in the Bureau is the concept that most people can change and become productive members of society, if they so choose and are given the tools to facilitate that change.

Alicia carried that philosophy with her to the parole board. Although the crimes the Ohio Parole Board encounters are generally the most severe, many offenders eligible for parole do illustrate the capacity for change. Board members must use structured decision making to identify those who are suitable for parole by utilizing the appropriate validated risk assessment tools, and input from both internal and external sources, all the while keeping in mind public safety. While some information used by the Board is protected by statute, the Board should make every effort to make transparent

the factors that are used to render its decisions. The makeup of the board should be both diverse and balanced while meeting the statutory requirements for the position. One of her personal goals is for the Board to expand and enhance its partnerships within DRC and the larger community to identify appropriate placement options for those who are deemed otherwise suitable for release, but who lack a viable release plan to facilitate a successful and safe return to the community.



During her tenure on the Board, Alicia has participated on the APAI Professional Development Committee, and was very involved in the annual conference in Columbus, Ohio. In her (very limited) spare time, she does jewelry making, builds LEGO architecture, practices yoga, reads, travels, attends and participates in theater, and caters to a very spoiled Pembroke Corgi.

Congratulations, Alicia!

Parole Board of Canada

The Importance of International Dialogue

by: Sylvie Blanchet, Executive Vice Chairperson, Parole Board of Canada

As I write this article about the APAI and the international connections, I think of my friend, colleague, and mentor, Madame Renée Collette, who believed whole heartedly in this Association and its achievements. She was a true champion of international engagement and dialogue through APAI. Her belief in the power of international collaboration – and the contribution she made to the APAI – should remain as a beacon for all of us. Since the inception of the APAI in the 1970's, many close relationships have been established largely due to the networking opportunities that the APAI provides to all of us.

In the field of conditional release and parole, external consultation is not always a natural inclination. After all, we work within the necessary legal and policy frameworks of our individual organizations and must each address specific challenges in our own jurisdictions. At the same time, the world is increasingly interconnected, and when I take a step back and reflect on the principles at the center of our work, I think of the common challenge we all have in contributing to public safety.

As technology advances, human rights, dignity, and safety concerns have received growing international attention. With international interconnectedness comes increased public interest for the best policy standards and responsible practices. A forum like APAI gives us the platform to have an international dialogue and learn from each other with a focus on making our communities safer and better places to live.

Considering the balancing act we face between our jurisdictional responsibilities, global operating environments, and the fact that we are more similar than different, I write this article with the hopes of encouraging greater exchanges of ideas and collaboration amongst our members and other stakeholders in the United States, Canada, and around the world.

There is no doubt that sharing our knowledge and best practices allows us to better serve our public, and the APAI is our vehicle to do this. I strongly believe that we share many common issues and challenges and that the sharing of ideas, emerging research and good practices can take place at the APAI table!

It may not always be clear to everyone why or how sharing our universal perspectives can advance our individual agendas. Having

said that, there are many examples I can site as great successes. These include, but are not limited to, the use of the Risk Assessment Framework that was developed in Canada and is now used by some US jurisdictions. The Parole Board of England and Wales recently shared with their training practices for Board members with the Parole Board of Canada. The sharing of these best practices is linked to our individual connections to the APAI and serve as examples that while we may not want to or be able to replicate everything, there are many opportunities to share and debate rather than reinvent the wheel! Our business is often more comparable than divergent!

In Canada, we have benefited greatly from our partnership with the APAI. One such example is related to training opportunities. The Board members at the Parole Board of Canada, receive extensive initial and ongoing risk management training, which includes an Annual Training on Risk Assessment (ATRA). In 2017, our ATRA conference was organized in partnership with APAI and was a huge success for all involved. Bringing the Board's national annual training and APAI together gave us the opportunity to share our experiences in Canada and to learn from our colleagues in the United States and overseas. I hope there will be more opportunities like this in the future. It represents exactly the kind of collaboration APAI is intended to foster and is mutually beneficial to the organizations involved.

At the PBC, we are very active in our outreach with partners and we do not limit ourselves to the boundaries of our own country. We are reaching out to various national and international organizations, stakeholder groups, and academic institutions in an effort to grow our networks as we believe that together we can improve our service delivery – being members of the APAI allows us to reach into a very large network. While we have the opportunity to meet once a year and learn from each other at the conference, the APAI network allows us year round to continue to forge our relationships, dialogue, and share information – we should all take advantage of this opportunity by being active members.

At the upcoming conference in April 2020, the first international dialogue meeting will be held where we will have the opportunity to share best practices from around the world. I look forward to seeing everyone in Nashville!

Ohio Parole Board

The Transformation of a Parole Board

by: Trayce Thalheimer, Chair

The year 2019 bought many changes to the Ohio Parole Board. A new Governor, a new Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Director, and a host of allegations of wrongdoing by the Ohio Parole Board Members by a former Parole Board Member. This Board Member retired at the end of 2018, but waited until the new administration was about to take over to make her claims. The claims of bias, inattentiveness, secrecy, and “pack mentality” decision making created a furor and inmates, their families, legislators, and media were quick to call for change, Board Member removals, and increased transparency.

While the allegations that the former Board Member made were baseless and, in some cases, lies, there were some slivers of truth. We were not very transparent, operating mostly behind closed doors. However, we were operating within the boundaries of our statutory mandates. In response to the allegations we did make several changes to our policies and practices. We started hearings earlier to allow for our Members to take lunch break. We modified our policy regarding staff input to allow DRC staff members to provide not only written input for offenders but to also participate in conferences with parole board staff. Three new Parole Board Members from outside of the department with diverse backgrounds were appointed, including a former Legislator, a former Prosecutor, and a former Public Defender. We also began our search for a fourth member whose experience was in substance use disorders and/or mental health.

The biggest change we implemented involved our actual hearing process. In Ohio, our release consideration hearings are closed, attended only by the Parole Board staff, inmates, and any special services an inmate may need to facilitate his or her hearing. If the recommendation for a parole was received the case was then moved to a Full Board Hearing. This open hearing permits input from any registered victim who opposed the release and from the offender’s supporters. These processes are governed by Ohio law and as such there is limited ability to make more transparent. Ohio Law allows for a victim, victim representative, or a Parole Board

Member to make a petition to the Board when a release is recommended for a Full Board Hearing. When that petition is made, the Board will review it and determine if a Full Board Hearing should be granted. Ohio Law mandates the automatic approval of the petitions for hearings for specific crimes, for example, aggravated murder.

In recent years, the Board had adopted a practice of petitioning all cases in which we recommended a release. Ultimately this resulted in a backlog of cases awaiting a hearing which delayed the release of an offender for an extended period. Offenders also complained that they had no idea what was going on at their Full Board Hearings. Offenders have no statutory right to attend full board hearings. While their supporters and attorneys were present, the offenders themselves complained that they did not know what was being presented on their behalf.

As a part of the Transformation, the decision was made to return to the true letter of the law. We returned to a petition process and only have a Full Board Hearing when it was petitioned and approved by a majority of the Board. The result of this was an expedited clearing of 85 backlogged cases, most of which were granted a release within 60 days. The remaining were petitioned and taken to a Full Board Hearing.

To continue to create additional transparency, the Ohio Parole Board partnered with The Ohio Channel to live stream Full Board Hearings. While the hearings themselves are “open” hearings, there are very few requests by the public to attend. Prior to implementing the live stream, the Board worked closely with our Office of Victim Services to create procedures to protect any participating victim’s identity to minimize any additional victimization. The video feed was set up as a fixed feed, meaning only the Board Members are seen on the screen. Participant testimony is heard but participants are not seen. Victims may choose whether they want the video feed on or off during their testimony and whether they will be called by name or use a pseudonym such as “victim” or “survivor.” Offender supporters are addressed by first name only. Public

JANUARY 2020

Defenders use written documentation as the primary avenue to share proposed employment and housing options.

In keeping with our mission, we have granted offenders the option of observing and/or making a statement during their Full Board Hearing via video. For the victims' protection, the offender sees only the Board Members. Victims may request the offender be removed from the proceeding during their testimony and may leave the proceedings themselves if the offender chooses to make a statement.

While the transformation of the Ohio Parole Board will continue with new initiatives in 2020, the impact of the changes made to date have been well received. Only five DRC staff members have requested conferences to provide input for offenders appearing before the Board, but written input has doubled with 374 input letters received in 2019, in comparison to the 182 received in 2018. Full Board hearings have reduced to 141 hearings in 2019, vs. 164 in 2018, however victim participation has increased by 20%. The viewership of our live streamed hearings has fluctuated between 20 observers to over 100 viewers depending on the hearing. More victims are requesting the live stream stay on during their testimony. The most surprising fact in all of this change to our Full Board process is the lack of involvement by the offenders. For all the

letters expressing frustration in their inability to know what was happening in their hearing... only one offender has participated, and one offender has observed since we started this process in July of 2019.

As with all news cycles, the hype over the Board's missteps has run its course. We have implemented several new practices and policies to increase our transparency. They are positive changes and in the long run will show that our Board has been and will continue to make decisions that are in the best interest of Justice. We acquired three new Board Members who have been amazing additions and we are about to add another two who will join our ranks in a few weeks. Our current Chair is retiring, and a new Chair will be appointed. Constant change is inevitable in our business and facing a storm of criticism is as well. I am proud to say that The Ohio Parole Board met the challenge to open ourselves to transparency while maintaining our legal obligations of confidentiality. We are ready to face 2020 and whatever challenges it may bring.

If you are interested in viewing our lived streamed hearings, we would love to have the added viewership! For the dates of broadcast feel free to contact Jennifer.Clemans@odrc.state.oh then tune in to ohiochannel.org. Feel free to drop us a note to let us know you are watching!



SAVE THE DATE!

nashville. tennessee

2020 ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE / APRIL 5 – 8, 2020

Crime Victims Committee

Catching up with the Crime Victims Committee

by: Libby Hamilton, Victim Liaison, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

One of the goals of the APAI Crime Victims Committee is to elevate awareness of current victim issues, so we wanted to take this opportunity to highlight what this month signifies. In a 2010 Presidential Proclamation, Barack Obama declared January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and January 11th is now known as #WearBlueDay thanks to the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign. We hear the term "human trafficking" a lot more recently, due to numerous public awareness campaigns that aim to increase detection and identify victims of this modern day form of slavery.

In Texas, Governor Greg Abbott has been in the forefront of signing legislation designed to make our state a "hostile place for traffickers," and also to assist survivors of this crime. Recently, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles unanimously recommended clemency for a sex trafficking survivor, and on Human Trafficking Awareness Day she was granted a gubernatorial pardon by Governor Abbott.

The Committee will also begin providing periodic updates on the agencies we represent and steps that we're taking to improve victim services in our area. Currently we have members from Alaska, Louisiana, Canada, Africa, Washington DC, Texas, Georgia, Minnesota, and England & Wales. It's always interesting when we get to compare notes on our monthly conference calls and find out what our counterparts are doing around the world.

For example, England & Wales (www.bit.ly/2U5Wrfv) and Texas (www.bit.ly/2S5MYlt) have videos that walk victims through the parole review process. Louisiana created a Victim Outreach Program (LaVO) in April of 2019, that is focusing on the creation of a Victim Handbook to educate readers on their processes and promoting the use of healing resources. Alaska, home to our Committee Chair, Edie Grunwald, also utilizes a Victims' Rights Handbook and strives to be as accommodating as possible to victims who wish to attend a hearing. In Canada, victims can register to receive notifications through a secure Victims' Portal, as well as request to listen to audio recording of their offender's parole hearing.

Lorie Brisbin with the National Institute of Corrections is doing incredible work for correctional staff who are victimized on the job. Something we often forget: our jails and prisons are the only places that a crime victim is expected to return to the scene of their victimization and pretend that nothing happened to them! With this in mind, she is working with the South Carolina Department of Corrections and other states on a post-critical incident model to address both traumatic events, and the long-term effects of exposure to these events.

We would love to see you in our victim-related workshops at the 2020 APAI Annual Training Conference in Nashville this April. Meg Garvin of the National Crime Victim Law Institute will be presenting on the positive impact of victims' rights, plus members of the Hawaii Crime Victim Compensation Commission & Hawaii Paroling Authority will discuss changing the narrative on victim restitution. If you're looking for some new ideas on how to improve post-conviction victim services in your area, there will also be presentations from Georgia and Texas to discuss some unique programs.

If you would like us to spotlight your work with survivors or a special program in your area, please shoot me an email!

Libby.hamilton@tdcj.texas.gov

"I call upon the people of the United States to **RECOGNIZE** the vital role we can play in **ENDING MODERN SLAVERY.**"

— Barack Obama

#InContext
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