



From the President

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TO-DO IN 2023-2024

- Renew Membership
- Serve on a Committee
- Recruit Fellows to APAI
- Make Plans to Attend the 2024 Annual Training Conference in Washington, Seattle in May 2024

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 on a per year basis.

Time is moving fast through this year. APAI continues to grow stronger in our partnerships along with expanding the resources available to our membership. Organizations are reaching out to help build for a better future. Work is being performed to harness those resources for the benefit of all organizations.

The contribution of so many cannot be forgotten. Dr. Serin was one of those individuals that had and will continue to have a huge impact on our profession. His dedication and hard work will live on throughout our lives. Keep his family, friends and colleagues in your thoughts as they contend with his passing.

The Washington host committee is excitedly awaiting the arrival of our conference. They continue to work on preparations for what will be an amazing event. The registration is now open as well as the link to booking your hotel room. Visit www.apaintl.org/conference.html to register and book your hotel room. You should do this as soon as possible as we are expecting high attendance rates.

On a similar note, the Officer nominations will open on January 7, 2024. Further details are available within this newsletter. It is also time to start thinking about those around you for submission of award nominations. Please acknowledge the hard work that is going on all around us.

In other exciting news, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has made available the Parole Board Orientation training in February 2024. They are currently working on dates for the Chairs' training around June 2024.

NIC continues to look for opportunities to help provide meaningful resources. In the last several months the creation of the Paroling Authorities Network (PAN) was developed. This network will meet at least twice a year and have discussions around the resources that are needed in our field. The second meeting of this group will happen on the weekend of our upcoming conference. APAI is thankful for our partnership with NIC.

Change is happening fast around us. Take time to welcome those new to our group. Do not forget about those that have gone before us to build what we have today. Participate in the change to make tomorrow better.

Best regards,

Jonathan Ogletree

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

MaryJane Ainsworth, Executive Director, Vermont Parole Board

by: Ashley Koonce, Executive Director, APAI

A huge welcome to our new Northeastern Regional Vice President, MaryJane Ainsworth. She has served as the Director of the Vermont Parole Board since 2019. Prior to 2019, she spent 12 years at the Vermont Department of Corrections in multiple roles ranging from policy development, computer database management, and sentence calculation.

MaryJane has lived in Vermont her entire life. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice and Masters of Justice Administration from Norwich University.

She has been a member of APAI since 2019, after becoming the Director of the Board. When asked about engagement on an international scale, she stated she's noticed the growth of APAI in the last four years. "The collaboration and learning opportunities are expanding. Each jurisdiction is different, but there are many similarities where we can share experiences and learn from one another. I value the international members as it expands my knowledge of the world and that the issues experienced in other countries aren't much different than the ones that we are experiencing."

She also states that APAI conferences are an extremely valuable way to expand your education in the areas that affect paroling authorities and that they also provide great networking opportunities and the opportunities to build relationships with paroling authorities throughout the world. "Some of the first APAI members that I met and chatted with were from other countries."

MaryJane states that she has always wanted to help individuals and the criminal justice system grabbed her attention in her late teens as a way she may be able to make a difference. "I first thought I wanted to be a juvenile social worker. After working at a local mental health agency with teenagers right out of college, I decided that I preferred the administrative roles. I have since advanced my career in the administrative areas of correc-



MaryJane Ainsworth, Executive Director, Vermont Parole Board

tions and parole. I truly enjoy being a part of advancing the field in the ways that I can." It was this that led her to reach out with interest in the Northeast Region Vice President position, when it became vacant.

One of her goals is to continue to be involved in the growth of evidence-based decision-making. In Vermont, they are currently implementing the Structured Decision-Making Framework and advancing their Board in this arena. Another goal is around data and how it is used. "How we learn from our decisions, exploring data of paroling authorities can help drive education and what is going well in the field."

IN MEMORIAM:

Dr. Ralph Serin - A Fond Tribute to a Stalwart Ally

Our hearts are heavy as we reflect on the immense loss to our community.

Dr. Serin, a luminary in the field of forensic psychology, served as a professor at Carleton University in Ottawa for many years. His groundbreaking work included the establishment of the Parole Decision-Making Laboratory, leaving an indelible mark on risk-based parole decision-making.

A trailblazer, Dr. Serin was not only a respected academic but also a steadfast friend and supporter of Parole Boards worldwide. His co-authorship of the structured decision-making framework, embraced by over 10 states and the National Parole Board of Canada, stands testament to his enduring impact.

What set Dr. Serin apart was his extraordinary ability to distill complex research into plain language, making it accessible and applicable to parole decisions globally. His wit and humor, woven into training sessions, added a unique touch that endeared him to all fortunate enough to attend.

As a token of our collective appreciation, the Association of Paroling Authorities and the National Institute of Corrections recently conferred a joint resolution upon Dr. Serin. This resolution recognizes his myriad accom-

plishments and remarkable contributions to our shared mission.



To pay tribute to Dr. Serin's legacy, a kudos website has been set up for all who wish to share their memories, stories, and express condolences. You can visit this website at www.kudoboard.com/boards/t3JXW6zi. Additionally, contributions can be made to the CHEO (Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario) Foundation in his honor.

In honoring Dr. Serin's legacy, let us rededicate ourselves to the principles he championed and strive to carry forward the torch of evidence-based parole decisions.

Association of Paroling Authorities International
and National Institute of Corrections

Resolution Commending

Dr. Ralph Serin

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph Serin received his Doctorate in Psychology from Queens University in 1988, and worked for the Correctional Services of Canada in a variety of capacities from 1975 to 2003, including Director of Operations and Programs Research

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph Serin is an Associate Professor at Carleton University, where he has served since 2003, teaching forensic and correctional psychology, and where he has served as Director of the Criminal Justice Decision Making Laboratory

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph Serin conducted research in collaboration with the National Parole Board of Canada to develop and validate a structured parole decision-making framework that has since been adopted by the National Parole Board of Canada, numerous paroling authorities in the United States, and is available to paroling authorities worldwide

WHEREAS, use of the Structured Decision-Making Framework developed by Dr. Ralph Serin and his colleague has been recognized by the National Institute of Corrections as an evidence-based best practice for paroling authorities

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph Serin has made meaningful contributions to the body of knowledge on risk assessment and personal change for justice-involved persons, from active criminal offender to desisting citizen

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph Serin has, through research and collaboration, significantly advanced the field of parole decision-making by promoting objective, risk-based, transparent, and consistent parole decisions

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph Serin has made significant and meaningful contributions to the body of knowledge on parole decision-making through numerous published articles, contributions to several scholarly books, and conference presentations for the Association of Paroling Authorities International, the National Parole Board of Canada, and the National Institute of Corrections

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph Serin has dedicated substantial time and expertise to students, practitioners, and government agencies around the world to improve criminal justice outcomes

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph Serin has generously and consistently shared his expertise and research with unfailing candor, humility, and a wry sense of humor, which is especially appreciated by those who have the good fortune of hearing him speak and to call him friend and colleague

RESOLVED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF PAROLING AUTHORITIES AND THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CORRECTIONS, that Dr. Ralph Serin be commended for his lifetime of dedicated service and expertise to the field of corrections and parole, for his unwavering support of research and evidence-based practices, for his enduring legacy of scholarly contributions to parole decision-making, and for his positive contribution to communities through the safe release of justice-involved persons.

Dated this 16th day of October, 2023.

Ashley Koonce

Ashley Koonce
Executive Director
Association of Paroling Authorities International

Jonathan Ogletree

Jonathan Ogletree
President
Association of Paroling Authorities International

Robbye Braxton

Robbye Braxton
Chief
National Institute of Corrections

COLLABORATION IS KEY

An Evidence-Based Approach to the Sex Offending Population

by: James Kissinger, Manager of Sexual Abuse Prevention Services, Michigan Department of Corrections & Tim Flanagan, Michigan Parole Board Member

At the 2023 APAI Annual Training Conference, one of the general session presentations was a panel discussion about institutional programming and parole decision-making for persons convicted of a sexual offense that explored how Washington, Ohio, and Kansas approach programming and how that programming (and other risk-relevant factors) is considered when making parole decisions. It was an interesting presentation, and one that has prompted Michigan to share their approach to highlight the collaborative relationship the Michigan Parole Board and their clinical experts in Sexual Abuse Prevention Services. These collaborations have led the state to employ what they believe to be a national model and a state-of-the-art approach to the management of the sexual abuser population, which is demonstrable in outcome data on release readiness and post-release success.

In 2010, in an effort to strengthen prison-based treatment services for those convicted of sexual offenses in Michigan, the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) contracted with the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) to conduct a system-wide review of policies and practices regarding the delivery of assessment and treatment services. This review was part of a broad-

er effort to improve management of those with sexual offenses in Michigan. The overall findings and accompanying set of recommendations formed the foundation of the current approach and led to modifications to Michigan's paroling practices to more align with contemporary research findings and evidence-based practices.

Using the guidance provided by CEPP, we worked to put evidenced based principles into practice. Over the course of the last 13 years, Michigan has implemented the following:

- A rigorous training and professional development process to grow staff into highly qualified assessment and treatment providers.
- An evidence-based treatment program that uses a cognitive-behavioral model, is individualized and guided by valid assessment instruments, and is delivered by well trained and supervised clinical staff.
- The use of multiple assessment instruments used specifically for the sex offending population.



Collaboration is Key – continued from page 5

- Alignment of community-based assessment and treatment practices with prison-based assessment and treatment practices, in order to ensure the same language is spoken and a continuity of care approach takes place.
- Developed and implemented a quality assurance process for therapies provided and documentation completed both inside our prisons and amongst community treatment providers.
- Engaged in extensive collaboration with stakeholder groups from different departments and professions, as well as with external experts.
- Created a research library from various publication sources that is shared amongst all involved in assessing and treating those who have engaged in sexually abusive behaviors.

In recognition that the Parole Board plays an essential role as to whether the overall management, assessment and program delivery provides a meaningful impact on departmental operations, we have established policies and practices to ensure a robust collaboration between the Board and departmental clinical experts. The board has worked for years to foster and refine the partnership and it has resulted in significant improvements in the parole process and the quality of parole decisions. As part of on-boarding new parole board members, extensive training for program models is done, the risk/needs assessments used in the overall management of sexual abusers, and overall education about the psychology of sexual abusers. Every board member in Michigan has been trained on the Static-99R, the Stable-2007 – and many have also been trained on the Acute-2007 (The Acute-2007 is designed to assess recent, risk-relevant behavior of sexual offenders in the community). It is crucial that the Board understand and have confidence in the assessments used and programming delivered – and they have worked to achieve that by providing regular expert level trainings in the scientific underpinnings. Additionally, the Board has at least quarterly meetings with the office of Sexual Abuse Prevention Services, and have

established a process to allow parole board referrals for expert review of certain individual cases being considered for parole. The parole board has also established a Program Liaison position to foster communication between their administrations. Many of the board members also attend the annual training conference of the Michigan Chapter of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers.

Of course, it is not enough to simply make changes which are believed to be in-line with national best practices. It is also necessary to have those policies and practices and programs independently evaluated. The Board recently contracted with Michigan State University and a leading independent national research and consulting firm to conduct a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of treatment and risk assessment for those convicted of sexual offenses, and surrounding processes around treatment and assessment. This study included 1,895 individuals over the course of nine years. The majority were assessed as above average risk or well above average risk. At three years, the rate of sexually motivated recidivism (based on any new charges) for those involved in the study is 4.22%. At five years, using the same criteria, the rate for sexually motivated recidivism is 4.74%. The rate of general recidivism at 3 years is 14.77%.

For the fourth year in a row, the overall recidivism rate in Michigan declined and now stands at 22.1 percent, again making it the lowest in our state's history. The new rate places Michigan fourth best in the nation. They remain laser focused on ensuring they are doing all they can to set people up for success when they leave prison and to reduce violence and victims in our communities. The board will continue to utilize research, data, and evidence-based practices in delivering these results. A commitment to effective programming, interventions, and supports help thousands of people each year successfully complete their supervision and move forward in life on a positive and safe path.

#CAPTUREDCOLLABORATIONS

Highlighting Member Connections through APAI

by: Ashley Koonce, Executive Director, APAI

One of the many benefits of being involved in a professional organization is the ability to collaborate with others who have a similar mission, but a different background. Whether it's the largest decision-making board speaking to the smallest or the most conservative paroling authority reaching out to another that has historically been more progressive, the opportunity for networking, creating and creating partnerships is almost limitless.

We have so many members that have made some of the best connections through their involvement with APAI.

We are excited to continue hosting a new section to highlight these events valuable connections. Each newsletter will feature the #capturedcollaborations of our Association!

We cannot do it without member input! Send us your photos and a brief description to be included in the newsletter and on our social media pages! Email content to koonce@apaintl.org.



Recently, APAI's President and Vice President had the opportunity to attend the National Summit to Advance States' Criminal Justice Priorities: Identifying Data-Driven and Research-Based Strategies for State Leaders in Atlanta, Georgia.

Pictured: Nebraska Board of Parole Chair, Rosalyn Cotton, APAI Vice President and Washington Indeterminate Sentence Review Board Chair, Kecia Rongen, and APAI President and Kansas Prisoner Review Board Chair, Jonathan Ogletree



Pictured: APAI Vice President and Washington Indeterminate Sentence Review Board Chair, Kecia Rongen and Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles Associate Member, Darryl Littleton



Pictured: Mississippi State Parole Board Member, Julia Norman, APAI President and Kansas Prisoner Review Board Chair, Jonathan Ogletree, and Nevada Board of Parole Commissioners Chair, Chris DeRicco.

A SECOND LOOK AT LIFE

A Case for Second Look Laws and Revisiting Life Sentences

by: Dan Fetsco, Lecturer, University of Wyoming, Department of Criminal Justice and Sociology



I was fortunate to have spent 10 years working for the Wyoming Parole Board, and I consider it the most important work of my career. Prior to the parole board, I had been both a public defender and prosecutor, and since 2017, I have been teaching criminal justice classes at the University of Wyoming. I tell people that my real education on the criminal justice system came from my time at the parole board. Wyoming is somewhat unique in that they provide an in-person parole hearing for every person incarcerated in the Wyoming prison system, unless that individual is serving Life Without Parole or is on Death Row.

Over those 10 years, I heard dozens of individuals serving life sentences – “lifers” – who asked for a recommendation for a commutation of sentence from the Governor. These people were literally pleading for their lives, and they had a historical reason to do so. There was a time in Wyoming, up until the mid-1990s, when the Governors regularly granted commutations on life sentences. For example, one Wyoming Governor granted over 900 commutations during his tenure from 1974 to 1987. Then

the tough on crime movement finally caught up to Wyoming, and commutations dwindled – to the point that the Governor from 2011 to 2019, granted only three.

This trend toward the abandonment of commutations was not limited to Wyoming but appeared in most states. The movement away from executive clemency also came at a time when prison populations were growing exponentially. One of my job duties at the parole board was to prepare the packet of documents that would be forwarded to the Governor for commutation consideration. That process was frustrating. Not only was it rare for the Governor to follow our recommendations, in several cases, the judge, prosecutor, and victim supported a commutation, yet the Governor still denied the recommendation.

When I left the parole board to begin teaching, I told myself that I would research and write about some of the problems that I saw with our system of parole and executive clemency. I have recently written a book that explores the alarming growth of life sentences in both

A Second Look at Life – continued from page 9

Wyoming and the U.S. The book is called *Cutting Life Short: A Second Look at Life Sentences in Wyoming*, and it will be published in 2024, by the University of Wyoming Press.

In the book, I discuss how life sentences have grown over the last 40 years. For example, in 1984, there were 34,000 people serving life sentences in the US, and by 2020, that number had surpassed 200,000. In Wyoming, there were 93 people serving life in 1984, and as of November 1, 2023, that number had grown to 525. Over the course of 40 years, the number of life sentences grew by over 500% in both Wyoming and across the nation. The ballooning of life sentences certainly does not track with the growth of the overall population. While violent crime rates have fluctuated and spiked at times, they have remained relatively consistent over the last 40 years.

Another thing I noticed while working at the parole board was the low recidivism rate for the lucky individuals who had been granted commutations from their life sentences before the tough on crime movement. Those former lifers on supervision in the community appeared to thrive, and the research confirms this. A 2002 study from the Bureau of Justice Statistics tracked 272,000 inmates released in 14 states and found only 1.2 percent of those freed after serving a murder sentence were re-arrested on homicide charges within three years - the lowest rate among all reported crimes by released prisoners. I was also reminded of the age-crime curve by those paroled lifers. The age-crime curve confirms that for the vast majority of people, a peak of criminal activity occurs in mid-adolescence, and then a sharp drop occurs in early adulthood, followed by a steady decline throughout the remainder of the human life span. This age-crime curve has been documented throughout history and in all cultures worldwide. I certainly believe I witnessed this process play out with the vast majority of paroled lifers in Wyoming.

There are many explanations for the growth in life sentences: increased usage of 3-strike sentencing, aggressive prosecutors, and the winds of politics dampening the use of commutations. While the cause may not be

clear, the need for solutions is urgently apparent. One possible solution is the use of Second Look Laws, which would involve parole boards. Second Look proposals are an emerging method of dealing with the explosion of life sentences, and they differ across the country. According to the Sentencing Project, legislators in 25 states have considered or passed Second Look laws.

In 2018, California passed a version of a Second Look law that allows prosecutors to reevaluate cases involving older individuals still in prison and possibly resentencing them. In 2020, the Los Angeles District Attorney had created a unit to conduct a sentencing review for all past cases where the individual had served over 15 years. The California law requires courts to consider many postconviction factors when resentencing, such as disciplinary record, programming history, and evidence that reflects where age, time served, and diminished physical condition, if any, have reduced the inmate's risk of recidivism.

The Massachusetts legislature is currently considering a Second Look law that would permit people who commit crimes under the age of 25 to petition for resentencing after 15 years in prison. The petition would go back before the original judge, but if the petition is granted, the person would then need to see the parole board for release consideration.

There are many positives that I see in Second Look laws, with the most significant change being the removal of the Governor from the process of determining early release for people serving life sentences. Many of those people have spent decades in prison, living disciplinary-free and actively engaging in rehabilitation and personal growth. By transferring the power of commutation to the courts and parole boards through Second Look laws, it would help to remove the politics from the process of considering the release of our nation's population of lifers, something that could help to significantly alleviate our mass incarceration problem.

AWARD NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN

Nominations Close March 1, 2024

by: Ashley Koonce, Executive Director, APAI

Working in the world of parole is a maze of complexity and demands. Our association has many unsung heroes among us, quietly doing amazing work. It's time to give them the recognition they deserve!

Our Annual Awards, are a highlight of the Annual Conference. It is such an exciting opportunity for our incredible members to surprise and cheer each other on as they receive well-deserved accolades. It's an event you don't want to miss!

But to make it great - we need our members' help to spot these hidden gems. Our President has issued a challenge in this newsletter, urging all of us to be the heroes who shout from the rooftops about the stellar work happening in our parole community.

Receiving recognition from your peers is such an honor, and parole is no different. Every year, colleagues in our field do some seriously amazing work, but they don't always get the accolades they deserve. We know there are loads of deserving candidates out there, far more

than our awards committees could know about. We are asking each of you to submit a nomination for at least one of the following award categories: Ben Baer, Vincent O'Leary, Renee Collette International Excellence, or CARE (Communication Award Recognizing Excellence in Education and Collaboration). It's a golden chance to give a shoutout to our friends and colleagues for the awesome things they do. Even if you're not submitting a nomination yourself, please pass the information along to your board members and stakeholders.

Let's turn the spotlight on those who make our field shine. Nominate now and let's make this year's awards the best yet!

Visit www.apaintl.org to download an award nomination form today!

NOMINATIONS CLOSE MARCH 1, 2024



2024 Annual
TRAINING CONFERENCE
• May 5 – 8, 2024 • Seattle, WA •

• REGISTRATION OPEN • VISIT WWW.APAINTL.ORG TO REGISTER AND BOOK YOUR STAY •

OFFICER NOMINATIONS OPEN SOON

Nominations Open January 7, 2024

by: Ashley Koonce, Executive Director, APAI

As the annual conference approaches, it is time to think about the upcoming officer nominations and elections.

The official election will take place during the Annual Training Conference. Elected officers are announced at the Annual Business Meeting, which will be held on Tuesday, May 7, 2024. The business meeting will be held in conjunction with the Annual Awards Luncheon.

The APAI Constitution states that elected officers shall serve two-year terms and may not serve for more than two elected consecutive terms in the same office. The office of President and Treasurer shall become vacant on even numbered years, while the office of Vice President and Secretary shall become vacant on odd numbered years (2024). Newly elected officers will assume their duties of office on July 1, 2024.

The APAI bylaws state, “The President shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Association, speak on the behalf of the Association, and preside over all meeting of the Association. The President shall appoint Regional Vice Presidents and serve on the Executive and Finance Committees. The President shall oversee the activities of all officers, function as the liaison between the Executive Director and the Executive Committee, and be responsible for the coordination of communications between the Association membership and other criminal justice professionals and organizations.”

The bylaws also states, “The Treasurer shall oversee all financial affairs of the Association and provide information and support to the Finance Committee. The Treasurer and Executive Director shall submit an annual budget containing personnel, operating and related fiscal information to the Executive Committee for approval a minimum of sixty days prior to consideration. The Treasurer shall present the Executive Committee approved Association budget to the membership at the Annual Business Meeting. The spending of funds not approved in the current budget shall require the authorization of

the Treasurer, President, Vice President and Executive Director. The Treasurer shall perform such other tasks as the President may assign.”

If you know of a co-worker or a professional colleague you have gotten to know over the years who would be a perfect fit, please contact APAI Executive Director or anyone on the Executive Committee.

If you would like to nominate someone for either position or have an interest of your own, please reach out to:

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIR

David Blumberg

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ashley Koonce
koonce@apaintl.org

Nominations will close on March 7, 2024.

CALL FOR

ARTICLES

Do you have news, advice or a story of interest to the Paroling Profession?

Submit your stories, photos and news to Ashley Koonce at koonce@apaintl.org

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