

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Pursuant to P.A. 331 of 2006
Section 605
Response to Parole/Probation Agent Workload Study

Pursuant to Section 605 of Public Act 331 of 2006, the Department is responding to the Probation and Parole Agent Workload Study that was published by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency in February, 2006.

The 2006 Study looked at the amount of time agents have available at work to spend performing the critical agency tasks of supervising offenders and conducting field investigations and how much time each of these tasks takes compared to previous workload studies. Our current agency workload standards are based on these prior workload studies. The results of the 2006 Study show that overall agents are required to spend more time supervising offenders, conducting investigations, and completing reports than they did previously.

Additionally, the Study reports that the number of work hours available to agents has decreased. This premise, however, will be diminished over time as the utilization of Banked Leave Time (BLT) that was accumulated during this period, is exhausted.

Many of the workload implications can and will be addressed by methods other than adding agent FTE's. We are currently evaluating new strategies, programs and technologies to improve agent efficiency while focusing on public safety. These new supervision methods must be studied and piloted and are dependent on funding resources. At this point it is too early to fully measure the impact on workload.

The goal of field supervision is to enhance public safety and reduce the number of new victims by increasing offender success and reducing recidivism. With the implementation of the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI), we are shifting our approach, resources, and methods of supervision to parallel the strategies endorsed across the country with other transition from prison to the community initiatives. In addition to changing the focus of offender supervision, most specifically through collaborative case management, we will explore new and proven technologies.

Staff assigned to MPRI sites have been trained to conduct extensive assessments with offenders to determine their risk for violence and recidivism as well as their criminogenic needs. This assessment is used to develop the Transition Accountability Plan (TAP). The first step in changing the way agents supervise is in the development and implementation of the TAP. This can only be successful through the collaboration of Department staff, community partners, and the offender.

The assessment and TAP will determine the type of supervision provided by the field agent. A demonstration project of the Collaborative Case Management and Supervision approach is currently being conducted in three counties to determine alternative ways of

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supervising parolees based on their risk and needs assessments. Low risk parolees receive less direct supervision, thereby allowing agents to spend more time working with higher risk parolees and community partners. This will affect workload reporting.

Consistent with MPRI strategies, the Parole Discharge Policy is being revised to allow agents to submit discharge requests prior to the original parole expiration date on appropriate and deserving parolees who are not serving for offenses with mandatory parole terms. The Parole Board has authority over these cases and will determine, on an individual basis, which parolees have attained a level of success that will not undermine public safety. Additionally, the Parole Board has reduced the length of parole terms for many former prisoners serving for non-violent, property offenses. Improved parolee success, reduced recidivism, shorter parole terms and an increased number of discharges will equate to an overall reduction in agent workload.

A pilot of voice recognition computer software will be conducted beginning in November, 2006. It will allow field agents to dictate into a microphone to be transcribed into text. We expect this technology to make agents more efficient.

A pilot (proof of concept) is also being developed with E-Michigan, a division of MDIT, for Kiosk reporting. The Kiosk software will interface with the Department's Offender Management Network Information (OMNI) system. This will allow supervision of low risk offenders without a great deal of human intervention thereby reducing agent workload.

The Department of Corrections is investigating new technologies that will allow us to migrate the OMNI application to a personal digital assistant (PDA). This mobilization of OMNI could allow agents to download their caseloads to hand-held devices so they will have access to case information and input while making field contacts with and about offenders.

The Department is moving in the direction of having the OMNI application become web-enabled which would allow on-line information sharing between agents and case-involved community partners. Agents, service providers and other stakeholders would have access to real-time data without the delays inherent in mail and telephone communication systems. It is also expected that service providers would have restricted data entry capability. The time-savings generated from this enhanced technology would increase agent efficiency.

As agreed with the UAW, the Workload Study report was distributed to all managers and agents with a request for suggestions on how to improve efficiency. Recommendations were made by field staff to modify or eliminate reports, modify supervision standards, and eliminate unnecessary or duplicative tasks that do not enhance public safety or promote offender success. The Department has agreed to form joint workgroups with the UAW to assess and evaluate these recommendations. The Department's plan to address agency workload standards includes the new strategies, programs, and technologies

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outlined above and working with the UAW management and members to identify and change inefficient practices.

As of October 1, 2006, we were authorized 1,150 agent positions, of which approximately 1,093 were filled. In our Fiscal Year 2007 appropriation, we were authorized 56 additional agent positions and we are in the process of filling all vacancies. In light of the proposed strategies and technologies, we do expect to achieve increased efficiencies. The Department understands there may be a need for additional agent positions, but at this time we are unable to quantify the number of agents needed.