Job title
Parole Officer and Parole Supervisor

General overview
Parole officers strive to ensure public safety by supervising and helping reintegrate federal offenders into the community. These offenders are serving sentences of two years or more (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012). Offenders are granted parole, where they serve the remainder of their sentence in the community, under supervision of a parole officer (Criminal Justice System, n.d.; O*NET, 2011). This is a conditional release and can be revoked if the offender violates the conditions imposed by the court. Parole officers assess and make recommendations for offenders prior, during, and after imprisonment (Criminal Justice System, n.d.).

Job duties and responsibilities
Parole officers examine an offender’s behaviour in order to make appropriate recommendations about the initial placement of an offender. They obtain information about offenders past and present behaviours via interviews with other inmates, institutional authorities, police, family and friends of the offender (Alberta Government, 2012; Correctional Service Canada, 2012). Parole officers also make recommendations for offenders during imprisonment. They plan programs for offenders, such as anger management programs. Parole officers provide their recommendations to the National Parole Board for whether or not an offender should be released on parole. It is then the Parole Boards decision to grant, deny or revoke parole for offenders. Parole officers supervise offenders who have been released on parole, day parole, or statutory release (Alberta Government, 2012).

Parole officers identify the offender’s risks and needs, and discuss with the offender how issues like drug and alcohol abuse, and anger management problems contribute to criminal behaviour. Parole officers develop a plan for the offender prior to release, which includes employment, housing, health care, education, drug screening and other activities that help in the rehabilitation process (Criminal Justice System, n.d.). Parole officers will not only provide the offender with resources, but also assist them in finding housing, employment, obtaining a social insurance number etc. Parole officers inform offenders of the parole conditions by the court and make sure they adhere to them (O*NET, 2011).

To ensure offenders are complying to the terms specified in their parole conditions and rehabilitation plans, parole officers have the right to visit the offender and anyone else involved (family, police, employers) with or without warning (Correctional Service Canada, 2012; O*NET, 2011). They also will visit individuals who are assisting the offender in a program, such as an anger management class. As well, random drug and alcohol screens of offenders are used to verify compliance with treatment programs (O*NET, 2011).

Another duty of parole officers included describing the offender’s progress in case files. They are required to discuss cases that require additional attention with their supervisors. If an offender breaches parole conditions or seems likely to do so, parole officers can send the offender back to jail, recommend remedial action or initiate court action (Correctional Service Canada, 2012; O*NET, 2011).
Typical workday

Parole officers are employed by the Correctional Services of Canada. Parole supervisors work in the private sector, but they are still under contract of Correctional Services of Canada (Alberta Government, 2012; Government of Canada, 2013). Some offenders live in rural areas and communities where there are no Correctional Services of Canada building. When this happens, Parole supervisors are contracted to supervise these offenders (Government of Canada, 2013).

Parole officers work in offices, court houses, and prisons (Alberta Government, 2012). They also travel to meet with clients outside the prison (Career Cruising, 2013). Because they supervise multiple clients at once, working long hours, including evenings and weekends is expected (Alberta Government, 2012; Career Cruising, 2013; Correctional Service Canada, 2012). Parole officers interact with dangerous offenders, and their family, friends and employers (Career Cruising, 2013). Parole officers can work closely with psychologists, correctional officers, primary workers, correctional program facilitators, aboriginal elders, teachers, mental health staff, social workers and other partners (Correctional Service Canada, 2012).

Educational requirements and other qualifications required

Parole officers who are employed by the federal government are expected to have a Bachelor of Arts degree with a specialization in sociology, psychology or criminology, or a Bachelor of Social Work or Bachelor of Applied Arts in Justice Studies degree. A college diploma in a related field may suffice for certain positions. For example parole supervisors employed in the private sector require a two year college degree in a related field. A master’s degree is not a requirement; but it can you advance to section supervisor and area manager positions (Alberta Government, 2012; Career Cruising, 2013). Experience is an asset, individuals who have experience are preferred (Alberta Government, 2012).

Parole officers who are employed by the Correctional Services of Canada are required to complete a probationary period of one year (Alberta Government, 2012). They must also successfully complete a comprehensive 14 day basic training program, Parole Officer Induction Training (POIT). POIT covers a plethora of topics pertaining to safety and risk management (Correctional Service Canada, 2012). They are also given ongoing training in subjects that will help them perform their duties in a professional and effective manner (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2013). The training program can be administered prior or after hiring an individual; this varies by province (Career Cruising, 2013).

Related skills, interests, and abilities

Parole officers should have excellent oral and written communication skills. They are required to write and present many reports. Interpersonal skills are important, parole officers spend a lot of time talking to offenders, their family members, friends, and as well as their colleagues. Decision making skills are critical, parole officers need to make accurate assessments. They need to be able to work independently and in groups (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012; O*NET, 2011).

Relevance of Psychology undergraduate degree

Parole officers examine human behaviour, performance, individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders. Parole officers are responsible
for developing a rehabilitation plan that targets offender’s criminogenic needs. Taking courses in criminal behaviour, forensic psychology, and criminology will help parole officers be aware of risk factors for recidivism, as well as potential gender differences. Being aware of different risk factors and protective factors can help parole officers assign appropriate treatment programs. Taking personality psychology, and motivation and emotion courses will help parole officers to become more aware of individual differences in personality, and motivation. Parole officers should be able to adapt their rehabilitation approach to suit the each offender (Alberta Government, 2012; O*NET, 2011). Taking research methods is also beneficial so parole officers can stay up to date on research pertaining to recidivism. Taking research methods will help individuals be able to accurately read research articles. Social psychology courses will also be beneficial to individuals who want to become parole officers. For instance, in social psychology you learn about catharsis, and its impact on aggressive behaviour.

In general an undergraduate degree will provide individuals with communication and written skills (Alberta Government, 2012; O*NET, 2011). These skills are necessary in order for parole officers to be able to effectively give a presentation, have discussions with others, and write reports that are given to their supervisors (O*NET, 2011).

Salary potential
A parole officer’s salary varies by province, experience, and education of the individual. Parole officers who are employed by the federal government can expect their salary to range from $50,000 to $70,000 a year; the median is $48,190. Both education level and experience have an effect on the salary level of parole officers (Career Cruising, 2013).

Job outlook
When examining the projected demand of parole officers, websites have grouped them with psychologists, social workers, counselors, clergy and probation officers. The project demand for the 2011 to 2020 period is 77,529 jobs available, with an expected 68,988 job seekers. Job openings are attributed to expansion demand and replacement demand. Job seekers are recent graduates, immigrants and people relocating (Government of Canada, 2013).

To apply
Individuals can contact the area manager of a local parole office, or via the Ontario Public Service, or individuals can use career job searches such as job bank or indeed (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2013). Parole officer’s work for the Correctional Services of Canada, they suggest the best way to find job opportunities is by searching www.jobs.gc.ca. This website includes all CSC job postings, which can be filtered by region (Correctional Service Canada, 2012).

To know more…
To know more about parole, go to http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/parole/index-eng.shtml
References


