



Vermont Legislative Research Shop

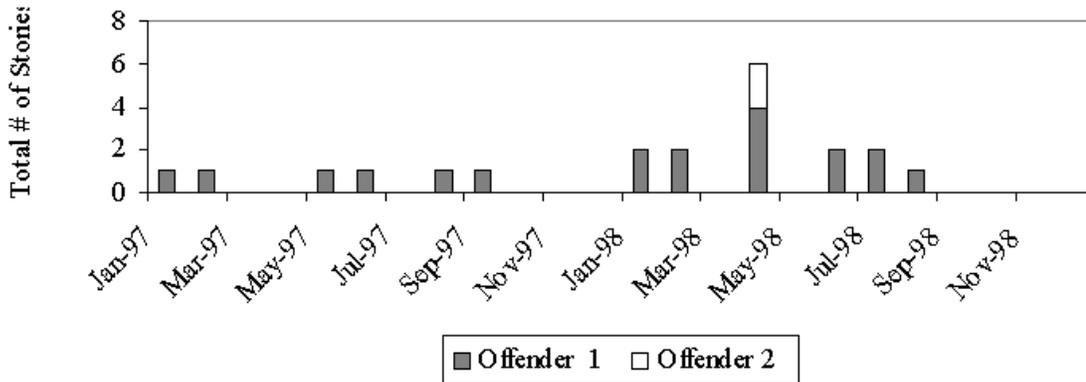
Vermont's Furlough Situation

Media Coverage of Crimes Committed by Furloughed Prisoners

The two largest newspapers in Vermont, *The Burlington Free Press* and the *Rutland Herald* wrote 22 articles regarding crimes committed by prisoners on furlough programs during 1997 and 1998 (see attached table). These newspapers also wrote 22 more articles regarding the Vermont State furlough policy. The 22 articles written about crimes committed on furlough represent 16 individual incidents.

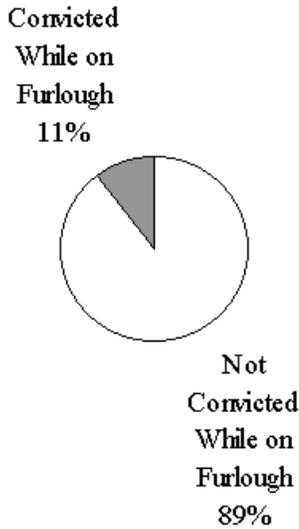
The distribution of the number of articles each violator received expressed in the following graph. The offender Brian Barcomb received four out of the six articles in the Burlington Free Press during April 1999. In all months except April, the media covered the same offense or offender multiple times.

of BFP and RHD Articles on Furlough Violators



Furloughs By the Numbers:

The VT Department of Corrections has put together figures that highlight the success of furlough integration in 1998. A document from the department shows the number of furloughed prisoners in 98' along with the portion of those prisoners that had been convicted of a new crime while they were on furlough (The pie graph below is taken from that document). The graph is based on the 1,320 prisoners furloughed in 1998. The data shows that 140 (11%) of those furloughed were convicted of another crime while on furlough.

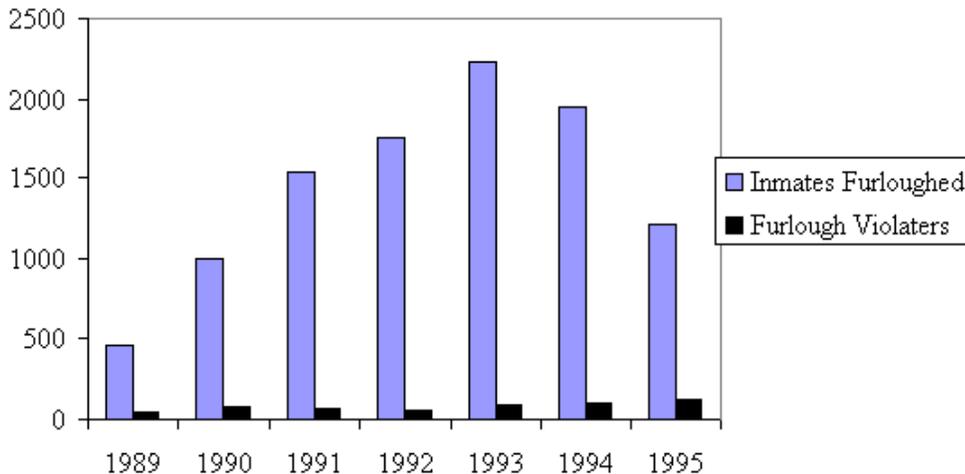


The offenses committed by these furloughed prisoners was of the following nature:

- The most common offense was escape (33%), followed by DLS (16%), and possession of marijuana (8%).
- Six of the 181 total crimes were violent felonies, 63 were non-violent felonies, 13 were violent misdemeanors, and 99 were non-violent misdemeanors.



Other data compiled by the Vermont Department of Corrections illustrates the success of furloughed prisoners from 1989 to 1995. The graph below shows the amount of furloughed prisoners for the years 1989 to 1995. It also shows the amount of prisoners in violation of their furlough. Violations in furlough are defined as those who have failed to report to their supervisors, have had their furloughs revoked for criminal behavior, or have been convicted of a crime. The rate of crime convictions per prisoners furloughed is as follows: 1% in 89', .7% in 90', .3% in 91', .6% in 92', .5% in 93', 1.1% in 94', .4% in 95'.



Department of Corrections Furlough Outcome Data 1989-95							
Fiscal Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Furloughs Granted	1342	1509	1980	2675	2884	2717	1725

Inmates Furloughed	461	998	1538	1763	2236	1951	1210
Failed to Return	28	48	47	28	43	32	46
Revoked-Criminal Behavior	9	18	14	20	37	44	67
Charged with Crime	8	10	12	16	19	29	0
Convicted	5	7	5	11	12	23	5

The Doble Research Report

On March 12, 1999 *The Burlington Free Press* ran an article titled, "Study: Vermonters skeptical of furloughs." Doble Research Associates conducted the study discussed in the article. After reading the *Free Press* article we contacted John Perry, an administrator at the Department of Corrections. He felt that the *Free Press* did a poor job conveying what the study really showed and sent us a copy of the study. The study was forty pages long and the results rely on a series of six focus groups conducted throughout the state in the fall of 1998 and the winter of 1999. Doble Research will complete, in 1999, a public opinion study contract with the National Institute of Justice that will document exactly how many Vermonters subscribe to views presented in this report (Doble, 13).

Doble found that Vermonters support a furlough program conceptually but not administratively, or at least not in the way they believe it is being administrated. When Doble asked Vermonters about the concept of a furlough program, they were overwhelmingly in favor. In the words of one man, "instead of dumping parolees into the community," the state should have a program in which offenders can make a gradual transition back into society, where supervision and control gradually diminishes. However, Vermonters sentiment changed when they were asked about the furlough program itself. They said it was filled with inappropriate, dangerous offenders who live in rent-free apartments without adequate supervision. Vermonters believe that the convicts in the furlough program are usually placed in it prematurely, before serving their minimum sentence (Doble, 11). The number one thing that Vermonters seemed to be cautious about was endangering the public to keep costs down. Thus, Doble Research concluded that officials should be wary about making the argument that supervision is lax or the ratio of furloughees to parole officers is high because of the need to contain costs. In the public mind, this is not an acceptable rationale (Doble, 12).

Burlington Meeting on Furloughs

On April 20th the Department of Corrections hosted a meeting at Burlington City Hall on the furlough program. Brian Crane (of the group researching this report) attended the meeting. The opinions expressed were similar to those expressed by the respondents in the Doble study. The general tone of the meeting was that the program was a good idea but that it needs to be administered better. Specifically, there is a need for supervision of furloughees after 11:00 p.m. (when supervisors now go home). Additionally, concern was raised about the concentration of furlough placements in Burlington's Old North End. (*The Burlington Free Press* 4/21/1999)

Sources

Doble Research Associates, Inc. 1999. *Restorative Justice and Community-Based Reparative Boards: The views of the People of Vermont*

Vermont Department of Corrections. 1998. *Court Data*, p. 129.

Vermont Department of Corrections. 1996. *Facts and Figures*, p.159.

myriad.middlebury.edu/htbin/dbsearch

Completed by Brian Crane, Paul Cascio, and Amen Teter on 4/21/99

	Date	Source	Page
Stories Relating To Crimes Committed on Furlough In 98 and 97			
Dead man missing since Aug 6, body found in Colchester.	8/25/98	BFP	2b:6
Furlough escapee captured in south Burlington hotel...	7/14/98	BFP	1b:1
Prisoner on furlough cited with assault and robbery or women in Burlington.	7/9/98	BFP	1b1
Captured furlough escapee in Burlington, Twice convicted rapist, Eugene Allen.	6/2/98	BFP	1b:2
Captured Furlough escapee, Eugene Allen, Returned....	6/1/98	BFP	1b:2
Inmates On Furlough Charged in Sexual Assault On Minor in White River Junction.	4/23/98	BFP	3b:1
Inmates accused of having sex with 15 year old.	4/22/98	RHD	17:5
Furlough escapee caught. Stakeout ends with arrest of Brian Barcomb in South Burlington.	4/8/98	BFP	5a:1
State Corrections Department defends furlough program. Police search for Brian Barcomb, escapee.	4/7/98	BFP	1a:1
Man with weapon robs Burlington family, Police suspect escape furlough prisoner Brian Barcomb.	4/6/98	BFP	1a:4
Furlough escapee, Brian Barcomb, Left Williston and is considered dangerous.	4/4/98	BFP	1:b1
Department of Corrections, Burlington police, make arrest after fight at furlough apartment.	2/13/98	BFP	13a:2
Stabbed inmate gets charge: John L Brown, who disappeared from Colch. apartment on furlough.	2/5/98	BFP	6b:1
Man on furlough, Keith B Wolcott, denies escape charges.	1/9/98	BFP	5b:1
Police seek man, Ronald Hemmingway Sr. of Burlington, missing from furlough.	1/1/98	BFP	1b:1
Man on furlough, Michael Parker, faces charges in auto theft of sport utility vehicle...	10/30/97	BFP	9b:1
Escape furlougee found in closet.	9/6/97	RHD	14:1
Rutland Police nab furlough escapee. Rutland Police catch a man who walked away...	6/18/97	RHD	3:5
Prisoner at large said to be dangerous, a Bennigton man on a prison furlough is sought...	5/30/97	RHD	15:2
Man found after alleged walkaway.	2/7/97	RHD	13:1
Man could get life for sex assault. A Burlington man on furlough from jail could get a life sentence...	1/30/97	RHD	20:1
Source:myriad.middlebury.edu/htbin/dbsearch			