



Personal Growth TPV Program

Background

This evaluation examined how receiving the Personal Growth (PG) program while incarcerated for a technical parole violation (TPV) impacts recidivism, and how PG's impact compares to its predecessor program, Back on Track Inside (BOTI). Based on Yield Theory, the PG program was developed and introduced in 2021 as the PA DOC's primary treatment curriculum for TPVs returning to incarceration. The PG program aims to reduce recidivism and future rule-breaking behavior by targeting unique risk factors associated with parole violations. However, no prior empirical evidence exists regarding PG's effectiveness.

Study Design

All individuals released between January 2020 and February 2025 from an incarceration term due to a TPV were sampled for this study. To examine PG's effectiveness, three different analyses of 6-month post-release recidivism rates were conducted:

- **Analysis 1** compared two groups of TPVs who were *re-paroled* after a revocation between 2021 and 2025:
 - a) those who received PG while incarcerated (n=3,415) –and–
 - b) those who did not receive PG while incarcerated although they were eligible (n=49)
- **Analysis 2** compared two groups of TPVs who *maxed out* after a revocation between 2021 and 2025:
 - c) those who received PG while incarcerated (n=525) –and–

d) those who did not receive PG while incarcerated although they were eligible (n=216)

- **Analysis 3** compared two groups of TPVs who were released after a revocation between 2020 and 2021:

e) those who received PG while incarcerated (n=1,344) –and–
f) those who received BOTI while incarcerated (n=690)

To ensure comparable groups were analyzed, propensity score matching (PSM) was used. Matching criteria included: age, sex, race, and mental health status; prior parole violations, arrests, and DOC stays; and the length of stay, additional programming assignments, and misconducts associated with the TPV incarceration term. Balance statistics confirmed strong matches between the treatment and comparison groups. To ensure robust conclusions, results were verified with additional statistical testing (Rosenbaum bounds, Mahalanobis matching, and inverse probability of treatment weighting).

Results & Conclusion

Statistical analyses found that **6 months after release, PG programming had no significant impact on recidivism**. No meaningful differences in 6-month recidivism were detected between reentrants who received PG during incarceration compared to those who did not receive PG, or who received BOTI instead. These results were consistent across all analyses conducted, and sensitivity analyses (Rosenbaum bounds) showed these findings were modestly robust. For example, using the

results from Analysis 2, it would take discovering unobserved or non-included factors that increased a TPV's odds of *not* receiving PG by 105% in order to lead to the conclusion that the 6-month recidivism rate for the PG group was statistically significantly lower than the no-PG group.

While TPVs re-paroled from incarceration appeared more likely to recidivate if they had received PG, those who maxed out appeared slightly less likely to recidivate if they had received PG. The 6-month recidivism rate was nearly identical for TPVs who received PG compared to those who received BOTI. These results are illustrated in the chart below, though readers should remember that none of the differences were statistically significant, meaning that apparent differences could be due to chance alone and thus the safest conclusion is that no real difference exists. **Ultimately, these results indicate that PG programming does not impact recidivism among technical parole violators 6 months post-release.**

