

**COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION FOR CORRECTIONS**

**STANDARDS COMPLIANCE REACCREDITATION AUDIT**

State of Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections  
Louisiana Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

June 3-4, 2024

**VISITING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Kyle Poppert, Chairperson  
ACA Auditor

Sandra Hylton  
ACA Auditor

**A. Introduction**

The audit of the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole, Baton Rouge, Louisiana was conducted on June 3-4, 2024, by the following team: Kyle J. Poppert, Chairperson; Sandra Hylton, Member.

**B. Facility Demographics**

Rated Capacity:	N/A
Actual Population:	29,757
Average Daily Population for the last 12 months:	28,798
Average Length of Stay:	6.99 years males 3.59 years females
Security/Custody Level:	Community supervision
Age Range of Offenders:	16-96
Gender:	Male & Female
Full-Time Staff:	31
	2 Administrative, 3 Support, 5 Investigative Specialist, 15 Program, 6 WAE,

**C. Facility Description**

The Board of Pardons was enshrined in the Louisiana Constitution in 1921, following the establishment of the Board of Parole in 1916. The original Board of Parole consisted of three members appointed by the Governor. In 1940 the Board of Parole was abolished with authority transferred to the Department of Welfare. In 1942 a new State Board of Parole was established to act in concert with Public Welfare, and in 1948 the Board of Parole assumed sole authority for paroling decisions.

The composition, terms, and tenure of Parole Board members changed over the years, and in 1982 the legislature mandated that all offenders released on their “good time date” be supervised, as if on parole, until their full-term date. This “good time parole supervision” is automatic, without input from the Board, but offenders are under Board control during this supervision. These offenders make up over 90% of offenders under the control of the Board.

In 2012, the state legislature abolished the Board of Parole and merged the parole function into the Board of Pardons. It created a Committee on Parole within this board, resulting in the current designation as the Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole.

The Board consists of the five members of the Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole, and two at-large members who serve only on the Committee on Parole, all of whom are appointed by the Governor to concurrent terms with those of the Governor.

Additionally, there is an ex-officio member of the Committee who is not a voting member. This ex-officio member is typically the Warden of the facility where the inmate is housed.

Members of the Board must have five years of experience in the field of penology, corrections, law enforcement, sociology, law, education, social work, medicine, or a combination of those disciplines. Members complete a comprehensive orientation period within 90 days of their appointment and an additional eight hours of training annually.

The Board's offices are within a complex of buildings housing government agencies, including the Central Office of the Probation and Parole Division as well as the Probation and Parole Academy. Hearing rooms are in a building adjacent to the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections. Funding for the Board is provided by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections. The Board is quasi-independent but is under the Department for administrative structure and support.

The Board meets on a regularly scheduled, publicly posted basis to consider applications for pardon, sentence commutation, and restoration of rights and privileges of citizenship. All recommendations for pardon / clemency are forwarded to the Governor for final action. The Committee on Parole has the sole right to grant parole.

Inmates who are eligible for parole are afforded a public hearing within six months of their eligibility date. Prior to the hearing, a parole eligibility plan facilitates the completion of a comprehensive parole plan to assist the Board in this decision-making process. Parole hearings are open by law, and individuals such as family members and victims are permitted to attend and make a statement. If the Board decides to grant parole, conditions are set by the Board / Committee and the offender will be assigned to a Parole Officer for eventual supervision.

In addition to parole hearings, the Board/Committee makes the final decision to revoke or continue supervision for significant violations of parole, after preliminary revocation hearings held by parole staff in the field. Additionally, the Board is responsible for the issuance of warrants for the arrest of parolees who are alleged to have violated supervision. The Board maintains a Web site which is comprehensive, up to date, and provides publicly necessary documents and schedules.

Parole hearings are now also available as "Zoom" meetings. Meetings are broadcasted over YouTube and are accessible to the public. This process also allows Victims and/or offenders' family members to be "present" for the hearings without having to travel to Baton Rouge.

The Mission of the Board of Pardons is: To serve the citizens of Louisiana through informed decision-making, thereby promoting public safety, addressing the needs of crime victims, and to facilitate successful reentry for offenders who have appropriately prepared for community supervision.

#### **D. Pre-Audit Meeting**

The team met on June 2, 2024, in Baton Rouge, to discuss the information provided by the Association staff and the officials from the Board.

The chairperson divided standards into the following groups:

Standards #2-1001 to 2-1074 Kyle J. Poppert, Chairperson

Standards #2-1075 to 2-1130 Sandra Hylton, Member

**E. The Audit Process**

1. Transportation

The team was escorted to the facility by Francis Abbott, Executive Director.

2. Entrance Interview

The audit team proceeded to the office of Francis Abbott, Executive Director. The team expressed the appreciation of the Association for the opportunity to be involved with the Board in the accreditation process.

Executive Director Abbott escorted the team to the hearing room where the formal entry meeting was held.

The following persons were in attendance:

Sheryl M. Ranatza	Chairperson
Francis Abbott	Executive Director
Whitney Troxclair	Executive Management Officer

It was explained that the goal of the visiting team was to be as helpful and non-intrusive as possible during the conduct of the audit. The chairperson emphasized the goals of accreditation toward the efficiency and effectiveness of correctional systems throughout the United States. The audit schedule was also discussed at this time.

The team met with all the Board members on the first day of the audit and with the additional members of the Committee on Parole on day two of the audit.

3. Facility Tour

The team toured the entire facility from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. The following persons accompanied the team on the tour and responded to the team's questions concerning facility operations:

Francis Abbott, Executive Director  
Whitney Troxclair, Executive Management Officer

The team noted facility notices were posted throughout the facility.

4. Conditions of Confinement/Quality of Life

The following narrative description of the relevant programmatic services and functional areas summarizes the findings regarding the quality of life.

**Security:**

The facility shares grounds with some Louisiana Department of Corrections Offices. The public entrance is controlled by office staff. There are about a half dozen external doors, mostly to staff offices that are card access for convenience.

There is a reception area that is staffed by office personnel. Visitors appearing for hearings have separate waiting areas for victims and offender supporters. Board staff are present in the hearing room. The LA Department of Corrections also supplies an officer to provide security during public hearings.

Staff have a separate gated parking lot with card access.

**Environmental Conditions:**

The building was comfortable for the season. Staff have sufficient office and meeting space. The hearing room was large enough to easily accommodate staff, security, attending members from the District Attorney's office, law enforcement, supporters of the petitioners, and victim representatives. There is ample storage.

**Sanitation:**

The building was clean and orderly. The grounds were well kept and litter free. The LA Department of Corrections supplies a female offender labor force to maintain the grounds and buildings.

**Fire Safety:**

Fire safety equipment is strategically located throughout the building. Exits are clearly marked and free from obstructions. The stairwells were clear and well maintained. Evacuation routes are posted in the building.

**Offender Work Programs:**

The committee on Parole requires all capable parolees to be gainfully employed.

**Social Services:**

The Board has sufficient staff to conduct placement investigations and conduct revocation investigations.

Each parolee is assigned to an officer who connects them with the resources identified through a personalized plan and/or by the recommendations of the Board. Parole Officers work closely with, are not directly supervised by the Board.

**F. Examination of Records**

Following the facility tour, the team proceeded to the conference room to review the accreditation files and evaluate compliance levels of the policies and procedures. The Board has no notices of non-compliance with local, state, or federal laws or regulations.

1. Litigation

Over the last three years, the Board had no consent decrees, class action lawsuits or adverse judgments.

2. Significant Incidents/Outcome Measures

The team did not identify any noteworthy issues with any significant incidents.

3. Departmental Visits

Team members revisited the following departments to review conditions relating to departmental policy and operations:

<u>Department Visited</u>	<u>Person(s) Contacted</u>
Executive Mgt. Office Programs	Whitney Troxclair Karla Williams Sharee Owens Chiquita McQuirter
Investigations	Shamyra Washington Rylee Haggard Markel Lewis Ikechukwu Odo Alexandra Greene
Administration	Betty Williams Keira Lee
WAE	Cecile Templet Sharel Favorite Silas Johnson

4. Shifts

a. Day Shift

The team was present at the facility during the day shift from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m..

The team was able to sit in on both pardon and parole hearings. The team noted Board members were courteous and very knowledgeable. It was clear their extensive criminal justice and social work background is integral to the process.

The team observed staff treating victims and supporters with equal compassion, empathy, and professionalism.

5. Status of Previously Non-compliant Standards/Plans of Action

The team reviewed the status of standards previously found non-compliant, for which a waiver was not granted, and found the following:

Standard #2-APA-1042 Salaries are set by State Statute. The board and its executive director have lobbied the legislature for salary increases. However, the standard remains non-compliant. The team suggested the Board request a waiver rather than a plan of action due to this matter being controlled by the State Legislature.

**G. Interviews**

During the course of the audit, team members met with both staff and petitioners to verify observations and/or to clarify questions concerning facility operations.

1. Petitioner Interviews

The team was able to view the interactions between the Board, staff and the petitioners during the hearings and while waiting for such proceedings. Petitioners felt they were generally treated fairly and had no specific objections or concerns.

2. Staff Interviews

The team met with all staff that were in the office during the audit. All staff were eager to assist the auditors and eager to explain the role they play in the daily operations. Staff were well trained and knowledgeable regarding their specific assignments and roles. Roles and duties were well defined, and each person knew how their participation contributed to the entire process.

## **H. Exit Discussion**

The exit interview was held at noon in the conference room with Vice-Chairman Prator, Board Member Fremin, Board Member Tillis, Director Abbott and 13 staff in attendance.

The following persons were also in attendance:

James M. Le Blanc, Secretary Louisiana Department of Corrections  
Gary Westcott, Deputy Secretary Louisiana Department of Corrections  
Two Parole Officers

The chairperson explained the procedures that would follow the audit. The team discussed the compliance levels of the mandatory and non-mandatory standards and reviewed their individual findings with the group.

The chairperson expressed appreciation for the cooperation of everyone concerned and congratulated the facility team for the progress made and encouraged them to continue to strive toward even further professionalism within the correctional field.



AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION  
AND THE  
COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION FOR CORRECTIONS

**COMPLIANCE TALLY**

<b>Manual Type</b>	Adult Probation and Parole Authorities 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition	
<b>Supplement</b>	2016 Standards Supplement	
<b>Facility/Program</b>	Louisiana Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole	
<b>Audit Dates</b>	June 3-4, 2024	
<b>Auditor(s)</b>	Kyle J. Poppert, Chairperson Sandra Hylton, Member	
	<b>MANDATORY</b>	<b>NON-MANDATORY</b>
Number of Standards in Manual	N/A	131
Number Not Applicable		0
Number Applicable		131
Number Non-Compliance		3
Number in Compliance		128
Percentage (%) of Compliance		97.7%
<p>! Number of Standards <i>minus</i> Number of Not Applicable <i>equals</i> Number Applicable</p> <p>! Number Applicable <i>minus</i> Number Non-Compliance <i>equals</i> Number Compliance</p> <p>! Number Compliance <i>divided by</i> Number Applicable <i>equals</i> Percentage of Compliance</p>		

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June 3-4, 2024

Visiting Committee Findings

Non-Mandatory Standards

Non-Compliance

**Standard #2-APA-1040**

TENURE ON THE PAROLE AUTHORITY IS NO LESS THAN FIVE YEARS. LEGAL PROVISION ALLOWS FOR THE REMOVAL OF PAROLE AUTHORITY MEMBERS FOR GOOD AND DEMONSTRATED CAUSE ONLY AFTER A FULL AND OPEN HEARING WHEN ONE HAS BEEN REQUESTED BY THE MEMBER. (IMPORTANT)

FINDINGS:

The terms of Board members are set by the State Constitution and mirror the term of the appointing Governor.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

Waiver Request

There is a clear policy in place at a higher level that is contrary to the requirements of this standard. The Louisiana State Constitution states that "each member of the board shall serve a term concurrent with that of the governor appointment them." (Article IV, Section 5(E)(2)). The Board has no control over, nor the authority to change, the Louisiana State Constitution. The term of office for a Louisiana governor is four years and is limited to two terms. The board works in conjunction with a full-time staff, which provides continuity, training, and support, for new appointees. During the audit period, there has not been the removal of a parole authority member. As such, the nature of membership appointments does not adversely affect, in a significant manner, the life, health, and safety of staff or offenders or the constitutional operation of the board.

AUDITOR'S RESPONSE:

The team supports the request for a waiver, as compliance with this standard is out of the control of the Board.

**Standard #2-APA-1041**

IF A FIXED TERM OF OFFICE IS USED IN THE APPOINTMENT OF PAROLE AUTHORITY MEMBERS, THE TERMS OF THE MEMBERS ARE STAGGERED. (ESSENTIAL)

FINDINGS:

Terms of the Board members are not staggered as they are fixed by State Constitution.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

Waiver Request

There is a clear policy in place at a higher level that is contrary to the requirements of this standard. The Louisiana State Constitution states that "each member of the board shall serve a term concurrent with that of the governor appointment them." (Article IV, Section 5(E)(2)). The Board has no control over, nor the authority to change, the Louisiana State Constitution. The term of office for a Louisiana governor is four years and is limited to two terms. The board works in conjunction with a full-time staff, which provides continuity, training, and support, for new appointees. During the audit period, there has not been the removal of a parole authority member. As such, the nature of membership appointments does not adversely affect, in a significant manner, the life, health, and safety of staff or offenders or the constitutional operation of the board.

AUDITOR'S RESPONSE:

The team supports the request for a waiver, as compliance with this standard is out of the control of the Board.

**Standard #2-APA-1042**

SALARIES OF PAROLE AUTHORITY MEMBERS ARE WITHIN TWENTY PERCENT OF THE SALARY PAID TO JUDGES OF COURTS HAVING TRIAL JURISDICTION OVER FELONY CASES. (ESSENTIAL)

FINDINGS:

Salaries are fixed by State Statute and are considerably lower than the judges within their jurisdiction.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

Plan of Action

Task

During the 2023, 2024, and 2025 fiscal legislative sessions, seek a salary increase for Board members.

Responsible Agency

Board Chair with the Department of Public Safety and Corrections.

Assigned Staff.

Board Chair and Executive Director.

Anticipated completion date:

August 15, 2023.

AUDITORS'S RESPONSE:

The team supports the plan of action. The team noted this issue is largely out of the control of the Board. The team noted the Board is fully staffed.