

Parole Reviews

Background

Minnesota statute allows a life sentence to be applied to individuals convicted of murder in the first degree and for certain criminal sexual conduct offenses.

On August 1, 1989, Minnesota changed the mandatory minimum prison term for a life sentence to 30 years. Prior to this change, the mandatory minimum prison term for a life sentence was 17 years.

Review Process

The Commissioner of Corrections is given the authority to grant indeterminate/Life-Sentenced individuals parole after they have served their minimum term of imprisonment also known as a Parole Eligibility Date (PED).

The Commissioner and an Advisory Panel of Department of Corrections (DOC) employees conduct an initial review of the individual's readiness for parole three years before the individual reaches their minimum term of imprisonment / PED, and then at intervals determined by the Commissioner.

The Executive Officer of Hearings and Release is responsible for maintaining the schedule for these reviews and works with the Life Sentence Victim Advocate, the committing county and the Case Worker at the facility to compile a packet of information about the incarcerated individual. The Life Sentence Victim Advocate will attempt contact with the victim's surviving family and others affected by the crime to allow them input in the process.

An Agent from the committing county will develop a community investigation that will capture the sentiment of the community, law enforcement, prosecutor, and sentencing judge regarding the individual at the time of the crime and at the time they are being reviewed by the Commissioner of Corrections and Advisory Panel.

Facility staff gather all information available on the individual to submit to the Commissioner and Advisory Panel, which could include making a recommendation to transition to lower custody, additional programming needs, or parole.

The Commissioner and Advisory Panel consider information collected from facility staff, the community where the incarcerated individual was sentenced and any surviving family members of the victim. The panel reviews all information and considers community investigation reports, victim sentiments, treatment progress, behavior while incarcerated, psychological and other diagnostic evaluations, criminal history and risk to public. At the review, the Commissioner will either assign a projected release date or continue the case with directives to be completed prior to the next review.

Each review is evaluated individually, with treatment and programming recommendations unique to that individual.