

A glossary of corrections terms

Boot camp (SAI)

The Special Alternative Incarceration program (SAI) began in 1988 as an alternative to prison for male probationers convicted of certain crimes and selected by courts. In 1992 the program was expanded to include both male and female prisoners and probationers. State law precludes participation if convicted of a number of primarily assaultive crimes. Phase I of the program involves a highly-disciplined regimen of 90 days, consisting of military-style exercise, meaningful work assignments and other programming, including secondary education and substance-abuse treatment. Phase II involves intensive supervision in the community, usually in a residential "halfway house" setting. Phase III of the program involves supervision of offenders similar to the way in which probationers are supervised.

Consecutive (stacked) sentences

Sentences for multiple offenses imposed so that the minimum of one must be served before service of the minimum on the next one begins. Normally, Michigan sentences imposed simultaneously are served concurrently. However, in certain circumstances, sentences must or may be consecutive.

Disciplinary credit

A reduction from a prisoner's minimum and maximum sentence for good conduct. In Michigan, the most credit any prisoner can earn is seven days per month; many earn none. Prisoners sentenced before 1978 received "good time" credit, which was given in larger quantities. Prisoners sentenced after "truth-in-sentencing" took effect cannot earn credits.

Flat sentence

A single term of years the prisoner must serve. Michigan has flat sentences, set by statute, for committing a felony with a firearm.

"Flop"

Prisoners' term for a decision to deny parole. The parole board uses the term "continuance."

Indeterminate sentence

A sentence with a minimum and a maximum term. The defendant must serve at least the minimum (reduced by any good time or disciplinary credit) and may be held to the

maximum. The judge sets the minimum; the maximum is usually set by statute. This is the typical Michigan sentence.

Life sentence (non-parolable)

The statutorily mandated sentence for first-degree murder. There is no parole eligibility. Release is only by commutation, pardon or death.

Life sentence (parolable)

A sentence that allows the parole board to either grant parole or keep the prisoner for the rest of his or her life. "Lifers" are eligible for parole after serving 10 or 15 years, depending on the offense date. The board can only parole a "lifer" if the sentencing (or successor) judge does not object and after holding a public hearing. In Michigan, the most serious offenses (second degree murder, assault with intent to murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, first-degree criminal sexual conduct) carry the penalty of "life or any term", which allows the judge to impose either an indeterminate sentence (by setting both the minimum and the maximum) or parolable life.

Major misconduct

An institutional rule infraction for which a prisoner can receive a major misconduct report or "ticket". The penalties for major misconduct can include: loss of accumulated disciplinary credits (for those who still earn them), segregation, increased security classification and denial of parole.

Mandatory minimum

A minimum sentence required by statute. The judge may impose a longer minimum than the statute requires, but usually cannot impose a shorter one. Michigan's drug statutes contained mandatory minimums until they were amended in 2002.

Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative (MPRI)

The Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI) works toward the goal that every prisoner released from prison will have the tools needed to succeed in the community. The mission is to reduce crime by implementing a seamless plan of services and supervision for each prisoner—delivered through state and local collaboration—from the time of their entry into prison through their reintegration into the community.

Parole

Parole refers either to the process of granting release to a prisoner before the maximum sentence expires or to the period of supervision that follows release. Prisoner becomes

eligible upon serving the minimum sentence minus any accumulated credits. Parole provides structured re-entry to society. It also serves as incentive for good institutional behavior because prisoners want to avoid being "flopped" (having parole denied). Parolees who violate conditions can have supervision intensified or be returned to prison.

Parole guidelines

A statutorily required point system to guide parole board discretion. The guidelines account for the details of the offense, prisoner's prior record, prison conduct, statistical risk score for assaultive behavior, the prisoner's age, program participation, and mental health variables. If score is in high range, parole is only supposed to be denied for "substantial and compelling reasons." Similarly, if score is in low range, parole is supposed to be denied.

Probation

A period of community-based supervision that may include such conditions as periodic reporting, treatment, community service, or the payment of fines and costs, and may also be joined with a county jail term.

Sentencing guidelines

A statutorily required point system to guide judicial discretion in sentencing and reduce disparity. The guidelines account for details of the offense and the defendant's prior record, and produce a range within which the judge should set the minimum sentence. The judge can only depart from the guidelines range for "substantial and compelling reasons."

Technical Violator

A probationer or parolee who violates the conditions of supervision, e.g., by failing to report or to participate in required programs or to pass a drug test.

Tether

Electronic monitoring either by radio frequency or GPS (Global Positioning System).

"Truth-in-Sentencing"

A legislative initiative, phased in for offenses committed after December 15, 1998, that:

- eliminates disciplinary credits
- prohibits any prisoner from entering a community program until after the prisoner has served the minimum sentence and become eligible for parole