



*Please Note: The information contained in this Guide is not intended as legal advice in any individual's case. There are many exceptions and variations in the parole consideration process. If you have questions, please consult with an experienced parole attorney.*

## **HOW TO PREPARE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE RISK ASSESSMENT**

This Guide is intended to help you familiarize yourself with the Comprehensive Risk Assessment (CRA or “psychological evaluation”) process and prepare for it. For other information about Comprehensive Risk Assessments, please see our “How to Challenge a Comprehensive Risk Assessment” Guide.

### **I. What is a Comprehensive Risk Assessment (CRA)?**

A Comprehensive Risk Assessment, or CRA, is a psychological evaluation completed by a psychologist who is hired by the Board to evaluate your future “risk of violence.” In order to write this assessment, the psychologist does a review of your Central File and SOMS. They also interview you for one to three hours in-person or over video. This interview covers the same topics covered in a parole hearing, including your life prior to your crime, the details of your crime, your conduct in prison, and your plans for release. Afterwards, the psychologist writes a report summarizing the information they obtained during the interview, the clinical assessment tools they applied, and the opinions they have about you. The psychologist will conclude the report by determining whether you pose a “low,” “lower moderate,” “moderate,” “moderate high,” or “high” risk of future violence.

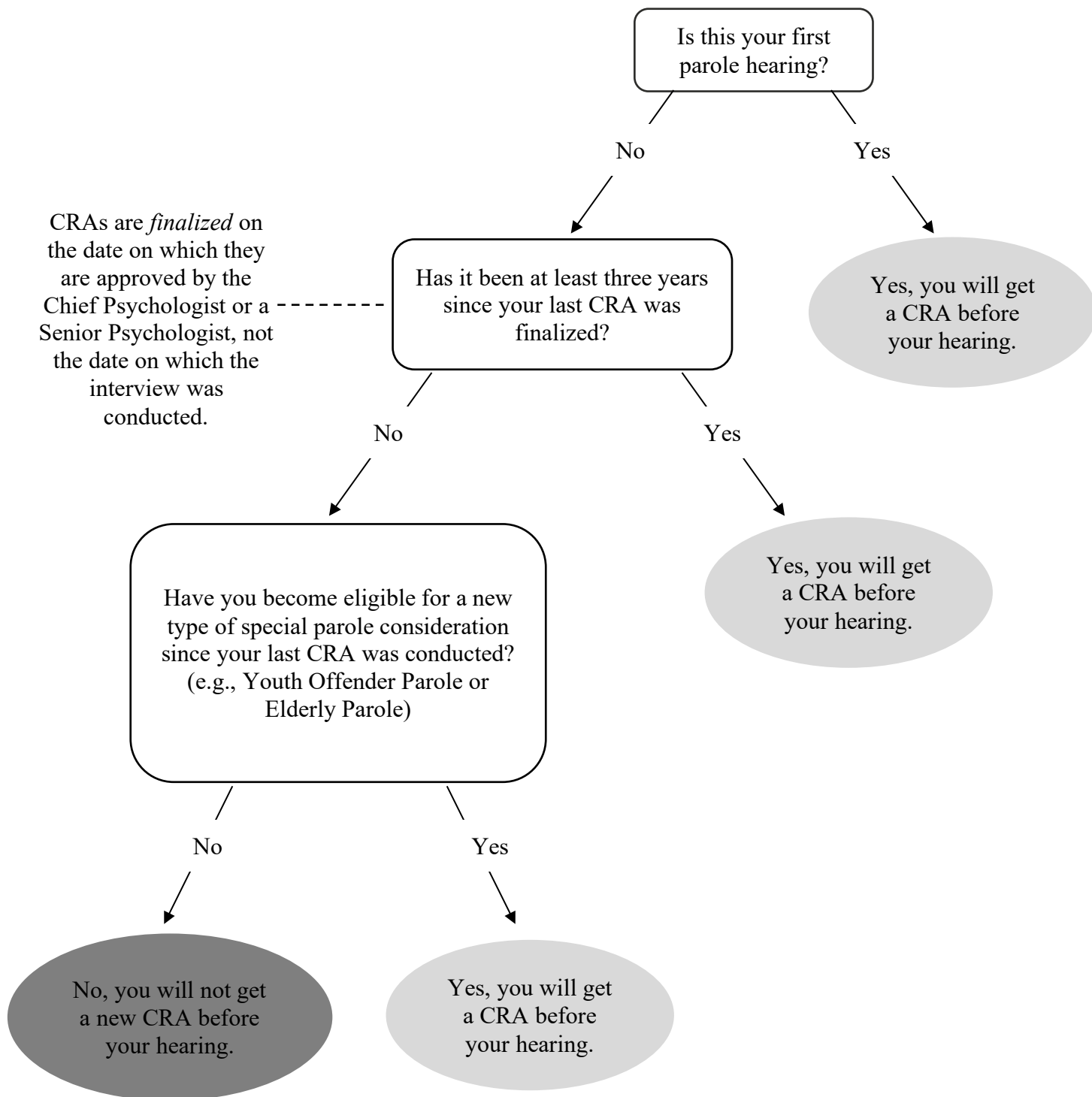
### **II. When will my CRA take place?**

Between four and six months prior to your parole consideration hearing, the Board psychologist will interview you, review your file, and write the CRA report. You should receive your completed CRA report no later than 60 days prior to your hearing date. Generally, CRAs are only conducted once every three years, so if you have two hearings less than three years apart, the same CRA can be used at both hearings.

### **III. How important is the CRA?**

The CRA is one of the most important documents the Board uses in determining whether or not a parole applicant will be granted parole. As a critical piece of the parole process, you should prepare for your CRA as if it is a parole hearing. The good news is that you prepare for the CRA in the same way you prepare for your parole hearing, so you do not need to do additional work. Your CRA is an opportunity for you to take accountability for your crime, share the insight and remorse you have gained while in prison, and share your release plans.

#### IV. When will I get a new CRA?



## V. Tips to Prepare for Your CRA

- *Prepare to demonstrate your growth:* It can be overwhelming to demonstrate years, and sometimes decades, of growth in just a few hours. If you can, work with someone you trust and practice talking about the difficult aspects of your crime, as well as any prison discipline, in an accountable way. It is also useful to practice talking about what you have learned from the programming you have participated in. If you do not feel comfortable practicing with another person, you can say things out loud to yourself or write them down.
- *Meet with your attorney:* Your attorney should support you in preparing for your CRA. If you are being represented by a state-appointed attorney and are expecting to receive a CRA prior to your scheduled hearing, your state-appointed attorney is required to spend a minimum of one hour supporting your CRA preparation.
- *Understand the version of the facts of your life crime in the record:* The psychologist will likely assume that the version of the facts of your life crime in the official record is true. Most often, the psychologist will review and use your Probation Officer's Report (POR) to gain an understanding of what happened during your crime. A version of your crime might also be recorded in a police report, or a Court of Appeals decision if you appealed your case. It is a good idea to review these documents very closely to ensure that you can answer questions about your crime and explain any differences between your version of the crime and the version in the official records. **Note:** If there are differences between your version of the facts and the version that is in the official record, you should discuss the differences with your attorney and get your attorney's advice on how to talk about the differences with the psychologist.
- *Review your past hearing transcripts and CRAs:* If you previously received a CRA or a parole denial, it is a good idea for you to review your past CRAs and hearing decisions and note the issues the psychologist and the Board raised. Try to think about specific ways you have addressed previous issues, like through programs or book reports, to show that you have taken their recommendations seriously.
- *Bring documents that demonstrate your insight:* You should bring any documents you have written that show your growth and remorse. This can include: relapse prevention plans, letters of remorse, parole plans, book reports, and letters of support. If you meet with the psychologist in-person, you can provide copies of the documents for the psychologist to review. If you meet with the psychologist over video, you can simply hold the document up to the camera and explain the contents of the document to the psychologist.

- *Talk with others:* Before your CRA, it can be helpful to talk to other people who have received a CRA and hear about their experiences. Just keep in mind that everyone's experience is different and your experience will be unique to you and your case.