



*Public Safety and Fiscal Responsibility*

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## **LIFERS REMAIN THE SHINING STARS OF RECIDIVISM**

*2015 CDCR Outcome Evaluation Report shows decrease in overall recidivism*

CDCR's recently released 2015 Outcome Evaluation Report, chronicling the recidivism rate of California inmates released in Fiscal Year 2010-2011 shows, as expected, lifers continue to be the safest, best performing prisoner cohort on parole. And, for the first time since CDCR began releasing these yearly reports, the number of all released inmates who stayed out of prison for 3 years following that release exceeded the number that returned to custody for a new offense.

According to the report, the overall recidivism rate for prisoners released that year was 44.6%, down 6.7% from the previous year. The Outcome Evaluation Report tracks inmates released in a given fiscal year (for this report, 2010-2011) for a 3-year period, noting the number and characteristics of those who are re-arrested and returned to state prison.

The annual period tracked 95,690 inmates who were released from state prisons during that time frame; 398 of those were lifers. The report notes specifically that lifers who are released exhibit a "substantially lower" re-offense and return to custody rate. Three years later only 3 of those former lifers were back in custody for a new crime, a recidivism rate of .8%, thus maintaining lifers' reputation of having the lowest recidivism rate of any prisoner group. For the last 20 years, even by CDCR reckoning, the overall recidivism rate for lifers has been less than 1%.

A few nuggets of interest gleaned from the report: 12 counties in the state received nearly 80% of those released, with Los Angeles County receiving the most, 26%, much in line with the county's overall station as home to 27% of the state's population. That county, however, also showed the lowest recidivism rate of the dozen counties with the most returning prisoners, at 32%, considerably below the overall average of over 44%.

Also as expected, the younger the released inmate the more likely he or she is to return to prison, with those ages 18-29 showing an average recidivism rate of 52% while those over 60 at the time of release showed a return rate of 31%. This is in line with other statistical data that shows the height of criminality for males is between the ages of 17 and 25 and for females, between 16 and 20 years of age, with precipitous drops after the age of 45.

The overwhelming majority of those released in 2010-2011 were male, 90.5%. Of those men released the recidivism rate was just over the average, at 46.4%. Females, who comprised 9.5% of those released, were returned to custody at a rate of 27.1%.

All of which only reinforces our advice to the public; you're safer in a room full of paroled lifers than in a grocery store line with strangers in front and behind you.

## **FAMILY VISITS—PATIENTLY (?) WAITING**

Patiently or impatiently, the wait continues for a glimpse of the regulations that will finally restore family visits for lifers and LWOP inmates. In early September LSA inquired of CDCR headquarters staff directly involved in the process and were assured the draft regs were under review.

“We are hoping to receive additional information from the Secretary’s Office soon, at which point we should have at least a draft we can share. I will definitely keep you apprised of any new information as it becomes available,” was the word from our source. And we have no reason to doubt that will be the case, and that the target date of starting visits by the first of the year is still intact.

As with any regulation change it is a slow process, going through numerous vetting reviews, including from CCOPA union reps, because we wouldn’t want to cause an undue burden to the guards. Would we.

Please be assured as soon as any substantive information on this issue is available we’ll be sending it out to all concerned, and that means your family and friends via email blasts, posting on Facebook and our webpage, as well as getting it to you via the next available newsletter. We’ve all waited 20 years....a few more weeks or months is do-able.

## **CREATE A VISUAL**

As we approach our seventh year anniversary Life Support Alliance is seeking a new look. When we began as an organization we were a trio of people on the outside, trying to help thousands on the inside. Now we’re more than a trio (way more, in fact), still trying to assist those inside, but working on many more fronts.

In addition to lifers on the inside, our efforts now extend to families of those still incarcerated, to help them understand the system and assist their loved ones, paroled lifers going through the rigors of DAPO, and, since the advent of SB 9 and 261, we now also serve long-term determinate inmates and, increasingly, LWOP prisoners.

So we've decided it was about time to upgrade our logo, to be more reflective of the scope of our outreach, input and impact. Logically, we're turning to our base clientele, those still inside. There are some terrific artists among you and we're asking for your ideas.

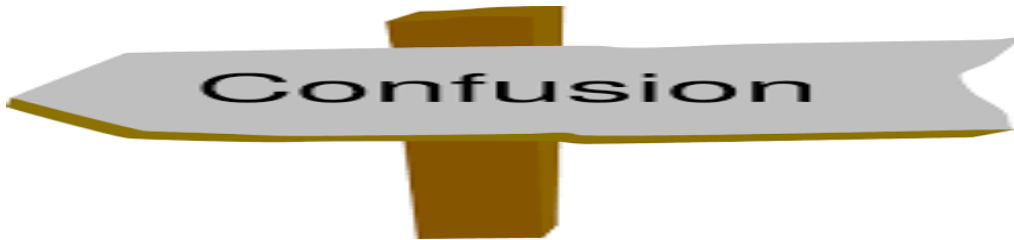
Create a new logo for LSA, one we can use on letterheads, publications, handouts, business cards and signs. Nothing fancy or complicated, we're still a pretty simple group, with limited funds, but something that will be reflective of what we do and who we serve.

A few guideline suggestions:

- Will reproduce well in black and white
- Not overly large or complex, to allow use in various sizes
- Black and white, or with one additional color, preferably blue or green
- Reflective of positive attitude and resolve
- Uniquely identifiable from other groups and organizations
- Useable with our new slogan: Promoting hope~ Restoring Lives~ Healing Communities

And we don't ask you to expend your efforts for nothing—the winner will receive a 2-year subscription to California Lifer Newsletter, where you'll be able to see your creation on every issue. Our Board of Directors and Advisory Board (the last group are all paroled lifers) will consider each design and choose the one most practical and reflective of our mission.

Start now, because we'd like to start off the new year with our new look. Send your design ideas to: PO Box 277, Rancho Cordova, CA. 95741, Attn: Logo Design.



## SENATE BILL VS. INITIATIVE: CONFUSION REIGNS

It's a battle of the 57's, and confusion reigns.

First, there's **SB 1157**, a state Senate bill currently waiting signature or veto by Governor Brown that would preclude local and county jails from replacing in-person visiting with video visits. But it affects only local and county jails, not state prisons.

Then there's **Prop. 57** on the November ballot which has yet to pass, and, if it does, will not directly impact lifers. Nope, it won't make your life crime a non-violent offense, it won't give you a special parole hearing and it won't send you home. Even if it passes by a majority vote of the electorate.

Cut to the chase: SB 1157 will not affect those in state prison and is, absent the Governor's signature or veto, already passed and ready to go. *\*As Lifer-Line went to print, Gov. Brown vetoed SB 1157, instead referring the issue of video visiting to the Board of State and Community Corrections "to address these issues."*

Prop.57 is the Governor's initiative to begin sentence reform, focusing on changes in credits, who decides when a juvenile is prosecuted as an adult and allowing those convicted of non-violent felonies to be required to serve only the full term of their primary offense sentence before being eligible for parole consideration.

That's it. It does not apply directly to lifers, whose crimes are almost without exception considered serious and violent, nor does it offer any reduction in their sentence, because of that serious/violent consideration. The proposed credits would probably apply to some lifers, but there is no hard and fast information on that as yet.

However, Prop. 57 is a real step in the right direction and for that reason we support its passage in the election. But it must receive at least 51% of the vote to pass, not a done deal. We don't know until Nov. 9, and that will only tell us if the measure has passed, with no particulars on how it will be enacted via CDCR regulations. That's where the rubber meets the road.

So, lifers, while Prop. 57 may eventually help with credits available to you, and we think it's a good idea and support its passage, it isn't going to spring the doors for you or make the parole board nod in agreement. And SB 57 would not affect you at all. Unless, of course, you get out, and were dumb enough to commit another crime and find yourself in county lock up, waiting for visits.



## **CONNECTING CAUSITIVE FACTORS TO ACTIONS=INSIGHT**

You go to your parole hearing and when the commissioner asks you 'what were the causative factors of your crime,' you answer, 'low self-esteem, no role model and bad decisions.' And you're right. All of those things are causative factors in your crime.

But when the decision is read, you're denied for lack of insight. What happened? How did knowing of the causative factors of your crime not show you have insight?

Knowing the causative factors of your crime means you know some of the things that influenced you to go down the wrong path. But insight means that you understand how those factors impacted your beliefs, and your beliefs caused you to act.

Think of it this way. Perhaps one of the reasons for your low self-esteem may have been that you hated your father, maybe you never knew him or he was abusive. An absent or abusive parent can cause a child to grow up feeling worthless, stupid and inferior; low self-esteem. But how did that feeling of animosity and hostility toward your father lead you to kill/injure someone who wasn't your father, in fact, may have been a total stranger?

Well, here's one possible connection. Low self-esteem often leads to an unhealthy, obsessive quest and need for approval and recognition, a need that can lead someone to take excessive actions to gain that recognition and approval. The constant need to prove one's worth to the world can cause anger and frustration, feelings that violence sometimes seem to mitigate, at least for the moment, because in that moment, you're in control (but certainly not of yourself) and the world is watching you.

Bad relationship with father → low self-esteem → need for acceptance and approval → anger/frustration → violence, in an effort to prove you're 'somebody.'

Understanding this progression, from causative factors to results, is insight. And taking it a step further, once you understand how these feelings have caused you to act, you can put in place tools to quell those feelings; that's your relapse prevention plan. Knowing when you're starting to slide down that treacherous slope of pain, anger and frustration, why you're feeling that way and what to do about those feelings before they become actions is what keeps you on track to pro-social behavior.

So it isn't enough just to know the causative factors of your crime, you've got to understand how they caused you to make those bad decisions that led to disaster for many and a life sentence for you. We call it connecting the dots, and if you'd like more information, write us and ask for the handout on Connecting the Dots.

## **AMENDS, THE RIGHT WAY**

Since LSA rolled out The Amends Project in March, presenting workshops to help those who wish to write an apology and amends letter to their victims, we've presented that workshop to several hundred prisoners in several prisons and are currently working on arrangements for more presentations. And, we've issued a flurry of certificates to those who have achieved the goal of writing a sincere, healing and appropriate letter of apology.

It's been an impactful and learning journey for us as well, meeting many men (so far we've only presented at men's prisons) who have changed their wayward lives so completely and are so anxious to continue the healing of both themselves and their victims and communities. It's motivating and uplifting for us, each time we meet and speak with those who attend the workshops.

And we've learned a few other things, too. We've learned there are those who will always try to short-circuit the system. That there are those who are there just for the chance to get yet another certificate and those who just aren't ready.

The only way to truly make amends is to sincerely put in the work on yourself. The only way to participate in The Amends Project is by attending the workshop. Those who send us letters, using forms they've copied from others who did attend the presentation are the short changers—they want the results without the work. We can spot those letters pretty easily. A non-starter. The ones who actually attended but were there in body only are also easy to spot. Their letters lack the sincerity required and fail to exhibit the life change necessary. Don't waste our time.

And then there are those that attend and make an effort to really write a letter, but haven't yet figured out where they fit in the equation. If you still think your victim did something to deserve your actions, if you're still obsessing about your victim, if you don't yet understand why you thought it was OK to

commit a crime, you aren't ready. You aren't ready to write a sincere apology letter, and you aren't ready for the BPH either.

We also receive letters from those who haven't attend the workshop because we haven't yet been to their institution. Please know those letters won't be considered, because to maintain the integrity of The Amends Project we can only review and consider letters written by those who attend a workshop. And we are making plans to go everywhere, from Pelican Bay to Ironwood and Chuckawalla, High Desert to CMC. At this point, we can only go where we're invited by an ILTAG group. If you're interested in attending an Amends workshop, talk to the sponsor/facilitator of your ILTAG and send us an invitation, or have them contact us directly.

We'll go wherever we're invited, as quickly as we can arrange travel and clearance. But please understand, only those who have attended the workshop will be considered to receive a certificate, if they meet the standards. Making true amends means doing things the right way.

## **SECOND ANNUAL NORTHERN CALIFORNIA LIFER PICNIC**

September 10, 2016, Elk Grove, Ca.



Good food, great company and jubilant reunions marked the LSA Lifer Picnic in mid-September. Lifers out anywhere from 12 years to three months came to share their first-days out experiences, support and catch up with each other and see who else had made it out the gate since last year's gathering. Many new faces and lots of returnees from last year's event made the day great fun. Many brought family and friends to add to the conversation and comradery. Hope to see more of you next year!