



THE BIG FOUR STRESSORS FOR PAROLEES

They aren't what you think and don't show up when you'd expect.

Preparing for a parole board hearing all lifers know the things they need to have prepared. Aside from those elusive things like insight, remorse and understanding, the panel will be looking for solid plans for living in society, and we all know that means jobs, housing, transportation, a support network and relapse prevention plan.

Those are the obvious challenges. But more subtle, less well identified but even more challenging are what experts in the reentry field call "The Big Four Criminogenic Needs." And while we have a real issue with the latest buzz word, 'criminogenic needs,' the Big Four are nonetheless worth noting and discussing, as is the time frame these obstacles seem to begin appearing.

Keep in mind, these Big Four apply to all parolees, and lifers have probably learned to cope with them better than the average ex-prisoner on parole, but that doesn't mean they aren't susceptible as well.

The Big Four:

1. Anti-social cognitions
2. Anti-social associations
3. Anti-social temperament
4. Family/relationship issue

Anti-social cognition is the thought process that rationalizes crime; society is unfair to me, society's rules are stupid and everybody does something against the rules. OK, life is often unfair, but not just to you. Yes, some of society's rules are pretty dumb, but rules are rules and you can't choose which ones you will follow and which ones you don't want to apply to you. And yes, probably everyone does from time to time break the rules (jaywalking, speeding), but as a paroled lifer, you can't afford to break any of them.

Anti-social associations mean, who are you hanging around? We can recall a parole panel once telling a prisoner being denied parole he should stop associating with criminals. While he was in prison. But when you're out, you've got the choice. Most probably, part of the successful

rehabilitation that got you a parole grant was your decision to associate in prison with people who, like you, were working to change their lives and go home. Back in the world, some of those not-so-positive people might not be so easy to spot as the ones on the yard, but be aware and keep yourself in upbeat company.

Anti-social temperament includes all those things you used to be—impulsive, aggressive, argumentative and self-focused. You know the signs, you had to learn to identify them and deal with them before you went to the parole board. Being aware of your triggers and what brings on those old feelings and ideas doesn't stop when you're found suitable.

Family and relationship issues; is your safety net starting to unravel? Your family is your first safety net, but after the first blush of coming home has faded and you're all now stuck in the reality of day-to-day necessities, finding a job, paying bills, dealing with kids or new relationships, are things not as good as they were at first? The honeymoon, figuratively or literally, will end at some point and the everyday routine may not be all you thought it would be.

The next consideration is when these Big Four start to make the most impact, and that time frame may be a bit surprising. Sure, there were all kinds of shocks when you first got out, from technology, to how friends have aged (and so have you) to the cost of gasoline. But, the experts who study this stuff tell us, the Big Four really start to have an impact on lifer parolees not right away or even within a few months. For the most part these subtle and troublesome items start to appear, for lifers, about 2 years after release.

Sneaky, huh? You're going along, doing well on parole and thinking things are fine. And suddenly, it all starts slipping sideways. Maybe you aren't as attuned to your triggers as you were when you were fresh on the streets? Maybe the day-to-day grind is dragging you down? Or maybe things on the home front aren't quite as rosy as they were?

Whatever the reason, that's when The Big Four seem to show up. So be aware, pay attention to what you're thinking and feeling. Go back to your relapse prevention plan, call your mentors/support system and take a step back. You overcame the twin hurdles of parole suitability and Governor's review; you can overcome these Four as well.

YEP, WE'RE TARDY TO THE PARTY

Apologies to all for our late publication—would like to say we can blame it on someone else, but in honesty, sometimes writing for 3 newsletters, all going to print about the same time, sometimes becomes just too much. This will be a combined October/November issue of ***After*Life***, an event that hopefully won't happen too often.

Lest you think we've been loafing, the last 6 weeks have been pretty full. The Executive Board meeting of the BPH, attendance at a training session for state appointed lifer attorneys, four days of attending training for BPH commissioners, meeting with the Director's Stakeholder Advisory Group on Long Term Offender Programming (yes, that's you guys) on housing and programming needs for paroling lifers, a seminar for lifer families in Oakland, attending parole hearings and a meeting with the Governor's staff. And that was just October.

In November we attended parole hearings at CHCF, met with the lady lifers at CIW, held a lifer family seminar in Riverside, attended another BPH Executive meeting, presented at a training session for advocates sponsored by the National Lawyers' Guild and met, once again, with members of the Governor's staff to discuss his reversals of parole and other lifer matters.

We continue to work for lifers, even after they have been released, but our primary focus remains on those still inside the wire and providing assistance for upcoming parole hearings. If you have issues we can help you with, let us know. Mail, email or even phone.



Fill out Form

THE 22: FORM OR CATCH?

Like everything in CDCR, and yes, even though on parole and under the supervision of DAPO you are still (somewhat) the property of CDCR, there is a process to filing a grievance, request or compliant. In this case the process starts with CDCR Form 22, a request for interview that precedes but does not supersede the old, familiar 602.

So here's the rundown on when, where and how to do a Form 22. The form is actually a request for an interview, a new format that allows a copy to be retained by the requestor as a receipt. At least that's the plan and expectation of DAPO, but recent requests for Form 22 have elicited varying responses, from "we don't have it," to offering up of the old, single copy form. More on this later.

According to the newly-introduced DAPO brochure, said to be available at all parole offices (even if the form itself isn't) the form has been redesigned to provide "a focus on timely problem solving" staff are to respond to original Form 22 requests within **3 working days**. (Emphasis original). "The form is designed to be answered directly by the individual it has been given to or passed on to someone else if needed. The person to whom you hand it will give you the receipt before passing it on." Well, maybe.

The receipt is to be the last copy of the 3-part form, but given the above responses for form requests, we suggest you take what you can get as a receipt, even if it's a copy of the old one-page form you submit. But either get a receipt of some sort or the name of the person you hand it over to.

After you receive your response (in 3 days), if you aren't satisfied with the outcome you can then request to kick the interview process up a notch, to your agent's supervisor, who has **7 days to respond**. And then you can file that 602. DAPO, while suggesting that Form 22 is not a substitution for verbal communication with your agent, does note parolees are "likely to get quicker service if the

form is submitted directly to their assigned agent.” Which is all well and good, or would be, if agents would respond to requests for communication from parolees.

This process can be used for any issues arising while on parole, from denied travel passes (imagine!), to problems with goals and progress sheets to consideration for discharge from parole. However, since, you only have a total of 30 calendar (not working days) to file a 602 following an event, be sure you file the Form 22 on any issue right away and stay on it until you either receive an interview and/or the allotted response time runs out. Then file the 602 right away.

We urge you to make use of the process, and if all else fails, contact LSA. But be aware, the first thing we’re going to ask you (because it’s the first thing DAPO will ask us) is whether or not you’ve followed the Form 22 route to completion. If you can’t get the form from your agent or parole office, just send up a flare and we’ll email you a copy. No, it won’t be the nice, new triplicate form, but since it appears many offices don’t have that one either you won’t be any the worse off.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Once upon a time, and not so long ago, a paroled lifer was pretty much an oddity, one-of-a-kind, museum specimen. During the term of former Governor Gray Davis only 8 lifers went home. Not so now, however. In the last three years (2011-2013) the BPH granted parole to 1,430 lifers. In the current year, from January 1 to mid-November, 2014, an additional 704 grants were handed out.

Of course, all of these are not yet home, for a variety of reasons. Governor Brown reversed 262 grants from 2011-2013, and an additional 122 have been reversed so far this year. Several others received a future release date and a limited number saw their grant rescinded via en banc hearing at the BPH.

However, by DAPO’s estimation in October, 2014 there were nearly 1,900 lifers on parole in California. And since that report 79 grants were made in October and the first 3 weeks of November saw an additional 31 suitability findings.

Wow. It could get crowded out here.



WHY THOSE PESKY GOALS SHEETS ARE IMPORTANT

Most, if not all (and by now it is supposed to be all) lifers have probably now encountered a nettlesome little document from your parole agent called Goals and Progress Sheet. Depending on how long you’ve been back in the world, you may have had this quarterly requirement for your entire time since home, or you may have had this goodie added since you’ve been out. And, depending on

who your agent is, this is either a conversation on the path to reintegration or just another rule/requirement thumped on you by DAPO.

As noted above, all parolees, including lifers, are supposed to be assigned goals and subsequently report their progress on reaching those goals to their agents quarterly. And, DAPO sources tell us, those 'goals' are supposed to be set by the parolee, his agent and possibly family members, working in concert to define what areas goals are needed and what those goals should look like. They can be as basic as finding a job, maintaining a stable residence or enrolling in school. Or they may be more subtle, like being sure the parolee is engaging in activities that are not only pro-social, but can foster the development of good parenting skills as well. Hopefully, as the length of time you've been home increases, the goals will become more expansive and sophisticated.

Whatever the goals it is important that those on parole, and their families, treat the assignments seriously and make good faith efforts toward reaching those goals. Why? Because everyone, even lifers, have a chance to be discharged from parole and begin living a truly free life. Yes, most lifers have a significant expanse of time to do under the watchful eyes of parole, but even those with theoretical life time parole can and have been discharged.

That process starts after a requisite number of years, depending on the life crime, with a review by your parole officer and supervisors. And one of the 'tools' they use to determine whether to recommend discharge or continue on supervision is how well any given parolee has met the goals set for him/her. Consistently meeting those goals is the first step toward possible discharge and is verifiable proof that you, as a parolee, are walking the walk of reentry.

What kind of goals should you be seeing? Depends on what you need. If you've yet to find a job, that will probably live large on your goals sheet. If you've had substance abuse problems in the past and have completed a substance abuse program your agent may set a goal of attending meetings as part of relapse prevention. If you're having family problems, counseling or parenting classes might be part of the goal.

What's important is that the goals are related to your needs, and that determination is best made by both you and your agent. If you're getting an already filled out goals sheet, the same goals never changing, suggest to your agent that he/she discuss the goals with you. And if you get a goal you don't understand, ask what the intent is and what the agent would suggest you do to meet that goal.

Be sure you put in a good faith effort to meet those goals once you understand them. If you don't fully complete every one, show progress and complete in the next quarter. No, you aren't going to get violated if you don't spend every single hour on your goals sheet in the activity indicated, but if you ignore the whole thing don't be surprised if your agent prods you and maybe none too gently.

DAPO officials are adamant that goals and progress reports are not to be used as simply another piece of paperwork to continue CDCR's hold over you and find a way to trip you up. The intent is to assist parolees in meeting the thresholds of reentry they will need to master in order to reintegrate into the world.

Take them at their word, at least until proven otherwise and work the goals, show your progress. And if your agent continues to insist on just handing you his idea of what's important in your progress, let us know. We're making a list. And checking it twice.

WHAT'S COMING

We're still waiting for the final version of DAPO's memo to agents outlining and hopefully standardizing the travel pass process. First discussed in August it appears the new guidelines won't be circulated until January, and then the inner circle will probably be a small one. LSA, however, hopes to be able to pass along to paroled lifers highlights of what the standardized guidelines are; after all, who needs to know more than the end users?

Also in the mill, or so we hope, are figures on recidivism among lifers over the last 2-3 years. As addressed elsewhere in this issue the number of lifers on parole is now at an unprecedented level and some political heat is beginning to be felt from certain, dare we say, more conservative groups who continue to maintain lifers are a danger to society. Our belief is that accurate statistics will prove them wrong, but for those stats we must ask CDCR, parent company of DAPO. And while any request of CDCR takes time, we are pretty confident our query will be answered.

Our conversations and interactions with paroled lifers have shown us that many newly-released lifers need a little domestic training in the form of shopping and cooking tips. So we're planning field trip to a local grocery store and some cooking demos as well for those lifers near our home base of Sacramento. If these new ventures work out well there may be a DVD in the offing that we can offer to more distant lifers and housing facilities. If nothing else, the day should be good for some crazy pictures and tales. Stay tuned!



A CHRISTMAS SONG

With apologies to the original author and singers

Over the river and through the woods
to the PO office we go
The bus knows the way, it takes me every day
Where ever I have to go

Over the river and through the woods
The winds of change do blow
They sweep us out and push us about
And never seem to slow

Over the river and through the woods
The bars left far behind
It's life anew for me and you
And the future looks just fine

