



NEW TRAVEL PASS FORM COMING SOON

The long-awaited change to the process for requesting travel passes is slowly making its way through the labyrinth of CDCR and officials hope it will hit desks and offices within the next 60 days. The new, one-page document that will act as both a request and pass, has been in development for several months and has gone through several layers of review—all typical CDCR process.

LSA has seen, and been able to comment on, the prototype and we believe it will be an improvement over the present nearly-everyone-uses-their-own-criteria process. The new form asks for all relevant information needed to provide the pass (so that nothing is missed and the agent must go back to the parolee to ask for more particulars), as well as lays out specific time frames for submission of the request and response. And, if the pass is denied, reasons for denial will be outlined on the document.

The form is designed to be scanned or emailed, which may, at least hopefully, eliminate the need to trek to the parole office to ask for a pass and then trek back again to pick up the approval and/or discuss a denial. The information requested is inclusive and while some options were dropped from earlier versions (on a why-the-heck-do-we-need-to-know-that basis) the remaining requisite requests can all reasonably be linked to needed information. In other words, this form isn't just intrusive for the sake of being so.

Perfect? Nope, but what is? And better than the present everyone on a different page situation. Hopefully more info and more accurate timeline for rollout will be available next month.

KNOW YOUR KEEPERS

If you're having trouble getting names and contact information for supervisors and/or regional supervisors, should you need them (say, to file a Form 22) LSA attempts to keep a current list of those contacts. If you need help in figuring it out, shoot us an email, with your address and what you need and we'll see if we can provide you the contact information. We won't fight your battle for you, but we'll at least point you in the right direction.

REQUIRED PROGRAMMING MAYBE, NOT REQUIRED RELIGION

Many released inmates, including lifers, are required, either as board-imposed conditions of parole or conditions added by their individual parole agents, to participate in substance abuse treatment programming. LSA has long been concerned that this forced enrollment is often unnecessary for lifers, who have long been clean and sober or would not have been paroled, and frustratingly restrictive in terms of true reentry, as well as inappropriate in some cases.

Additionally, many of the programs are residential, meaning paroling lifers are in some instances, trading prison yards for confinement in program units, which are often making choices for their 'clients,' including the presence of faith-based activities. And it appears we are not alone in this concern.

A Shasta County parolee, (not a lifer) who was required by his parole agent to attend a faith-based drug treatment program, has settled his suit against the state and the facility contractor for nearly \$2 million. Barry Hazle, whose parole was revoked and who was returned to prison for a few months after complaining about required attendance in a program that required acknowledgement of a 'higher power,' began his suit some 6 years ago. The recently settled litigation will see the state pay Hazle \$1 million and West-Care, the contractor who administered the facility and program, will add an additional \$925,000 because courts found the company contracted with program providers offering only religious based programs.

Shortly after Hazle filed his suit CDCR reportedly issued a directive that parole agents may not compel a parolee to take part in religious-themed programs, based a couple of minor things, including federal case law and a little thing called the US Constitution. Parolees who object to being forced into a religious based program are to be transferred to non-religious treatment. That is still the procedure, according to CDCR spokesman Luis Patio.

Hazle's attorney, John Heller, said the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals' opinion "tells others that they have this right [not to be forced to participate in religious-based activities], and it informs authorities what they can expect if that right is violated. That might keep things like this from happening in the future."

Well, maybe. One of our purposes in publishing this in After*Life is to remind parolees, and agents, that compulsory residential substance abuse treatment may not be appropriate for all, and those programs that are religious-based may be even less appropriate for some. Including those who do not practice any religion. Treatment and housing without a faith base is a required alternative.

While faith-based programs and housing has been an immense benefit and support to many, that faith component should not be required practice by all. If your program/housing was selected by DAPO be sure any faith requirements are of the order you can be comfortable with.

If church attendance is required as part of the program it must be one you are comfortable with and you should be given a choice. Same with any treatment or 12 step program. If not, ask.

You are entitled to practice your own faith. Even if that faith is no faith at all.



TRAITS OF UNHAPPINESS

Seven traits of chronically unhappy people—practice them and you'll stay that way.

Psychology Today magazine reports that University of California researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky believes “40 percent of our capacity for happiness is within our power to change.” Although everyone has bad days (weeks, months) perhaps the difference between being unhappy and having an unhappy life is how long we allow ourselves to stay in the quagmire.

There are seven traits that chronically unhappy people seem to have mastered. Why should you care? Because a chronically unhappy person shows that unhappiness; it's reflected in your very facial expression, reactions and words. And unhappy people tend to act out. Starting to see the connection between chronic unhappiness and suitability?

So check yourself and see how many of these traits you've adopted as part of your persona.

- Your default belief is that life is hard. Well, yes, sometimes it is, especially for those on parole. But content people understand that hard times come and go and choose overcoming instead of victimhood. They focus on how they got themselves into the situation and concentrate on getting out of it—and into happier circumstances.
- You think most people can't be trusted and are against you. A little paranoia, anyone? While you don't have to be a Pollyanna, happy people tend to believe that there is good in everyone and foster a sense of community.
- You spend your time obsessing about all the things that are wrong. Easy for former prisoners to do, as they often experience much difficulty. But don't meet every positive statement with “Yeah, but...” If there isn't too much good, maybe there are some things that aren't all that bad.
- You jealously compare yourself and situation to others. Just because someone else gets a break doesn't mean there aren't any left for you. Happy people understand one person's good fortune doesn't limit others from achieving the same.
- You try to control your life. You can't micro-manage every event in life. That's called manipulation and it seldom works in the long run. Be focused on your goals but be able to roll with the punches life will inevitably throw at you.
- You look to the future with worry and fear. Again, understandable, given the time you've lost to prison. Everyone feels worry and fear, but happy people don't live it. Take what actions you can to eliminate your worries and fears (taking responsibility!) and when you've done all you can, clear your mind.

- Your conversations are all about complaints and gossip. Unhappy people live in the past, always reminiscing about the wrongs and hardships. When they run out of their own to talk about they turn to discussing others. Live in the now and dream about the future, if the now isn't so great. But chances are the past wasn't all that wonderful either—or you wouldn't be where you are.

Obviously, everyone is going to be down from time to time—but just don't swim in the muck forever. Positive daily habits can be noticeable in those who practice them. No one has a perfect situation but everyone can make the best of what they're dealing with.

IF YOU'RE IN THE AREA..

...of Sacramento on February 28, you're invited to join LSA and lifer families at our first seminar of 2015. Capital Christian Church, 9470 Micron Ave., will be the place and anytime from 8 am to 3 pm will be the time. And we'll even give you lunch.

LSA seminars provide lifer families with information on the parole process, how they can help their lifer become suitable and what to expect when they come home. But most importantly, what we provide is hope for these families that they can be reunited with their prisoners and begin again to live a complete life.

And that's where you, the paroled lifer, come in. Stop by and chat with the families, maybe even meet some old friends. Let the families see real, actual paroled lifers. It adds immensely to their hope. We won't put you on the spot or make you speak—though you can, if you'd like to. We just want you to be the living, breathing and smiling, hope for the future.

HELP US BUILD THE GATE

As recounted in last month's After*Life, LSA is in the process of creating a new program for the benefit of lifers found suitable but not yet released. "From the Date to the Gate" (D2G) will provide a glimpse of some of the challenges these soon-to-be parolees will face on release and hopefully, some advice on how to meet those challenges.

And the advice will be coming from you, the paroled and successful lifers already making your way in the world. We've already had the first of several planning sessions, brainstorming with a group of lifers in the Bay Area (great day, talking with ex-lifers out anywhere from 3 years to 2 weeks) as well as a professional filmmaker who is working with us to capture all the scenes. We'll also be tapping into advice from DAPO, psychologists, mentors and life-skills helpers to provide a wide range of alerts and help. After putting out a call for suggestions (what was the biggest challenge/surprise/issue you faced coming home) we got some excellent insights, on which we continue to build.

So keep sending us your ideas and suggestions---and the guys on the inside are sending questions too, letting us know the things they are the most concerned about. And when we put out an email call for a meet and chat confab in your area (we'll travel to you—no need to waste a travel pass request), come if you can.