



## THE POLICY ON TRAVEL PASSES

Many things have changed about parole supervision over the last few years, most especially in the time since lifers began coming home in significant numbers and the prison population has been reduced through realignment. We've noted before, in *After\*Life* and other LSA publications, the new shift in attitude and focus of DAPO, now geared more toward assisting in reentry than finding ways to violate parolees and send them back inside.

Yet we continue to hear from many lifers that travel passes are either elusive or a non-starter for their parole agents, some even being told 'don't even ask for a travel pass until you've been out a year.' And frankly, this drives us crazy. Conversations with DAPO administration, at the top levels, has convinced us this attitude is agent-specific, not policy and those agents need to be, shall we say, re-educated. At a recent meeting in DAPO headquarters we again brought up the subject of lifers having difficulty getting travel passes.

In response to our queries, we were able to secure a copy of a February, 2015 memo to agents outlining the process for granting travel passes, the whys, wherefores and reasons. Officially, Policy No. 15-04 notes, in part, "DAPO staff shall utilize the travel permit process as an avenue to encourage the participation in positive pro-social activities. Positive, pro-social activities while on parole supervision are a key component of the reentry process. Pro-social activities include, but are not limited to, family reunification, education, religious events, volunteering, employment, participating in self-help activities or activities that help others."

Note the use of the word 'shall.' Not just may, or are encouraged, or can if they want to—staff *shall* use travel to encourage pro-social activities. And those pro-social activities "include, but are not limited to", the reasons outlined.

We're not going to print the whole memo here, like most CDCR communications it's pretty long-winded and convoluted. But the meat of the memo, that lifers should, absent a real reason to deny, be granted travel passes is clear.

Of course, if you're struggling, have had some bumps in the road and been non-compliant, don't expect to be allowed to visit Mexico, Canada or the Virgin Islands. But if you've been in line with your parole conditions and your agent's expectations, you should be able to travel.

If you're getting the runaround, or negatives or just being ignored in regard to travel, try the standard remedies first, Form 22, interviews with your agent and supervisor. And in the course of those interviews, you might want to ask them if they've seen the Policy memo 15-04; maybe they missed it. Maybe they forgot. Maybe they could stand a gentle reminder.

And if that reminder is necessary, let us know and we'll email you a copy of the whole memo, so you can provide it to your agent and any others who may have missed it. Just in case.

If you continue to have problems getting permission to travel, let us know and we'll see what we can find out. But be aware, the first thing we're going to ask you is who your agent is and out of what office. And if you are unwilling to tell us, to let us take the full information to our contacts for clarification, then understand, there isn't much we can do to help you. It's hard to go to our sources and say 'there's a nameless agent somewhere in California who's giving some unidentified lifer parolee the blues over travel.' Yeah, that pins it right down.

Be sure that when you do put in a travel request to do so well in advance, provide full information about how you'll be traveling, where you're going, where you'll be staying (including contact information) and the reason for your request. Most agents will allow passes to be requested via email (this is actually encouraged) and will send the pass in the same manner. Again, if this is not your experience, we want to know.

And not only us, DAPO administration would like to know also. Those in DAPO leadership do want all their agents not only in the same book, but on the same page, adhering to standardized policy. It can be difficult to achieve this goal, and we'd like to help them in the endeavor.

## **DON'T FORGET 'THE ONE WHO BRUNG YA'**

Now that you're out, being re-assimilated into society and working on your new life, don't forget about one of the key players in your release—your parole attorney. If you were fortunate enough to have hired one of the dedicated and professional attorneys who specialize in parole hearings, and who may well have cut you deal to fulfill payment of fees after your release, don't forget that promise.

True, attorneys can't 'get' you a date, that's up to you; but a good and interested attorney can certainly assist you in reaching that goal. And suitability aside, if you made a promise to someone good enough to cut you a little slack, be sure you keep your end of the deal. It's what's expected of you now that you're on your way to becoming a contributing citizen, so you might as well start off on the right foot.

Most attorneys don't expect a huge lump sum, but steady work toward meeting that obligation is both appreciated and a sign of real understanding of how to get along in society. Reputations, so important in prison, are important on the outside too. Make sure yours is solid.



## **SWAT TEAM**

### **BEWARE IN LA**

Most parolees know, when you're on parole any law enforcement agency is allowed to enter your residence, search your person or your car, all without a warrant or the protections the rest of society enjoy. That's one of the costs of being on parole, for both you and your family at home.

But in Los Angeles this 'at any time' prospect has taken on a whole new atmosphere with the activation of a dedicated (in terms of that's all they do, not in terms of their dedication to principle in particular) squad of, well, let's be honest here, goons, who can and do take this policy to the most egregious limits. And, understand, these guys are not DAPO agents.

Nope, they are not employed by the state of California and are not supervising state parolees. Yes, it may say 'Parole' on the back of their handy-dandy, and oh, so stylish anti-assault vests. But that's just a hoax. They are not really parole agents, they're just masquerading as parole agents.

What they are, in fact, is a posse of over-zealous LA cop types who just like the idea of being able to barge their way into the home of a parolee or probationer, throw their weight around and intimidate everyone in sight. And you won't be selected for this visitation on the basis of your performance on parole, or even lack thereof.

Who gets invaded by this army is determined strictly by where you live. Geographical sweeps have become a part of 'law enforcement' in the LA area. Every day this squad picks a certain number of square blocks that need their attention and off they go, with a hearty Heigh-ho Silver. Everyone on parole or probation residing in that area gets a visit and a thorough rousing.

Perhaps the most disturbing part of these visits is the manner in which they arrive—often in full battle dress, mounted on military surplus Humvees, tricked out in all the armament available, guns and handcuffs drawn and waiting. Just a friendly visit, checking up on the welfare of citizens.

These cowboys do take prisoners. Reports from paroled lifers in the LA area who have been subjected to these tactics report they've been cuffed and pushed to the ground, harassed, verbally castigated. Their homes have been tossed with no regard to anything other than a show of force and more than one family pet (sometimes cowering under the bed) has been threatened with being shot as a 'danger to officers.' Yeah, those Chihuahua bits can be deadly.

And if you, the parolee, don't happen to be home when the traveling intimidation squad arrives, then your relatives and housemates will be treated to the tender mercies of these "Parole" agents. So if this happens to you, be aware of a couple of things.

Your agent didn't ask for this service, didn't authorize it, can't stop it and may not even know about it; you aren't in trouble with DAPO. But if they show up, you should report the event to your DAPO agent.

In fact, DAPO administration isn't even happy with this practice, or the fact that the participants label themselves 'parole,' which they aren't. Maybe they're just trying to minimize their culpability.

The attention of this group has nothing to do with your performance on parole, just the luck of the draw and where you live.

These cowboys have the authority to arrest you if they find a potential violation and won't hesitate to do so. Whether or not you'll be charged with a crime, let alone are guilty of one, will be sorted out later, that isn't something this group is concerned about. Arrest first and ask questions later is their motto.

There is no way to prepare for, prevent or anticipate these visits, just be aware they can happen and try not to stress too much if it happens to you.

While similar sweeps can happen in any area, as any law enforcement agency can search at will, we haven't had reports of such, shall we say, enthusiastic performance, anywhere other than LA. It seems to be peculiar to these 'law enforcement' agencies. That isn't the only peculiar thing about them.

## **FROM THE DATE TO THE GATE**

Our long-planned project to give those still awaiting release after a grant, From the Date to the Gate (D2G) a head's up on the challenges in front of them is beginning at last—filming begins Halloween Day, and we don't know if that's significant or not. But for those of you who aren't close enough to make it onto film, we'd still like your input and impressions.

Here are a few of the topics we're covering, feel free to email us your input and ideas, experiences and words of wisdom ([lifesupportalliance@gmail.com](mailto:lifesupportalliance@gmail.com))

- What was the biggest change, the biggest surprise for you in the world?
- What was the biggest obstacle you found to smooth reentry?
- Did you parole to transitional housing, was it helpful with the challenges, if so why or why not and what could make it more appropriate for lifers?
- If you returned to your family right away what challenges did that bring and what's been helpful in getting over those bumps; words of advice to families?
- What would you like to tell those still inside, getting ready to come home?

And we welcome suggestions for other topics, subjects or issues. You guys are the experts, and we're looking to you to make D2G real, impactful and useful for lifers.