



WHO'S ON PAROLE? A LOT OF LIFERS

Life Support Alliance is fortunate to be a member of the Director's Stakeholder Advisory group through the Division of Rehabilitative Programs, a body that meets regularly to consider virtually all aspects of rehabilitative efforts for individuals still in prison and for those on parole. Our hope, as a member of this group, is to provide input on the needs and prospects of lifers, both in light of what programs might be helpful in attaining suitability and what can help them on release.

During a recent DSAG meeting data regarding the parolee population, collate by the Department of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) was presented that we found interesting, especially in combination with other information gleaned from conversations with other officials in the parole world. We assembled this information and, aside from presenting it here, offered this snapshot of the parole situation, to the parole commissioners at their August meeting.

Currently, according to DAPO figures, there are some 45 thousand individuals on parole in California, a substantial increase over the 26 thousand, plus or minus, originally expected with the implementation of realignment. Roughly 6 thousand of those parolees are in Los Angeles alone. About 2% of that total are over 65 years of age, but the average age is 38. About 8% are women. Agents report that some 17% are fitted with GPS monitors, while 25% have former gang affiliations and about 16% retain a 290 designation. Some 30% are employed while another 2% are full time students.

For our interests the most important figures and information relate to lifers. Of the total parolee population, lifer account for about 7%. That translates to over 3,000 lifers currently on parole; undeniable proof that things in the lifer world have changed. A large share of that number have been released in the last 3-5 years. Last year alone saw over 700 lifers released.

Of course many individuals on parole fall into what might be termed co-occurring categories, and such is the case with lifers. Lifer, overall, tend to be older than the average parolee, more likely to be employed (those PIA jobs can and do translate into employment in the world) and slightly less than the general parole population are women.

Despite the uptick in the number of lifers granted parole and released, as a group they continue to exhibit the lowers recidivism rate of any cohort. Most parole regions are now staffed by agents with specialized case loads, including agents with only lifers under their supervision. The agents we speak with, and we speak with many, and often, report lifer parolees are the easiest to work with, most compliant and productive. They are also the most determined to give back and are involved in many pro-social groups and activities, including mentoring programs.

All of this is not to say that there are not still issues and difficulties in the world of lifer parolees, from recalcitrant agents to job and housing challenges. But on the whole lifers are making it in the world and helping each other in the process.



A REMINDER....

FIRST ANNUAL NORTHERN CALIFORNIA LIFER

**SATURDAY SEPT. 19, 2015
NORTH LAGUNA CREEK PARK
6400 JACINTO AVE
SACRAMENTO, CA.**

11:30 AM TO 4 PM

Come join us for the first lifer picnic in Northern California! Group picture at 2 pm, lots of food and fellowship. If you need a travel pass, apply now and if you have problems please let us know. If you need a contact number for your parole agent's records, use Life Support Alliance, 916-402-3750, Vanessa Nelson-Sloane.

We're hoping for a big turnout and great weather. Come see who you recognize—we've even invited the Governor! Please RSVP so we're sure we have enough eats for all....

RSVP to the phone number above or email at: lifesupportalliance@gmail.com.

See you there!!!

DON'T LET OBSESSIONS TURN INTO TRIGGERS

A disappointment in any area, professional, personal, social, can turn into an unhealthy obsession that can become a dangerous trigger. Part of reintegrating into society is being aware of this possibility and being able to deal with it.

Whether it's a missed opportunity, a relationship failure, loss of a job, a death, or just a disappointment by a friend, disappointments can become obsessions if left mentally unresolved. And obsessions can lead to depression, frustration and anger, all common triggers for anti-social behavior.

Psychologist Dr. Karla Ivankovich, an adjunct professor for the University of Illinois, Springfield, noted "When something is not resolved in a way that feels 'right' in our psyche, we often find ourselves 'stuck' in this area." The more you dwell on the specific issue the more you create a well-worn mental path, one your thoughts can easily stray down and continue the obsessive pattern. Its human nature to dwell or ruminate on events for a period of time, because the brain is attempting to make sense and rationalize what happened. But the more you mentally walk that well-worn path the harder it is to take the fork in the road to positive thoughts of the future, as opposed to negative memories of the past.

So use those lessons gleaned from past experiences, even those you encountered in prison programming, and your relapse prevention plan. Address your thoughts and energies toward areas entirely unrelated to your obsessive thoughts; in the words of Monty Python, 'and now, for something completely different.'

Do a cost/benefit analysis; if I think about this one more time, what good will I gain from it or what will it cost me in terms of energy and positive functioning? Use the practices of mindful meditation to break your thought pattern and redirect your mind and actions.

And be aware that similar situations may happen again in the future. Analyze how you've reacted to those situations and make a plan of action for future occurrences. Write a script for yourself to follow the next time, look for signs in future situations that history may be repeating itself and move to make corrections or adjustments.

We are able to learn from past events and create a different future—lifers have done this before and can draw on those same skills to continue the process.

THE PASSING OF A CHAMPION

A strong and respected voice for the humane treatment of prisoners was silenced recently with the death of retired federal judge Lawrence Karlton. Karlton, aged 80, died July 11 at this Sacramento home from heart-related issues.

Appointed to the federal bench in 1979 by former President Jimmy Carter, Karlton retired in the fall of 2014. Although his opinions covered issues as diverse as environmental concerns to undocumented immigrants, Karlton will be remembered by those in the prison advocacy community for his landmark opinion determining the California Department of Corrections' treatment of mentally ill inmates was

unconstitutional, in violation of the Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.

An original member of the three federal judge panel that would eventually, and still, oversee the state's process of reducing the overwhelming prison population, Karlton joined judges Thelton Henderson and Stephen Rheinhardt found the state's lack of treatment for prisoners constituted "ongoing constitutional violations remain in this action and the prospective relief ordered by this court remains necessary to remedy those violations."

"Karlton's written legal opinions on mental health care for inmates, amnesty for undocumented immigrants, and preservation of the environment will stand as lasting monuments to his deep caring for all living things," said Dale Drozd, a US Magistrate judge and former law clerk for Karlton. Marc Seitles, another former Karlton law clerk, now a criminal defense attorney in Miami, called Karlton "a great liberal thinker," whose legacy will be his decisions protecting the rights of immigrants, prison inmates and others outside traditional power structures.



ADDICTON RECOVERY DIFFERS IN MEN AND WOMEN

While substance abuse is, in general terms, more common in men than women, a new study suggests men may be able to recover from the long-term effects of chemical dependency somewhat better than women. The study, from the University of Colorado, suggests that because men tend to externalize emotions and stress, often via impulsive behavior such as drug use, they often show better recovery from long term effects.

Women previously addicted to stimulants, and who abstained from use for more than a year, exhibited 'notably less gray matter' in brain volume than normal, a change not seen in men in similar circumstances. Whether the lower mass of gray matter is a cause or result of addiction isn't clear, according to Dr. Mark Regner, one of the study's authors.

"We don't know if the smaller gray matter volume was a result of stimulant dependence or if the smaller gray matter differences contributed to the development of stimulant dependence," he said. Other theories note that even behavioral, emotional and personality differences can impact recovery. There is even the possibility that male/female hormones may play a part.

And while some evidence points to long-lasting brain changes in past substance abusers other studies suggest brains can largely, even completely recover. While the difference between recovery in males and females was noted in this study the more important variations appear to be based more on the individual than simply gender.