



19 pages (double sided) for loved-ones of prisoners to print out and mail into prison and be involved in this process.

Avatar

Parole Suitability Readiness Workshop

AVATAR

Parole Suitability Hearing

Line of Questioning: Insight/Responsibility/Remorse

1. COMMITMENT OFFENSE

- a. Attitude towards the crime vs. Version of the facts (POR/Appellate Opinion)
- b. Motive for the crime (Insight/Responsibility)
 - i. Past (root causes/contributing factors leading up to the crime)
 - ii. Present (beliefs/values/traditions: What made you feel it was okay?)
 - iii. Future (What have you done to prevent this from happening again?)
- c. Victims (Remorse)
 - i. The impact of his actions acknowledged? (authentically/genuinely)
 - ii. Were victims acknowledged by name?
 - iii. Number of victims?

2. PRIOR CRIMINALITY

- a. Responsibility
- b. Violence (gang related/domestic abuse/murder/assault/etc....)
- c. Age (adult/juvenile)

3. UNSTABLE SOCIAL HISTORY

- a. Problematic relationships: (parents/siblings/spousal/employer/etc....)
- b. Lengthy arrest history
- c. Failed previous grants (probation/parole)
- d. Failure to profit from society's previous attempts to correct criminality:
 - i. Juvenile camp
 - ii. County jail
 - iii. Prior prison term

4. PAST AND PRESENT MENTAL STATE & ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CRIME

- a. Minimization:
 - i. Blaming others
 - ii. Making excuses
 - iii. Justifications for behavior
- b. Responsibility:
 - i. Accountability
 - ii. Contribution
 - iii. Remorse

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5. MISCONDUCT WHILE INCARCERATED

- a. 115's specifically:
- b. 128's, especially where they show a pattern
- c. Understanding the nature and magnitude of the offense (Remorse)

6. INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

- a. Disciplinary free?
- b. Education
- c. Vocational training
- d. Self-help

1. PAROLE PLANS Realistic (reasonable/practical)

- a. Residential
- b. Employment
- c. Marketable skill?
- d. Support

8. CLOSING STATEMENT

- a. How can you assure the Board that upon release you will live a crime free life?
- b. What makes you suitable for parole?

Parole Suitability Readiness Workshop

(6 session AVATAR workshop)

Week 1- Introduction

- A. What is your motivation for being released? Are you willing to do the hard work?
- B. Purpose of course is to teach proper preparation for BPH through personal story, life experience, and self-help therapy.
- C. Addressing 115's.
- D. Importance and direction in writing remorse letter.
- E. Preparing for Psychological Evaluation.
- F. Preparing a closing statement.
- G. Mock BPH panel (requirements must be met).

Week 2- Self-help and Rehabilitation

How to use self-help therapy to gain insight into character defects, criminal lifestyle/life crime, and how to apply what has been learned for rehabilitation. (i.e.; criminal lifestyle: CGA; alcohol/substance abuse: AA/NA/Celebrate Recovery; violence: AVP, Anger Management). Gaining understanding of causative factors and how to practice articulation and discussion of ideas learned in rehabilitation.

Week 3- Overcoming Obstacles (115's)

Owning behaviors that contributed to Rule Violation and showing how rehabilitation has specifically addressed past behaviors. (Attending specific groups that will address specific 115's – AVP for violence; CGA for gang activity, etc.) Creating sustained disciplinary free time from previous rule violation.

Week 4- Remorse Letter

Understanding the value of the remorse letter and learning how to write the remorse letter and the importance of making amends. Confronting caused pain and suffering, and owning responsibility for past behaviors as a necessary part of the healing process for both victims, as well as perpetrator.

Week 5- Preparation for the Psychological Evaluation

Answering critical questions to gaining insight for causative factors of the life crime, how that has changed and what role alcohol/substance abuse, gang activity contributed to life crime. Presenting proof of parole plans (residence and employment), stable relationships, pro-social support and activities upon release.

Week 6- Closing Statements

The purpose of a closing statement and how to prepare according to suitability requirements. Learning how to establish suitability requirements through use of Title 15 suitability factors.

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Parole Suitability Readiness Workshop

Week 1-Introduction

1. What is your motivation for getting out of prison? Are you willing to do the hard work that is necessary?
2. Do you know your story, and life experiences? Do you know how self-help therapy benefits you in gaining insight into your character defects and the causative factors of your life crime?
3. What are some obstacles to you being found suitable for Parole? 115's, 128's and 1030's: How many do you have? What are they? How long ago did you get the 115? What self-help group, or correspondence course will address your 115's?
4. Have you written a remorse letter? If yes, why did you write it? If not, why haven't you written the letter?
5. Do you know what critical questions will be asked at your psychological evaluation? Should you present verification of parole plans, support letters, positive chronos, etc. to the psychologist?
6. What is the purpose of a closing statement? Should it be written out?

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Week 2- Self-Help Therapy & Rehabilitation

The purpose of self-help therapy is so that you can gain insight into your character defects, criminal lifestyle, and life crime. Self-help therapy teaches you how to work towards rehabilitation.

Do you know how to apply what you've learned in self-help in order to demonstrate your rehabilitation progress?

Example: 1. Is your crime drug or alcohol related? 2. How long have you been in substance abuse treatment? (AA/NA/Celebrate Recovery)
3. What have you learned in these programs that have helped you understand why you developed a substance abuse problem?
4. What character defects contributed to your substance abuse?
5. How have you addressed these character defects by using the substance abuse treatment's methods?
(These questions may be applied to anger/violence and gang/criminal lifestyle needs through AVP; Anger Management; CGA etc.)

You must know the material of the specific self-help programs you are involved in. It is very important that you participate by sharing about yourself, whatever your problems may be. It is important that you discuss how you manage your problems through the application of the suggested methods of which ever programs you are attending, or have attended.

Participating in this manner will enable you to discuss your insight and rehabilitation progress with the psychologist, as well as during your suitability hearing. Use your group participation experience as an opportunity to learn and practice speaking and sharing about yourself.

Take the initiative to get involved in self-help therapy. There is a great deal of self-help available and you should be involved in at least one group and one correspondence course at all times. By consistently attending self-help therapy programs you create a record of documentation that demonstrates you are proactive in your rehabilitation process.

Week 2-Assignment

On a separate sheet of paper answer all of the above listed questions. If you have a history of gangs, substance abuse, prior arrests, and/or violence answer the questions in order to address each issue. If you have multiple issues to address work through the process with each of your identified areas of need.

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Week 3- Addressing 115's

There are many obstacles to being found suitable that must be overcome. One of the main obstacles is Rule Violations (115's). Rule Violations are documentation that demonstrate that you are still a criminal, because you cannot obey the rules of the institution. In view of the psychologist and BPH panel you are not rehabilitated, will continue to break the laws of society, and are currently a risk of danger to society. This is how 115's are viewed, and rightfully so. If you cannot obey clear rules in a controlled environment (prison) you definitely will not obey the laws of society and are clearly not suitable for parole.

How to address 115's:

Do not make excuses for them; own up to 115's as being deserved because you violated the rules. Acknowledge the behavior was exactly who you were at that time in your life and rehabilitation has been a slow process for you.

Demonstrate how a certain self-help program (group or correspondence course) helped you address those specific problems. (115 for violence-AVP, Anger Management; Gang activity-CGA, etc.) There is a self-help program for everything under the sun. Take the initiative to get involved in your rehabilitation.

Get positive (laudatory) chronos from staff (correctional officers, work supervisors) commending your attitude, work ethic, positive programming, respect for staff and peers, ability to follow directions, obey the rules, etc. These positive reports will neutralize 115's and verify your current positive programming. This demonstrates your rehabilitation, which proves you are no longer a risk of danger to society.

Week 3- Assignment

For each 115 you have received, write out one page to address the 115 using suggestions from this week's topic. (3 115's- 3 pages)

Example: 115 for fighting/violence in 1995.

In 1995 I had not yet addressed my problem with anger. I did not know how to manage my emotions, or anger. Learning how to develop anger management skills has been hard for me. In AVP I learned to fill in what you learned in this space when I get angry. I also learned in GOGI (Getting Out By Going In-Self-help group) "positive thoughts tool" to focus my thoughts on positive things. This has helped me to fill in what you learned in this space. I have not fought in 17 years. I credit my change in behavior to the knowledge I gained in AVP, GOGI, and Anger Management self-help groups.

(This exercise is meant to help you discuss the knowledge you've gained in self-help to address your character defects that contributed to each 115 you have received. Keep in mind the psychologist and BPH panel want to know why you violated institutional rules and how you have changed. This demonstrates insight into your behavior.)

You must put distance (years) between your last 115 and your suitability hearing. The psychologist may say your gains (progress) are only recent ("recent gains") and BPH panel members may deny suitability based on this. They may recommend that you "continue to demonstrate change over time", which means you need to be disciplinary free and involved in self-help groups for a longer amount of time. If this is the case, you comply with those recommendations because they just gave you a road map to being found suitable. All recommendations are really what is required to be found suitable and obtain your release from incarceration.

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Week 4-The Remorse Letter

It is absolutely necessary to write a remorse letter to the victim/s of your crime and the family of your victim. This demonstrates an attempt to make amends for the pain and suffering you have caused in their lives. You need to practice empathy by placing yourself in the shoes of your victim and your victim's family. If someone murdered, kidnapped, or assaulted your mother, father, brother, sister, or child you would want to know that person was sorry for their actions, had changed, that they are not continuing hurt people (even while in custody): and that they are aware of the pain they have caused to you and your family.

Although these are painful and difficult challenges to face, and speak of directly (especially in a letter), writing a remorse letter to your victims holds many benefits.

1. Writing your remorse letter allows you to confront and acknowledge the pain and suffering you are responsible for. (You can depend on feeling very uncomfortable during the process of writing this letter. Remember: **short term pain for long term gain.**)
2. This experience will soften your heart and allow you to be sensitive to your victim's pain. You may even cry. This is good for you. (This will show when you speak to the psychologist and BPH panel.)
3. You will experience humiliation and shame for your actions. These are appropriate emotions to experience. This shows that you are human and that you do not have a heart of stone. Only sociopaths have no remorse for hurting others. (Humiliation and shame will also be demonstrated before the psychologist and BPH panel.)
4. Writing your remorse letter may also help your victims in their healing process by knowing you are acknowledging how much you hurt them and that you are sorry. (You owe them an apology-this is absolutely due to your victim and your victim's family.)
5. Writing your remorse letter will help you to get in touch with all these experiences and emotions, and will help you in discussing your victims, what you know about them, and how sorry you are for your action when you speak to the psychologist and the BPH panel.

How to write a remorse Letter

2. Address your victims by name (first and last).
3. Acknowledge how you know that you hurt your victims and how you are responsible for the pain and suffering they have experienced. (How did you harm your victims: You took a loved one from them; a child grew up without a father/mother; traumatized by your actions. You do not need to give details. Do not be graphic.)
4. Express your regret and how sorry you are for your selfish and irresponsible actions. Express that you know that you cannot relieve their pain. Express that you are ashamed of your actions and of the pain you have caused this family.
5. DO NOT ASK FOR FORGIVENESS. This is not about you. This process is meant for your victim's family, to help them in their healing.
6. Be genuine and sincere; demonstrate humility and authenticity.
7. Send remorse letter to:

Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services
P.O. Box 94283-001
Sacramento, CA 94283-001

Week 4-Assignment

Write your remorse letter. If necessary, write your remorse letter more than once. Several drafts will help in the process of expressing yourself, as well as helping to develop a well written letter. (Your victim and your victim's family deserve your very best, so take your time and do a good job.)

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Week 5-Preperation for the Psychological Evaluation

It is important to know that your interview with the psychologist is just as important as your suitability hearing. It is the psychological interview that will set the foundation for who you are now through the assessment of a qualified professional; the forensic psychologist. This evaluation is known as a "Comprehensive Risk Assessment" and "Subsequent Risk Assessment", and it's purpose is to evaluate your risk of danger to society. The BPH panel relies heavily on this evaluation to determine whether you are suitable for parole. The courts also rely on this evaluation as well.

There are critical questions that will be addressed in each risk assessment by the psychologist. The following is a quote from the "Comprehensive Risk Assessment", page 2.

"Psychological questions to be answered in evaluation based upon the information available to this examiner, the purpose of this evaluation is to address the following issues/questions:

- ★ 1. What is Mr. Inmate's risk for perpetrating future violent behavior within the free community?
- 2. What was the significance of drugs/alcohol as it relates to the commitment offense and what is the estimate of Mr. Inmate's ability to refrain from using/abusing them when released?
- 3. To what extent has Mr. Inmate explored the commitment offense and come to terms with the underlying causes?
- ★ 4. What is Mr. Inmate's need for further therapeutic programming while incarcerated?"

The first question will be answered based upon your social upbringing, criminal history, prison record (rule violations), positive programming, and how questions 2-4 are answered.

Factors that elevate your risk: unstable social upbringing, criminality at an early age, rules violations in controlled settings (prison), lack of positive programming (low participation in self-help therapy, no vocational skills or educational upgrading, low participation in pro-social activities in leisure time etc.), unresponsiveness to prior attempts at rehabilitation, (probation, prior arrests, etc.), and unresponsiveness to therapy (continued rules violations after attending self-help therapy).

Factors that lower your risk: Stable upbringing and present positive, stable relationships with family and friends, lack of criminal history, disciplinary free behavior, positive programming (self-help therapy, vocational skills, educational upgrading, pro-social activities in leisure time-volunteering, tutoring, chapel participation, sports leagues, etc.).

For question 2 you need to know if, and how, drugs/alcohol contributed to your commitment offense. If it did, using them affected your decision making and your reckless behavior became more serious. Be able to articulate why you began using, (insight) and how you are managing your addictions and maintaining your sobriety through substance abuse treatment. (See week 2 topic and assignment.)

For question 3 you need to be able to discuss what the underlying causes of your commitment offense are. What this means is what events in your life lead you to become a person who could commit this crime. (Disobeying rules because, you started associating with negative influences because, you started using drugs/alcohol because, you became involved with gangs because, you started breaking the law because, you developed anger problems and became violent because...). If you can evaluate your own life and identify when you first started to go astray, and why you engaged in any of the above behaviors, you are displaying insight. Another important aspect in this process is displaying an understanding of how you chose to address all of these issues and began to change. Understanding how self-help therapy taught you tools and techniques, and how 12-step concepts have helped you manage your substance abuse, anger, criminal thinking/behavior, etc. This is how you have come to terms with the underlying causes of your commitment offense. You've acknowledged these problems and have gotten help through self-help therapy.

Question 4 is the psychologist's recommendations of what issues you need to address. If you have unresolved issues (115's) take the initiative to use self-help therapy, or one-on-one psychological counseling, to demonstrate that you are attempting to increase in your growth and positive programming.

You need to have verification to present to the psychologist of everything that you are claiming to be involved in. Treat this as if it is your suitability hearing, and bring all your necessary supporting documents. Example: proof of parole plans (residence, employment); stable and positive relationships (support letters). Have a relapse prevention plan to give to the psychologist, for their records. As you discuss all of these issues present your verification throughout the evaluation hearing. This will show that you can verify what you are claiming and that you are prepared for your evaluation. Just be yourself; relax and don't try to appear as someone that you are not. Psychologists are trained to evaluate your genuineness, so be yourself-genuine and authentic.

When asked to discuss the crime be prepared to articulate why you became the person you had become. When asked, "Why did this happen?" (Be prepared whether in the psychological evaluation or BPH panel.) Do not initially explain the events that took place-you can do that later. This question really means, "What kind of a person were you that you were capable of this crime?" You need to know who you were and how you've changed. Obviously, to some degree, each of us was selfish, irresponsible, impulsive, living recklessly with a criminal mindset, and did not value human life. The key is to personalize this for yourself and your circumstances.

Week 5-Assignment

Answer questions 2-4 on a separate sheet of paper.

For question 3 you need to form your own answer in 2 separate phases.

Question 3-phase 1: What are the underlying causes of your commitment offense?

(Which means, what factors in your life, and lifestyle, contributed to your committing this crime? I.e.: Dysfunctional family, criminal environment, drug/alcohol use, gang lifestyle, etc., or How did you become this person who could commit this crime?)

Be detailed and specific, and start where your life took a turn for the worse in your decisions and when you began to go astray.

Question 3-phase 2: How have you come to terms with the underlying causes of your commitment offense? (Which means, how did you address these issues in order to change? I.e.; Becoming religious, feeling guilty for pain caused, recognizing pain caused to family by lifestyle choices. These are motives for change. You then need to recognize which self-help therapy programs taught you how to deal with each issue. You need to be detailed and specific in your description of your change process.

For question 4, make your own recommendations of what you need to do to address problem areas that you have identified and which self-help therapy programs will be most beneficial. You need to make your own recommendations in areas such as addressing 115's, educational upgrades, vocational upgrades, etc. Evaluate your problem areas, predicting what the psychologist will most likely recommend, and address these areas.

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Week 6-Preparing a Closing Statement

The purpose of a closing statement is so you can articulate to the BPH panel **WHY YOU ARE SUITABLE FOR PAROLE**. The contents of your closing statement and the way in which you deliver your closing statement will be your final opportunity to demonstrate to the BPH panel that you are suitable for parole. The main thing to understand in preparing your closing statement is that the content must be verifiable reasons of why you are suitable for parole. It cannot solely be based on an appeal to the heart of the BPH panel members.

One very important aspect in this process is figuring out how to combine a rational and emotional closing statement. The best way to do this is to use the Title 15, Division 2, Board of Prison Terms Suitability Factors, and converting this into everyday language to express to the BPH panel why you are suitable for parole. If you quote directly from the text you will come across as arrogant and with a sense of entitlement. Remember, you are there to be held accountable for your crime and to be assessed as to your risk of danger to society. So, be humble.

You need to know what makes you suitable for parole so you can articulate this in your closing statement.

California Code of Regulations

Title 15. Crime Prevention and Corrections

Division 2, Board of Prison Terms [Pg.73-74, 2281(b)]

Circumstances Tending to Show Suitability

1. **No Juvenile Record-** The prisoner does not have a record of assaulting others as a juvenile or committing crime with a potential of personal harm to victims.
2. **Stable Social History-** The prisoner has experienced reasonably stable relationships with others.
3. **Signs of Remorse-** The prisoner performed acts which tend to indicate the presence of remorse, such as attempting to repair the damage, seeking help for or relieving suffering of victim, or the prisoner has given indications that he understands the nature and magnitude of the offense.
4. **Motivation for Crime-** The prisoner committed his crime as the result of significant stress in his life, especially if the stress had built over a long period of time.
5. **Battered Woman Syndrome**
6. **Lack of Criminal History-** The prisoner lacks any significant history of violent crime.
7. **Age-** The prisoner's present age reduces the probability of recidivism.
8. **Understanding and Plans for Future-** The prisoner has made realistic plans for release or has developed marketable skills that can be put to use upon release.
9. **Institutional Behavior-** Institutional activities indicate an enhanced ability to function within the law upon release.

Now that you know what factors qualify you as suitable for parole you must use the factors that apply to you and incorporate them into your closing statement in everyday language.

AVATAR

BPH Denial Management Counseling

Presenters: (Names of presenters)

I. Introduction – AVATAR- An Opportunity for Change

(Name of presenter)

- a. Relapse Prevention
- b. Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS)
- c. BPH Preparation
- d. BPH Denial Management Counseling (Refer to Objective and Program Agenda format)

Note: To provide an opportunity to develop skills in addressing BPH concerns that will influence the decision of future hearings, understanding the process, coping with associated stressors related to BPH concerns. Our goal is to minimize the harmful effects of stress and related ailments as the pressures of this event is experienced.

II. Video Review:

(Presenter)

- a. Fair Chance Project
- b. Exchange Dialogue: (Portfolio Outline)

III. Exercise (Review)

(Presenter)

- a. Intro./Purpose:
 - i. Perception – Reviewing our previous perception of the BPH process.
 - ii. Approach – The shift in developing a future based language approach that correlates with our quest for parole and the BPH process.
 - iii. Resolve – The result of a pro-active approach in our quest for parole.

SPEAKING PANEL: (OPTIONAL)

PSRW Facilitators

Speakers:

First

Second

[Preparation

[the “unspoken” components]

1.

Third	[Responsibility]
Fourth	[Honesty/Lying]
Fifth	[Remorse]
Sixth	[Closing]

IV. Post Hearing Preparation

a. Suitable-

- (1) Review anticipated anxieties being found suitable for parole.
- (2) Refer to Music and Art Therapy program.

b. Decision Process-

- (1) BPH decision (weighing the evidence)
- (2) Decision Review Unit(DRU) 120 days
- (3) Governor's desk for review 30 days

c. Unsuitable-

- (1) Review transcripts (understand clearly the reasons for denial)
- (2) Clearly understand the reason for denial (always getting a second opinion)
- (3) Seek legal counsel if necessary
- (4) Petition for an advanced hearing [BPH 1045 (A) Form] *Speaker- 5 min.
- (5) Review BPH recommendations
- (6) Begin preparing for next hearing (conduct/self-help/Educ./Voc./etc...)

Post Incarceration Syndrome and Relapse

By Terence T. Gorski.

(Permission is given to reproduce this article with proper referencing).

The Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS) is a serious problem that contributes to relapse in addicted and mentally ill offenders who are released from correctional institutions. Currently 60% of prisoners have been in prison before and there is growing evidence that the Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS) is a contributing factor to this high rate of recidivism. [i]

The concept of a post incarceration syndrome (PICS) has emerged from clinical consultation work with criminal justice system rehabilitation programs working with currently incarcerated prisoners and with addiction treatment programs and community mental health centers working with recently released prisoners. This article will provide an operational definition of the Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS), describe the common symptoms, recommend approaches to diagnosis and treatment, explore the implications of this serious new syndrome for community safety, and discuss the need for political action to reduce the number of prisoners and assure more humane treatment within our prisons, jails, and correctional institutions as a means of prevention. It is my hope that this initial formulation of a PICS Syndrome will encourage researchers to develop objective testing tools and formal studies to add to our understanding of the problems encountered by released inmates that influence recovery and relapse.

Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS) - Operational Definition

The Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS) is a set of symptoms that are present in many currently incarcerated and recently released prisoners that are caused by being subjected to prolonged incarceration in environments of punishment with few opportunities for education, job training, or rehabilitation. The symptoms are most severe in prisoners subjected to prolonged solitary confinement and severe institutional abuse.

The severity of symptoms is related to the level of coping skills prior to incarceration, the length of incarceration, the restrictiveness of the incarceration environment, the number and severity of institutional episodes of abuse, the number and duration of episodes of solitary confinement, and the degree of involvement in educational, vocational, and rehabilitation programs.

The Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS) is a mixed mental disorders with four clusters of symptoms:

- (1) Institutionalized Personality Traits resulting from the common deprivations of incarceration, a chronic state of learned helplessness in the face of prison authorities, and antisocial defenses in dealing with a predatory inmate milieu,
- (2) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from both pre-incarceration trauma and trauma experienced within the institution,
- (3) Antisocial Personality Traits (ASPT) developed as a coping response to institutional abuse and a predatory prisoner milieu, and

(4) Social-Sensory Deprivation Syndrome caused by prolonged exposure to solitary confinement that radically restricts social contact and sensory stimulation.

(5) Substance Use Disorders caused by the use of alcohol and other drugs to manage or escape the PICS symptoms.

PICS often coexists with substance use disorders and a variety of affective and personality disorders. Symptoms of the Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS) theme Below is a more detailed description of four clusters of symptoms of Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS):

1. Institutionalized Personality Traits

Institutionalized Personality Traits are caused by living in an oppressive environment that demands: passive compliance to the demands of authority figures; passive acceptance of severely restricted acts of daily living, the repression of personal lifestyle preferences, the elimination of critical thinking and individual decision making, and internalized acceptance of severe restrictions on the honest self-expression thoughts and feelings.

2. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) [ii] is caused by both traumatic experiences before incarceration and institutional abuse during incarceration that includes the six clusters of symptoms: (1) intrusive memories and flashbacks to episodes of severe institutional abuse; (2) intense psychological distress and physiological reactivity when exposed to cues triggering memories of the institutional abuse; (3) episodes of dissociation, emotional numbing, and restricted affect; (4) chronic problems with mental functioning that include irritability, outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, and an exaggerated startle response; (5) persistent avoidance of anything that would trigger memories of the traumatic events; (6) hypervigilance, generalized paranoia, and reduced capacity to trust caused by constant fear of abuse from both correctional staff and other inmates that can be generalized to others after release.,

3. Antisocial Personality Traits

Antisocial Personality Traits [iii] [iv] [v] are developed both from preexisting symptoms and symptoms developed during incarceration as an institutional coping skill and psychological defense mechanism. The primary antisocial personality traits involve the tendency to challenge authority, break rules, and victimize others. In patients with PICS these tendencies are veiled by the passive aggressive style that is part of the institutionalized personality. Patients with PICS tend to be duplicitous, acting in a compliant and passive aggressive manner with therapists and other perceived authority figures while being capable of direct threatening and aggressive behavior when alone with peers outside of the perceived control of those in authority. This is a direct result of the internalized coping behavior required to survive in a harshly punitive correctional institution that has two set of survival rules: passive aggression with the guards, and actively aggressive with predatory inmates.

4. Social-Sensory Deprivation Syndrome:

The Social-Sensory Deprivation Syndrome [vi] is caused by the effects of prolonged

solitary confinement that imposes both social isolation and sensory deprivation. These symptoms include severe chronic headaches, developmental regression, impaired impulse control, dissociation, inability to concentrate, repressed rage, inability to control primitive drives and instincts, inability to plan beyond the moment, inability to anticipate logical consequences of behavior, out of control obsessive thinking, and borderline personality traits.

5. Reactive Substance Use Disorders

Many inmates who experience PICS suffer from the symptoms of substance use disorders [vii]. Many of these inmates were addicted prior to incarceration, did not receive treatment during their imprisonment, and continued their addiction by securing drugs on the prison black market. Others developed their addiction in prison in an effort to cope with the PICS symptoms and the conditions causing them. Others relapse to substance abuse or develop substance use disorders as a result of using alcohol or other drugs in an effort to cope with PICS symptoms upon release from prison.

PICS Symptoms Severity

The syndrome is most severe in prisoners incarcerated for longer than one year in a punishment oriented environment, who have experienced multiple episodes of institutional abuse, who have had little or no access to education, vocational training, or rehabilitation, who have been subjected to 30 days or longer in solitary confinement, and who have experienced frequent and severe episodes of trauma as a result of institutional abuse.

The syndrome is least severe in prisoners incarcerated for shorter periods of time in rehabilitation oriented programs, who have reasonable access to educational and vocational training, and who have not been subjected to solitary confinement, and who have not experienced frequent or severe episodes of institutional abuse.

Reasons To Be Concerned About PICS

There is good reason to be concerned because about 40% of the total incarcerated population (currently 700,000 prisoners and growing) are released each year. The number of prisoners being deprived of rehabilitation services, experiencing severely restrictive daily routines, being held in solitary confinement for prolonged periods of time, or being abused by other inmates or correctional staff is increasing. viii

Post Release Symptom Progression

This is because released prisoners experiencing PICS tend to experience a six stage post release symptom progression leading to recidivism and often are not qualified for social benefits needed to secure addiction, mental health, and occupation training services.

Stage 1 of this Post Release Syndrome is marked by Helplessness and hopelessness due to inability to develop a plan for community reentry, often complicated by the inability to secure funding for treatment or job training;

Stage 2 is marked by an intense immobilizing fear;

Stage 3 is marked by the emergence of intense free-floating anger and rage and

the emergence of flashbacks and other symptoms of PTSD;

Stage 4 is marked by a tendency toward impulse violence upon minimal provocation;

Stage 5 is marked by an effort to avoid violence by severe isolation to avoid the triggers of violence;

Stage 6 is marked by the intensification of flashbacks, nightmares, sleep impairments, and impulse control problems caused by self-imposed isolation. This leads to acting out behaviors, aggression, violence, and crime, which in turn sets the stages for arrest and incarceration.

Currently 60% of prisoners have been in prison before and there is growing evidence that the Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS) is a contributing factor to this high rate of recidivism.

Reducing The Incidence Of PICS

Since PICS is created by criminal justice system policy and programming in our well intentioned but misguided attempt to stop crime, the epidemic can be prevented and public safety protected by changing the public policies that call for incarcerating more people, for longer periods of time, for less severe offenses, in more punitive environments that emphasize the use of solitary confinement, that eliminate or severely restrict prisoner access to educational, vocational, and rehabilitation programs while incarcerated.

The political antidote for PICS is to implement public policies that:

- (1) Fund the training and expansion of community based addiction and mental health programs staffed by professionals trained to meet the needs of criminal justice system clients diverted into treatment by court programs and released back to the community after incarceration;
- (2) Expand the role of drug and mental health courts that promote treatment alternatives to incarceration;
- (3) Convert 80% of our federal, state, and county correctional facilities into rehabilitation programs with daily involvement in educational, vocational, and rehabilitation programs;
- (4) Eliminate required long mandated minimum sentences;
- (5) Institute universal prerelease programs for all offenders with the goal of preparing them to transition into community based addiction and mental health programs;
- (6) Assuring that all released prisoners have access to publicly funded programs for addiction and mental health treatment upon release.

[i] Ditton, Paula M. Mental Health and Treatment of Inmates and Probationers, Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 11, 1999 (NCJ-174463), (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>)

[ii] American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV), Fourth Edition, 1994 (Pg 424 – 429)

- [iii] American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV), Fourth Edition, 1994 (Pg 645 – 650)
- [iv] Forrest, Gary G., Chemical Dependency and antisocial Personality Disorder – Psychotherapy and Assessment Strategies, The Hawthorn Press, New York, April 1994
- [v] Hempphill, James F.; Templeman, Ron; Wong, Stephen; and Hare, Robert D. Psychopathy and Crime: Recidivism and Criminal Careers. IN: Cooke, David J.; Forth, Adelle E., and Hare, Robert D. ED: Psychopathy: Theory, Research, and implications for Society, Kluwar Academic Publishers, Boston, 1995
- [vi] Grassian, Stuart, Psychopathological effects of solitary confinement, American Journal of Psychiatry, 140, 1450 - 1454 (1983)]
- [vii] American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV), Fourth Edition, 1994 (Pg 175 – 272)
- [viii] Ditton, Paula M. Mental Health and Treatment of Inmates and Probationers, Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 11, 1999 (NCJ-174463), (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>).

Avatar – 12 Rules for Parole Hearings

1. BE PREPARED

Prisoners have the right to conduct an Olsen review (review of the C-file prior to their hearing). Review your C-file. If possible, make copies of the Court of Appeals decision, if any, Probation Officer's Report and Intake Summary at the beginning of the C-file. Know what evidence the District Attorney's office will attempt to use against you. Typically, the DA will prior statements in the Probation Officer's report, or evidence cited by the Court of Appeals. Additionally, review any police reports in the C-file as such reports are often supplied by the District Attorney's office for the Board's review. Of course, be familiar with your Psych report or mental health evaluation. The board and DA frequently discuss comments in these reports. Finally, be prepared to discuss any prior criminal history as this is a routine part of the hearing. Know whether charges dismissed, probation was granted or a guilty plea or verdict was obtained. The Board will appreciate your preparation.

If you are unfamiliar with the resolution of prior criminal charges, the Board may perceive your lack of knowledge as not caring or an attempt to avoid or minimize responsibility. A little preparation can avoid this perception.

2. BE HONEST

Nothing works more damage with the Board than dishonesty. This point cannot be overstated. Be truthful about all matters discussed with the Board. Additionally, answer questions simply and directly. Avoid volunteering unnecessary information. If you have questions about the contents of your answers, consult your attorney.

3. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

Avoid excuses and blaming others. If you don't accept responsibility for your choices and the consequences of your actions, the Board will find you lack insight into the causative factors of your offense as well as the consequences of your behavior. However, if explanations are needed to clarify the facts concerning your role in the crime or to address mitigating circumstances don't hesitate to do so. But always take full responsibility for the consequences of your own choices and actions. Remember, the Board believes you are guilty before you step into the room. The more you attempt to avoid responsibility and distance yourself from your crime, the more the Board sees you as unsuitable for parole.

On the other hand, if you truly are innocent, by all means, maintain your innocence. Know, however, that the Board has absolutely no power to change your status from "guilty" to "not guilty". Know also that simply maintaining one's innocence has never proven persuasive in practice with the Board. Consider completing the Board's recommendations even if you are innocent.

4. DEMONSTRATE INSIGHT

It's not enough to accept responsibility for one's crime. The Board wants to see you demonstrate insight and understanding of why the crime occurred. Keep it simple. The Board wants to know why you made the choice to commit a seriously anti-social act. When the question is asked, "Why did this happen?", or "Why did you commit this crime?", the Board is looking for insight and understanding of "why" and "how" you became a person that could commit this crime. In your answer be sure to include your character defects that contributed to your behavior and criminal actions-selfish, angry, violent, bad decision making, no regard for the law and no regard for human life etc. Some discussion of your childhood experiences and relationship with your parents may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances. (Such as parent's divorce leading to confusion as a child and feeling unprotected, which lead to feeling the need of a gang's protection, although joining a gang was obviously not the correct choice for protection and a sense of security). Inadequate self-esteem as a child or adolescent often leads to approval seeking behavior, substance abuse, and poor choices. And these topics may need to be addressed, but stay focused on the crime. Be able to explain in less than five (5) minutes how those experiences resulted in your choice to commit the crime or get involved in criminal activity. This is the hardest part for many. There is no good reason for a life-crime, but there are circumstances that make it more likely that people will commit such a crime or engage in criminal behavior. Recognize and explain what events, factors, and choices put you in circumstances (and gave you the mentality) to commit the crime. Explain what you would do to avoid a repeat of the crime in the future. If you have no understanding of any factors that lead to the crime the Board will conclude that you are unsuitable for parole. If you don't understand why the crime occurred, the commissioner or deputy commissioner will ask, "How can the Board know the crime won't happen again if you don't know why it occurred?" If you truly don't know why, focus on your life before the crime. What were your goals? Who were your friends? Did you have a drug or alcohol problem? What type of relationship did you have with your parents, siblings, spouse, girlfriend, or boyfriend? How do you feel about yourself? Looking into these questions should help give you some understanding of what led to the crime.

5. SHOW REMORSE

The Board wants to see remorse. I'm not suggesting anyone put on a show for the Board, but a genuine expression of remorse is important. When the Board asks, "How do you feel about this crime," you have an opportunity to express remorse and understanding of the pain caused to the victim and his or her family. Put yourself in the shoes of the victim's family in order show empathy and understanding of their feelings. Relate how your own personal losses, if any, bring you understanding of the suffering of the victim's family. Take the opportunity to tell the Board how you feel about the crime and express your regret for the pain caused.

6. DISCUSS THE CRIME ONLY IF SOMETHING IS GAINED

I talked about discussing the crime earlier in the course but let me reiterate. The decision whether to discuss the crime is yours. If you feel that you want to discuss the crime with the Board regardless of evidence that may contradict your version of the crime, regardless of the DA's questions, regardless of the presence of the victim or the victim's family, then go ahead and discuss the crime. It's your hearing and it's your right to discuss the crime.

That said, I'll also reiterate that discussing the crime is advisable only if you are comfortable doing so and have something to gain such as clarifying your limited role in the crime without minimizing your choices, pointing out mitigating factors such as long term stress, explaining your insight and understanding of the causative factors or have the support of the victim's family or DA's office.

Absent these benefits or others, discussing the crime merely gives the Board and the DA the opportunity to ask questions in cross-examination fashion. You could, however, present your version of the crime to the Board and choose not to answer questions from the DA. You are not required to answer the DA's questions.

Therefore, if you know that the DA will be hostile consider not answering his/her questions. In any event, I generally recommend that extended discussion of the facts of the case should be avoided, if it will lead to impeachment by the Board or the DA, with prior inconsistent statements or contrary eyewitness or expert testimony on matters of substantial significance.

7. HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

There are absolutely unquestionable subjective human elements in parole hearings. One of these is attitude. Even though it may be hard to be optimistic in the face of the Board's 99% denial rate, (Statistics for 2017?), the Board still expects a certain attitude before it will grant parole. Hostility, distrust and accusations against the Board work only to your disadvantage. These feelings and attitude are completely understandable, however, it truly serves you better to present yourself as calmed and composed rather than distrustful and angry, even though those feelings may be well justified. The Board sees an individual's inability to control his anger and emotions in a parole hearing as a sign that he will be unable to control his anger and emotions in free society. Therefore, failure to control those emotions does more harm than good. On the other hand, being overly respectful or obsequious is not recommended either. Just be yourself and show common courtesy. Even though the prisoner may have an outstanding record to present to the Board, if he does it with the wrong attitude, one that conveys anger, distrust and hostility, parole will likely be denied. Avoid those attitudes in hearings. It will serve you better than venting your emotions on the Board.

8. AVOID MAKING EXTENDED LEGAL ARGUMENTS

Unless you are representing yourself, it is not advisable that you make extended legal arguments to the Board. Additionally, the best place for legal arguments is the courtroom, not the boardroom. The Board is an administrative agency and has no judicial power. Sometimes, however, legal arguments are necessary, but they should ordinarily be made by your attorney. Making legal arguments to the Board, explaining why the Board must set a parole date for you is perceived by the Board as an absence of remorse. These arguments focus on the prisoner's legal rights and are perceived as self-centeredness. Although you may have good arguments, let your attorney make them at the appropriate time. This will help avoid the appearance of selfishness and lack of remorse.

9. DON'T MINIMIZE PRIOR CONVICTIONS

Violent or non-violent priors such as burglary, receiving stolen property, possession of drugs and so on should not be minimized as irrelevant or not deserving of the Board knowing the difference between a petty theft and a prior robbery. So, dwelling on the insignificance of a prior petty theft presents an image of self-centeredness, and an absence of remorse, and should be avoided. This ties in with Rules 3, 4, and 5 regarding acceptance of responsibility and demonstrating insight and remorse. SPECIAL NOTE: You may refuse to discuss any prior convictions, but this may be perceived by the Board as an absence of remorse, insight and failure to take responsibility. Discuss this option with your attorney.

10. DISCUSS SELF-HELP THERAPY

During discussion of post-conviction factors, discuss what was learned in recent self-help programs. Review the program before the hearing to prepare. Bring some of the course materials with you to the hearing. When asked, explain what was taught and how you can apply it in the future or how you applied it since it was learned. If you can't remember the steps, know some of AA or NA you can discuss in detail and whether you practiced those principles. For example, making amends, taking a moral inventory, etc. SPECIAL NOTE: If no programs are offered at your institution or you have taken all that's offered, do book reports on substance abuse, anger management, relationships, or other topics relevant to your case. The Board will accept your book reports as valid self-help participation.

11. HAVE DETAILED SUPPORT LETTERS

Ask family and friends to write support letters containing details about your living arrangements such as whether you will share or have your own room, rent an apartment, etc. For job offers, request details on whether the job is part time or full time, hourly or salary and rates of both, the nature of the work and any other details that may be helpful such as whether your experience is desirable for your position and how long the job is expected to last.

1.2 KEEP CLOSING STATEMENTS BRIEF

Ideally, closing statements from the parole candidate should be no longer than five (5) minutes if possible. Beyond that, the Board's attention starts to fade. Unfortunately, the Board does not schedule enough time for each hearing.

AVATAR

BPH PREPARATION PORTFOLIO

- I. BOARD REPORT
 - Board Report
 - Court Orders/Decisions
 - Police Dept. Opposition
 - D.A. Opposition
- II. PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION
 - Supporting Documents related to previous evaluations
- III. PAROLE PLANS
 - Residence
 - Employment Offers
 - Resumes
 - Support Letters
- IV. RELAPSE/SOBRIETY
 - Relapse Prevention Plan
 - AA Chronos
 - NA Chronos
 - Sponsor Information
- V. SELF-HELP, EDUCATION, VOCATION
 - List of Achievements- Original Certificates Optional
 - List of Self-help Programs-Chronos in Date Order
- VI. VICTIM CONCERNS
 - Letter of Remorse
 - Letter of Apology (To Community)
- VII. HEARING RECORDS
 - List of Past Issues at Hearings That Have Been Addressed
 - Copy of Recent Hearing Transcript
 - RVR 115's and Appeals That are Relevant to Hearing
- VIII. CLOSING STATEMENT

40: BPH - ^{PAROLE} ~~MEMBERS~~
MEMBERS

PRV: NAME, "RELATION", PH#

SUPPORT LETTERS CAN AID PAROLE

Life Term Inmates in the California prison system are encouraged by the Board of Parole hearings to provide evidence of support for their release on parole. One way to do this is to receive letters from people who can offer positive information supporting an inmate's release. The information below is provided for inmates and family members who have questions about such letters.

SUPPORT LETTER FOR THE PAROLE FILE

There are no rules for support letters. These are only guidelines and suggestions. You must use what fits your own special situation. Do not be afraid to ask people to write letters. Many people care and want to help. Your request for help may give them a better understanding of the correctional process.

WHAT IS A LETTER OF SUPPORT

Letters of support are evidence that the inmate will have a network of friends and family to help upon his release. They show:

1. Someone knows the inmate and cares.
2. The inmate has free world support and input while in prison.
3. He will have outside assistance when released from prison.
4. The good side of the inmate and thus help balance the bad side which appears in his criminal record.

WHAT SHOULD SUPPORT LETTERS LOOK LIKE?

Letters of support should have a good appearance. If possible, it should be typed and one page in length. If the letter is from a business or professional person, when possible, it should be written on letterhead stationary.

HOW MANY SUPPORT LETTERS?

At the time of the parole hearing interview three to ten letters should be enough. Keep sending support letters regularly, not just at the parole hearing date. This shows consistency and active support and lets the Board know that you will stick by the after release.

WHAT TO SAY?

There are several general areas of information to be included in these letters:

1. Your relationship to the inmate.
2. How long you have known the inmate.
3. You believe that, despite his mistakes he is a good person.
4. The reason you feel this way.
5. Your belief the inmate will be useful a law-abiding citizen of the community.

6. You may describe improvements in the inmate's attitude, behavior and efforts he has made to improve himself.

(If you are going to provide housing, give the address of the residence and your phone number. You can mention other kinds of help you can provide. For instance, clothing or transportation etc.)

PAROLE PLAN

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-Mail:

Parole Agent Appointments:

Residence -- (Describe plan for living arrangements):

Transportation:

Initial Employment Plan:

Secondary Employment Plan:

Support Group (If required):

Recreational Activities:

Name:

Date:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Phone:

Relationship to Parolee:

California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation
Board of Parole Hearing
P.O. BOX 4036
Sacramento, CA. 95812-4036

Re: Letter of Support for:

Dear Chairperson,

Please accept this correspondence as a continuation of my expressed support upon
_____ release.

This letter is written to reaffirm that my current pledge of support for
_____ remains the same as that expressed in previous letters I have
written to the Board of Parole Hearings in favor of his parole.

Thank you for your time and consideration with this matter.

Sincerely,

EFFECTIVE ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS

Q.- Did you understand what I read, sir?

A.- Yes, I did.

Q.- And is what I read an accurate reflection of what occurred?

A.- It's very accurate, sir.

Q.- Are there any clarifications you wish to make regarding this?

A.- No. I think it's very accurate.

Q.- Okay. When the report stated that you finally forced out of the car, what does that mean?

A.- It means I surrendered.

Q.- You surrendered?

A.- Yes.

Q.- What did you do with the gun at that point?

A.- I threw it on the ground.

Q.- Okay. From that point on you cooperated with the police, is that correct?

A.- Yes, I did.

Q.- And why did you have a need to commit this robbery, sir?

A.- Well, when I came to California I was going to work in construction, but when I got here there was no work. The people who had encouraged me to come out here were not supportive. I was paying for a motel room every night and my money was running out. I couldn't find employment. I started to feel desperate to obtain money, and I completely disregarded concern for others and committed the crime, sir.

Q.- You were arrested about 2 years after the incident, is that correct?

A.- Yes, it is.

Q.- Did you visit Nevada during that period of time?

A.- Yes, I did.

Q.- Okay. What was that all about?

A.- I went to college and I got into a fight and I got kicked out of school.

Q.- Were there any criminal charges filed as a result of the fight?

A.- Yes.

Culpability- Accepting the facts of my commitment offense. It is important to accept total responsibility and not to justify. Do not talk about what I did not do. Accept the fact I belong in prison for what I did concerning my commitment offense and criminal and moral things I did wrong before that. I accept prison was the best thing for me at that time.

Insight- Understand who I was, who I am and how I arrived at that place, and this place in my life. It is important to understand the impact of my actions and the affect they had on so many people. Explain everything I have done, and am doing, and will continue to do to prevent it from happening again. I need to understand myself and be able to explain how wrong I was from day one. (Stealing candy, cars, shop lifting). Where I became the kind of person who did what I did and where it became acceptable behavior. Why I would choose those choices instead of something else. Why would I give in to that way of thinking and how did I justify it? Why I joined a gang. (Did I view them as extended family just to be accepted?) Why I felt I needed a gun (false sense of pride and feeling like someone I'm not) (false courage, sense of being invincible). What was my biggest downfall? (selling, using drugs, gangs). I saw others and wanted what they had. How did I affect others by selling drugs and being in gangs?

(Destruction. My behavior as a gang member created an environment of fear in the community. My involvement in selling drugs directly contributed to crime escalating and the destruction of the lives of those I sold drugs to.)

Remorse- More than saying I'm sorry. It's about showing I'm sorry. It's about giving back and participating in programs that give me something to give back to others. I need to feel the destruction, pain, and wrong I caused and be disgusted with that person who I once was. I need to understand that my choices and actions were not only against man's law, but God's law. I'm the reason for the pain my victim's family, friends, neighbors, co-workers are feeling. It had a ripple effect. I am able to move on because God is forgiving.

Responsibility- I need to not only be responsible for the crime I committed but the things I did before that. Every time I used drugs was a crime. How do I take responsibility? It's important to take responsibility for what I did, who I was, even though that is not the person who is in front of you today. There is a difference between who I was and who I am today.

Be aware of TRAP Questions:

- 1) Agree with the facts of the case. (Probation Officers Report/Trial Transcripts)
- 2) Why you committed the crime. (Don't try to explain because that makes you sound like you are trying to justify your crime when there is NO justification. "I will not try to justify my actions because there is no explanation or justifications why I did this." "The victim (By name) is dead and I am responsible. I am wrong and very sorry." "Tell us how it happened" is the same question.
- 3) How or where did you get the gun? "Illegally."

- 4) Why did I have it? Because at the time I was going to hurt and harm someone. It made me feel powerful and gave me a false sense of power and self-worth. I was an active criminal and I had no regard for the law.

Frequently Used Terms

The terms listed below are often used during the parole hearing process. Please do not hesitate to ask the Victim Services Representative at the institution where the hearing is going to be held or the Victim Services Coordinator at the Board of Parole Hearings if you have any questions.

Board: Another term used for a Hearing Panel.

Board of Parole Hearings (BPH): BPH is comprised of 17 members appointed by the Governor. Of the 17 commissioners, 12 determine parole suitability for adult inmates, and five determine parole suitability for juvenile offenders.

BPH Victim Services Coordinator: The person you call if you want to attend a parole hearing or if you want to request notice of a parole hearing. You can reach this person toll-free at (866) 278-9282.

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR): The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is responsible for adult offenders sentenced to state prison and for juvenile offenders sent to the state's juvenile correctional facilities. The CDCR also is responsible for supervising these offenders if they are released on parole. The Secretary of the Department is appointed by the Governor and serves as a member of the Governor's Cabinet.

Cancellation: The cancellation of a life parole consideration hearing is somewhat rare. A hearing may be cancelled as a result of a court order or when an offender's "minimum eligible parole date" (see below for definition) has not been determined correctly.

Panel Chairperson: The BPH hearing panel member who states the decision whether to grant or deny parole. He or she is usually a commissioner.

Classification and Parole Representative (C&PR): The person at the correctional facility who receives your written statement or the audiotape/videotape/DVD of your statement. You can also call this person to ask any questions you may have about the facility and its programs by calling the facility phone number and asking for the C&PR. A listing of correctional facilities is located on page 9 of this brochure.

Commissioner: A member of the BPH. Board of Parole Hearings' Commissioners are appointed by the Governor.

Deputy Commissioner: A member of the PBH hearing panel who is an employee of the State of California.

Determinate Sentence: A sentence with a fixed term set by law. Inmates sentenced only to determinate terms do not receive parole consideration hearings. Inmates serving a determinate term are instead released from prison once they have served their time. Most offenders are entitled by law to have their sentences reduced by a specified percentage (15 to 50 percent) unless they behave poorly while incarcerated.

Executive Session: A session at the end of the hearing when the panel members discuss whether or not to grant the inmate parole. Everyone leaves the room except the two panel members during an executive session.

Indeterminate Sentence: A sentence of an unspecified duration, such as "life terms."

Minimum Eligible Parole Date (MEPD): The earliest date inmate's serving a life sentence may be legally released on parole. The Board schedules an inmate's initial parole consideration hearing 13 months prior to his/her MEPD.

Office of Victim and Survivor Services is the victims program within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). The OVSS strives to ensure crime victim's rights are proactively enforced throughout the state correctional system. The OVSS provides assistance and services to victims and their families at all levels within CDCR.

Postponement: The rescheduling of a parole hearing to a future date. A hearing may be postponed for "good cause." For example, a hearing may be postponed because the inmate has a case pending in court. A hearing also may be postponed because the inmate did not have sufficient time to prepare or was not able to get necessary documents to present to the hearing panel. Request for postponement received less than 10 working days prior to a hearing will be considered by the Board, but are generally presumed to be invalid. The Board's policies concerning postponements, continuances and stipulations can be found in section 2253 of Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations.

Stipulation: A stipulation is an agreement between the Board and an inmate that the inmate is not suitable for parole. A stipulation can happen at or before the parole hearing (unless it is the inmate's initial parole consideration hearing). No hearing will be held if there is a stipulation. The stipulation will specify how long it will be before the inmate will again be scheduled for a parole hearing.

Transcript: The typewritten record of everything said on the record at a parole hearing or a typewritten record of a victim impact statement.

Victim Impact Statement: A statement that describes the emotional, financial, physical, and/or spiritual impact the crime had on the victim, the victim's family, and/or the community.

Victim's Notice of Hearing form (BPH Form 1087D): A form that tells you the date, time, and place of the parole hearing. Upon your request, this form will be sent to you by the institution where the hearing will be held at least 30 days before the hearing.

Victim's Services Representative: A person at the correctional facility who will contact you before the hearing, meet you at the gate on the day of the hearing, assist you before, during, and after the hearing and who will answer your questions.

Victim/Witness Assistance Center: County centers that help victims and their families. Call 1-800-VICTIM to find one near you.