

**HealthRIGHT 360's experiences with clients released from custody after up to 50 s of incarceration**

Wayne Garcia, Vice President of Programs

Mardell Gavriel, Vice President of Mental Health Services

Scott Collier, Director of Research

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**The History of Ex-lifers being granted parole**

- Ex-lifers being released to the community
  - Why now?
    - Pre 2000 – unheard of for lifers to be released
    - Aug 14, 2003 – Attended first embankment hearing
    - Case example: HealthRIGHT 360's first ex-lifer, "Johnny"
  - How rapidly has the increase in Ex-lifers occurred?

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**Ex-lifers Paroled by Administration**

- In 2014, Governor Brown reversed 133 of 672 (19.8%) parole grants
- In 2010, Schwarzenegger reversed 70% of parole grants
- In 1999, Governor Davis reversed 100% of parole grants

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## HealthRIGHT 360 Offers of Placement

2011	2012	2013	2014	Jan 2015	Feb 2015
45	46	295	1,189	85	95



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## HealthRIGHT 360's Increase in Ex-lifers

- How many have we had to date? From 2012 to present, HealthRIGHT has provided services for **368** unduplicated individuals comprising 648 episodes in various programs/services
- How many do we currently have? 140 unduplicated individuals at various locations (131 in Los Angeles Residential program).
- More than half of HealthRIGHT's Los Angeles residential treatment facility is comprised of ex-lifers.

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## Eligibility and Process

- Which "traditional" lifers are eligible for parole consideration?
- What is the process for becoming eligible for parole?
- What are some of the barriers to becoming eligible?

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike vs. Traditional Lifers

- Entitlement vs. appreciation and thankfulness
- Fear factor keeps them honest
- Released because of rule changes vs. working within the system
  - Board of Prison Hearings
  - CA Prop 36

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### Demographics of HealthRIGHT 360's Current Ex Lifer Residential Clients (Los Angeles Only)

Age at Intake (N=131)	
Mean	51.44
Median	50
Minimum	31
Maximum	83

	Frequency	Percent
Asian/Pacific Islander	15	11.5
Black/African American	52	39.7
Latino	30	22.9
Mixed Race	2	1.5
Native American/Alaskan Native	2	1.5
Other	2	1.5
White/European American	28	21.4
Total	131	100.0

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### Ex-Lifers Have Often Had Mental Health Issues Prior to Incarceration

- Ranges from no MH issues to moderate problems
- Exposure to violence
- High rates of substance use/trauma
- At risk for cognitive impairments related to TBI, addiction, or fetal exposure to alcohol
- Multi-generational impact of addiction, homelessness, mental illness, incarceration
- MH problems may be undiagnosed/misdiagnosed as conduct disorders/anti-social traits
- Poor access to healthcare

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## Psychological Impact of Incarceration

- Dependence on institutional structure
- Hypervigilance, interpersonal distrust, suspicion
- Trauma
- Hoarding behaviors
- Emotional flattening that goes beyond not revealing emotions to distancing from emotions

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## Survival Strategies

- Many incarcerated individuals develop patterns/behaviors that keep them safe in the institutions
- Some of these behaviors are incompatible with other settings
- The very things that may have kept them safe in prison may undo re-entry efforts
- There is possible paradox here with ex-lifers

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## Reentry Challenges for Ex-Lifers

- Institutionalized patterns/daily life
- Fragmented support networks
- Lost roles in family systems
- Disparity between expectation/reality
- Economic self-sufficiency

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## Strengths

- Long-term incarceration can lead to adaptive coping
- Many ex-lifers demonstrate a desire to mentor or have others learn from their experience
- Living in close quarters/relational skills to get along

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## Point of Specific Programming for Ex-lifers

- To provide a gentle landing or transition into community living
- Allows space and time to experiment with skills and coping strategies
- Step-down to lower levels of care

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## HealthRIGHT 360's Programming for Ex-lifers

- Population in LA facility is 100% criminal justice population
  - Empathy, identification, shared lived experience between staff, ex-lifers, and other clients
- Keeping in contact with graduates allows us to bring them back if they start struggling
- Freedom Day

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### The importance of a Transitional Community

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- Assists with making a “soft landing”
- Time to switch out survival skills
- Experiment with new behaviors
- Reunify with family/friends in a structured way with support

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### Family Reintegration Groups

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- Prepares families and ex-lifers for reunification
  - Families learn what their loved one went through and his/her challenges to adjusting to life outside the institution
    - Example: language (tiers vs. floors, chow hall vs. dining room, spitting in toilet vs. sink)
  - Ex-lifers learn what his/her family went through without their presence over the years
    - Roles played by the ex-lifer were filled during their absence; some ex-lifers feel role loss

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### Unique Challenges for Ex-lifers

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- Relatively older population (our oldest ex-lifer is 83)
- Chronic pain/pain management
- Use vs. abuse
- Memory challenges (possible Alzheimer’s Disease)

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## Unique Challenges for Ex-lifers (continued)

- Adjusting to technology
  - Mobile phones (phones may be in prison, but a lifer that wants to get paroled unlikely to risk it)
  - Internet/email (needed to apply for jobs and search for housing)
  - Talking gas pumps, auto flushing toilets, cars that start without a key

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## Case Example: Heroin Overdose

- 30 years in prison
- Parents were now deceased
- Sister didn't want anything to do with him
- Intentional OD/suicide attempt
  - Work to convince staff to keep him in program

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## Ex-lifer Outcomes

			Discharge Reason				Total	
			Asked to Leave	Completed	None of the above	Walked Away		
Los Angeles Ex-lifer Clients	Sub-program	MH @ 2307 6th	Count	4	360	38	3	345
		Percent	3.5%	<b>78.3%</b>	15.7%	2.6%	100.0%	
		Count	0	53	10	1	64	
	OP @ 145 22nd	Percent	0.0%	<b>82.8%</b>	15.6%	1.6%	100.0%	
	Res @ 2307 6th	Count	5	176	23	7	211	
	Percent	2.4%	<b>83.4%</b>	10.9%	3.3%	100.0%		
	Total	Count	9	319	51	11	390	
		Percent	2.3%	<b>81.3%</b>	13.1%	2.8%	100.0%	
All other LA Clients	Sub-program	MH @ 2307 6th	Count	81	198	74	465	818
		Percent	9.9%	<b>24.2%</b>	9.0%	56.8%	100.0%	
		Count	2	185	79	87	353	
	OP @ 145 22nd	Percent	0.6%	<b>52.4%</b>	22.4%	24.6%	100.0%	
	Res @ 2307 6th	Count	208	494	220	1429	2351	
	Percent	8.8%	<b>21.0%</b>	9.4%	60.8%	100.0%		
	Total	Count	291	877	373	1981	3522	
		Percent	8.3%	<b>24.9%</b>	10.6%	56.2%	100.0%	

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## Ex-lifere Outcomes (Continued)

Sub-program	Ex-Lifers Mean	Ex-Lifer N	All Others Mean	All Others N
MH @ 2307 6th	188.77	115	63.51	718
OP @ 145 22nd	215.63	64	110.34	274
Res @ 2307 6th	203.40	209	62.88	2009
Total	201.08	388	67.36	3001

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## Employment for Ex Lifers

*Employment Placement for Ex-lifers*

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	2014 Total
12	8	9	10	11	7	14	19	10	15	11	4	130
Jobs												

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## Staff Thoughts on Ex-lifers in Program

We asked staff to respond to the following items:

1. How has the increase in the number of former lifers impacted the treatment program?
2. What are their unique needs?

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How has the increase in the number of former lifers impacted the treatment program?

"The increase in the number of former lifers has been a significant benefit to treatment programs. Stability is their primary contribution to the program. Due to their maturity and the amount of rehabilitation they have engaged in during their incarceration, they enter treatment more grounded and compliant than those struggling with active addiction and recidivism. The majority of the ex-lifers are older and as such, have been known to provide a type of mentorship over younger residents by demonstrating respect for self and others, offering guidance, and sharing their stories as cautionary tales to those currently in a cycle of maladaptive behaviors."

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How has the increase in the number of former lifers impacted the treatment program? (Continued)

"Due to the amount of introspection and work they have engaged in throughout their decades of incarceration, this population challenges group members and facilitators to operate at a higher level. In groups they exemplify the necessity for vulnerability and honesty in order to make progress. Their ability to share honest and difficult truths often creates a group environment where deeper healing and emotion is elicited."

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What are some of the unique needs of the ex-lifers?

"The ex-lifers typically enter treatment with a stack of certificates describing their accomplishments in various areas. Many have not only completed full curriculums, but have proceeded to obtain specialized training, and have taught the curriculums in prison. This population has training in administrative skills, machinery, forklift operation, ophthalmology, and a myriad of other areas. Educational accomplishments range from having obtained a GED to Bachelor's degrees, and even credits towards Masters and Doctoral degrees. In addition, many of our ex-lifers have had significant work experience while incarcerated. They have a better understanding of how to maintain long-term employment, how to interact with co-workers, and are eager to re-enter the job market in order to maintain that sense of responsibility."

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What are some of the unique needs of the ex-lifers? (Continued)

"Most importantly, the ex-lifers for the most part enter treatment with a sense of humility. They have a desire to give back and be active, positive members of society. The majority of the gentlemen make a concerted effort to volunteer in some capacity, even before obtaining employment. They volunteer with at-risk youth, with public defenders working on amending laws, with churches, as well as with organizations trying to assist current lifers. This humility and need to give back is a characteristic not seen with other residents and one that seems to be an integral part of their success personally and professionally."

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Future of Parole for Lifers

9000 lifers anticipated to be paroled in the next 3 years

Our experience has shown that there are benefits to helping re-acclimate them

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