

## Tips for Writing Your Letter

- Make sure that your handwriting is easy to read. If your handwriting is hard to read, consider printing the letter.
- Avoid long and disorganized letters. It is best to be clear and to the point.
- Do not push your religious beliefs. You can tell the victim that your faith is helping you change your life, but it is not appropriate to try to force your beliefs on the victim.
- Ask for help with writing your letter. If you are struggling, ask a trusted friend, chaplain or corrections staff to help.
- Put your draft letter aside for a while. When you come back to it later you may want to make changes.
- If you are truly sorry, consider offering a genuine apology for your behavior.
- It is recommended that you submit your draft letter to your treatment provider or classification counselor for input before submitting it.

## What if There is a No-Contact Order?

You can still submit an accountability letter if there is an active no-contact order or no-contact provision with the victim or victim's family in your sentencing order. If your victim chooses to accept the letter, Victim Services will contact the Prosecutor's Office and request a court order for a one-time exemption to allow us to provide the letter to the victim or victim's family.

## Will I be Notified if the Letter is Received?

Unless the victim specifically requests Victim Services notify you that they received the letter, you will not be notified. All letters that are accepted are deposited permanently into the Letter Bank so victims may access them anytime.

Mail Letters To  
Victim Services Program  
PO Box 41119  
Olympia, WA 98504-1119

500-BR011 (R. 03/25/2024)

## The Accountability Letter Bank

*A Guide for Incarcerated Individuals*



## What is the Accountability Letter Bank?

The Accountability Letter Bank (ALB) provides incarcerated individuals an opportunity to communicate to the victims of their criminal behavior their understanding of the harm caused by their crime and acknowledge responsibility for the consequences of their behavior. They may also share the positive things they are doing and the steps they are taking to change their lives.

## Why Write An ALB Letter?

The traditional criminal justice system is not designed for incarcerated individuals and victims to communicate, despite many incarcerated individuals wishing to provide a genuine apology to their victim. The ALB program provides incarcerated individuals this opportunity.

Receiving an accountability letter can assist with a victim's healing process, as most have no idea if their perpetrator is truly remorseful, accepts full responsibility for the crime or has changed for the better.

## How Can I Write an Accountability Letter?

Please review the writing tips in this brochure before you start. Letters should speak from the heart and display empathy. All letters must be mailed to Victim Services along with a signed "Accountability Letter Bank Application To Participate" (DOC form #02-395). Victim Services staff will review your letter to make sure it is appropriate. If your letter needs to be reworded, it will be sent back to you with suggestions. If it is appropriate, you will be notified by letter. Victim Services staff make every attempt to contact victims when we receive a letter. It is always the victim's decision whether they choose to receive the letter.

Writing an Accountability Letter is voluntary. You have nothing to gain except personal growth and insight. Under DOC policy, submitting this letter will not affect your custody level, parole eligibility, release date or conditions of supervision. You are not allowed to use the letter in an attempt to gain a pardon or commutation. Before you write the letter, consider whether you have accepted full responsibility for your crime, the harm caused and your motivation for writing the letter. The process of writing this letter may help you become more honest about yourself and your intentions.

## Questions To Consider

You are taking a positive step toward accepting responsibility for your actions. Please consider these questions when writing your letter:

- Are you remorseful? Are you truly sorry for the harm you caused or do you feel sorry for yourself because you are being held accountable?
- Do you expect the victim to forgive you? If you expect forgiveness, you are writing the letter for your own benefit and not the victim's. Do not ask the victim to forgive you, as it places the responsibility on the victim to meet your needs.
- Do you make excuses for your actions? If you make excuses then you have not fully accepted responsibility for your actions.
- Do you blame the victim, others or your circumstances for the crime? If so, you are not ready to submit a letter.
- What have you done to change your life? The victim may want to hear about programs or activities that you have participated in to help change your attitudes and criminal behavior.

