

The Montana Department
of Corrections, helping
crime victims heal...

Offender Accountability Letters



Montana Department of Corrections
Victim Programs Manager
(888) 223-6332
www.cor.mt.gov

Montana Department of Corrections
P.O. Box 201301
1539 11th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-1301

THE MDOC MISSION...

The Montana Department of Corrections
enhances public safety, promotes positive
change in offender behavior, reintegrates
offenders into the community and supports
victims of crime.

Is there a letter for me?

Please notify me if the following offender(s)
deposits a letter for me in the Accountability
Letter Bank. This does not constitute an
agreement on my part to read, acknowledge, or
respond to the letter.

Today's date: _____

Offender: _____

Prison # if known: _____

Crime(s): _____

I understand that the Accountability Letter
Bank must have a current address in order to
notify me, and that it is my responsibility to let
the Victim Programs Manager know if my
address or phone number changes. The Depart-
ment of Corrections will keep this information
confidential and will not share it with the
offender(s).

Name: _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____

Mail this form to:

Montana Department of Corrections
Victim Programs Manager
Accountability Letter Bank
P.O. Box 201301
Helena, MT 59620-1301

What are accountability letters?



Many felony offenders are sincerely sorry for the harm they have caused others. Adult offenders who have demonstrated accountability for their crimes may write letters to their victims as part of their treatment plan.

Correctional staff will screen the letters for inappropriate content, such as blaming others, before they are deposited in the accountability letter bank, where victims may access them voluntarily. The letters are not sent to victims unless the victims request them.

Will the offender know where I live?

The Department of Corrections holds all victim information in strict confidence and will not share it with offenders or anyone else without your permission. The department does not allow offenders to mail letters directly to their victims. Offenders deposit their letters in the accountability letter bank in the victim information office, where victims may access them.

Will a letter cause us more pain?

You might experience grief or sorrow when you read a letter from the offender responsible for the crime against you. Most victims who receive accountability letters report that they experience a degree of healing when they hear that the offender is sincerely sorry. Victims may learn details of the crime that can diminish their fear and restore a sense of security. Offenders who participate in the accountability letter process have demonstrated that they accept responsibility for their crimes and do not

want to cause more harm. Victims who decide to receive accountability letters assume some risk that the letters might cause emotional pain. Only you can decide if you want to hear what the offender has to say.

What if the offender blames me?

Offenders who are allowed to participate in the accountability letter process have reached a point in their treatment where they understand that they are solely responsible for their criminal actions. Accountability letters are screened by treatment and victim service professionals to assure that offenders don't blame others or make excuses for their criminal behavior.

Am I expected to forgive the offender?

The decision to forgive another is personal. Forgiveness for the offenders is not the purpose of accountability letters. Offenders must acknowledge that they harmed the victims, and they may talk about how they have changed their lives. Your offender will not ask for forgiveness.

How will I know if there's a letter for me?

The MDOC victim information specialist will contact you if we have your current address on file. You may call us toll-free (888) 223-6332 any time to ask if we have an accountability letter on file from your offender.

I don't want a letter from my offender!

Many victims do not want to hear from their offenders. The victim always makes the decision to receive or refuse an accountability letter.

Helping victims heal...

Offender accountability letters are one example of restorative justice, a criminal justice concept that focuses on offender accountability and healing for all parties harmed. The Department of Corrections offers other restorative justice programs for victims of crimes committed by adult offenders under our supervision:

Victim-Offender Dialogue (VOD)

Many crime victims have questions only the offender can answer. Victim-Offender Dialogue allows victims to meet face-to-face with their offenders to discuss the crime and its effects. VOD is voluntary for both parties, and occurs with the help of trained facilitators after months of careful preparation. This intensely emotional experience often helps victims begin a journey of healing from the trauma of the crime. VOD forces offenders to hear how they have harmed others, which often motivates them to change.

Victim Impact Panels

Victim Impact Panels consist of two to four victims of felony crimes who volunteer to tell a group of convicted adult offenders how a particular crime has harmed them, their loved ones, and their communities. The offenders may be allowed to ask questions. VIPs sometimes occur in prison, but more often in community corrections facilities such as boot camp, drug/alcohol treatment facilities, and prerelease centers.

Call (888) 223-6332 if you would like to discuss these programs more. You may also log onto www.cor.mt.gov for more information.