



Montana Department of Corrections
Accountability Letter Program

LETTER GUIDELINES

Congratulations on your decision to write an accountability letter to your victim.. A sincere accountability letter demonstrates that you regret the harm you caused, and that you accept responsibility for your crime(s). Your victim may choose not to receive your letter or respond. Writing the letter will help you identify your true feelings about yourself, your victim, and your crime(s). This is a *positive* step for you.

Please answer the following questions for yourself, and use the guidelines to write your letter.

- ✓ The letter is voluntary and the benefits to you are personal insight and growth.
- ✓ Are you truly sorry for what you did to harm the victim, or do you just regret that you were caught? If you feel sorry for yourself, you may not be ready to write a letter to your victim.
- ✓ Do you expect something from the victim in return for the letter? If you expect the victim to write back or forgive you, your reason for writing the letter is to benefit you, not the victim. You are not yet ready to write a letter.
- ✓ Do not ask the victim to forgive you. A request for forgiveness would place responsibility on the victim to meet your needs. Forgiveness is a personal choice.
- ✓ Accept responsibility for your actions without any excuses.
- ✓ Do not blame the victim or others for the crime.
- ✓ Your victim might like to hear what you are doing to change your criminal lifestyle.
- ✓ Do not force your religious beliefs on the victim. It is ok to tell the victim that your faith is helping change your criminal behavior.
- ✓ Be brief.

Please submit your draft letter to a case manager, treatment specialist, or DOC victim services staff.