

Support Letters & Witnesses Guidance

Support letters fail when they are generic, when they over-promise, or when the writer does not know the commitment offense. Coordinate every letter so it covers a specific role — not just 'he is a good person.'

Letter type	What it should cover	Status
Housing letter	Specific address, relationship to client, rules of the home, length of offer, and that household members are aware of the commitment offense.	Requested / Drafted / Signed / Filed
Employment / income	Job offer or concrete hiring pipeline, hours, pay, start conditions. If training or benefits, name the program and intake contact.	Requested / Drafted / Signed / Filed
Family support	Relationship, specific ways they will support (transportation, meals, emotional support), and realistic expectations.	Requested / Drafted / Signed / Filed
Program / treatment	From a provider or facilitator: nature of contact, duration, observed change, and what is planned after release.	Requested / Drafted / Signed / Filed
Community / mentor	Sponsor, clergy, peer mentor, or community organization with a concrete role in the reentry plan.	Requested / Drafted / Signed / Filed
Victim's next-of-kin	Only when appropriate and the writer initiates it — handle with extreme care and through counsel.	Requested / Drafted / Signed / Filed

Guidance to Give Letter Writers

- Name your relationship to the client and how long you have known him or her.
- Confirm you are aware of the commitment offense (without needing to describe it in detail).
- Describe the specific, concrete support you will provide — address, hours of employment, rides, meals, sponsorship, etc.
- Explain what you have personally observed that shows change over time.
- Avoid promises about the future you cannot keep. Panels recognize over-promising immediately.

- Sign, date, and include current contact information. Notarization is not required but adds weight when appropriate.