

Parole Support Letter Suggestions

PEP Family Program

Thank you for supporting your loved one through the parole process! This document is meant to be a compiled list of suggestions to help you construct a great letter to represent your loved one.

What is a letter of support?

Letters of support are evidence that the participant will have a network of friends and family to help when he is released.

Why write a parole support letter?

Inmates in the Texas prison system are encouraged by the Board of Pardons and Paroles to provide evidence of support for their release on parole. One way to do this is through letters supporting a participant's release.

What are the rules for writing a parole support letter?

There are no rules for support letters. These are only guidelines and suggestions. You must use what fits your own special situation. Don't be afraid to ask people to write letters. Many people care and want to help.

What is the benefit of a parole support letter?

A parole support letter shows:

1. Somebody knows the participant and cares about him.
2. The participant has free world support while in prison.
3. Someone will be there to help when he is released.
4. The good side of the participant to help balance the bad side which appears in his criminal record.

Who writes support letters?

1. Family members, relatives, close friends and loved ones.
3. Respected members of the community, such as businessmen and religious leaders.
4. Prospective employers, school teachers, students, counselors, etc.
5. The participant's TDCJ supervisors or other people who have known him/her while in prison, e.g. chaplain, counselor, teacher, volunteers from the community.

If you can't find anyone who knows the participant, you may ask for letters from people who know you and state that your support will be of value during the participant's re-adjustment to the community. Also, people can write offering their support for the participant based on their position in the community (such as a minister in your church.).

How many support letters should I send?

At the time of the parole interview, three to ten support letters should be enough. Keep sending support letters regularly (twice/year should be sufficient), not just at the parole interview date. This shows consistency and active support and lets the Parole Board know that you'll stick by the participant after release.

How long should the letter be?

The most important aspect of the letter is that it clearly states the nature of support—financial, vocational, residential, etc. Avoid lengthy petitions and letters which may take away from the most important details that need to be communicated.

Where should I send the letter?

Letters can be sent to: **Texas Board of Pardons & Paroles, ATTN: Support Material, P.O. Box 13401, Austin, TX 78711-3401.**

If they are within a couple of months of their eligibility date, letters are sent to regional offices.

- ❖ For participants on the Bell Unit, that address is: Huntsville Institutional Parole Office, ATTN: Correspondence, 1022 Veterans Memorial Pkwy., Suite B, Huntsville, TX 77340
- ❖ For participants on the Estes Unit, the address is: TDCJ - Parole Division, ATTN: Correspondence, P.O. Box 13401, Capitol Station, Austin, TX 78711
- ❖ For participants on the Lockhart Unit, the address is: Angleton Institutional Parole Office, ATTN: Correspondence, 1208 N. Velasco, Angleton, TX 77515

Should I send the letter to each parole panel member?

It is not necessary to send a copy of the letter to each parole panel member. Letters are placed in the participant's file to be available to any reviewing parole panel member.

Recommendations

- This is a professional letter written to an important audience so it's wise to format the letter professionally. Use letterhead and proper letter formatting as shown in the examples. Copy, paste and personalize the letterhead example included here if you would like.
- Type the letter. Making the letter easy to read is the goal if you want your letter to be reviewed.
- Your letter should be short and to the point. There is a very good chance a parole board member will review a one-page typed document which would take one minute to read rather than a five-page handwritten letter which would take 10 minutes to read.
- Be sure to use the participant's name exactly as it appears in their prison records and always include his TDCJ number. The prison system may contain 50 Joe Smith's so it is of the utmost importance to help the board identify who the letter is regarding.
- Be genuine and honest. It's important that you accurately represent your feelings and beliefs about your loved one. Don't exaggerate with flowery language or make statements that are untrue. Inconsistencies between your perspective and reality may actually be a red flag to the

Parole Board.

- NEVER request that the board re-try the case of the participant. The board is not charged with determining innocence or guilt. Their goal is to weigh the interests of public safety and the inmate's readiness to be released to supervision.
- Once you have completed your support letter, sign it and make copies. Send the original to the Parole Board, send a copy to your loved one, and keep one for your records.
- Letters that say "He made a mistake and he has learned his lesson" are not nearly as effective as a letter with a few examples of how the participant used to act before versus how he acts now and a conclusion that he will not make the same mistakes in the future. Giving the Parole Board examples and information to work from so they can draw their own conclusions (and agree with your conclusion) is much more effective than requesting them to accept your conclusions in blind faith.
- Remember that a parole vote is about balancing rehabilitation of the participant with the safety and security of the community. Community interests will always win out; therefore, it is imperative to persuade the Board that he is not a threat to the community.

Addition Resources Regarding Support Letters

- <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp/faq/SupportLetters.html>
- www.prisonertalk.com
- Internet search engine key words
 - Parole support letter
 - Family parole letter
 - Parole package