9. Sample Character Reference Letter: Mother

Date

The Honorable (name of your judge)

United States District Court Judge

(Name of your judicial district)

(Address of your judicial district)

City of your judicial district, state, zip

Regarding: U.S.—v—Your name and case number

Dear Judge (last name):

My name is [Mother’s name] and I am XX’s mother. I am very sorry that my son violated federal law. He made some seriously bad decisions and he knows it. I am saddened by the thought that he engaged in business that harmed to others. Our family is going through a process of self-examination and contrition together. Please accept this letter as my way to tell you more about my beloved son.

XX is a kind and gentle person. Like me, he has a big heart and will often tear up and cry spontaneously when he sees or hears something that touches him. XX has always treated his parents kindly and respectfully. He is very attentive to his dad who is elderly and unstable.

XX comes from a good hard-working family. We have lived in XXX for 51 years and have cherished our opportunities to be of service to the community. XXX has blessed us with peaceful, prosperous lives and we are forever grateful. Our family founded XXXX Stores in 1959 and sold these five retail farm stores in 1988. We own and operate XXXX’s Diner, XXXX Mall, and XXXX Indoor Shooting Range in XXXXX.

XX has worked at these businesses and we taught him to have a good work ethic. He will have a job with our family business upon his release from whatever sanction you deem appropriate.

As his mother, it has been hard for me to watch XX struggle to find his footing. In school, I saw how his learning disabilities stigmatized him. He felt different from the mainstream kids and chose to associate with other outsiders who readily accepted him. From early on, I think he started picking up unhealthy attitudes towards drugs, school, and himself.

He could never apply for a job or even go to a doctor or dentist alone because he was afraid to show his inability to read. He struggled to write well and understand questions on forms. He did eventually receive his high school diploma at a school in XXXX that specialized in students like XX. We stuck with him and I know he wanted to do well.

XX is a good father and takes his son fishing often. For the past ten years, he has bowled on a father/son league and coached youth basketball at YMCA well after his son was too old to play. In addition, he coached youth baseball for many years. He cares about young people and is always ready to help. He drives often to XXXXX, to see his daughter and her two children. No one doubts his loving devotion to his children and to our entire family.

XX has a tender heart and won’t hesitate to help out less fortunate friends and neighbors. Unknown to us, he provided food, clothing and shelter to a homeless person in one of our warehouses for the winter. He is kind and does not turn away from people in need.

XX got himself in trouble because he started gambling, but he knows that is not an excuse for his wrongdoing. Proceeds from his illegal drug sales went to the casinos. Eventually, he recognized his gambling problem and put himself on a no-entry list at the Indian casino. He has taken full responsibility for his criminal activity and is ready to accept his punishment with courage and dignity.

XX has a gentle nature. He does not confront, argue, or act on his anger. I pray that he will be able to serve his sentence in the safest place possible. Your Honor, I hope you will consider sentencing him to a minimum-security prison that offers opportunities for learning and communicating.

Since being on pre-trial supervision for over a year, XX has voluntarily attended meetings that focus on the root of gambling and drug problems. Those meetings have helped him learn more about himself. He has stayed clean and away from bad influences. For the first time in years, he has spent more time with family. He seems calmer and more willing to talk and communicate. For me, it is a wonderful change.

I believe XX will learn from this and change his life’s course. Obviously, we are sickened about what he did. He needs to be accountable for it. We are confident that he will stay on this path that is free from drugs and gambling. My whole family wants XX to emerge from this legal process with a desire to live a peaceful, responsible life of love and service.

Your Honor, we love XX very much and hope you will have mercy on him.

Sincerely,