We Resolve Intake Brochure

WE RESOLVE

Tipping the Scales Toward
Community Healing

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Going through the criminal legal process can be complicated and stressful. You may feel as if you or your loved one have no recourse or anyone in your corner during this difficult time but that is not the case, and **we're here to help.**

We Resolve is a community organization comprised of folks, many of whom themselves have experienced the stresses of the criminal legal system, and who now work to support loved ones and their families as they go through the criminal legal process. We are not lawyers nor do we provide legal advice, but we care deeply about you and can provide you with resources to better understand the process you or your loved one are currently going through.

We operate under a **participatory defense** model that centers you as a human being, and not just another statistic. To this extent we show up to court in support of community members facing charges, coordinate with their legal teams, and work to create "social biographies" that showcase a person's character, environment, and social support, in order to positively impact the outcome of the case.

These efforts have already proven effective, **saving Minnesotans over 1,100 years in time served** and preventing the attachment of negative labels onto community members that could go on to affect the rest of their lives. Enclosed in this brochure you will find more information about how the criminal legal process works, and how We Resolve can help those facing charges and their families.

Sincerely,

_____

Damon Drake
Executive Director - We Resolve

Crafting your Social Biography

We Resolve has found success in working with individuals to craft **“social biographies”** which include information about a person that will be looked upon favorably by a judge.

This information can include both pictures and written statements, including letters of support from community members or photos of the person charged with their loved ones.

We Resolve uses the information you give us to create a compilation that emphasizes your humanity to the court, in the hopes of **reducing or eliminating aspects of any sentence** you may receive.

The following pages contain a guided checklist which includes many of the items We Resolve typically looks for when crafting a social biography. Please follow the checklist instructions and provide us with as many of relevant items as you are able to, as each one is another tool that we can use to try and lessen any potential sentence.

Social Biography Checklist I : Letters from Loved Ones

Please aim to think of **people who would be willing to write letters of support** on your behalf. Those letters could include:

□ Letters from Family & Friends

- Who are you? What is your association with the person facing charges?
- How long have you known this person?
- Describe the person in three words. Give an example of each word relating to the person, or any specific or memorable moment that captures persons personality.

□ Letters from Community Members

- Work: Previous or current employers, co-workers & work friends.
- Faith: Pastors, priests, or other spiritual leaders. Congregation members.
- Play: Members or coaches in previous or current sporting leagues or clubs. Neighbors.
- Anyone you believe might be able to speak to the person's character.

Social Biography Checklist II : Your Past & Future

Please aim to think of **three past accomplishments or hardships, and any future plans**. If you can provide us with photos or written statements to this effect that will be a bonus.

□ Proof of Past Accomplishments

- Graduations.
- Program completions.
- Sports activities.
- Certifications.
- Church/religious affiliations.
- Volunteer work.
- Overcoming of a personal barrier.
- Anything the person accomplished and is proud of.

□ Past Hardships

- Traumas.
- Mental illnesses.
- History of special education or learning disabilities.
- Lack of adult guidance/good role models.
- Lack of available community resources.
- Other relevant past incidents.

□ Future/Current Prospects

- School or program enrollment.
- Rehabilitation programs that have agreed to accept the person.
- Support from family or friends.
- New environmental changes.
- Personal projects or goals.

Social Biography Checklist III : Pictures & More

Pictures and documents can help showcase your humanity for the court. Please aim to provide us with **pictures or documents showcasing yourself, or important moments in your life**. These could include:

□ Pictures

- Pictures do not have to be from the present time, they may span periods from the past to the present. You want to show the person in their character, with their family/ community and environment.
- Pictures with family.
- Pictures in work environments, or working with co-workers.
- Pictures with neighbors.
- Pictures at a religious institution.
- Family events or special occasions.
- At sporting events.
- At school.
- Doing family responsibilities.

□ Other Documents that may be Helpful

- School records.
- Awards.
- Immigration records.
- Medical records demonstrating health issues.
- Pay stubs.
- Rent stubs.

For Families: Supporting your Loved One

Families (and friends) can help support their loved ones as they go through the criminal legal process in a variety of different ways.

Doing what you can to contribute to your loved one's **social biography** (see page #2) by supplying We Resolve with relevant photos or documentation can be a massive boon to your loved ones prospects as they navigate through the system.

Writing **character letters** and letters of support (see page #10) can likewise showcase how valued your loved one is to you and others in the community.

Just **showing up at court** during all of your loved one's hearings can make a huge difference, as it shows the judge that there is someone there to support your loved one. If you can bring along other family members or friends, that will also help.

Attending **We Resolve meetings** can allow us to hear updates about your case and direct you to other forms of help or resources if need be.

Outline - Good Character Letter

DATE IT June 19, 2025

ADDRESS IT “Honorable Judge” OR “To Whom it May Concern”

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Introduce and establish yourself. Who’s in your family? What do you do for a living? How do you know the person?

My name is Cecilia Sanchez, and I am writing in support of my younger brother Luis who is facing charges in your court. Including Luis, there are three children in our family, and I am the eldest. I am also a mother to 4 children and have been married for 12 years to my husband Ramon. I am a schoolteacher at Happy Days Elementary School where I have been teaching first grade for 10 years. I am a lifelong Saint Paul resident, and we have lived in the same neighborhood since we were children.

DESCRIBE THE PERSON

Give a short description of the person. Think about specific examples that help support that.

Luis is a person who always puts others first. Every month, he sets aside a portion of his salary so that he can pay our mom's electricity bill. Sometimes, even when he is short on money and has to choose between gas for his car or paying her utility bill, he'll walk to work so that his mom can keep the lights on at her home.

DESCRIBE IMPACT OF DETENTION ON THE FAMILY

Describe the impact of the absence of your loved one from the family or community. What's suffered because of it? What's the loss?

Since Luis has been in jail, no one has been able to stay home with our mom at night to help her with her needs. Luis was always the one taking her to her doctor's appointments and his absence has affected our morn greatly.

Continued Next Page →

Outline - Good Character Letter

EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR THE PERSON

Do not talk about the details of the case, but if it's appropriate, recognize the seriousness of the incident.

This is the most important section. *This is where you can get detailed on the kind of support you can provide for the person so they can attend court and comply with all provisions of release. This can be rides to court, housing, help with childcare, etc...*

I understand that the charges in this case are extremely serious. If Luis is released, as his sister, I am more than happy to provide a roof over his head. I will help make sure he has rides to court and that he can attend all his court dates. I will help drive him to appointments, make sure we keep a home that is alcohol and drug free, and ensure that he will be a productive member to our home, our society, and community. I will help him find a job, help him open a savings account, and also ensure that he meets all his conditions of release so he can succeed.

THANK THEM

Thank them for reading the letter.
Give out basic contact information.

Thank you so much for reading this letter. You can reach me at (xxx)-xxx-xxxx if you need more information.

PRINT YOUR NAME AND SIGN THE LETTER

Sincerely,

Cecilia Sanchez

Cecilia Sanchez

Resources:
The Criminal Legal System

The criminal legal system can at times be confusing to wrap your head around. The following pages include various resources to help you better understand the process.

Pages 10-11 contain a diagrams which displays the typical process and trajectory of a court case in the State of Minnesota, alongside points of intervention where you can do things to affect the process in your favor.

Pages 12 and 13 contain forms that will allow us to help you better. These forms include a letter which you can give to your attorney, and a “release of information” form which will allow us to help craft a social biography in support of you.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to your lawyer, or us, if you have questions about a part of the process.

Points of Intervention
General Felony Court Procedure - Minnesota

Arrest & Arraignment

- Document the incident
- Get a list of witnesses and their contact information
- Show up at court and take notes
- Find out the charges against you

- Prepare social biography (page 2) information in preparation for pretrial release or bail
- Arrange a meeting with your public defender
- Get a copy of the police report and begin to document inconsistencies

Plea

- Review the discovery you have to this point. Point out inconsistencies, raise questions, and share what you have with your attorney
- Share possible witness's contact info with your attorney's investigator

- Begin working with We Resolve to build your social biography
- Talk to your attorney about possible motions they can raise (discovery, motions to dismiss charges, etc.)

Preliminary Hearing

- Show up at court and take notes
- Point out inconsistencies between police reports and preliminary reports and raise questions
- Meet with your attorney to share notes, discuss the status of your case

- Bring family, friends, and/or community members to court with you to help take notes, point out inconsistencies, and show the court that you are loved

Points of Intervention
General Felony Court Procedure - Minnesota

Trial

- Meet with your attorney to discuss the approach to trial, witnesses on your behalf, experts they can retain, and your testimony
- Discovery info often rolls in slowly rather than being given all at once. Keep current on all the discovery available and review them
- At trial bring your family, friends, and/or community members to court with you to help take notes. Give those notes to your attorney every day.
- Meet with your attorney to discuss sentencing strategies and alternatives to incarceration

Sentencing

- Ask your attorney about potential motions (like motion for a new trial, etc.)
- Finish social biography and submit that to your attorney so they can present it to probation, the DA, and the judge*
- Prepare witnesses to testify on your character, current and future prospects, and any impact of your incarceration on family, friends, or your community*

**These steps may also be applicable to the trial phase*

Appeal

- Compile all notes in preparation for an appeal
- Make a list of key observations from the case that you felt were major issues
- Make sure your attorney prepares the notice for appeal

Dear _____,

We wanted to reach out and share that we are working with We Resolve, the Midwest participatory defense hub here in the Twin Cities, and we are asking for your support in working with them. We recognize that you want to maintain important confidential communications, but we encourage you to share as much information as ethics allow. We are including a release of information we have signed allowing you to have communication with We Resolve.

The organization will develop a social biographical document about our loved one, a document that shares information about work, family and community connections. The biography will be humanizing and personalized and will not discuss the criminal allegations. We Resolve additionally supports family and our community attendance at all appropriate court hearings.

We Resolve is a participatory defense non-profit that supports accused persons and their loved ones as they navigate the criminal legal system. In general, they work with clients, family, and community to assist clients and their attorneys to seek better outcomes for their clients. Their primary purpose is to support and educate the family and community about the criminal legal process. They also seek assistance from the community to reduce bail and will share any information about exculpatory or mitigating evidence that may result in an acquittal, dismissal, or reduced sentence if the facts allow.

Together, We Resolve and legal counsel have worked to save their shared clients **over 1,100 years behind bars and approximately $8 million in fines.** Using recent Minnesota Department of Corrections budget data, they estimate those "wins" have saved our communities **over $61.1 million.**

If you want to learn more about participatory defense, please visit www.weresolve-mn.com.
They can also be reached at ddrake@weresolve-mn.com.

We look forward to hearing from and working with you.
With gratitude,

_____

RELEASE OF INFORMATION:

This is a consent for release of information (hereinafter referred to as the “release of information”) about:

Name of Individual: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I authorize _____ to release or obtain (circle one) the following specific information: Information about my case that will be helpful to We Resolve in supporting a reduced sentence and my humanization before the Court.

This release of information is valid until _____, and is not automatically renewable. It expires at the end of the period specified, unless revoked in writing sooner.

I understand I have the right to see this information at any time. I understand that I can revoke this consent in writing to both the person giving and the person receiving the information. Any information already released may be used as stated on the consent. By my signature below, I affirm that I have read this release or that it has been read to me, and I understand its content.

Client’s Printed Name: _____

Client’s Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Printed Name: _____

Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contact Us:

weresolveminnesota@gmail.com
(952) 905-6820

WE RESOLVE

Our Mission:

We, a group of Twin Cities families, artists, and organizers, resolve to walk with individuals, families and communities as they empower themselves using the Participatory Defense Model to defend their loved ones against a discriminatory punishment system.

The “First 24”

Our Website