

## MODULE 2: PLANNING YOUR CAMPAIGN

### Lesson Overview

A successful character reference campaign doesn't happen by accident. Judges can easily see whether a defendant invested time and thought into gathering letters—or if it was thrown together at the last minute. Planning your campaign early not only improves the quality of letters but also shows the Court that you're serious about accountability and preparation.

This module will guide you through designing a campaign timeline, identifying supporters, and beginning respectful outreach.

### Key Concepts

1. Start Early, Finish Strong
  - ◇ Waiting until a week before sentencing leads to rushed, generic letters.
  - ◇ Starting early (ideally at plea stage, or as soon as possible after) allows time for thoughtful, detailed submissions.
  - ◇ Judges often recognize when a defendant has put in genuine work over time.
2. Build a Broad Support Base
  - ◇ Strong campaigns include a variety of voices: family, friends, mentors, employers, colleagues, faith leaders, neighbors, teachers, and community members.
  - ◇ Letters from people outside your immediate family often carry more credibility, because they show your reach and influence in the community.
3. Diversity of Perspectives
  - ◇ Each supporter should share a different angle: your work ethic, your parenting, your service, your recovery, your faith, or your mentorship.

- ◇ The more diverse the perspectives, the more complete the picture of your life.
4. Be Clear, Respectful, and Direct in Requests
    - ◇ Some people may not know what a character letter should include. It's your responsibility to guide them.
    - ◇ Avoid begging or pressuring; instead, explain the purpose, provide instructions, and give them time.

## Steps to Plan Your Campaign

1. Make a Master List
  - ◇ Write down every person who has seen your positive qualities.
  - ◇ Think beyond family: colleagues, coaches, community leaders, mentors, or even people you've helped informally.
2. Prioritize and Categorize
  - ◇ Rank your list by strength of relationship and credibility.
  - ◇ Categorize by themes: family, work, community, service, mentorship, faith, etc.
3. Create a Timeline
  - ◇ Week 1—2: Identify and reach out to potential writers.
  - ◇ Week 3—5: Provide instructions, answer questions, and start collecting drafts.
  - ◇ Week 6—8: Review drafts with counsel, follow up on missing letters.
  - ◇ Week 9—10: Organize and finalize packet for submission.
4. Communicate Clearly
  - ◇ Provide writers with a short guidance sheet: what to include, how to format, where to send.
  - ◇ Encourage them to write from the heart—specific stories, not general praise.



## Reflection Journal Prompt

- » Who are the five most credible people in your life who could speak to your character?
- » What unique stories can each of them tell that would help a judge understand you more fully?

## Worksheet: Building Your Outreach Plan

Fill out the following table:

Name	Relationship	Theme/Story They Can Share	Contacted (Y/N)	Status (Pending/Complete)
Pastor Smith	Faith Leader	My work with youth group	N	Pending
Maria Lopez	Employer	My reliability and leadership	N	Pending
Aunt Sharon	Family	How I cared for my father	N	Pending
Mr. Patel	Neighbor	Help with community garden	N	Pending

## Key Takeaway

Planning is the difference between a weak letter file and a compelling campaign. By starting early, diversifying your support, and guiding your writers, you'll ensure your sentencing judge has a clear, authentic picture of your true character.

