

Tips for Submitting Successful APTA-PA Award Letters

APTA-Pennsylvania's Awards Program provides an opportunity to recognize achievements and outstanding contributions by members. It is an honor for an individual to be acknowledged by colleagues for contributions in practice, education, or service. It is also a privilege to write a nomination letter or letter of recommendation acknowledging the accomplishments of a colleague. The purpose of these tips is to provide suggestions to compose a strong letter of support and boost your nominee's chances to receive the recognition that he or she deserves!

First Steps

Before starting to compose your letter, carefully review the award criteria. Make a mental note of the achievements you want to recognize, and then consider whether the award is a good fit for your candidate's contributions. Review the list of past recipients for the award and ask yourself if your candidate has similar qualities and achievements that you could highlight in your letter.

Tips to Compose the Letter

The introduction to your letter should briefly describe your relationship to the candidate. Discuss how you know the candidate, and justify that you are confident that you can document reasons that the nominee deserves the award. Do not focus on yourself – but make a case that you have explicit knowledge of the candidate's worthiness for the particular award. If you worked on a particular project with the nominee, provide examples of the work you did as a team, and state how that work supports the criteria for the award. If you are a past award recipient, say so. That will further justify your ability to be a good reference.

Provide evidence of qualifications, achievements, abilities and service, by citing examples from the candidate's resume. Don't just list key points from the resume – provide explicit statements of how these key aspects link the candidate's accomplishments or service to the award criteria, and support the nominee's qualifications to be the recipient. Explicitly use language in the award criteria to illustrate your point. Emphasize personal characteristics of the nominee that link to the award criteria - passion for a cause, helpfulness, team contributions, a lifelong commitment or an outstanding short duration contribution to foster a worthy cause. In essence, discuss how the nominee made a difference!

If the nominee knows that he/she is being considered for a particular award, ask what achievements he/she would like to be included and highlighted in the recommendation letter. Are there strengths that the nominee would like you to emphasize.

If you are nominator, briefly summarize key points from the other letters of nomination. Do not simply restate their points, but reflect on your perceptions of why the information in those letters strengthens and supports the nomination.

Conclude your letter with a short impact statement reaffirming why you believe that the candidate meets the award criteria and should be considered as a worthy recipient of the selected award.