

Letter to Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith and Ms. Smith

I need to send a letter to three children of a defendant. They are Michael, Christine and Steven Smith. How would you address that letter?

Dear Ms. Smith and Messrs. Smith:

Deb Matthews, Virginia

I would send 3 letters.

Duke Drouillard, Nebraska

I would go with either what you have in the subject line, or "Dear Mr. Michael Smith, Ms. Christine Smith, and Mr. Steven Smith:"

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

I agree, 3 separate letters, each addressed to each child. You can include the other 2 children under CC on each but they should each get their own letter addressed just to them.

This way you show that each child actually got a letter, otherwise you leave open an argument that only 1 was sent and someone didn't get a copy etc.

Erin M. Schmidt, Ohio

I can see the argument for three separate letters, depending on the import of the correspondence, but if you're sending it to them by Certified Mail, etc., you already have confirmation that they all received it. The benefit of one letter addressed to all three is that they all know they got the same letter, if that has some inherent benefit in the context in which you're sending it.

Traditionally, I would have said (and would still be inclined, generally) to address it not to Dear So-and-So, but simply open with one of the following, based on my experience as a secretary for someone fairly fussy about such things when I was in college:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

or

To the Family of Pat Smith:

But I *would* list all three names and addresses as separate addressee blocks above the message and below the date. (I would probably do two side-by-side, and one below, so as not to use the whole page for addresses.)

Richard J. Rutledge, Jr., North Carolina

I'd send three letters, just change the salutation and address on each one.

Ed Burcham, Kentucky

I send one letter addressed to all so that everyone knows they got the very same correspondence and the knowledge playing field is level.

Deb Matthews

It is actually quite common in estate and trust administration, at least by my practice, to send a single letter addressed to multiple beneficiaries.

Sometimes there are a lot more than 3, too, and we want them to see that they all were sent the same letter at the same time, and doing multiple cc's on multiple letters gets confusing to all. We prove delivery to a court by proving delivery (often by certified mail/return receipt, but sometimes a certificate of service or even our address printing records), not by how the letter is addressed. When there are more than about 3, we usually use the salutation of "Dear Beneficiaries:"

Cynthia V. Hall

I've always seen it done as a CC to everyone and the letter addressed individually. It just may be personal preference or by area though

Erin M. Schmidt

If it the same letter then I send individual letters but salutation is Dear Heir of John Smith or such.

Ron Jones, Florida

Many years ago, my firm represented ten massage parlors which were really fronts for prostitution and the businesses hired us for one mutual cause.

Nine were owned and managed by men, one by a woman. The boss dictated letters to them as a group. His salutation: Dear Gentlemen and Madam.

Marilou Auer, Virginia (not a lawyer)
