

Sealing and Expunging Criminal Records in Ohio

If you have ever looked for a job, you know that a criminal record can be a big barrier. Employers may look at your background check and immediately decide not to hire you. You may be eligible to apply to seal or expunge your criminal record.

What does it mean to seal or expunge a criminal record?

Many people use these words interchangeably, but they are different legal remedies. When a court seals a conviction or dismissal, all information about that case is removed from public view. The law allows some employers to see the conviction, but the general public cannot see it. When a court expunges a record, the court system is ordered to destroy the record, not just put it away.

Which convictions cannot be sealed or expunged?

- Felonies of the first or second degree
- Some Felonies of the third degree
- Felony offenses of violence
- Sex offenses while the person is required to report or register
- Offenses when the victim was age 12 or younger
- M1 Domestic Violence and Violations of a Protective Order
- Most traffic and motor vehicle convictions, including OVI

Am I eligible to get my criminal convictions sealed or expunged?

In order to answer this question, a person who knows the law must look at all of your convictions. They must look at each conviction to see if it is excluded or eligible. In addition, you must have paid all court-ordered fines and restitution and have served the required waiting period. You may be able to get some of your convictions sealed or expunged while others may be ineligible.

Who can help me figure out if I can get my convictions sealed or expunged?

You may be able to get help from your local Legal Aid office. You can find the Legal Aid that serves your county at <https://www.ohiolegalhelp.org>. Call the office in your area and they can tell you if they can help you. You can also get the names of lawyers in your area by calling your county Bar Association.

