

# Getting a Pardon in Georgia: *A Path to Opportunity & Record Clearing*

## Part One – Georgia Justice Project Presenters

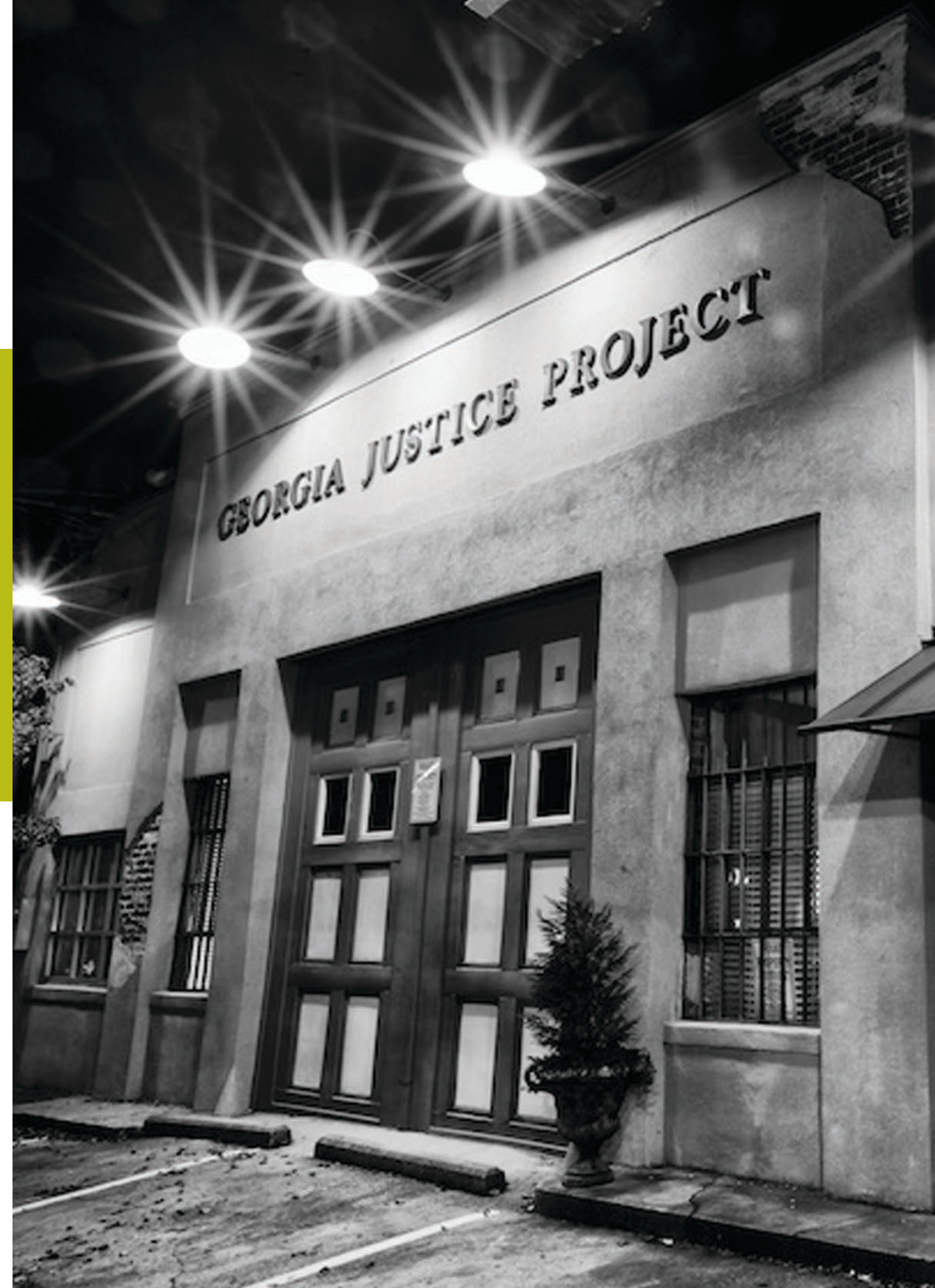
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10/7/2025



# Getting a Pardon in Georgia

## PART 1 - TODAY

- Overview: Record clearing
- What is a pardon?
- The power of a pardon
- Eligibility
- Application & Process
- Preparing to tell your story

IN 2  
WEEKS

## PART 2 - October 22nd

- Brief recap
- A closer look at the application
- Submitting a strong application
- What happens after submission & decision
- Hear from the State Board of Pardons & Paroles

# GEORGIA JUSTICE PROJECT'S INTERVENTION

## HOLISTIC CRIMINAL DEFENSE

- Legal Representation with Social Services
- Restorative Justice
- Warrant Resolution
- Early Termination of Probation

## POLICY/24 LAWS CHANGED

- In 2025, passed the Survivor Justice Act—protecting survivors from unjust convictions and expanding restorative justice statewide

## UNDER CORRECTIONAL CONTROL

- Metro Reentry Facility (MRF)
- Reentry Lawyering
- Family Support
- Driver's License Reinstatements
- Prison Visitation

## CRIMINAL RECORDS

- Record clearing (expungement)
- Record Clearing Events
- Second Chance Desks



# GJP's Record Clearing Work



## Free legal support with Georgia record clearing

- Individual representation (limited capacity)
- Community partnerships – Second Chance Desks & Events

## Community education & self-help resources

- Determine eligibility
- How to tell your story
- Clear your Georgia record on your own

## Expand record clearing in Georgia

- Changing the law to expand record-clearing eligibility

[Click here to find additional resources](#)

# Georgia Record Clearing Overview

# Record Clearing in Georgia

## Expungement

Process that destroys any trace of a criminal record; **does NOT exist in Georgia**



VS

## Restriction & Sealing

Limits who can see a criminal record; hides from most 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, except law enforcement



# Georgia's Two-Step Process

## Official Criminal History: **Restriction**

Restriction hides case information on a GCIC/FBI record

Georgia Crime Information Center  
3121 Panthersville Road  
Decatur, GA 30037  
(404) 244-2639

**Criminal History Record**

**Introduction**

This rap sheet was produced in response to the following request (Produced on 2023-12-08):

|                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| State ID Number | [REDACTED]  |
| ARN             | RESTRICTION |
| Purpose Code    | U           |
| Attention       | [REDACTED]  |

The information in this rap sheet is provided subject to the following caveats:

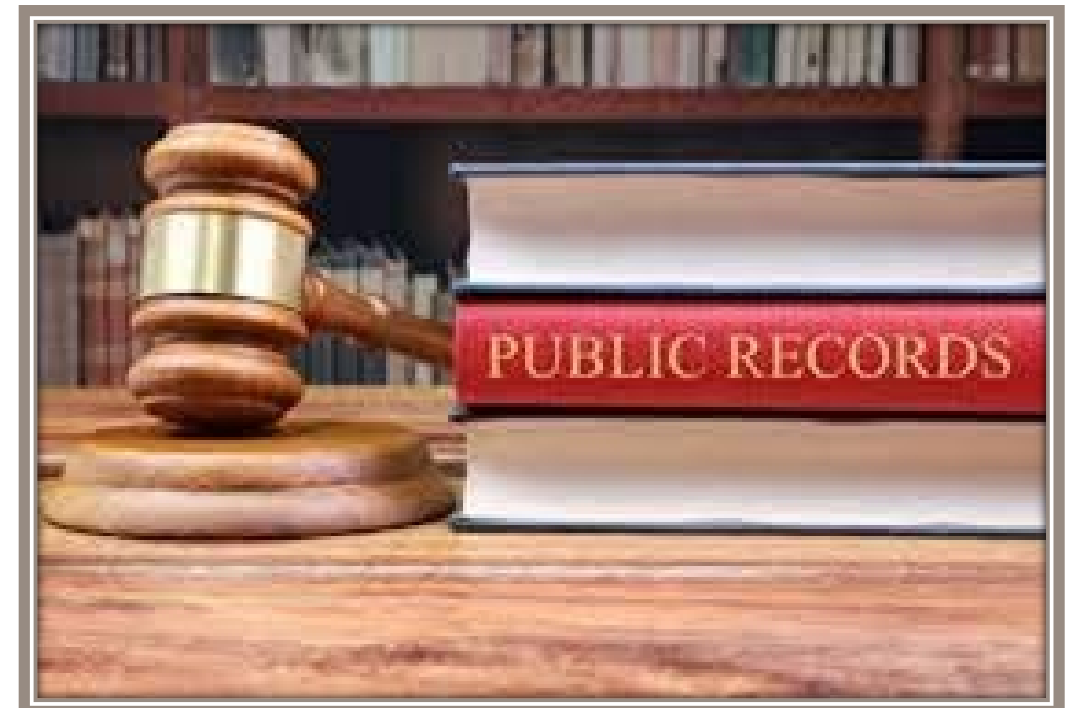
\*\*THIS RESPONSE IS BEING PRODUCED FOR YOUR REQUEST SENT: 2023-12-08 (GA; 2007-08-11)

Important! Criminal history record information is obtained one of two ways: 1) by conducting an inquiry using personal identifiers such as name and date of birth (name search), or 2) by submitting fingerprint cards to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC). When conducting a name search for criminal history record information, there is a possibility that the information returned belongs to a different person with the same, or similar, identifiers. In this case, a positive match of the person whose criminal history record is sought requires submission of fingerprint cards to GCIC. When conducting a fingerprint search for criminal history record information, the information returned does, in fact, belong to the individual. In this case, conducting a name search using the individual's personal identifiers would be the same information. (GA; 2007-08-11)



## Clerk Records: **Sealing**

Sealing hides case information from private background checks



# REMINDER about voting!

## You CAN vote in Georgia if...

- You are **NOT** currently serving a sentence for a felony conviction
  - Completed incarceration, parole, & probation
- You are serving a felony **First Offender** or **Conditional Discharge** sentence & status has not been revoked

When your sentence is complete, your right to vote is automatically restored! But you need to **register** or **re-register** to vote

Outstanding monetary obligations do **NOT** keep you from voting if your sentence is complete

[Click here for more information](#)

# The Power of a Pardon

# What is a Pardon?

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- An order of forgiveness from the State of Georgia for a conviction (usually a felony)
- Granted by the State Board of Pardons & Paroles (SBPP)
- Establishes the person pardoned is a law-abiding citizen & is fully rehabilitated



**NOTES: No cost to apply & you do not need an attorney**

# How Can a Pardon Help Me?

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## Record Clearing

- A pardon doesn't clear your record, but you can apply to have most pardoned convictions cleared from your record (sealed)



## Restoration of Rights

- Pardons restore certain civil rights - right to serve on a jury, be a notary, or hold public office, & sometimes the right to carry a firearm

## Emotional Relief

- A pardon can provide closure, symbolize a fresh start, & recognize all you have done to move on from your past

## Better Job Opportunities

- Employers may be more likely to hire you
- Pardons protect Georgia employers when hiring someone with a conviction (O.C.G.A. §54-1-54(b))

# You Do NOT Need A Pardon If...

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- **You were never convicted**
- **You were sentenced under the First Offender or Conditional Discharge Acts & you successfully completed your sentence**

# You MAY Not Need A Pardon If...

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- **Your convictions occurred because you were the victim of sex or labor trafficking**

[Click here for more information](#)

- **You only have *one* felony conviction, you were eligible for First Offender at the time of conviction, but never informed**

[Click here for more information](#)

# Pardon Overview

# Other Kinds of Relief Granted by SBPP

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- **Restoration of Civil & Political Rights**
- **Restoration of Civil & Political Rights with Firearms**
- **Pardon with Firearms**
- **Registered Sex Offender Pardon**
- **Misdemeanor Pardon Exception**

# Pardon Eligibility Questions

- 1. Do you have a felony conviction from Georgia on your record?
- 2. Have you been finished with all *sentences* (including probation/parole/incarceration) for at least 5 years?
- 3. Have you lived a “law-abiding life” for at least 5 years?
- 4. Did you pay your fines & restitution?
- 5. Are all your cases/charges closed?

**IF YOUR ANSWER IS YES TO ALL QUESTIONS  
YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A PARDON!**

# Pardon Eligibility Questions

✓ 1. Do you have a felony conviction from Georgia on your record?

- Felony Conviction: a case where you pled or were found guilty and received a sentence of more than a year
- You can request a pardon for more than one (all) felony convictions on your record
- You can only apply for a pardon for Georgia convictions (not out of state or federal convictions)

# Pardon Eligibility Questions



**2. Have you been finished with all sentences for at least 5 years?**

**(including time on probation / parole / incarceration)**

- **Must be off ALL sentences for 5 years before you apply:**
  - All cases, including out of state history
  - **Non-reporting probation still counts as being under sentence**
- **If unsure, review your sentence documents or ask probation for a certificate of sentence completion**
- ***Note: There is a 10-year waiting period to apply for pardon while on the sexual offense registry***

# Still on Felony Probation? KYR - Early Termination



Who is eligible for early termination consideration?

**EVERYONE!**

*After serving 3 years on felony probation*

You must have served **3 years** of probation sentence & have...

- **No new arrests** for anything besides a nonserious traffic offense
- No **probation revocations** in the **past 24 months**
- Paid all your **restitution** (not including fines and fees)

DCS does **not** have **blanket policies** that disqualify certain offenses from early termination

# Pardon Eligibility

✓ 3. Have you lived a  
“law-abiding life”  
for the last 5 years?

- No new arrests or convictions during the 5-year waiting period
- Exceptions:
  - New offense is a minor traffic offense (not arrested & does not appear on your criminal history)
  - New offense is completely dismissed & restricted

# Pardon Eligibility

✓ 4. Did you pay your fines & restitution?

✓ 5. Are all your Cases Closed?

- Fines & restitution end when your sentence is complete
- No pending charges, including traffic offenses if they appear on your criminal history; No dead dockets

# Pardon Eligibility

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ALL QUESTIONS...

**YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO  
APPLY FOR A PARDON!**

# Eligibility Exceptions to know...

**Time Waiver:** 5 year waiting period can be waived if you can show a delay in your chosen profession. Must include:

- 3 letters of reference from non-family members explaining why you deserve waiver
- Documentation from your employer or potential employer explaining the need for waiver

**Misdemeanor Convictions:** You can apply for a pardon for misdemeanor convictions if you have documentation showing you need it for:

- Adoption / Custody / Foster Care/ Daycare
- Section VIII (8) Housing
- Truck driver into Canada
- Education
- Employment
- Immigration
- Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (POST).
- Simple battery - Family Violence

❖ **Granted in LIMITED instances**

# Pardon: Overview of Process

- **Step 1: Get ready!**
  - Gather required & helpful documents
- **Step 2: Create free online account & complete online application**
  - <https://pap.georgia.gov/parole-consideration/pardons-restoration-rights>
  - Work & save your progress over time
- **Step 3: Board's investigation**
  - Application review & notification of District Attorney and Victim, if applicable
- **Step 4: Interview**
  - In person/In home interview IN GEORGIA
- **Step 5: Decision**
  - Board makes decision 6-8 months after submission
  - If granted, you receive a certificate of rehabilitation & most cases become eligible to restrict and seal

# Get ready: Gathering Your GCIC & Court Documents

# What to gather now:



- ❑ ***Copy of your GCIC, Purpose Code U***
- ❑ "Final disposition" for all convictions you are seeking a pardon for
- ❑ Certified final disposition for any case appearing as "Time Expired Restricted" on your GCIC
- ❑ **NOTE:** If you have cases on your record which involve an allegation of violence, the Board will ask for a certified copy of those indictments

# How to get a copy of Your GCIC



- Bring your government ID
- Go to your local police department or sheriff's office

**\*Only do this is if you are sure do not have an outstanding warrant\***

- Request a **GCIC-Purpose Code U** (personal copy, do NOT share)
- There is a fee (usually \$25)

# How To Read Your GCIC Report

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## YOU ARE LOOKING FOR:

1. Cases You Want Pardoned
2. Cases That Say "Time Expired Restricted"

# Arrest Information

|                                            |                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| ===== OTN 00031313131 (Cycle 1 of 1) ===== |                                                              |
| Offender Tracking Number (OTN)             | [REDACTED]                                                   |
| Earliest Event Date                        | 2002-11-26                                                   |
| Offense Date                               | 2002-11-26                                                   |
| <hr/>                                      |                                                              |
| Arrest                                     | (Cycle 1)                                                    |
| Arrest Date                                | 2002-11-26 ← arrest date                                     |
| Case Number                                |                                                              |
| Arresting Agency                           | GA0610000; GILMER COUNTY SHERIFFS OFFICE ← arresting agency  |
| Subject's Name                             | [REDACTED]                                                   |
| Arrest Type                                | ADULT                                                        |
| Charge                                     |                                                              |
| Charge Tracking Number                     | [REDACTED]                                                   |
| Charge Literal                             | PURCHASE/POSSESS/CONTROL-DRUG NAME MUST BE ENTERED IN CHARGE |
| Charge Description                         | COMMENT FIELD                                                |
| Statute                                    | VGCSA POSS METH                                              |
| State Offense Code                         | 16-13-30(A); GA                                              |
| Severity                                   | 3512                                                         |
|                                            | FELONY ← severity                                            |

# Court Proceedings

|                        |                                                                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Court Disposition      | (Cycle 1)                                                                    |
| Case Number            | [REDACTED]                                                                   |
| Court Agency           | GA061015J; GILMER COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT                                      |
| Subject's Name         | [REDACTED] [REDACTED]                                                        |
| Charge                 |                                                                              |
| Charge Tracking Number | [REDACTED]02                                                                 |
| Charge Literal         | PURCHASE/POSSESS/CONTROL - DRUG NAME MUST BE ENTERED IN CHARGE COMMENT FIELD |
| Charge Description     | VGCSA POSS METH                                                              |
| Statute                | 16-13-30(A); GA                                                              |
| State Offense Code     | 3512                                                                         |
| Severity               | FELONY                                                                       |
| Disposition            | GUILTY (CONVICTED / ADJUDICATED) (2003-03-04; Convicted)                     |

Court

Outcome of charges  
(disposition)

# Time Expired Restriction (TER)

**You must include a certified copy of the Final Disposition for any case listed as time expired**

Charge Literal MANUFACTURE/SELL/DISPENSE/DISTRIBUTE - DRUG NAME MUST BE ENTERED  
IN CHARGE COMMENT FIELD

Charge Description SCH II TOT GA0670000

Statute 16-13-30(b); GA

State Offense Code 3513

Severity Felony

Magistrate

Magistrate Agency GAGCIC000 (GEORGIA CRIME INFORMATION CENTER)

Magistrate Action TIME EXPIRED RESTRICTION FOR NON-CRIMINAL JUSTICE PURPOSES PER

O.C.G.A. 35-3-37

Magistrate Action Date 2013-07-01

# Request Final Dispositions:

1. **Felony convictions\***
2. **Time Expired Restricted cases**



- Call or visit the clerk's office where the case resolved
- Have **your name, date of birth, and arrest date** from the GCIC
- For all felony convictions and TER arrests, you **MUST** request a certified copy



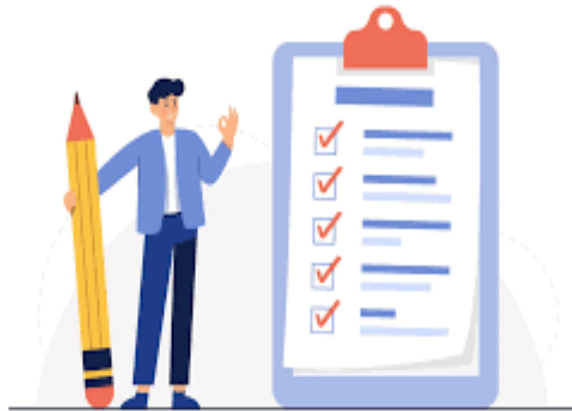
- Some jurisdictions have records online
- However, when in doubt about the information found online, go in person or call the clerk's office

# Get Ready: Gathering Personal Information

# Information you will need to gather & share

- **Addresses for the past 10 years & dates you lived at each address**
- **Address, phone number, & supervisor's name for each employer since you completed your final sentence**
- **Name of high school & technical schools or colleges attended, dates attended**
- **Dates of marriages & divorces**
- **Names & ages of your minor children, and any minors who live with you**
- **Military discharge info (DD Form 214)**
- **Info about substance abuse or mental health treatment**
- **Info about debts that are in default**
- **Info about civil lawsuits if you were/are a party (case number, court, outcome, & description of what the case was about)**

# Recommended items/info to start gathering



- ✓ 1 or 2 photos of you & your family
- ✓ 3 Letters of recommendation (non-family members)
- ✓ Certificates, diplomas, other evidence of rehabilitation
- ✓ Evidence that the conviction is harming you

# PREPARING TO TELL YOUR STORY

*Sharing the story of your rehabilitation  
with the Pardon Board*

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# Telling Your Story: Goals

## BE PERSUASIVE:

convince the Board  
to grant your pardon

## HUMANIZE:

have the Board see  
you as a person &  
not just your record

## DEMONSTRATE:

your stability &  
rehabilitation: *show,*  
*don't tell*

# Telling Your Story: Challenges

Some people have a clear sense of their story & it's easy for them to share

For others, it is very hard...

- It can be painful to relive your experiences.
- It can be difficult to remember what happened, or to put things in a clear timeline

**BEING VULNERABLE CAN BE HARD!**

**But sharing your struggles will make your story more impactful**

# Telling Your Story: Reflect & Identify Key Moments

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THAT HAVE SHAPED YOUR LIFE (positive & negative)

- What was your life like growing up?
- What's a strong memory you have from childhood?



## IDENTIFY TURNING POINTS

When did things start to go wrong?  
What led to your conviction?  
What was the lowest point from that time?



## RECOGNIZE LESSONS LEARNED

- What helped you realize things had to change?
- What steps did you take to improve your life?
- How is your life different now?

# Preview of Part Two AND Your Homework

- ☐ Register for Part Two
- ☐ Review the application
- ☐ Begin to organize the necessary information
- ☐ Begin to gather your documents
- ☐ Start making notes about your story