

How to Get a Pardon in Georgia

A pardon in Georgia is “an order of official forgiveness granted to those individuals who have maintained a good reputation in their community following the completion of their sentence(s).” Pardons are generally for felony convictions, but misdemeanors can be pardoned if certain criteria are met. Pardons are granted by the Georgia State Board of Pardons & Paroles and may be helpful for advancement in employment, housing, or education. Most pardoned offenses are now eligible for restriction and sealing (expungement). NOTE: A pardon is NOT required to restore your voting rights. If your sentence is complete, just re-register and you can vote. More info at GJP.org/voting.

In addition to this handout, GJP created a full **Pardon Toolkit** with more detailed guidance, including videos.

To access the **Pardon Toolkit**, scan this QR code or go to: <https://bit.ly/GJPPardonToolkit>



Eligibility

- You were convicted of a felony offense in Georgia (for misdemeanor eligibility, please refer to the Board’s website for more information at <http://pap.georgia.gov/pardons-restoration-rights>)
- You are not currently required to register as a sex offender (this would require a different type of pardon);
- You completed all sentences at least five (5) years before applying (this means that you have been off parole or probation for five years);
- You have lived a law-abiding life in the last five (5) years (this typically means no new arrests);
- You do not have any pending charges (NOTE: the Board requires that all cases appearing as a dead docket be dismissed prior to submitting an application. A dead docket is an inactive pending case); and,
- All of your fines or restitution are paid.

Process

1. Get your official GCIC criminal history record from a law enforcement agency for a fee. (NOTE: We recommend a Purpose Code U report which should be kept for your personal review only.)
2. Create an online account with the State Board of Pardons & Paroles. You can register for an account at <http://pap.georgia.gov/pardons-restoration-rights>. (NOTE: The Board no longer accepts paper applications.)
3. Start the online application by entering your name and then fill out each section completely. You can use one application for multiple felony convictions. You will need to get the final dispositions for all cases you want pardoned. (NOTE: A final disposition is available at the office of the clerk of the court that handled the case.)
4. Review your GCIC criminal history record and see if any final dispositions are missing or appearing as Time Expired Restricted (“TER”). (NOTE: A final disposition is the outcome of the case/charges.)
5. Get certified copies of any missing dispositions for any arrests (felony or misdemeanor) that appear on your GCIC criminal history record. You will need to upload these court documents. (NOTE: the clerk’s office can provide a certified copy for a small fee, and it will have a raised seal on it.)
6. Once you have completed the application, review your responses and scan/upload any other required materials. Print, sign in front of notary and upload the required waiver documents.
7. Wait approximately six (6) to nine (9) months for a response. The Board will contact you before their final decision to schedule an interview in person at your home.
8. If granted, wait thirty (30) days and obtain a new GCIC criminal history record to make sure your record shows you have been pardoned of the offense(s).
9. If you are denied, you may re-apply after two years. There is no appeal process.
10. If granted, you are immediately eligible to request restriction and sealing. Certain serious violent felonies and sex offenses are not eligible even if you receive a pardon. See www.GJP.org for more info.

Required Documentation

1. Completion of the online application, which can be found on the website for the State Board of Pardon & Paroles at <http://pap.georgia.gov/pardons-restoration-rights>.
2. Veterans who were not Honorably Discharged need to upload a DD-214.
3. A current paystub or W-2 if you are employed and do not want your present employer contacted.
4. Certified copies of needed dispositions, such as convictions that you are seeking to have pardoned and any missing or TER dispositions. (NOTE: you may be asked by the Board to still submit additional court documents, so be sure to include your best contact information on the application for them to reach you after submission.)
5. A copy of your GCIC criminal history record that is less than thirty (30) days old. (We recommend a Purpose Code E report.)
6. Proof of identification (Driver's license, passport, etc.).
7. Proof of residency.

Optional Documentation

You don't want to overwhelm the Board with too much information, but may want to upload the following:

1. Personal/Cover letter - Explain briefly why a pardon is important to you, and why you think you deserve one. The application requires you to describe your history in detail including any drug and mental health treatment, your version of the incidents where you were convicted, your charitable and volunteer activities, and why you think you deserve a pardon, so this letter should be a quick summary.
2. Letter(s) of reference from people who know you (such as community leaders, employers, or counselors who can vouch for your good character). If you are also seeking restoration of firearm rights, you must submit 3 notarized reference letters from non-family members.
3. Resume, transcripts, certificates, awards, and any other documentation of educational, training, drug treatment or other programs you have completed that have helped you to improve yourself.

Sample Personal Statement/Cover Letter	Sample Letter of Recommendation
Date State Board of Pardons and Paroles 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S.E. Balcony Level, East Tower Atlanta, GA 30334-4909 Dear State Board of Pardons and Paroles: My name is XXXX and I am requesting a pardon due to the progress I have made in my life. I realize that I made some bad choices in my life, but I have worked hard to ... (take responsibility for your actions and talk about how you have moved on). The convictions on my criminal history occurred more than ten years ago when I was battling alcoholism and addiction. I have been sober for 6 years and currently attend a 12-step program (speak to your personal circumstances and story). It has been very hard for me to find a job (or housing, whatever your situation is) with my record, and I hope a pardon will help. Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely,	Date State Board of Pardons and Paroles 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S.E. Balcony Level, East Tower Atlanta, GA 30334-4909 Dear State Board of Pardons and Paroles: I am writing in support of Ms. XXXX's application for a pardon. I have known her for X years. I was Ms. XXXX's manager when we worked together at the XXXX Company (state how you personally know the applicant). I have had the opportunity to talk to Ms. XXXX about the mistakes she has made in the past and she has demonstrated that she has changed (write what you know and feel about the applicant). Ms. XXXX has been a responsible employee. She was never late; was polite to customers; and worked hard (write about what you have observed). Unfortunately, Ms. XXXX was laid off recently and is having trouble finding a new job. I hope the Board will consider granting her a pardon to improve her chances. Sincerely,