

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).

Eligibility

- You were convicted of a felony offense in Georgia (for misdemeanor eligibility, please refer to the Board’s website for more information at <https://pap.georgia.gov/parole-consideration/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;
- You do not have any pending charges; and
- All of your fines or restitution are paid.

Process

1. Complete a pardon application. (NOTE: You can submit one application for multiple felony convictions.) The application must be notarized on two separate pages, wait until you are with the notary to sign these pages.
2. 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.)
3. Review your GCIC criminal history record and see if any final dispositions are missing or appearing as Time Expired Restricted. (NOTE: A final disposition is the outcome of your charges.)
4. Get certified copies of any missing dispositions for any arrests (felony or misdemeanor) that appear on your GCIC criminal history record. (NOTE: A certified copy is available for a small fee at the office of the clerk of the court that handled the case, and it will have a raised seal on it.)
5. Mail your application and the required materials to the State Board at the address provided on the application.
6. Wait approximately nine (9) months for a response. (NOTE: The Board will contact you before their final decision to schedule an interview.)
7. If approved, wait six (6) weeks and obtain a new GCIC criminal history record to make sure your record shows you have been pardoned of the offense(s).
8. If you are denied, you may re-apply after two years. There is no appeal process.
9. If granted, you are immediately eligible to request restriction and sealing. (NOTE: Certain serious violent felonies and sex offenses are not eligible even if you have received a pardon.)

Required Documentation

1. 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 attach a DD-214.
3. A current paystub or W-2 form if you are employed and do not want your present employer contacted.
4. Certified copies of missing or TER dispositions.
5. A copy of your GCIC criminal history record that is less than thirty (30) days old. (Note: We recommend a Purpose Code E.)
6. A self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Optional Documentation for General Pardon

You don't want to overwhelm the Board with too much information, but may want to send one or more of 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 just be a quick summary.
2. Letter(s) of recommendation from people who know you (such as community leaders, employers, or counselors who can vouch for your good character).
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
<p>Date</p> <p>State Board of Pardons and Paroles 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S.E. Balcony Level, East Tower Atlanta, GA 30334-4909</p> <p>Dear State Board of Pardons and Paroles:</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Sincerely, XXXX</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>State Board of Pardons and Paroles 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S.E. Balcony Level, East Tower Atlanta, GA 30334-4909</p> <p>Dear State Board of Pardons and Paroles:</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Sincerely, XXXX</p>