

Sealing Your Juvenile Records



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Why Should You Read This?

Even though you may have completed your probation time and plan to stay out of trouble, a juvenile delinquency adjudication can still affect your life. For example, it may make it more difficult for you to get a job or go to the college of your choice. Sealing your juvenile records can help you to leave your past behind and move on.

This pamphlet will explain what it means to seal your juvenile records, who qualifies to have their juvenile records sealed, and how to go about doing it.

What is a Juvenile Record?

A Juvenile Record is all the papers, orders, and reports in your juvenile court file AND all the papers relating to your case held by other agencies such as the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Probation Department, and law enforcement.

What Does It Mean To Seal Your Records?

Sealing your records means that all records held by the police and sheriff's department, the court, the probation department, the district attorney, and the DOJ will be closed up and sealed off. Sealed court proceedings will be treated as though they never took place. If someone asks these agencies about a sealed record, the law requires the agencies to answer, "We have no record of that matter." The law says you can legally say that you were not adjudicated, and not even arrested, for the matter that gets sealed. (Welfare & Institutions Code section 781)

NOTE: A juvenile delinquency adjudication is NOT a criminal conviction. (WIC Section 203)

- So, if you are asked in a job application whether you were ever convicted
 of a crime, you can truthfully answer "no" even if you haven't yet sealed
 your records.
 - Exception: Law enforcement and certain health care employers may
 ask applicants about or seek information regarding juvenile delinquency
 records before they are sealed. (Labor Code section 432.7) However,
 it is unclear if the Labor Code allows law enforcement and health care
 employers to ask about or access sealed juvenile records.
 - Note: Employers that conduct background checks (most public and some private employers) may be able to access juvenile records that contain felony adjudications. Find out if your potential employer

will do such a check and consider disclosing that you have a felony adjudication—it will give you an opportunity for an open and honest discussion with the employer so there are no surprises if a background check reveals felonies on your record.

What Gets Sealed?

All records and papers that are in the custody of the juvenile court AND other records relating to the case which are in the custody of other agencies and officials

• Remember, records kept by the police, the probation department, and the district attorney are also sealed.

Who is Eligible to Get Their Records Sealed?

You can seal your records if:

- You are at least 18 years old and have completed probation, OR you are younger than 18 but at least 5 years have passed since your last arrest or discharge from probation.
- For example, if you completed probation or were last arrested at age 12, you can petition to have your records sealed at age 17.
- You have not been convicted of a felony or of any misdemeanor involving a crime of "moral turpitude" since your last arrest or discharge from probation.

Remember: A conviction is an adult criminal designation, so this means that you can not have any felony convictions or misdemeanor convictions involving moral turpitude in criminal (adult) court. If you do, you may not be able to seal your juvenile record.

- You can show the court that you have been "rehabilitated."
- Your case started and ended in juvenile court.

AND

 You do not have an open civil suit regarding the actions that caused your juvenile record.

What is a Crime Involving Moral Turpitude?

Moral turpitude crimes are crimes that reflect dishonesty or a deep lack of concern about what society views as right or wrong. For example, such things as fraud, theft, sex and drug-related offenses, and offenses involving great bodily injury are considered to involve moral turpitude.

Who Doesn't Qualify To Get Their Records Sealed?

- If you committed an offense that is listed in Welfare & Institutions
 Code section 707(b) when you were age 14 or older (see list at back
 of pamphlet). Make sure you know what offense was adjudicated
 against you—it may be different than the offense you were charged with!
- Traffic violations or offenses and parking violations cannot be sealed.

For example: a ticket for speeding.

Once They Are Sealed Can the Records Be Unsealed Again?

Generally, once your records are sealed, they cannot be unsealed. However, insurance companies are permitted by the Department of Motor Vehicles to look at your sealed records for the purpose of determining your rates. Only automobile-related violations should affect your rates. In addition, if you sue someone for defamation, that person may be able to look at your sealed records. Lastly, in certain circumstances your records may be unsealed to increase your sentence in a later crime under the "Three Strikes" Law.

Is the Process of Sealing Automatic?

No, unless your records are being sealed through a procedure called "deferred entry of judgment." Otherwise, your records will not be sealed unless you file a petition with the court. Your attorney or public defender should be able to tell you if your records are sealed. You can also request your court file from the court where you were adjudicated and review the file to see if your records have been sealed.

Deferred entry of judgment means that you admitted your charges, but once you complete the program satisfactorily, the judge will dismiss your charges. Your charges and your arrest will be treated as if they had never occurred, and your juvenile court records will be sealed automatically.

How Do I Get A Petition to Have My Records Sealed?

You must go in person, call, or write to the clerk of the court in the county where the juvenile delinquency adjudication took place.

- In Los Angeles County, petitions can be obtained in person from any Juvenile Court, including Eastlake, Sylmar, Los Padrinos, Pasadena, Inglewood, Pomona, Compton, Long Beach, Lancaster, or Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center. Ask the clerk for a "Petition to Seal Juvenile Records Packet."
 Please specify whether you need a form to seal dependency or delinquency and informal juvenile and traffic court cases or both.
- You should file your petition at the court that closed your case and terminated probation. However, you may file at any juvenile court.
- You may also request that the petition be mailed to you. In order to do so, send a self-addressed legal size envelope bearing appropriate postage to the following address:

Sealing Desk Superior Court / Juvenile Division 1601 Eastlake Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90033

You can call the court clerk at Eastlake at (323) 226-2854 if you have additional questions

- You may also download the forms from the Los Angeles County Superior Court website at www.lasuperiorcourt.org/juvenile.
- There is currently no fee for filing.

How Do I Get My Arrest Record?

You must appear in person with valid photo identification at the Clerk's Office of any of the above-listed juvenile courts. You may need the information in this record to accurately complete the Petition to Seal Juvenile Records. Your Probation Officer also may be able to assist you with getting a copy of your arrest record.

How Do I Complete the Petition?

A blank copy of the Petition to Seal Juvenile Records, brief instructions provided by the Superior Court, and sample arrest records are included at the end of this booklet in an Appendix. We have provided more detailed instructions here, which may help you as you fill out your Petition. The sample Petition is divided into sections "A", "B", and "C".

REMEMBER: The petition must be filled out in a neat and clear manner or it will not be accepted. You should either type or print clearly in black ink.

Section A:

Write your name, address, sex, age, birthplace, birth date, current address, height, weight, date you will reach the age of thirty-eight, social security number, driver's license number, day time phone number, and mother's first and last maiden name

Section B:

This next section is the most important part of the petition. The arrests / charges that you list here will be the only ones that get sealed. Be sure to follow the directions carefully when completing this section.

- Under "Date", write the day of your arrest (the day that the police stopped you,) not your court date.
- Under "Arresting Agency," write the name of the agency that arrested you, for example: Los Angeles Police Department, Whittier Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.
- Under "Violation" list the number and code section that you were charged with or arrested for under the Penal Code (PC) Health and Safety Code (HSC) or Vehicle (VC). For example, write PC 459 (Burglary) or HSC 11357 (Possession of Marijuana). Do Not simply write "Burglary" or "Petty Theft"- you must list the actual Code section.
- Under "Disposition" write the end result of your charge. Examples of dispositions are: Suitable Placement, Juvenile Traffic Court, Counsel and Release, Home on Probation, DJJ, DA Reject, Camp, or 654 WIC Probation.

Section C:

You need to answer the following question: "Is there any pending civil litigation directly relating to or arising from the criminal act that caused

your juvenile records to be created?" In other words, is there a civil court case related to your arrest or court charges? For example, if you were arrested for battery (hitting someone,) is the person you were arrested for hitting also suing you in civil court for money damages?

If there is a civil case open, you are not eligible to seal your juvenile court records at this time because the civil court may need to access your juvenile record in order to resolve their case. You need to wait until the civil case is over.

If you do have an open civil case related to your delinquency charges, list the name of the case, case number and the court district where the case is being heard.

Lastly, date and sign the form.

The bottom part of the form is for the court to fill out. Do not write under the black line and the words "Court Order."

What Happens After I File the Petition?

After you file the petition, the court will hold a hearing. In Los Angeles County, it will take about 6-12 weeks, depending on the court docket, to get a hearing date. You will receive a "Notice of Hearing" form in the mail several weeks prior to your court date.

At the court hearing, the judge will review the recommendation from the probation department as to whether your records should be sealed.

You are not required to be at the hearing, although it may be in your best interest to appear as it will offer you the opportunity to answer any questions the judge may have and hear the probation officer's report.

You, the district attorney, probation officer, or any other person who has relevant evidence may testify at the hearing. You can bring witnesses to testify on your behalf, for example, a pastor or a teacher.

Note: In LA County, the judges often rule on the petition before the court date; you can call the clerk of the court the day before your hearing, in the afternoon, to see if there is a decision. If you are unable to attend and do not call, the court will notify you by mail a week or two after your hearing date.

If the court grants your petition, it will seal your court record and require other agencies, which have evidence of your juvenile court history, including probation, the district attorney and the DOJ, to seal their records.

What Happens if the Court Denies My Petition?

In many cases, if the court denies your petition, you may reapply at a later time. Sometimes, the court wants to wait a while and be sure that you are really on the right track before allowing you to seal your records. If you have questions about why your petition was denied, ask the judge at the hearing, and ask whether you would be eligible to re-apply at a later date.

How Can I Check To Make Sure That My Rap Sheet Shows that My Records Were Sealed?

In order to make sure that the police, sheriff, and other agencies seal your records, you should request a copy of your juvenile records.

For FBI records:

Send a cover letter containing your mailing address, set of fingerprints, and date and place of birth, and the appropriate fee (at this printing, \$18) to:

FBI CJIS Division – Record Request 1000 Custer Hollow Road Clarksburg, West Virginia 26306

Fingerprint services are widely available and charge about \$10-15—look in the yellow pages.

For specific requirements, see: http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/fprequest.htm

For California records:

Send your fingerprint images (a Live Scan is necessary for CA residents) and the appropriate fee (\$25 at this printing) to:

California Department of Justice Record Review Unit P.O. Box 903417 Sacramento, CA 94203-4170

For specific requirements, see: http://www.ag.ca.gov/fingerprints/security.php

For local police records, check with your local police department.

Once the Records Are Sealed, Do They Get Destroyed?

Yes. Your juvenile court file will be destroyed 5 years after it was sealed if you committed a 601 (status) offense, and on your 38th birthday if you committed a 602 offense. (See the back of this pamphlet for definitions of 601 and 602 offenses.) The probation department, police department, and other agencies can (but don't have to) destroy their records after 5 years.

Are There Any Alternatives To Sealing Juvenile Records?

If you were arrested, but not taken before a court, you may request that you be found "factually innocent" and your records be sealed. "Factually innocent" means that there is no reasonable cause to believe that you committed the offense for which you were arrested.

If you do not file an application to seal your records, your juvenile court file only will be destroyed eventually, unless the court finds good cause to keep your file open:

- 601 (status offender) records at age 21
- 602 records at age 38

However, if you committed a 707(b) offense, those records will not be destroyed. In addition, the probation officer may destroy your probation records after 5 years.

If you committed or were arrested for an adult offense, there may be other ways to wipe away part or all of your record. You should consult an attorney.

APPENDIX

(Note: code sections may change)

Welfare and Institutions Code 601:

§ 601. Minors habitually disobedient or truant

(a) Any person under the age of 18 years who persistently or habitually refuses to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of his or her parents, guardian, or custodian, or who is beyond the control of that person, or who is under the age of 18 years when he or she violated any ordinance of any city or county of this state establishing a curfew based solely on age is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court which may adjudge the minor to be a ward of the court.

Welfare and Institutions Code 602:

§ 602. Minors violating laws defining crime; ward of court

- (a) Except as provided in subdivision (b), any person who is under the age of 18 years when he or she violates any law of this state or of the United States or any ordinance of any city or county of this state defining crime other than an ordinance establishing a curfew based solely on age, is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, which may adjudge such person to be a ward of the court.
- (b) Any person who is alleged, when he or she was 14 years of age or older, to have committed one of the following offenses shall be prosecuted under the general law in a court of criminal jurisdiction:
- (1) Murder, as described in Section 187 of the Penal Code, if one of the circumstances enumerated in subdivision (a) of Section 190.2 of the Penal Code is alleged by the prosecutor, and the prosecutor alleges that the minor personally killed the victim.
- (2) The following sex offenses, if the prosecutor alleges that the minor personally committed the offense, and if the prosecutor alleges one of the circumstances enumerated in the One Strike law, subdivision (d) or (e) of Section 667.61 of the Penal Code, applies:

- (A) Rape, as described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 261 of the Penal Code
- (B) Spousal rape, as described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 262 of the Penal Code.
- (C) Forcible sex offenses in concert with another, as described in Section 264.1 of the Penal Code.
- (D) Forcible lewd and lascivious acts on a child under the age of 14 years, as described in subdivision (b) of Section 288 of the Penal Code.
- (E) Forcible sexual penetration, as described in subdivision (a) of Section 289 of the Penal Code.
- (F) Sodomy or oral copulation in violation of Section 286 or 288a of the Penal Code, by force, violence, duress, menace, or fear of immediate and unlawful bodily injury on the victim or another person.
- (G) Lewd and lascivious acts on a child under the age of 14 years, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 288, unless the defendant qualifies for probation under subdivision (c) of Section 1203.066 of the Penal Code.

Offenses listed in Welfare and Institutions Code 707(b):

- (1) Murder.
- (2) Arson, as provided in subdivision (a) or (b) of Section 451 of the Penal Code.
- (3) Robbery.
- (4) Rape with force or violence or threat of great bodily harm.

- (5) Sodomy by force, violence, duress, menace, or threat of great bodily harm.
- (6) Lewd or lascivious act as provided in subdivision (b) of Section 288 of the Penal Code.
- (7) Oral copulation by force, violence, duress, menace, or threat of great bodily harm.
- (8) An offense specified in subdivision (a) of Section 289 of the Penal Code
- (9) Kidnapping for ransom.
- (10) Kidnapping for purpose of robbery.
- (11) Kidnapping with bodily harm.
- (12) Attempted murder.
- (13) Assault with a firearm or destructive device.
- (14) Assault by any means of force likely to produce great bodily injury.
- (15) Discharge of a firearm into an inhabited or occupied building.
- (16) An offense described in Section 1203.09 of the Penal Code.
- (17) An offense described in Section 12022.5 or 12022.53 of the Penal Code.
- (18) An felony offense in which the minor personally used a weapon listed in subdivision (a) of Section 12020 of the Penal Code.
- (19) An felony offense described in Section 136.1 or 137 of the Penal Code.

- (20) Manufacturing, compounding, or selling one-half ounce or more of a salt or solution of a controlled substance specified in subdivision (e) of Section 11055 of the Health and Safety Code.
- (21) A violent felony, as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 667.5 of the Penal Code, which would also constitute a felony violation of subdivision (b) of Section 186.22 of the Penal Code.
- (22) Escape, by the use of force or violence, from any county juvenile hall, home, ranch, camp, or forestry camp in violation of subdivision (b) of Section 871 where great bodily injury is intentionally inflicted upon an employee of the juvenile facility during the commission of the escape.
- (23) Torture as described in Sections 206 and 206.1 of the Penal Code.
- (24) Aggravated mayhem, as described in Section 205 of the Penal Code.
- (25) Carjacking, as described in Section 215 of the Penal Code, while armed with a dangerous or deadly weapon.
- (26) Kidnapping, for purposes of sexual assault, as punishable in subdivision (b) of Section 209 of the Penal Code.
- (27) Kidnapping, as punishable in Section 209.5 of the Penal Code.
- (28) The offense described in subdivision (c) of Section 12034 of the Penal Code.
- (29) The offense described in Section 12308 of the Penal Code.
- (30) Voluntary manslaughter, as described in subdivision (a) of Section 192 of the Penal Code.



Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE PETITION to SEAL JUVENILE RECORDS FORM

If you do not have your arrest information, some information may be obtained from the Juvenile Delinquency clerk's office at Los Padrinos, Pasadena, Pomona, Long Beach, Compton, Kenyon, Inglewood, Sylmar, Mc Courtney Juvenile justice Center of Eastlake juvenile Court. Information regarding court locations is available on the court's website at: http://lasuperior court.org/locations. If no arrest information is found go to the agency that arrested you request your information.

Complete the following information:

- 1. Complete all identifying information (name, address, DOB, etc.) on the top portion of the form.
- 2. Complete the information for each arrest disposition separately starting with the Incident, #1 and include the date, arresting agency, violation charge, and disposition of each arrest (if applicable).
- 3. List the date of each and every arrest in the "DATE" column. In the "ARRESTING AGENCY" column, list the name of the arresting law, list the name of the arresting law enforcement agency (Police, Sheriff, etc.) that arrested your on the specific date. In the "VIOLATIONS" column, list the code section(s) violated (i.e. 11357 H&S, 487 PC, 23152 (a) VC. etc.) In the "DISPOSITION" column, list the final result of your arrest (I.e. Home on Probation/HOP, Department of Juvenile Justice/ DJJ. California Camp Placement/CCP etc.).
- 4. Answer the question regarding the civil lawsuits and sign and date the order above the "SIGNATURE OF PETITIONER OR AGENT". (DO NOT WRITE THE COURT ORDER AREA OF THE FORM.)

To seal a record concerning the California Highway Patrol (CHP), please put in the description of the incident (citation, arrest or accident, including the appropriate numbers when available), the date of the Incident, and the specific location of the Incident (CHP area or City).

When the petition has been processed, you will receive a Notice of Hearing date to appear in court. Your appearance in court is not mandatory: however, it may be in your best interest to appear as it will afford you the opportunity to address the court and hear the probation department's report.

Following these instructions carefully will reduce or eliminate any delays in processing your petition. If you have any questions about this form, please call the appropriate court location and return the completed Petition to Seal Juvenile Record and Court Order to them.

For questions regarding sealing for Eastlake Juvenile Court, please call (323) 226-8920.

Petition to Seal Juvenile records for Eastlake Juvenile Court may be sent to:

Eastlake Juvenile Court Attn.: Sealing Clerk 1601 Eastlake Avenue, Room J Los Angeles, CA 90033

SEALING INFORMATION NEEDED TO COMPLETE FORM:

COMPLETE THE TOP PORTION OF THE "PETITION TO SEAL JUVENILE RECORDS" REGARDING PERSONAL INFORMATION AS INDICATED.

THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE ARREST INFORMATION LOOKS LIKE THIS:

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664/211 PC

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JUDGE/COMMISSIONER/REFEREE OF THE JUVENILE COURT

Public Counsel, the public interest law office of the Los Angeles County and Beverly Hills Bar Associations, is the largest pro bono law firm in the U.S., and also is the Southern California affiliate of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Public Counsel coordinates the contributions of thousands of volunteer lawyers each year. Public Counsel serves those in need—such as children and the elderly, literacy projects and low income housing providers, refugees and the homeless—by providing legal representation and matching financially eligible clients with volunteer attorneys.

While this publication is designed to provide accurate and current information about the law, readers should contact an attorney or other expert for advice in particular cases, and should also consult the relevant statues and court decisions when relying on cited materials.

The contents of this brochure may be reprinted. Any adaptation or translation of the contents of this brochure must be authorized by Public Counsel.

You may find this booklet and other Public Counsel booklets at www.publiccounsel.org (First click on "Resources"; second, click on "Publications", third click on "Children's Rights Project.")

Public Counsel P.O. Box 76900 610 South Ardmore Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90005

213/385-2977 ext. 500 or 800/870-8090 Adoptions: 323/526-6360 www.publiccounsel.org