

Certificates restore your job, housing, and civil rights

Next Door Project

In New York State, there are two types of certificates available to open barriers to employment, licensing, public housing, and civic participation for individuals with conviction histories:

Certificates of Relief from Disabilities (CORs) and **Certificates of Good Conduct (CGCs)**.

How can a certificate help me?

1. Certificates remove any **mandatory barrier** to employment or licensing caused by felony convictions. For example, one law says that people with certain felony convictions, no matter how old they are, can't get security guard licenses. Another law prohibits people from driving a school bus or Access-a-Ride for a certain number of years after some convictions. Once a person gets a certificate, these rules **no longer lock them out** of these jobs.

2. For all other employers, certificates are evidence of **positive change** they must consider when deciding whether to hire you.

3. In New York City, the rules for **public housing** and some vouchers exclude people with records for a certain number of years, unless they can prove they pose no risk in a hearing. If you have a certificate, however, these exclusions will not apply to you.

4. Once a person has a felony conviction, they cannot **serve on a jury** for the rest of their life, unless they get a certificate. That does not mean you will be chosen to serve on a jury, but you are allowed into the pool of potential jurors.

Which certificate can I get? It depends on how many court cases resulted in felony convictions. If you were convicted of two felonies in a single court case, that counts as one felony when you apply for a certificate. The number of lesser convictions, like misdemeanors and violations, does not matter.

- COR: No more than one case with a felony conviction.
- CGC: Two or more cases that resulted in a felony conviction.

When do I apply? Currently incarcerated individuals cannot apply. If you are not incarcerated, when you apply depends on the certificate you are trying to get:

- COR: You can apply anytime.
- CGC: You must wait certain number of years, depending on the most serious conviction in your **entire record**, after your release from prison. Parole violations do not restart the clock:
 - A & B Felonies: 5 years and
 - C, D & E Felonies: 3 years.

[www.cssny.org/
programs/entry/
the-next-door-project](http://www.cssny.org/programs/entry/the-next-door-project)
212-614-5441
legal@cssny.org

Where do I apply? If you received any sentence **except incarceration in state prison**, apply through your sentencing court for a COR. This means that you were never incarcerated, or you were incarcerated in a city jail, like Rikers Island. In every other situation, you apply through Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), meaning you:

1. Are eligible for a COR, but did time in a state prison;
2. Are only eligible for a CGC; or
3. Want a COR or a CGC for a conviction that occurred outside of New York State.

What's the application process? It depends on where you must apply, but essentially you will give evidence of **positive change** to an officer in an interview, and that person will decide whether to **recommend** you for the certificate. Such evidence includes documents like diplomas, certificates, and letters of reference. You should also write your own letter to explain this information.

If you are on parole, probation, or post-release supervision, you must go through your parole or probation officer to apply. Otherwise, If you must apply to your sentencing court, **use the chart below**. You will apply at your sentencing court, be interviewed by a probation officer, and might appear in court. If you are denied, be sure to get the docket number of your case. This will make it much easier for a lawyer to help you.

If you must go to DOCCS, fill out and mail the application (ask us for one) and your proof of positive change. A local parole officer (or a federal probation officer if you were in the federal system) will contact you for an interview and write a report to the Board of Parole. Three members of the Board of Parole meet monthly to review applications; they must all agree to grant the certificate. The process can take up to eighteen months.

Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
Where can I get a Certificate of Disposition and apply for a Certificate of Relief from Disabilities?				
Felonies & Misdemeanors: 265 E. 161st Street Second Floor	Felonies: Supreme Court 320 Jay St. 13th Floor Misdemeanors: Criminal Court 120 Schermerhorn St. Room 502	100 Centre St. Felonies: Supreme Court Room 1000 Misdemeanors: Criminal Court Room 526	125-01 Queens Blvd. Felonies: Supreme Court Room 710 Misdemeanors: Criminal Court Room G-64	Felonies: Supreme Court 18 Richmond Terrace Room 110 Misdemeanors: Criminal Court 67 Targee St. Room 103
When is my interview with a probation officer for a Certificate of Relief from Disabilities?				
Usually the same day.	Within a week of your court date.	Within four weeks of applying.	Usually the same day.	Within six to eight weeks of applying.
Where is the probation office?				
215 E. 161st St. Fifth Floor	210 Joralemon St. Eleventh Floor	100 Centre St. Room 1037	125-01 Queens Blvd.	340 Bay Street
Do I have to appear before a judge to get a Certificate of Relief from Disabilities?				
No, your case is not calendared.	Yes, your court date will be about five to six weeks after you apply.	No, your case is not calendared.	Yes, your court date will be about five to six weeks after you apply.	Yes, Probation will tell you when your court date is.
How am I notified about whether the Certificate of Relief from Disabilities was granted?				
Mail.	Judge tells you in court.	Mail.	Judge tells you in court.	Judge tells you in court.
How long does it usually take to get a Certificate of Relief from Disabilities after I apply?				
Four to six weeks.	About six weeks.	About six weeks.	Five to six weeks.	Six to eight weeks.