



Pardons in Pennsylvania: Helping Low-Income Philadelphians With Criminal Records Obtain A Fresh Start

DATE: June 29, 2023 from 9:00am-10:30am via Zoom

It's been estimated that there are 100,000 low-income people living in Philadelphia who have turned their lives around since having been involved with the criminal justice system. In some low-income, high arrest, primarily minority neighborhoods, upwards of 60% of the adults are thought to have criminal records (arrests and convictions). With 87% of employers and 80% of landlords checking those records as part of the application process, those records are used to deny jobs, housing, credit, education, and other opportunities for which they are qualified.

PLSE is looking for more people to help low-income Philadelphians apply for a pardon and get the best chance they can for a hearing. This **90 minute training** will explain the pardon process and include an in-depth explanation of the Application for Clemency.

At the end of the program, participants will be matched with a PLSE client who has been screened for eligibility in PLSE's Pro Bono Pardon Project (see attached). The goal is to begin the pardon application during the first meeting, and to eventually submit a completed application on behalf of a PLSE client. The estimated pro bono hours for 1 pardon application is **10 hour pro bono hours**.

Faculty: Sarah Coyle, Staff Attorney at PLSE

In preparation for this event, feel free to watch this short video [People Change, Records Don't](#)





Eligibility Criteria for the PLSE Pro Bono Pardon Program

- A criminal record and/or residence in Philadelphia County
 - Household income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline
 - With limited exceptions, ** no conviction anytime anywhere of any “Crime of Violence” as defined in PA Code § 81.202:
 - (i) Murder of the third degree, voluntary manslaughter, rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 2702(a)(1) (relating to aggravated assault), robbery as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3701(a)(1)(i),(ii) or (iii) (relating to robbery) or kidnapping.
 - (ii) An attempt to commit murder of the third degree, voluntary manslaughter, rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 2702(a)(1), robbery as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3701 (a)(1)(i),(ii) or (iii) or kidnapping.
 - (iii) An offense committed while in visible possession of a firearm for which sentencing was imposed under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9712 (relating to sentences for offenses committed with firearms).
- ** PLSE believes that an individual is bigger than their criminal record in all circumstances. Convictions for robbery or aggravated assault dating back at least 8 years will be referred to the Pro Bono Program only on a case by case basis.
- At least 3 years have passed since *completion* of most recent sentence
 - Payment of amount due in restitution and fines (not including court fees and costs) is possible within 30 months

Pardon Project Volunteers have the right to decline a referral for any reason. If, after investigation, a Pardon Project Volunteer determines that a client does NOT qualify for PLSE's Pardon Project, the volunteer may decide (in her/his own discretion) whether or not to continue assisting the individual. If the volunteer declines to proceed further, PLSE will notify that individual that they are being declined from the Project but remain eligible for Pardon Workshops and other services provided by PLSE.

The Pardon Project is an initiative of Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) Recipient, 2021 Greater Philadelphia Innovation Award for Community Development