



## **FAST FACTS about PARDONS IN PENNSYLVANIA**

**A pardon erases your criminal record, automatically, “like it never happened”.** “Clean Slate” only “seals” your record-- it’s still there for law enforcement and many employers to see.

**6 out of 10 people who apply for a pardon actually receive one!** Those who do best wait at least five years after they have completed their sentence before they apply.

**The pardon process is completely free** except for getting copies of documents from the court. The application and instructions are online at [bop.pa.gov](http://bop.pa.gov) and there are LOTS of videos and forms on our website to help you apply: [PardonMePA.org/#self-help](http://PardonMePA.org/#self-help).

**You do NOT need a lawyer** – although it’s always best to get legal advice when trying to do something as important to you as getting a pardon. If you cannot afford an attorney, many counties now have volunteer Pardon Projects where you can ask for help: you can contact them via our website: [PardonMePA.org/#locations](http://PardonMePA.org/#locations)

**There are only 4 steps:** (1) the application, (2) investigation by the government including interviewing you, the victim(s) of your crime (if any) and many others, (3) a public hearing via zoom before the Board of Pardons, and (4) if they vote to recommend you, review of your case and decision by the Governor. Even so, the process takes several years from beginning to end.

**All you need is 3 out of 5 votes to get recommended to the Governor.** You can watch the hearings to see what’s important to the members of the Board of Pardons. They are held three times per year via zoom.

**Successful applicants accept responsibility for what they did and tell persuasive stories about how they have changed and won’t ever commit another crime.** A pardon actually forgives you for what you did – it does NOT mean you were wrongly convicted.

**The more achievements you’ve had since completing your sentence, the better!** It’s always best to have other people talking about how good you are and saying you have earned a second chance. Collect letters of reference, certificates, diplomas, pictures of you volunteering in the community – not only to attach to your application but to show who you really are to potential employers, lenders, landlords and others as you wait your hearing.

**The application, supplemental materials, and questions are all sent to the government by email: [bopclemency@pa.gov](mailto:bopclemency@pa.gov).** Be sure to keep copies of whatever you send in so you have them when it’s time for your interview and hearing.

**[www.PardonMePA.org](http://www.PardonMePA.org)**