What is a pardon?
In some cases, you can ask the court to seal your criminal records. This used to be called expungement.

You CANNOT ask to seal your criminal records with a Petition to Seal if:

- You are a sexual offender whose victim was under the age of 18 years
- You have a felony and any part of your sentence was spent in the Arkansas Department of Corrections
- You have a Class Y felony
- You have a Class A or B felony that are not drug offenses
- You were sentenced for manslaughter
- You have an unclassified felony with a maximum sentence that was more than 10 years
- You have a violent felony

If any of the above is true, you will have to complete an application for pardon. If you are given a pardon, then your criminal records will be sealed.

If you were convicted of a federal crime, you will need to visit www.justice.gov/pardon for information and instructions.

Before You Apply
Applying for a pardon is NOT a guarantee that you will be granted a pardon. The process can take a long time (sometimes up to several months or a year).

You cannot ask for a pardon if you are on probation or on parole. You have to finish the terms of your sentence, and you must pay any costs or fines that were part of your sentencing. For some convictions, you may have to wait a certain period of time before you can apply for a pardon.

You may want to talk to an attorney for help. An attorney can make sure that you have all of the documents that you need and can look over your application before you file.

How do I apply for a pardon?
You can find the Pardon Application on the Arkansas Governor website at governor.arkansas.gov. The application is also known as Executive Clemency.

If you have never applied for a pardon before, you will need your:
- Judgment and Commitment Order
- Felony information or probable cause affidavit from the Clerk’s Office
- Narrative incident report from arresting agency (city police, sheriff, or state police)
- Order to Seal (only if your record is sealed)

You can get your Judgment and Commitment Order by visiting the clerk’s office at the court where you were sentenced and ask for copies. You may be charged a small fee (generally $5) to get copies.

If you have filed for a pardon before, you will need your:
- Judgment and Commitment Order
- Information sheet or probable cause affidavit
- Narrative incident report from arresting agency (city police, sheriff, or state police)

You will have to attach these documents to your application. Your application will have to be signed, dated, and notarized.

You will also need letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation have to include the current address and phone numbers of the people writing the letters. Letters can be written by:
- Family members
- Friends
- Minister
- Current or past employers
- Other people you may know who can speak about your moral character and good behavior

You will also have to write a letter of personal plea. Your letter should include facts about what steps you have taken to pay for the crimes that you committed. These steps can include education, employment, or community service.

The goal of your letter should be to prove that you are sorry for what you have done and you have already taken steps in fixing your mistakes. You should end your
letter by asking that a hearing be set so you can discuss your case.

After You Apply
The Parole Board reviews all applications for pardon. The Governor will not look at any application that has not been reviewed by the Parole Board first.

After the Parole Board looks at your application, it will make its recommendation. This is when you will receive a letter. Do not call the Parole Board to ask about your results. Only call the Parole Board if you need to change or update your address.

After letting you know its recommendations and posting the results on its website, the Parole Board will forward your application to the Governor's office. Once the Governor's office has received your application, you can make an appointment with the Governor's Counsel for Clemency and Corrections.

Governor's Decision Is Final
When you make your applications, there are three possible results.

1. The Governor may not take any action on your application. If this happens, you can reapply for a pardon.

2. The Governor can deny your application for pardon. This decision is final. You cannot appeal.

3. The Governor accepts your application and sends out a notice to grant a pardon. There will be a 30-day waiting period. This waiting period is to give the public time to make comments and give information about the pardon. If any negative information is received during this waiting period, the Governor can choose to deny your pardon.

If you are given a pardon, you can have all of your rights restored.

For more information, visit the Arkansas Governor's Office website: governor.arkansas.gov

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The information and statements of law in this fact sheet should not be considered legal advice. This fact sheet is provided as a broad guide to help you understand how certain legal matters are handled in general. Courts may interpret the law differently. Before you take action, talk to an attorney and follow his or her advice. Always do what the court tells you to do.

www.arlegalservices.org