

FREE HELP FOR CIVIL CASES

The FCMC Self Help Center is a free, walk-in service to help you represent yourself in court without a lawyer.

We cannot offer legal advice, but we can point you to helpful resources.

The Self Help Center Can Help You:

- Learn how to represent yourself
- Get help with court rules, procedures, and forms
- Know what to expect before you go to court
- Be more informed of your legal options

Civil Legal Issues We Can Help You With:

- Sealing/Expunging of records
- Landlord/tenant issues—including evictions and rent escrow
- General division claims
- Small claims
- Creditor/debtor issues

What You Can Access at the Self Help Center:

- Court forms
- Tools and guides to help with court forms and legal research
- Pro Se (self-representation) aid and guidance
- Answers to general questions about Municipal Court processes or procedures

REMEMBER

Staff cannot provide legal service or representation and cannot assist with any criminal, protection order or traffic matters.

It is up to YOU to make decisions about your legal issues.

READY TO GET STARTED?

WALK IN

OR

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

375 S. High St., 16th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
(last visitors accepted at 2:30 PM)

The Center does not accept appointments and staff cannot provide information over the phone. The Center is closed whenever the Municipal Court is closed. There may be times the Center is closed during normal hours due to staff responsibilities.



www.franklincountymunicourt.org/selfhelp

Includes helpful legal and research resources and materials on various legal issues and a web chat to answer your questions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

SEALING & EXPUNGING CRIMINAL RECORDS

What's the difference between expunging and sealing a criminal record?
See O.R.C. 2953.32

EXPUNGEMENT	SEALING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deletes the Court record, destroying it forever. • No one has access to expunged Court records. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seals the Court record from public access. • Only certain people have access for certain reasons. 



What convictions cannot be sealed or expunged?

See ORC 2953.32

Convictions for first or second degree felonies cannot be sealed/expunged.

More than 2 third degree felonies cannot be sealed/expunged.

Any convictions under 2919.25 or 2919.27 (Domestic Violence or Violation of Protection Order) cannot be sealed/expunged.

Convictions for OVI and Physical Control can never be sealed/expunged. Convictions for other traffic offenses (Chapters 4507, 4510, 4511, and 4549) cannot be sealed/expunged, except as otherwise provided in O.R.C. 2953.61.

Convictions for sexually oriented offenses cannot be sealed while subject to SORN registration requirements.

Convictions in which the victim was under 13 cannot be sealed/expunged (except 2919.21 Nonsupport or contribution to nonsupport of juveniles).

Convictions for felony offenses of violence cannot be sealed/expunged. "Offense of violence" is defined in 2901.01(9) as follows:

- 2903.01: Aggravated murder
- 2903.02: Murder
- 2903.03: Voluntary manslaughter
- 2903.04: Involuntary manslaughter
- 2903.11: Felonious assault
- 2903.12: Aggravated assault
- 2903.13: Assault*
- 2903.15: Permitting child abuse
- 2903.18: Strangulation
- 2903.21: Aggravated menacing*
- 2903.211: Menacing by stalking*
- 2903.22: Menacing*
- 2903.34: Patient abuse/neglect*
- 2905.01: Kidnapping
- 2905.02: Abduction
- 2905.11: Extortion
- 2905.32: Trafficking in persons
- 2907.02: Rape
- 2907.03: Sexual battery
- 2907.05: Gross sexual imposition
- 2909.02: Aggravated arson
- 2909.03: Arson*
- 2909.24: Terrorism
- 2911.01: Aggravated robbery
- 2911.02: Robbery
- 2911.11: Aggravated burglary
- 2917.01: Inciting to violence*
- 2917.02: Aggravated riot
- 2917.31: Inducing panic*
- 2917.321: Swatting
- 2919.25: Domestic violence
- 2921.03: Intimidation
- 2921.04: Intimidation of attorney, victim or witness in criminal case or delinquent child action proceeding
- 2921.34: Escape*
- 2923.161: Improperly discharging firearm at or into a habitation, in a school safety zone or with intent to cause harm or panic to persons in a school building or at a school function
- Division (A)(1) of section 2903.34: F4 Patient abuse or neglect (M ≠ OOV)
- Division (A)(1), (2), or (3) of section 2911.12: F2 + F3 Burglary (F4 ≠ OOV)
- Division (B)(1), (2), (3), or (4) of section 2919.22: some F2 + some F3 Endangering children
- Felonious sexual penetration in violation of former section 2907.12 of the Revised Code
- 959.131(C): Cruelty to companion animals* (F5 = OOV)

*There are both felony and misdemeanor versions of the crime. Misdemeanors are eligible for sealing/expunging.

When can I apply to seal/expunge a conviction record?

See ORC 2953.32(B)

You must wait a certain amount of time after the final discharge from a case before you apply for that record to be sealed/expunged. Final discharge means you have finished serving any community service, jail or prison sentence, any term of probation or parole, and paid any fines and restitution.

For Record Sealing:

- Minor misdemeanors: 6 months
- Misdemeanors, 4th-degree felonies, and 5th-degree felonies: 1 year
- 3rd-degree felonies: 3 years
- Any conviction subject to SORN registry: 5 years after requirements have ended.
- Any conviction for ORC 2921.43 (soliciting improper compensation): 7 years
- Bond Forfeiture: Anytime

For Expungement:

- Minor misdemeanors: 6 months
- Misdemeanors: 1 year
- Felonies: The amount of time required for sealing +10 years.
- Bond Forfeiture: 3 Years

What if I have criminal charges pending against me?

See ORC 2953.32(D)(1)(b)

You are not eligible if you have any criminal charges currently pending against you from the time you submit your sealing/expungement application through the date of your hearing. This includes things like pending speeding tickets, warrants for your arrest, and being on probation for another case in any court in the U.S.

Expungements for specific firearm offenses and victims of human trafficking are still available in accordance with ORC 2953.521 and 2953.36, respectively.

What about dismissed cases?

Any criminal case can be sealed if all charges were dismissed. There is no filing fee for applications containing **only** dismissed cases, but you cannot have any open criminal/traffic cases. There is no waiting period.

Where do I go to get a conviction record sealed/expunged?

Come to the Self Help Center on the 16th Floor of 375 S. High Street to get help looking up your case(s), applying to seal/expunge, and filling out the application.

Municipal Court applications should be filed at the Expungement Window on the 2nd Floor of 375 S. High Street. Common Pleas Court applications should be filed with the Common Pleas Clerk's office on the 1st Floor of 345 S. High Street.

Is there a fee for applying to seal/expunge conviction records?

Yes, there is a \$50 fee to submit an application to seal/expunge convictions. Each application is \$50, **not** each case. If you have cases in Common Pleas Court and in Municipal Court, you will have to pay a filing fee in each court. If you cannot afford the filing fee, you can ask a judge to waive it by filing an affidavit of indigency. Visit the Self Help Center to get that form.