



Pardon Coach Training

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PHILADELPHIA
LAWYERS *for*
SOCIAL EQUITY



OBJECTIVE:

To come together as a community and provide pathways to redemption for those who have been held accountable by the criminal legal system and establish a model of community forgiveness that other communities can follow.



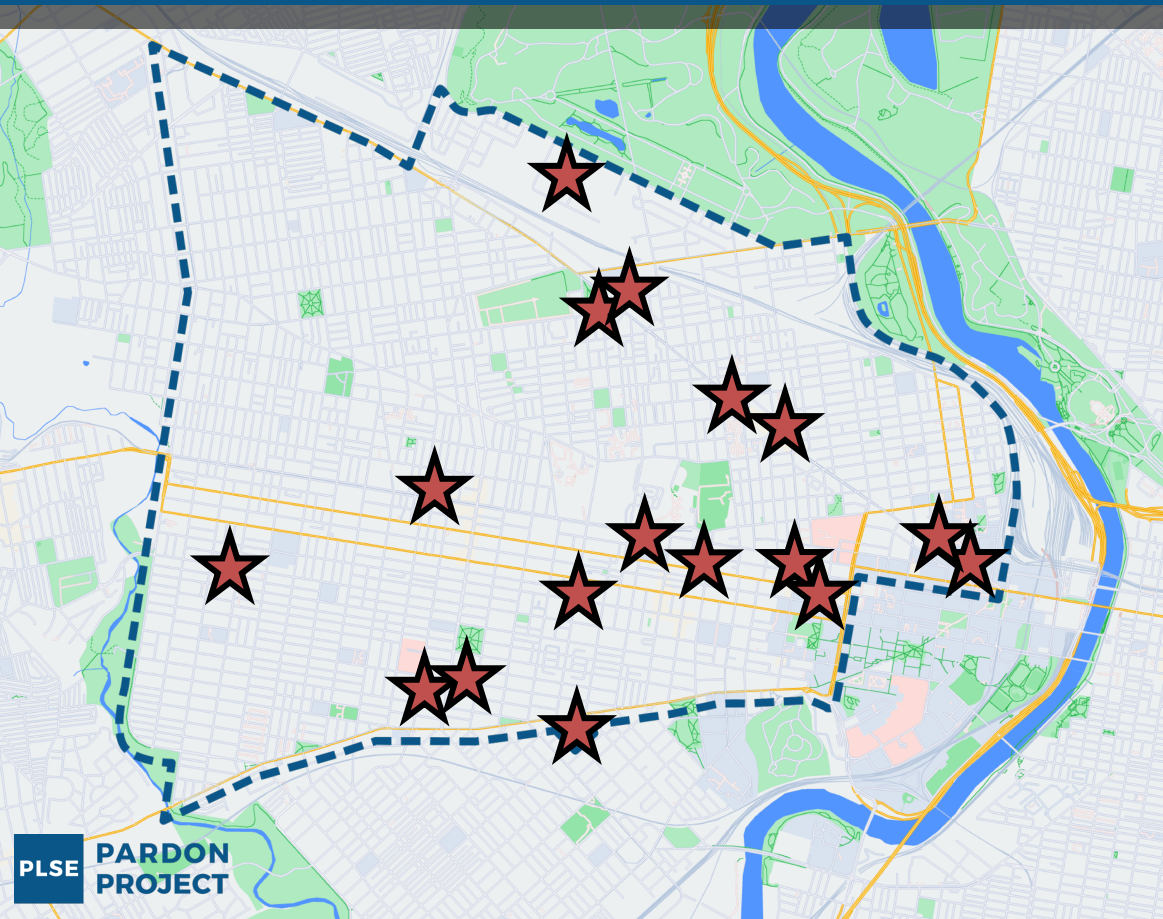
MISSION:

People with criminal convictions in their past shouldn't have to hold their heads in shame forever. *And they don't have to.*

We can help them achieve the freedom that they've earned so they can pursue and achieve their full potential – for themselves, their families, and our community.

West Philadelphia Pardon Network

Pardon Hubs as of 1/11/24



- The Enterprise Center*
- University City District -- West Philadelphia Skill Initiative*
- The Philadelphia Masjid Inc.*
- Alain Locke School*
- Office of Representative Rick Krajewski, 188th District*
- Office of Council-Member Jamie R. Gauthier, 3rd District*
- Hope PHL*
- Eddie's House*
- Blackwell Cultural Alliance*
- NOMO West | Tom Reid Village*
- Walnut Hill Community Association*

Four Websites

- West Philly Pardon Network

<https://pardonmepa.org/west-philly>

- Board of Pardons (BOP)

<https://www.bop.pa.gov>

Phila Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE)

<https://plsephilly.org>

- Online Criminal Records (AOPC)

<https://ujportal.pacourts.us/CaseSearch>

KEY WORDS & CONCEPTS

- **Pardon Coach** (someone trained to help)
- **Criminal record** (arrests & convictions)
- **Expungement** (erasing the record)
- **Clean Slate** (hiding/sealing the record)
- **Commutation** (shortening the sentence)
- **Pardon** (forgiving the crime)
 - in PA, only for people who have completed their sentences
- **Exoneration** (proving innocence)

The Pardon Process: It's Simple!

- 1) **Application** ~ where WE can help!
- 2) Investigation by the Dept of Corrections
- 3) “Merit Review” – Board of Pardons (BOP) decides who “merits” a Public Hearing (**just 2 of 5 votes needed**)
- 4) Public Hearing before the BOP – **just 3 votes needed** to get to the Governor
- 5) Decision by the Governor

Bottom Lines

- IT CAN TAKE 3-4 YEARS, but.....
- **Over 80%** of applicants receive a public hearing
- **Over 80%** of those granted a hearing end up recommended to the Gov
- **Over 95%** of those who are recommended DO receive a pardon
- ***EXPUNGEMENT IS NOW AUTOMATIC!***

The #1 JOB OF THE PARDON COACH is
help the applicant GET JUST 2 VOTES!

The Judges

Board of Pardons: 5 members

Lt Governor (Chair)

Attorney General

Victim Representative

Medical Doctor

Corrections Expert

***When you are working on the Application,
consider the interests they represent!***

The Law

- (1) The Members of the Board of Pardons have COMPETE discretion**
- (2) They can ask whatever questions they want to**
- (3) They do NOT have to explain their votes, and they NEVER do**

The Key Questions

1. “What did you learn from your experience in the criminal justice system?”
2. “If you were presented with the same situation today, what would you do differently?”
3. “How do we know if the stresses return that you won’t go back to how you acted before?”

The Best Answers

Don't Just SAY so....

PROVE IT!!!

Think about **what** you have accomplished –
like diplomas, certificates, promotions –
who can say good things about you,
photos of you doing things for others

What Makes A Good Candidate

- 5+ years of no problems (10+ if crime involved guns, children, serious violence or sex) since completion of sentence
- 7 years “clean and sober” / anger and behavioral issues under control
- **Independent** confirmation of rehabilitation
- Reasons to stay on “straight and narrow”
- Community and family supports
- Evidence of “giving back” to the community

What If “Now Is Not The Time”?

- Avoid “interactions” with the police
- Develop strong networks of support
- Keep a steady job
- Keep your kids out of trouble
- Help others avoid what you did wrong
- **Keep doing good things – *achieve!***
 - GED, badges, promotions, letters of thanks
- Do some volunteering/community service
 - Mentor at AA/NA, shovel sidewalks, Toys4Tots
 - Volunteer at church/masjid/synagogue

What Makes A Good Application?

- **100% honesty** and openness/nothing to hide
- Giving the government reasons to believe won't commit another crime
 - “Owning” the crime – no insisting on innocence or blaming others (eg the Public Defender or judge)
 - Showing/demonstrating remorse
 - Explaining the change
 - Having support structures in place
- Proof of completion of counseling, 12-step, and/or anger management program(s)

Why Be 100% Honest? They Will Check!

Required

Court Documents*
Completed & **Signed** Application

- Criminal Complaint
- Affidavit of Probable Cause
- Criminal Information/Indictment
- Final Plea or Verdict
- Sentencing Order
- Proof of Payment of Financial Obligations (fines, costs, restitution, supervision fees)
 - *If you have an outstanding balance, provide a receipt showing your current balance and the date of your last payment.*

Changes/Updates

(the process takes 2+years)

- What?
 - **Changes in contact info**
 - **Achievements/Accomplishments**
 - **Rejections** because of the record
- How? Write an email to
bopclemency@pa.gov
- In the “Subject” line put
 - Applicant’s full name **AND**
 - “BOP #” or “C-”number”

What You'll Need To Coach (look in the CHAT)

- Finding an Online Criminal Record
- Things to Get from the Courthouse
- Helpful Websites
- What to do if this is NOT the right time to apply
- **Application (a fillable PDF)**

The Pardon Application



**PARDON
PROJECT**

The Pardon Project is an initiative of
PHILADELPHIA LAWYERS FOR SOCIAL EQUITY

www.PLSEPhilly.org

To arrange a screening of the film *Pardon Me*

www.PardonsNow.org

Questions?

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