

Seal, vacate, or destroy juvenile court records

Author

Northwest Justice Project

Last Review Date

April 17, 2025

In Washington, juvenile court records are available and open to the general public until they are sealed or destroyed. Learn when you can have your juvenile records sealed and vacated or destroyed, and how to do it. (Forms and instructions)

1. Fast facts

Fill out forms online

- [Fill out forms to seal, vacate, or destroy juvenile court records](#)

Juvenile court records include crimes you were accused of committing, even if you never had a trial, as well as offenses you were found guilty of. These are

public records. So unless they're sealed or destroyed, anyone can see them. They may come up in a background check when you apply for a job or housing.

Sealing the record makes it private so that only people in the court and some law enforcement can see it. It shouldn't show up on a background check after it has been sealed.

Even though a record has been sealed, it does still exist. Records may be unsealed if you are convicted of a new juvenile offense, adult crime, or if you are charged with a felony.

When can records be destroyed

Only **diversion** records can be destroyed. The juvenile court should automatically destroy records of successfully completed diversion agreements after you reach age 18.

If your juvenile criminal history shows records that should've been destroyed but weren't, you can use [WA Forms Online](#) to fill out forms to ask the juvenile court to destroy your records now. You don't need to seal records that should be destroyed.

When can records be sealed?

For most juvenile offenses, your record can be sealed if all of these are true:

- You don't have any criminal charges pending against you now.
- You don't currently have to register as a sex offender.
- You don't owe any restitution to a named victim for the case you want to seal. (A named victim is a person or business. It doesn't include

government agencies or insurance companies.)

- It's been more than **2 years** since the date of your last sentencing (disposition), or the date you were last released from detention, prison, or jail — whichever is later. If the offense is a Class A Felony, it must be more than **5 years**.

Different rules apply if your offense was Rape 1, Rape 2, or Indecent liberties with actual force. Try to [talk to a lawyer](#) for advice.

My records can be sealed. Should I also get them vacated?

We recommend asking the court to **seal and vacate** for a full restoration of your rights. This can matter for FBI background checks and security clearances. Just sealing your records may not be enough.

To vacate your record, the judge may want information from someone other than you about how you're doing. It's not required, but you may want to get one or two letters in support to bring to your hearing. Ask people who know you well to write the letters. You can use the sample letter included with these forms. The letters can be very short, simply explaining how long they've known you and that you've stayed out of trouble.

2. Before you file

Before you start filling out forms, make sure you can answer these questions:

- What is the cause number of your case? (Examples: 17-8-987234-63, 04-8-98734-1)

- Was it a trial or dismissal?
- What is the date of your trial, plea or dismissal?
- Do you owe the court any money?
- What is the charge on your record? (Examples: Assault, Malicious Mischief, Theft)
- What is the classification of the offense? (Examples: Class A Felony, Class B Felony, Class C Felony, Misdemeanor, Gross Misdemeanor)

If you don't have this information, contact the Juvenile Court ask them to print you off a copy of your juvenile criminal history. Use [this court directory \(https://www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir/?fa=court_dir.county\)](https://www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir/?fa=court_dir.county) to find contact information for Juvenile Courts by county.

3. Step-by-step

Follow these steps to **seal and vacate** your juvenile court records.

1. **Fill out the forms.** You can [fill them out online](#) or [print to fill out by hand](#).

Pierce and some other counties require you to use their own forms. Ask the juvenile court clerk or administrator in your county if they have special forms to seal and vacate juvenile court records. If not, use ours.

2. **Call or visit the Juvenile Court for the county where your records are.**

Tell the clerk you'll be filing a motion to seal and vacate your juvenile offense records. Tell the clerk you want to schedule a hearing on your motion 3 or 4 weeks from now.

Ask the clerk:

- What day and time can I schedule a hearing on a motion to seal and vacate records?
- What courtroom will the hearing be in? (This may be assigned on the day of the hearing.)
- Is there an option to appear remotely? (Phone or video.)
- Where should I go to file my motion? (Juvenile court or Superior Court Clerk's Office)
- Write in the hearing details you got from the clerk on the **Notice** form.

In some counties the judge may decide these motions **without a hearing**. If the clerk says you don't need a hearing date, check the box for "No hearing is scheduled" in section 1 of the **Notice** form. You still must follow all the steps below (except preparing for and going to the hearing).

The clerk may say they'll **seal** your case without a hearing, but **not vacate** it. We recommend asking for a hearing to get the vacate for a full restoration of your rights. This can matter for

FBI background checks and some gun rights. Just sealing your records may not be enough.

3. **Make copies. Address envelopes.**

Look at the **Notice** form. Count the number of agencies the Notice says it is "TO." Make enough copies of the Motion, Notice, and Order forms to give one set to each agency.

Write each agency's name and address on a separate envelope. Put one set of copies into each envelope.

The agency addresses are listed on your Notice form. Some agencies may share an address. You still must make a separate copy for each agency.

4. **File the originals with the court.**

The clerk should **not** charge you a fee to file this motion.

To file in person:

- Bring your originals and copies to the county Juvenile Court or Superior Court Clerk's Office (wherever the clerk told you to file when you asked them)
- Give the clerk your set of originals to file
- Ask the clerk to stamp your copies to show the date you filed the originals, OR stamp the copies yourself

- Take the stamped copies back from the clerk. The clerk keeps the originals

To file by mail: mail the court clerk your originals plus one set of copies with a postage-paid return envelope addressed to you.

5. **Deliver or mail copies to everyone listed on the Notice form the same day you file.**

You can deliver the copies in-person (hand delivery) or by mail. You **don't** have to do both.

Hand Delivery means handing a copy to someone who works in the office. Have them stamp the date on your copy of the same papers.

Mail: If you send your papers by regular first-class mail, you can have an extra copy sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, for extra proof of mailing. Attach a copy of the green return receipt card to the Proof of Service form.

6. **Get letters of support (optional)**

To vacate your record, the judge may want information from someone other than you about how you're doing. It is not required, but you may want to get one or two **Letters in Support** to bring to your hearing. Ask people who know you well to write the letters. You can use the **sample letter** included with these forms. The letters can be very short, simply explaining how long they have known you and that you have stayed out of trouble.

7. **The Prosecutor may contact you before the hearing.**

If the Prosecutor agrees to seal your record, that's great!

But, the Prosecutor may agree only to **seal** your record, **not vacate it**. Again, we recommend asking for a hearing to get the vacate for a full restoration of your rights. **You can tell the Prosecutor you want the judge to decide**. Once the record is sealed, you can't come back to ask for a vacate later.

8. **Go to your court hearing, if there is one.** Read chapter 4 for how to get ready and what to expect at the hearing.

9. **Get a certified copy of the signed order from the clerk.**

When the order is available, go to the clerk's office and ask for a certified copy of the signed order. Our proposed order says you should get one certified copy for free. If the judge crosses that out, you'll have to pay for it. It should cost less than \$10.

If you can't afford a certified copy, get a regular copy. Otherwise you'll have no proof that your record has been sealed. It will be very hard to get a copy later.

You should keep a copy of your order in case someone, like a prospective employer or landlord, gets negative information from some other source.

10. **Send the “Letter to agencies after order is signed” together with a copy of the signed order to every agency involved.**

Make enough copies of the letter and signed order for you to bring or mail one to all the agencies you sent the Notice form to, except for the Washington State Patrol (WSP). The clerk is required to send a copy to the WSP, so you don't have to.

This step is the big one! If you don't send an agency a copy of your signed order, they won't know your record is sealed.

It may take the agencies some time to update their records. You can pay \$10 to check your criminal history report with the WSP to make sure the record is gone.

Sometimes the clerk will give a copy of the order to the Prosecutor and Probation offices. You can ask the clerk if they do that. If not, bring or mail a copy to the Prosecutor and Probation offices, just like you're doing for the other agencies.

Your criminal history information may have found its way into other databases. A state agency or private data company may have still have the information. You may have to send them a copy of the signed order.

11. **Congratulations!**

After the judge signs your order, you can treat the sealed offense/s as if they never occurred. You don't have to admit the sealed offense ever

happened. If all your offenses are sealed or destroyed, you can answer 'no' if asked about criminal history.

4. Hearing

Bring your copies of the Motion and Notice forms to the hearing. Also bring the extra copy of your **Order on Motion to Seal and Vacate**.

Dress as if you were going to a job interview. Arrive 30 minutes early.

When you get to the courtroom:

- Check in with the courtroom clerk. Usually, they're sitting at a desk close to the judge. **Tell the courtroom clerk your name — they need to know you're there.**
- Wait for your name to be called. The judge may want to talk to you. They may ask about what you've been doing, and why you'd like to seal and vacate your record. If you brought any **letters in support**, tell the judge about them now and hand them to the bailiff.
- Be polite, reasonable, and calm. If you're confused or don't understand something, politely tell the judge so and ask for clarification. If the judge asks you any questions, answer the best you can. If you don't know the answer to the judge's question, don't guess. Tell the judge you don't know the answer. If you need time to think, just tell the court you need a moment. Take your time.
- The judge may ask if you sent the copies to all the listed agencies. Answer honestly.

- Some courts use their own orders, but if they ask if you have brought one, hand the order you brought to the Bailiff. If they ask where you got them, you can say that you got them from Washington Law Help. The bailiff will hand your order to the judge. You can wait for the order to be signed.
- If the judge agrees with you and signs your order, ask the judge or courtroom clerk when the order will be available at the clerk's office. Tell them you want a certified copy.

5. Forms

These forms are to **seal and vacate** juvenile records. If your records should be **destroyed**, fill out the forms on [WA Forms Online](#).

Pierce and some other counties require you to use their own forms. Ask the juvenile court clerk or administrator in your county if they have special forms to seal and vacate juvenile court records. If not, use ours.

Form attached:

Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense (NJP Juvenile 481)

Form attached:

Notice of Respondent's Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense (NJP Juvenile 482)

Form attached:

Order on Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense (NJP Juvenile 483)

Form attached:

Letter in Support of Vacating and Sealing Juvenile Court Records (NJP Juvenile 484)

Form attached:

Letter to Agencies AFTER Order is signed (NJP Juvenile 485)

Follow the general rules to format and fill out court documents.

Tips for filling out the Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense (NJP Juvenile 481)

Fill out the **motion** form to explain what you want the judge to do and why they should do it.

Tips for filling out the Notice of Respondent's Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense (NJP Juvenile 482)

Write the county name where you are filing on each of the first 5 recipients after "TO:" Put the address for each recipient. You should be able to use the Juvenile Court address for the first 5 recipients.

Write the name of each law enforcement agency that was involved in your case, and put their address. There should be at least 1, maybe more. This could be the agency that arrested you or where you were on probation.

You must include all the addresses here as part of your proof of service.

Form section 1. Notice. If you're asking for a hearing, ask the court clerk for help filling in the date and other hearing details.

Date and sign after section 1. Put your contact information.

Form section 2. Declaration of Service. Put the date and check how you're serving copies to all the agencies listed on the "TO:" line on page 1.

Date and sign again after section 2. Put the place (city and state) where you are when you're signing.

Tips for filling out the Order on Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense (NJP Juvenile 483)

Fill out the **order** form the way you want the judge to sign it. This is a **proposed order** you'll ask the judge to sign at the hearing. If you're not sure about something in the order, leave it blank for the judge to complete.

Tips for filling out the Letter in Support of Vacating and Sealing Juvenile Court Records (NJP Juvenile 484)

These aren't required, but can be helpful to get your record vacated. You can bring letters to your court hearing in case the judge wants information from someone other than you about how you're doing.

Ask one or two people who know you well to write a letter in support of vacating and sealing your record. They can use this sample letter, or write their own. The letter can be very short, simply explaining how long they've known you and that you've stayed out of trouble.

Tips for filling out the Letter to Agencies AFTER Order is signed (NJP Juvenile 485)

Address this letter to the all the same agencies you listed on the Notice form. Attach a copy of the signed Order from the judge.

WashingtonLawHelp.org gives general information. It is not legal advice. Find organizations that provide free legal help on our [Get legal help](#) page.

Superior Court of Washington County of _____, Juvenile Division	
State of Washington v. _____, Respondent. D.O.B.: _____	No: _____ Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense (No mandatory form) (MTAF)

Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense

1. Motion

The Respondent, (*name*) _____, asks the court to issue an order sealing their juvenile court records. This motion is based upon RCW 13.50.260(3) and (4) and Respondent's declaration below.

Respondent declares:

2. Finding of guilt (*check one*)

- Guilty:** On (*date*) _____ I was found guilty of (*offense*) _____
 I was released from detention on (*date*) _____.
- Not guilty:** On (*date*) _____ my charge of (*offense*) _____
 was resolved as not guilty.
- Dismissed:** On (*date*) _____ my charge of (*offense*) _____
 was dismissed.
- Diversion:** On (*date*) _____ my charge of (*offense*) _____
 was referred to diversion.

3. Eligibility for sealing records (*check one*)

- Class A Felony Conviction:** At least one of the offenses I am attempting to seal involves a Class "A" felony but both of the following are true:

- Since my last date of release from confinement, including full-time residential treatment, or from the entry of disposition (including deferred disposition), I have spent **five** consecutive years in the community without committing any offense or crime that has resulted in conviction or adjudication.
 - I have not been convicted of Rape in the First Degree, Rape in the Second Degree, or Indecent Liberties with Forcible Compulsion;
- All Class B and C Felony, Gross Misdemeanor, or Misdemeanor Convictions, or Diversions:** Since my last date of release from confinement, including full-time residential treatment, or from the entry of disposition (including deferred disposition), I have spent **two** consecutive years in the community without committing any offense or crime that has resulted in conviction or adjudication.

4. Eligibility for vacating

Since my last date of release from confinement or entry of disposition, I have demonstrated sufficient rehabilitation to support vacating my juvenile record based on *State v. Garza*, 200 Wash.2d 449, 2022.

5. Other requirements

I meet the following requirements:

- There are no proceedings pending against me seeking conviction or diversion of a juvenile or criminal offense.
- If I was convicted of a sex offense, I am no longer required to register for a sex offense under RCW 9A.44.130 or I have been relieved of the duty to register under RCW 9A.44.143.
- Full restitution owed to any individual has been paid, or I ask for any remaining restitution to be waived under RCW 13.40.190(5). There is good cause to waive. I am indigent or unable to pay.

I, Respondent, declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Washington that the information above is true and correct.

Signed at (*city and state*): _____ Date: _____

▶ _____
Respondent signs here

Print name

Lawyer (if any)

Date: _____

▶ _____
Respondent's lawyer (if any), signs here

Print name and WSBA #

Respondent or lawyer's mailing address:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

**Superior Court of Washington
County of _____, Juvenile Division**

State of Washington

v.

_____,
Respondent.

D.O.B.: _____

No: _____

Notice of Respondent's Motion to Seal
and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense

(No mandatory form)

(NT)

Clerk's action required: 1

**Notice of Respondent's Motion to Seal and Vacate
Records of Juvenile Offense**

TO: (County name) _____ County Superior Court Clerk's Office

Address: _____

(County name) _____ County Prosecutor, Juvenile Division

Address: _____

(County name) _____ County Juvenile Court Administrator

Address: _____

(County name) _____ County Juvenile Records

Address: _____

(County name) _____ County Juvenile Probation Manager

Address: _____

(Law enforcement agency) _____ Police Department / Sheriff

Address: _____

(Law enforcement agency) _____ Police Department / Sheriff

Address: _____

Washington State Patrol, Records Division; P.O. Box 42633; Olympia, WA; 98504

Juvenile Rehabilitation (DCYF); P.O. Box 45045; Olympia, WA; 98504

1. Notice

Respondent has filed a Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense.

- No hearing is scheduled.
- A hearing will be scheduled by separate notice.
- There will be a court hearing on:

(date) _____ at (time) _____ am / pm,
 at (County name) _____ County Superior Court,
 Juvenile Division, in Courtroom _____.

Remote hearing information, if any:

▶ _____
 Respondent (or lawyer, if any) signs here Print name (and WSBA # if lawyer)

Respondent's (or lawyer's) mailing address:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

2. Declaration of service

On (date): _____, I served copies of this Notice and the Motion to Seal and Vacate Records to each recipient listed in the Notice by:

- mail** (check all that apply): first class certified other _____

at the addresses listed above _____

- email** to (address): _____
(only if allowed by agreement, order, or your county's Local Court Rule)

- hand delivery** at (time): _____ a.m. p.m. to this address:

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Washington that the statements on this form are true.

Signed at (city and state): _____ Date: _____

▶ _____
 Server signs here Print name

**Superior Court of Washington
County of _____, Juvenile Division**

State of Washington

v.

Respondent.

D.O.B.: _____

No: _____

Order on Motion to Seal and Vacate
Records of Juvenile Offense

(No mandatory form)

- Sealing Granted (ORSF)
- Vacate Granted (ORV)
- Sealing Denied (ORSFD)
- Vacate Denied (ORDYMT)

Clerk's action required: Section 5

Order on Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense

1. Basis

Respondent filed a motion to seal and vacate juvenile offense records under RCW 13.50.260. The court considered the motion and any supporting documents, any response, and the relevant court record.

The court decided the motion **with** **without** oral argument.

2. Notice

Respondent **gave** did **not** give adequate notice to the appropriate parties and agencies.

3. Eligibility for sealing records

- Respondent has **satisfied** the requirements of RCW 13.50.260 and is entitled to have sealed the official juvenile court record, the social file, and the records of the court and of any other agency in the case.
- The court finds there are compelling privacy or safety concerns that outweigh the public interest in access to the court records under **GR 15**.

In addition, the court finds as follows:

- Respondent is **not** eligible for sealing records under RCW 13.50.260 because (specify)

4. Eligibility for vacating

- Respondent has **satisfied** the requirements to vacate based on *State v. Garza*, 200 Wash.2d 449, 2022. Since the last date of release from confinement or entry of disposition, Respondent has demonstrated sufficient rehabilitation to support vacating their juvenile record.
- Respondent does **not** meet the factors for vacating records because (specify)

5. Order

Based on the above findings, it is hereby ordered:

- Vacate granted** (ORV): The files and records in this case are vacated.
- Sealing granted** (ORSF): The files and records in this case shall be sealed as follows:
- Pursuant to RCW 13.50.260**
- a. With the exception of identifying information specified in RCW 13.50.050(13), the official juvenile court record, any associated judgment, the social file, and other records relating to the case are sealed.
 - b. The proceedings in the case shall be treated as if they never occurred and the subject of the records may reply accordingly to any inquiry about the events, the records of which are sealed.
 - c. Any agency shall reply to any inquiry concerning confidential or sealed records that records are confidential, and no information can be given about the existence or nonexistence of records concerning an individual.
 - d. Inspection of the files and records included in this order may only be permitted by order of the court and upon motion made by the person who is the subject of the information or complaint, except as otherwise provided in RCW 13.50.010(8) and 13.50.050(13).
 - e. Any adjudication of a juvenile offense or a crime subsequent to sealing has the effect of nullifying this order. However, the court may order this case resealed upon disposition of the subsequent matter if this case meets the sealing criteria under RCW 13.50.260 and this case has not previously been resealed.
 - f. Any charging of an adult felony subsequent to this order has the effect of nullifying this order.
 - g. The clerk shall provide Respondent with one free certified copy of this order.

Pursuant to GR 15: The court grants the motion to seal pursuant to GR 15. The files and records in this case are sealed for a period not to exceed the following time period: _____, and the clerk of the court is ordered to seal the entire court file and to secure it from public access.

Restitution waived: Pursuant to 13.40.190(5), the court finds good cause and any remaining restitution and interest is waived.

Vacate denied (ORDYMT): The files and records in this case shall not be vacated.

Sealing denied (ORSFD): The files and records in this case shall not be sealed.

Other: _____

Ordered.

Date: _____

▶ _____
Judge / Commissioner

Submitted by:

Respondent (or Lawyer, WSBA #)

Prosecuting Attorney, WSBA #

Date: _____

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter as a reference for (*name*): _____.

I have known this person for ____ years as their (*describe relationship: family member, counselor, supervisor at work*): _____.

I understand (*name*): _____ is asking the Court to vacate a juvenile record. I am writing to tell the Court that from what I have observed, they are a law-abiding person who contributes positively to their family, friends, colleagues, and community. They have made a lot of personal progress in the time I have known them. From what I know, they are doing well and have rehabilitated since their juvenile court involvement.

Here are some things that I believe demonstrate their rehabilitation and good character (*Consider relationship with family and friends, work experience and ethic, law-abiding behavior, completion of any education, counseling, or other programs, and general strength-based characteristics.*):

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

I am pleased to offer this character reference. I am proud of all they have accomplished.

Sincerely,



Sign here

Print name

Street address

City, state and zip

Phone number / Email - optional

Date: _____

TO: (County name) _____ County Superior Court Clerk's Office

(County name) _____ County Prosecutor, Juvenile Division

(County name) _____ County Juvenile Court Administrator

(County name) _____ County Juvenile Records

(County name) _____ County Juvenile Probation Manager

(Law enforcement agency) _____ Police Department / Sheriff

(Law enforcement agency) _____ Police Department / Sheriff

Juvenile Rehabilitation (DCYF); P.O. Box 45045; Olympia, WA; 98504

Re: Order on Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense

Enclosed with this letter is a copy of my Order/s on Motion to Seal and Vacate Records of Juvenile Offense. This Order and RCW 13.50.260 require any agency in possession of sealed records to keep the content of the records, as well as their existence or nonexistence, confidential.

Thank you for your help. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Sign here

Print name

Street address

City, state and zip

Phone number / Email - optional