

TIP



If you need more help or cannot pay the fees, there are several not-for-profit legal organizations that may be able to help you apply for your RAP sheet free of cost and/or help simplify the process. See the [RESOURCES](#) section for free legal help.

What if there are errors on your RAP sheet?

Although legislation was passed in 2019 that has significantly reduced errors, RAP sheets may still include mistakes, including reporting:

- Information about a different person
- Incomplete information about a case, like the disposition or sentence – e.g. missing disposition
- Sealed records
- Old warrants that have been cleared³⁵

Again, background check companies don't get official RAP sheets, but if there's an error on your RAP sheet, it's likely that there's an error on your commercial background checks. If you think there is an error on your RAP sheet, see the Legal Acton Center's guide, *Your New York State RAP Sheet: A Guide to Getting, Understanding, and Correcting your Criminal Record*, available at lac.org/assets/files/Your_New_York_State_Rap_Sheet.pdf, or view the [RESOURCES](#) section for free legal help.

Collect “evidence of rehabilitation,” also known as “proof of positive change”

When preparing to apply for school, a job, or a license, it is especially important to collect what is commonly known as “evidence of rehabilitation” or “proof of positive change.” These are any documents to show an employer, landlord, or government agency other things you have done post-conviction that they will perceive as positive.

Proof of positive change may include:

- Letters of recommendation. These can come from past employers, counselors, people who know you well, faith leaders, volunteer programs, etc. It is particularly helpful to have letters from people who know you have a conviction record and will vouch for you
- Copies of awards
- Graduation certificates from programs
- Educational achievements
- Proof of current employment/job training
- Certificate of Relief from Civil Disabilities and/or a Certificate of Good Conduct (see the [CERTIFICATES GUIDE](#) in the Appendix)
- Any other documents about your achievements or positive developments in your life

TIP



Gathering these documents can take time. It's important to collect them before someone runs a background check. You can collect these documents at any time and keep copies on hand so you can provide them quickly, instead of scrambling to get them at the time an employer or housing provider requests them.

The more documents the better! But keep in mind:

DO

- ✓ **DO read through each document carefully to make sure there isn't confidential information in it.** You should not share documents that have personal identifying information, like a social security number. You can black out any confidential information with a marker before copying and sending. You also need not provide any confidential health information.
- ✓ **DO get letters or papers on official letterhead and/or signed by a responsible person.** If someone signs a letter, make sure it also includes their contact information.

DON'T

- ✗ **DON'T provide duplicative documents about a single accomplishment.** For example, if you attended an education program, you might want to provide a transcript and/or a completion certificate. You don't need to also provide registration documents, receipts, or attendance sheets.
- ✗ **DON'T provide original documents unless required.** Make copies or scan documents and send electronic versions. Keep the originals for yourself!
- ✗ **DON'T provide documents that have negative information if there are alternatives that you can provide.** For example:
 - You should not provide a school transcript if your grades are poor. Instead, provide proof of enrollment.
 - You should not provide proof that you attended a program that also shows that you missed or were late to several sessions.

For more information on collecting evidence of rehabilitation, see the Legal Action Center's guide, *How to Gather Evidence of Rehabilitation*: lac.org/assets/files/How-to-Gather-Evidence-of-Rehabilitation.pdf