

**Innocence Projects List compiled for Capital Region Ex-Offenders Support Coalition
(2 are National and 4 are located in PA)**

For a list of other Innocence Projects not listed in this document for those convicted of crimes in other parts of the country see:

<http://www.nacdl.org/public.nsf/PrinterFriendly/InnocProjContacts?openDocument>

(National)

1) Innocence Project

100 5th Ave 3rd Flr

New York, NY 10011

info@innocenceproject.org

website: <http://www.innocenseproject.org>

The Innocence Project is not equipped to handle case applications or inquiries by email or over the phone. All case submissions and follow-up correspondence will be handled by mail or overnight delivery services only.

All cases for consideration should be mailed (to the address above) with a brief factual summary of the case and a list of the evidence used against the defendant. No other documents should be submitted for initial review. The Innocence Project is not equipped to handle telephone or electronic (email) applications.

The Innocence Project only accepts cases on post-conviction appeal in which DNA testing can prove innocence. If the case does not involve biological evidence or DNA, visit the Other Innocence Organizations page to see if there is a program in your area that provides broader legal and investigative assistance.

(National)

2) Centurion Ministries

221 Witherspoon Street

Princeton, NJ 08542-3215

<http://www.centurionministries.org>

Because our office is not designed to handle huge volumes of phone calls or email, we firmly request that ALL inquiries come in the form of a letter so that we may carefully review them and answer them in a complete and efficient manner. Please be sure to write legibly and include a full return address. Please allow 8 to 10 weeks for our reply. We read and respond to all letters.

Additionally, please note that when reviewing a case, it is our policy to work directly with the inmate ONLY. The inmate will be responsible for obtaining and supplying all needed information and documentation. It is the inmate's responsibility to keep friends and family updated regarding the status of their case with Centurion Ministries. We will not carbon copy letters to friends and family. Please review the section Centurion Ministries' Criteria for

Considering Review of a Case under "General Procedures for Submitting Requests" (listed below) before writing to us about a case.

"General Procedures for Submitting Requests" (list of 5 stages)

Stage 1:

When a request is received, our first task is to decide whether it meets CM's criteria (see below) for considering a case. If the inmate's case does not meet our conditions, he or she is notified and given any advice we feel might be useful. Often, further correspondence is necessary to make this determination. We receive many new requests every working day, so it sometimes takes a month or longer for us to respond to each letter. Furthermore, with our very small staff, each respondent is corresponding with numerous inmates. For inmates who do meet our conditions, Stage 1 consists of a lengthy correspondence in which we try to elicit from the inmate all the information we can about the circumstances of the case. In this stage, we want the information in the inmate's own words, without any official documents (except for the pre-sentence report) unless specifically requested. It is important to stress that this correspondence does not mean we are committed to taking the case. Stage 1 can be very time-consuming and require a great deal of effort on the inmate's part. At this (or any other) stage either the inmate or CM may decide to terminate the relationship.

Stage 2:

Once we are satisfied that we have gathered as much information as we can, we put the case in a holding file. Because we have such a large backlog of cases, additional years are added to the waiting process. During this stage, we may correspond occasionally with the inmate to give support should the need arise. The inmate may give us newly acquired information. At this stage, the inmate's case is discussed during our staff meetings.

Stage 3:

When an opening occurs or for any number of reasons, we could move the inmate's file to Stage 3. Only at this stage will we request and read the trial transcripts.

Stage 4:

In this stage, and after a careful review of the entire record of the case, we will now meet personally with the inmate for a lengthy interview.

Stage 5:

It is at this stage that we commit to a case. When that happens we then pursue all avenues of investigation. When the investigation produces significant new evidence, we retain an attorney on behalf of the inmate.

It is important to reiterate a few major points: we are not lawyers; we are investigators / advocates; there is no immediate, magical solution; our process is long, difficult, and sometimes mentally distressing. Of the thousand of requests we have received, and considering the very small size of our staff, very few cases reach the final stage. We are here as a resource for all those who write to us and fit our criteria. We seek truth and justice. We wish we could do much

more for the many convicted innocent whose cases we cannot tend to due to our limited resources.

"Centurion Ministries' Criteria" (List of 5 qualifications/criteria)

CM has very narrow criteria for the types of cases that we will consider reviewing. Therefore we are not able to help the vast majority of those who contact us. We have adopted these narrow criteria so that we may function in an efficient and productive manner. We regret that we cannot be all things to all people. Please review our stated criteria (which follows), our general procedures (see above), and how to contact us if you know someone who fits ALL of the listed criteria.

1. We only consider murder or rape cases within the United States as well as Canada that carry a life or death sentence. We do NOT consider self-defense or accidental death cases. We will only consider a rape case if there is the possibility of using DNA testing to clear the convicted person. We do NOT consider child sex cases unless the case has physical evidence that could be scientifically tested to prove innocence;
2. You must have finished your direct appeal (the first appeal to the court of your conviction);
3. You must be absolutely 100% innocent of the crime and have had absolutely no involvement whatsoever with the crime;
4. You must be indigent;
5. We are NOT lawyers and, therefore, we do NOT offer legal assistance to those who petition us for help. We CANNOT make referrals to attorneys.

If the inmate does fit ALL of our criteria, their initial letter to us should be brief, outlining the facts of the crime, and what led to their arrest for the crime.

INMATES SHOULD NOT SEND BRIEFS OR TRANSCRIPTS OR OTHER MATERIALS! We just want to hear the facts in the inmate's own words. We in turn will send them a letter that outlines exactly what information we want, and what they can expect from us in the way of assistance.

3) Dusquesne Law Post Conviction DNA Project

600 Forbers Ave, 632 Fisher Hall

Pittsburg, PA 15282

phone: (412) 396-1038

email: lawclinic@duq.edu

website: <http://www.law.duq.edu/Academics/AcaClnDNA.html>

The Post Conviction DNA Clinic is a year-long project designed to provide students with an understanding of the core problems in our criminal justice system that underlie the increasing number of wrongful convictions.

Students in the project review case files and prisoner correspondence with the aim of identifying cases that present plausible facts and arguments that call for post conviction DNA testing. Post conviction proceedings in the state and federal system are also explored and pursued. Classroom lectures are designed to explore the foundations of DNA as an identification science.

This project introduces students to the leading indicia of wrongful convictions and the impact of various behavioral and natural forensic science applications that have led to post conviction exonerations. Substantive reviews take place regarding the importance of the medical and legal death investigation, case law, pertinent studies and articles on the subject of wrongful convictions, and numerous Post Conviction DNA Project state and federal public policy developments designed to advance the interests of justice as well as the forensic science community.

Individual student conferences on case files are regularly held throughout the academic year. Students are expected to prepare post conviction petitions for relief when necessary.

4) Penn State Criminal Justice Project

Penn State University

Dickinson School of Law

150 South College Street

Carlisle, PA 17013

Description Actual innocence claims, DNA only for now.

Email: tjp184@psu.edu

Contact: Timothy Prendergast

Phone: (717) 240-5227

Staff: Two faculty, six student volunteers

Legal Support: yes

States Served: 5

5) The Innocence Institute of Western PA

Point Park University

Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

201 Wood St.

Pittsburg, PA 15222-1984

Phone: 412-765-3164

Fax: 412-392-3917

Email: bmoushey@pointpark.edu

Website: <http://pointparkinnocenceinstitute.pointparkjournalism.com>

The Institute is interested in all cases that resulted in wrongful convictions. As a fledgling organization we are currently only able to take on cases within a 100-mile radius of Pittsburgh (Harrisburg is not covered by this radius because it's 200 miles from Pittsburgh).

If your committing county falls within this area, then you meet this requirement.

If you have a case that fits our criteria, please mail us a letter detailing evidence of your actual innocence along with a copy of a legal document that best summarizes your case.

Do not send all of your legal materials until we have accepted your case!

6) Pennsylvania Innocence Project

Temple University Beasley School of Law

1719 N. Broad St.

Philadelphia, PA 19122

Phone: 215-204-4255

Email: innocenceprojectpa@temple.edu or innocencepa@temple.edu

website: <http://www.innocenceprojectpa.org>

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. What are the criteria for acceptance with the Pennsylvania Innocence Project?

A. The Pennsylvania Innocence only takes on cases for those who have been wrongfully convicted of a crime, and who have already exhausted their direct appeals. By wrongfully convicted, we are limited to cases where the inmate is factually innocent of the crime. This is different from the many cases where an inmate may be legally innocent of the crime (such as a case involving a claim of consent instead of rape, or self-defense rather than murder), or where the inmate has serious constitutional or procedural grounds for reversal of his conviction. As important as all of those issues are, we are simply limited in our resources and in the scope of assistance we can offer.

Q. What do you mean by “factually innocent”?

A. We can only take on cases for people who had no involvement in the crime for which they were convicted. This will generally mean people who had an alibi for the time of the crime, whether it was presented at trial or not.

Q. Does the Pennsylvania Innocence Project take only cases with DNA evidence?

A. No. The Pennsylvania Innocence Project will take on cases whether there is DNA or not.

Q. Can I submit an application for a friend or family member?

A. No. The Pennsylvania Innocence Project can only accept cases directly from the inmate involved.

Q. Will the questionnaire be available online?

A. No. Because we have an established screening process, with a number of steps, we do not want to receive questionnaires from inmates with whom we have had no contact. The questionnaire is not designed to do an initial determination of eligibility; it is designed to gather information about a particular case. Please do not copy the questionnaire for others. If you are interested in having your case reviewed by the Pennsylvania Innocence Project you need only

write us a letter with a brief factual summary of the case, a statement as to why you are seeking our help and a list of the evidence used against you at trial. No other documents should be submitted for initial review.

Q. How long does it take for the Pennsylvania Innocence Project to determine whether it will look into a case?

A. Once we receive your letter, we will review it to determine whether your case meets our criteria. If so, we will send you a detailed questionnaire to be completed. The time from writing to the Project until an initial determination is made is generally less than 2 weeks.

Q. What is the process for the Pennsylvania Innocence Project to review and take on a case?

A. The Pennsylvania Innocence Project is set up to operate through 4 Stages. Stage 1 is a review of the first letter sent by an inmate to the Project explaining the facts of his/her case, the reason s/he feels that s/he has been wrongfully convicted, and explaining what new evidence (if any) may be available to prove innocence. If a case meets the initial criteria (that the inmate is claiming factual innocence, was convicted in Pennsylvania and is beyond the direct appeal stage), then the case moves to Stage 2 review, and the inmate is sent a detailed questionnaire to fill out. We ask that the inmate also send a copy of the appellate brief and court opinions from the direct appeal. A volunteer lawyer or law student will carefully review the materials to determine whether the Pennsylvania Innocence Project should accept the case. At Stage 2, the volunteer will often write back to the inmate to obtain additional information. When the reviewer determines that the case is, indeed, one of factual innocence, the case moves to Stage 3. During Stage 3, volunteer lawyers, students and investigators gather all of the relevant materials and documents in the case to determine what led to the wrongful conviction and where the new evidence may be. Once those documents are gathered and thoroughly reviewed, the case is submitted to the Board of Directors for the Pennsylvania Innocence Project. If the Board decides to accept the case, then it moves on to Stage 4, where a team of lawyers and law students and investigators thoroughly investigate the case and try to develop a litigation strategy for the eventual exoneration of the inmate. At any point in the process, the Pennsylvania Innocence Project may determine that the case will not be pursued, and the inmate will be promptly notified. Only when the Pennsylvania Innocence Project has agreed to pursue litigation on behalf of the inmate does legal representation begin. Up to that point, the Pennsylvania Innocence Project will be investigating the claim only, and will not represent the inmate. The inmate must continue to pursue any existing post-conviction petitions on his/her own.

Q. Will the Pennsylvania Innocence Project represent me in my ongoing PCRA petition?

A. No. The Pennsylvania Innocence Project does not represent inmates until a decision is made to pursue litigation on the inmate's behalf. Until that time, the inmate must continue to pursue any existing post-conviction petitions on his/her own.

If your case meets the initial criteria, please send us a letter, with a brief factual summary of the case, a statement as to why you are seeking our help and a list of the evidence used against you at trial. The Pennsylvania Innocence Project only accepts case inquiries through the mail, not

by e-mail or phone, and the request must come directly from the inmate; we do not accept referrals from friends or family members. No other documents should be submitted for initial review. Please print clearly. Please be assured that we will keep any information you send confidential. We will share your information with law students, attorneys, and investigators working on your case, but only to the extent necessary to obtain or provide legal or investigative assistance for you. Please also understand that we may contact your former and/or current attorneys for information about your case.

Review of a questionnaire takes more time due to the large volume of requests; it may take several months before the Project screeners are able to decide whether or not to accept your case. Please be patient. Please do not telephone or write additional letters asking about your case. However, you must update your address if you are moved.