CORI and the Sealing of Criminal Records

Information included in this packet was gathered from www.massresources.org. The CORI Personal Request Form and Affidavit of Indigency are forms provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

What is a CORI?

A CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) is a person's criminal history. You will have a Massachusetts CORI if you have ever been charged with a crime in a state or federal court in Massachusetts, whether your case ended with a conviction, a finding of not guilty, charges were dismissed, or another outcome.

The Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) is the state agency in charge of the criminal justice information system, including CORI services, for Massachusetts. CORI reports help protect public safety by allowing employers, school administrators, public housing officials, and others to screen out potentially dangerous ex-offenders. However, CORI reports also create a major barrier to employment, housing, loans, and other services for people with criminal records who are not a threat to society.

What information is in a CORI?

Your CORI is a record of all criminal cases where you appeared before a judge in a court in Massachusetts. Your CORI includes pending charges, prior convictions, and cases that ended without a conviction (for example, a finding of not guilty, or cases that were dismissed).

Not everyone has access to all of your CORI records. The access category of the person or agency requesting the CORI determines which records are included. For example, employers and landlords with Standard Access can only see open cases; unsealed murder, manslaughter, and sex offense convictions; and other convictions that are unsealed and not eligible to be sealed.

A Massachusetts CORI only contains information from the Massachusetts courts. If you have a criminal record in another state, the out-of-state information will not appear on your Massachusetts CORI.
How do I get a copy of my CORI report?

**Online:** You can request a copy of your CORI online using the web-based iCORI service:
1. Go to the Massachusetts iCORI Service and click on the "Register as an Individual" link
2. Answer "Yes" to the question "Would you like to request your own Personal CORI?"
3. Enter your personal information, including a username, password, and e-mail address
4. Verify your information; then follow additional instructions and submit your registration
5. Check your e-mail for the iCORI Account Activation notice; follow the instructions to activate your account
6. After you have registered, enter your username and password at Massachusetts iCORI Service Login
7. Click on "Add Request," select the purpose of the request, and enter the subject information
8. Click on "Add & Checkout" and follow the instructions for submitting your payment
9. View your CORI online (in PDF format) or download your CORI to your computer

**By mail:** You can also request a copy of your CORI by mail:
To get a copy of your Massachusetts CORI report by mail, you must send a Personal CORI Request Form (attached to this packet) to the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS).

After you complete the form, you must:
- Sign the form in front of a notary public
- Include a $25 check or money order payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Include a business size, self-addressed stamped envelope
- Mail the notarized form, $25 payment, and self-addressed stamped envelope to:
  Department of Criminal Justice Information Services
  200 Arlington Street
  Suite 2200
  Chelsea, MA 02150
  ATTN: CORI Unit

Your CORI report will be mailed to you in about two weeks.

If you cannot pay the $25 fee for your CORI, you should fill out and sign an Affidavit of Indigency and include it with your CORI request. You can download the affidavit from the Massachusetts Court System web site.

You can get your CORI report for free if:
- you get TAFDC, EAEDC, SSI, MassHealth, or Massachusetts Veterans' Benefits
- or if you meet the income limits (125% FPG)
- or if paying the $25 fee for the CORI will cause you hardship

**Note:** For a copy of your criminal record in another state, you must contact that state directly.
Why should I get a copy of my CORI report?

There are several reasons to get a copy of your CORI report:

• Check for mistakes: CORI reports are not always accurate. You should review your CORI to make sure that the information about your cases is correct, and that all of the cases listed in your CORI belong to you.
• Try to seal your criminal records: You may be able to seal some or all of your criminal records so that employers, public housing agencies, schools, and anyone else outside the criminal justice system cannot see them.
• Prepare for job interviews: If you know what is in your CORI, you can point out mistakes, explain your record, and bring recommendations or other documentation to show that you have changed your behavior.

How do I seal or correct my CORI?

Sealing CORI records:
If you seal CORI records, they will not appear on CORI reports given to employers, public housing agencies, and other agencies outside the criminal justice system. Records that are eligible to be sealed will not appear in Standard Access CORI reports, whether or not those records have actually been sealed. Most criminal records can be sealed by mail after a waiting period of at least 5 years for a misdemeanor, or at least 10 years for a felony. Some criminal records can be sealed by a judge with no waiting period. There is no charge to seal your records.

Cases that can be sealed are:
• cases that did not result in a conviction (cases where you were found 'not guilty;' or cases where charges were dismissed or dropped, even if you were on probation). You can ask to have these cases sealed right away.
• most misdemeanor convictions after a 5-year waiting period, and most felony convictions after a 10-year waiting period. The waiting period starts on the date when you were found guilty, or when you completed your jail or prison sentence, whichever is later. If you are convicted of another crime during the waiting period before you file your petition, the waiting period "clock" starts again. You cannot seal your previous record until the waiting period for your most recent conviction is over.
• First-time drug possession convictions. You can ask to have these cases sealed without a waiting period, as long as you did not violate any court orders regarding your case.
• Note: Some types of convictions, for example, certain firearms offenses, "crimes against the public" (e.g., perjury, witness intimidation), state ethics act violations, and sex offense cases, cannot be sealed.

If you seal all of your records, a CORI check from an agency outside the criminal justice system will show that you have no criminal record. Criminal justice agencies will be able to see that you have sealed records, but they must get a court order to see the records.
Correcting CORI mistakes:
If you find a mistake on your CORI, the probation office where the case was heard may be able to correct it. You can also call the Commissioner of Probation at 617-727-5300 for help. In some cases, you may have to file a petition with the court to have your record corrected.

Who can see my CORI report?

Many different organizations and people can see some or all of the information on your CORI. Some organizations are required by law to do CORI checks on their employees and volunteers.
• All criminal justice agencies, such as police, judges, and prosecutors, can see your CORI at any time.
• Organizations that work with the elderly, disabled, or children (such as nursing homes, schools, camps, hospitals, preschools, and government agencies serving these populations) are required by law to do a CORI check on employees and volunteers who will have direct unsupervised contact with clients. Adoptive and foster parents must also have CORI checks. As of January 2013, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and school districts are authorized to conduct fingerprint-supported national criminal history background checks on all teachers, school employees and early education providers in Massachusetts.
• Banks, insurance companies, and companies that hire security guards, amusement ride operators, security system installers, and private investigators must do a CORI check on their employees.
• Parents can request CORI reports for child care providers, and elderly and/or disabled people can request CORI reports for home health aides:
  o Parent request for a child care provider CORI: Child Care Provider CORI Form
  o Elderly/disabled request for a home health aide CORI: Home Health Aide CORI Form
• Housing agencies are authorized to use CORI reports to screen tenants for public and subsidized housing.
• Private employers and private landlords are given Standard Access to CORI to screen potential employees and tenants.
• Anyone can request an Open Access CORI report.
• You can get a copy of your own CORI.

How do employers get a copy of my CORI report?

Most employers are not allowed to ask you about your criminal history on an initial job application. After the initial job application, an employer may access your CORI under these conditions:
• You must agree to a CORI check by signing a CORI Acknowledgment Form for Employment and Housing
• The employer must verify your identity
The employer must certify under oath that the reason for the CORI request is to evaluate a current or potential employee.

If an employer questions you about your CORI or decides not to hire you based on your CORI, the employer must give you a copy of the CORI report. The employer must also give you a chance to fix any mistakes in the report.

Note: Some employers use criminal background checks from private Consumer Reporting Agencies (CRAs) in addition to, or instead of, CORI reports. Criminal background reports from private companies may include records that are sealed, records that have not been updated, out-of-state records, and other information not found in your CORI. If an employer uses a CRA report, the employer must give you a free copy of the report and an opportunity to fix any mistakes in the report.

**What problems will I face if I have a CORI?**

Having a CORI record can cause many problems, especially when you are looking for a job or housing:

- Public housing agencies can disqualify you from public housing or subsidized housing (such as Section 8) based on your CORI or the CORI of any adult leaseholder in your household. You have the right to a hearing to discuss the accuracy or relevance of the information in your CORI.
- Massachusetts employers can refuse to hire you because of your criminal record, even if you are qualified for the job. You have the right to a hearing to discuss the accuracy or relevance of the information in your CORI.
- You may be prohibited from volunteering at your child's school or sports events, or doing other volunteer work with children, or with elderly or disabled adults.
- If you were incarcerated for a drug-related felony and were released from prison less than 12 months ago, you cannot get TAFDC (Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children) for yourself unless you are exempt from the time limit or get a domestic violence waiver.
- A CORI may prevent you from becoming a foster or adoptive parent.
- Colleges and technical schools might not allow you to do clinical work or internships in certain fields like nursing or teaching that require contact with children, the elderly, or people with disabilities.

**Are there incentives to hire people with CORI records?**

The Federal Bonding Program and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program (WOTC) offer incentives to employers who hire ex-offenders:

- The Federal Bonding Program is a job hiring incentive program that protects employers from loss resulting from any dishonest acts performed by "at-risk" employees that they hire. The "at-risk" categories include ex-offenders, recovering substance abusers, dishonorably discharged veterans, etc.
By bonding "at risk" job seekers who are not bondable by private insurers, the Federal Bonding Program removes one barrier to employment.

- The **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)** is a federal tax credit for employers who hire workers from certain hard-to-place target groups. One of the WOTC target groups is ex-felons who were convicted or released from prison within one year of the date of hire. In most cases, the employer is eligible for a tax credit of $2400.

### Where can I get help with CORI-related problems?

**Legal Advocacy and Resource Center (LARC)**  
Telephone: 617-603-1700 or 1-800-342-LAWS (5297)

The LARC Hotline provides low-income Massachusetts residents with free legal information, advice, and referrals for CORI-related problems.

**CORI Project, Mass Law Reform Institute**  
99 Chauncy Street, Suite 500  
Boston MA 02111  
Telephone: 617-357-0700  
Toll-free: 800-717-4133, x504 (voice mail)

The CORI Project of the MLRI provides advice and referrals for Massachusetts residents with CORI problems. The MLRI also advocates for CORI reform and offers a variety of CORI training programs.

**Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)**  
197 Friend Street  
Boston, MA 02114  
Telephone: 617-371-1234 or toll-free 800-323-3205  
Service Area: Greater Boston, especially Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan

Greater Boston Legal Services advocates for CORI reform and assists clients in sealing CORI records in court. GBLS provides advice and individual representation. GBLS holds walk-in CORI clinics at the Roxbury and Dorchester Divisions of the Boston Municipal Court. Call GBLS for details.

**EPOCA**  
5 Pleasant Street  
Worcester, MA 01609  
Telephone: 508-459-0558

EPOCA (Ex-prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement) hosts weekly CORI Training Workshops, led by EPOCA leaders every Wednesday from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. They are full of new people every week. Come and join if you need help sealing your record, know others who do, or have a question about CORIs or the record sealing process.
CRIMINAL OFFENDER RECORD INFORMATION (CORI)
PERSONAL REQUEST FORM

Use this form only for requesting your own CORI. A bank check or money order for $25.00 must be submitted with this form. Please note: this is a multi-page request form. Incomplete request forms will not be processed. Requests must be mailed, along with the accompanying payment or indigency waiver, to the address provided above, ATTN: CORI Unit.

Request Type Details

*Are you applying for an indigency waiver? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you are applying for an indigency waiver, please go to www.mass.gov/courts/formsandguidelines/aff_indigency.pdf to download the waiver form. You must submit the waiver with the completed application.

☐ If you require a certified copy of your CORI, please check this box.

Requestor Details

Please complete this section using your information. A red asterisk (*) denotes a required field.

*First Name [ ] *Last Name [ ]

Middle Initial [ ] Suffix [ ] *Date of Birth [ ]

Maiden Name [ ]

*Last 6 digits of Social Security number [ ] ☐ I do not have a Social Security number

*Mailing Address

Street 1 [ ] Street 2 (Apt, Suite, Bldg) [ ]

City/Town [ ] State [ ] Zip [ ]

Phone [ ] Ext. [ ] Email [ ]

☐ Check here if your CORI request is limited to your maiden name. (IMPORTANT: if this box is not checked, you must pay an additional $25 unless you are indigent.)
Personal CORI Request Authorization

I hereby swear, under the penalties of perjury, that the information I have provided above is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

______________________________   ______________________
Signature of individual named in criminal record   Date

Authentication of Signature By Notary Public or Correctional Facility

On this ____ day of _________, 20___, before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared ______________________ (name of document signer), proved to me through satisfactory evidence of identification, which were ______________________, to be the person whose name is signed on the preceding or attached document, and acknowledged to me that (he) (she) signed it voluntarily for its stated purpose.

______________________________   ______________________
Notary Public   Correctional Facility Official (give rank and title)

______________________________
My Commission Expires

________________________________
Correctional Facility Address and Phone
By using this form, the Requestor agrees to be bound by these terms and conditions and any and all other guidelines, disclaimers, rules, and privacy statements within this agreement, collectively referred to as "Terms and Conditions." All Terms and Conditions contained herein apply only to obtaining information from the DCJIS.

(1) As referenced in these terms and conditions, the terms below shall have the following meanings:
   (a) CRA: Consumer Reporting Agency.
   (b) CRRB: The Criminal Records Review Board.
   (c) CORI: Criminal Offender Record Information.
   (d) DCJIS: The Massachusetts Department of Criminal Justice Information Services.
   (e) iCORI application: The internet-based system used to request and obtain CORI and self audits, whether by electronic request or request submitted using a paper form.
   (f) Requestor: A registered user of the iCORI system and any additional authorized users for the requestor's account. Requestor, as used in these terms, includes Consumer Reporting Agency requestors. Requestor, as used in these terms, also includes any individual who requests or obtains CORI or a self audit report from DCJIS using a paper form.

(2) Obtaining CORI from DCJIS using this form is subject to Massachusetts General Law as well as to Federal law, including, but not limited to, M.G.L. c.6, §§ 167-178B (the CORI Law); M.G.L. c. 66, § 10 (the Public Records Law), and any current or future laws applicable to the use of personal information. Sanctions for violations of these laws include both civil and criminal penalties.

(3) An individual or entity who knowingly requests, obtains, or attempts to obtain CORI or a self-audit from the DCJIS under false pretenses, or who knowingly communicates, or attempts to communicate, CORI to any individual or entity except in accordance with CORI law, or who knowingly falsifies CORI or any records relating thereto, or who requests or requires a person to provide a copy of his or her CORI except as authorized under M.G.L. c. 6, § 172, shall, for each offense, be punished by imprisonment in a jail or house of correction for not more than one year or by a fine of not more than $5,000.00. In the case of an entity that is not a natural person, the amount of the fine may not be more than $50,000.00. In the case of such a violation involving juvenile delinquency records, an individual or entity shall, for each offense, be punished by imprisonment in a jail or house of correction for not more than one year or by a fine of not more than $7,500.00. In the case of an entity that is not a natural person, the amount of the fine may not be more than $75,000.00.

(4) The DCJIS makes every effort to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information it provides. Neither the DCJIS nor the CRRB shall be liable in any civil or criminal action by reason of any CORI or self-audit report that is disseminated by the DCJIS or the CRRB, including any information that is false, inaccurate, or incorrect, because it was erroneously entered by the court or the Office of the Commissioner of Probation.

(5) CORI results are based on an exact match of the information provided by the requestor to information as it appears in the CORI database. Requestors are responsible for providing accurate information for the subject requested. In addition, it is the requestor's responsibility to compare the CORI or self-audit results received from the DCJIS to the subject's personal identifying information to ensure that results match this information. The DCJIS is not liable for any errors or omissions in the CORI results based on a requestor's submission of inaccurate, incorrect, or incomplete subject information.

(6) Each requestor who submits 5 or more background checks annually must have a written CORI policy. Each requestor is responsible for adopting its own CORI policy. The DCJIS publishes a model CORI policy on its web site that may be adopted for use by requestors. If this requirement applies to a requestor, the requestor agrees that, at the time of submission of a CORI request, it has adopted a CORI policy.

(7) The requestor agrees that he/she has reviewed and understands all training materials regarding the CORI process and CORI requirements available from the DCJIS on its web site, mass.gov/cjis. The requestor also agrees that he/she understands that reviewing and understanding the DCJIS training materials before submitting CORI requests is a requirement of obtaining CORI from DCJIS. Requestors are solely responsible for reviewing and understanding the training materials provided by the DCJIS.
(8) Requestors who seek to receive standard or required CORI for employment, housing, licensing, or volunteer purposes must ensure that the following are completed prior to submitting a CORI request:
   (a) a CORI Acknowledgement Form has been completed for each subject to be checked;
   (b) the identity of each subject has been verified;
   (c) each subject has signed the CORI Acknowledgement Form;
   (d) each CORI Acknowledgement Form has been signed and dated by the requestor certifying that the subject was properly identified; and
   (e) the requestor is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.
(9) All requestors, including those that request CORI through a CRA, must comply with 803 C.M.R. 2.00 and, if applicable, 803 C.M.R. 5.00. In addition, CRAs are also responsible for ensuring compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act and with DCJIS regulation 803 CMR 11.00
(10) A requestor that uses CORI to commit a crime against, or to harass, another individual may be subject to the criminal penalties set forth in M.G.L. c. 6, §178 ½, including imprisonment in a jail or house of correction for not more than one year and a fine of not more than $5,000.00. The DCJIS and the CRRB disclaim any liability for the improper use or dissemination of information obtained through the DCJIS or the CRRB.
(11) Requestors are subject to audit at any time by the DCJIS and may be asked to produce documentation to demonstrate compliance with these provisions and with DCJIS regulations (803 CMR 2.00-11.00 et seq.).
(12) No information obtained from the DCJIS regarding use of CORI or the iCORI system shall be construed as legal advice.
(13) The DCJIS reserves the right to alter, amend, or discontinue any condition of obtaining CORI from the DCJIS. Any such changes will appear on the DCJIS web site in advance. The user is subject to the terms of use in effect at the time of his/her agreement. The DCJIS and the CRRB shall not be liable for any damages associated with use of this site.
(14) These Terms and Conditions are governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the laws of the United States, without giving effect to any principles of conflicts of law. If any provision of these Terms and Conditions is judicially determined to be unlawful, void, or for any reason unenforceable, then that provision shall be deemed severable from these Terms and Conditions and shall not affect the validity and enforceability of the remaining provisions.
By submitting a request for CORI to the DCJIS, I affirm that I have read and understand these Terms and Conditions. Further, I understand and agree to, and am bound by, these Terms and Conditions as well as by M.G.L. c. 6, §§ 167-178B, inclusive, and 803 CMR 2.00-11.00, inclusive.
Subject Name: 

Address: 

Street and number  
City or Town  
State and Zip Code

Pursuant to M.G.L. General Laws, Ch. 6, §172A, I swear (or affirm) as follows: I AM INDIGENT in that: (check only one of the following)

1. I receive public assistance under the following program:
   - [ ] Massachusetts Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC)
   - [ ] Federal Supplement Security Income (SSI)
   - [ ] Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC)
   - [ ] Medicaid (MassHealth)
   - [ ] Massachusetts Veterans' Programs

   My income, less, less taxes deducted from my pay is $____________ per week/month/year (circle period that applies), for a household of ______ persons, consisting of myself and _____ dependents; which income is at or below 125% or less of the current poverty threshold annually published in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; [List any other available household income for the circled period on this line:] $______________ or

2. [ ] I am unable to pay the fees and costs, or I am unable to do so without depriving myself or my dependents of the necessities of life, including food, shelter and clothing. If you check this box, you must complete the following:

   Gross monthly income: __________________
   Gross Income for the past twelve months: ______________

   If employed, please list your occupation, employer’s name and address:

   If not employed, please list your source of income:

3. [ ] I am currently incarcerated (Provide Name & Address of the Correctional Facility in the space below)

I request that the DCJS waive the fee of $25.00 for a Personal Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Request

Signed under the penalties of perjury:

Signature of Applicant ___________________________ Date ___________________________

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS CONFIDENTIAL AND SHALL ONLY BE DISCLOSED AS AUTHORIZED BY LAW.