

The Ohio Justice & Policy Center's

# CQE Workbook

A step-by-step guide to applying for a  
**Certificate of Qualification for Employment**

Version May 22, 2020





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The Ohio Justice & Policy Center's  
CQE Workbook

Version 12/6/2019



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# What would a CQE do for me?

Before diving into this long process, you probably want to know what a CQE is and why it might be valuable to you. This is how CQEs work:



*CQEs erase two effects of criminal records.*

## 1. Erasing job barriers

Many **Ohio laws** prevent people with criminal records from getting certain government-issued licenses or from working in certain jobs. These legal barriers are sometimes called *collateral sanctions* or *the civil impacts of criminal convictions*.

When the law imposes a **mandatory restriction** — one that absolutely prevents the person with the specific criminal record from working or being licensed in that field — a Certificate of Qualification for Employment creates flexibility. Instead of relying on the blanket restriction (for example, a rule that says no one with a particular criminal record can ever receive a particular license), the state agency that governs that field of employment is **required to individually assess** someone with a CQE to determine whether they are fit for the job.

The CQE creates a “**rebuttable presumption of rehabilitation**” when you apply for a professional licensing. This means that a person’s criminal convictions are insufficient evidence that the person is unfit for the license, employment opportunity, or certification in question.

The CQE **does not guarantee the job** or license — it *allows*, but *does not require*, the agency to let you into this field of employment.

## 2. Erasing employer fear

The #1 reason employers run criminal-record checks and do not hire people with criminal records is because they are **afraid** that, if the new employee does something bad in the future, the **employer will get sued**.

When a job applicant has a CQE, the employer can be confident they won’t get sued in that way. The CQE creates **immunity from negligent-hiring lawsuits**.



*CQEs do not erase the criminal record.*

### Not “expungement”

CQEs are a **new way to overcome job barriers** in the law and employer fear. A CQE will not seal or expunge your record.

Once you get a CQE, state licensing agencies and employers **will still be able to see all your convictions** on a background check.

CQEs are **available to far more people** than criminal-record sealing (“expungement”); the eligibility rules for CQEs are much more wide open.

# Roadmap for Your Application

## Getting a CQE takes time and dedication

This workbook is designed for someone with a criminal history who wants to apply on their own or for attorneys or other professionals who intend to help applicants through at least part of the CQE process. Here's what you can expect:

### Step 1

#### Are you eligible to apply yet...or at all?

- You must wait 6 months from the end of your last misdemeanor sentence or 1 year from the end of your last felony sentence—or qualify for “early filing.”
- CQEs are not effective if you have a federal offense, for removing a federal-law job barrier, or for removing a job barrier in another state.
- There is a limited list of severe offenses that bar you from getting CQE only for healthcare-related licenses.

### Step 2

#### Identify your records and goals

- Think through the kinds of jobs you are, or might become, qualified for. Where do you *want* to work?
- Gather info about *all* your criminal offenses, including case numbers and courts.
- Think about the kinds of barriers you may face when applying for employment or professional licensing. You can explore Ohio’s collateral sanctions at <http://CIVICohio.org>

### Step 3

#### Apply for a CQE online

- You must submit your application online using the website for CQE applications: <https://drccqe.com>.
- After you create your account on that website, there is a lengthy, multi-part form to complete. You may need an attorney’s advice to answer some of the legal or technical questions.

### Step 4

#### Wait for DRC’s approval, then file in court

- The CQE law requires most applicants to first have their applications screened by the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC). You must wait for an email indicating that DRC is satisfied that your application is complete.
- It is then your responsibility to print off the complete application from <https://drccqe.com> and file it in the court of common pleas for the county where you live. It may be helpful to attach supporting documents, like letters of recommendation.
- There is a \$50 filing fee for CQE petitions. If you do not have enough income to pay for the filing fee, ask the court for a filing fee waiver to find you indigent.

### Step 5

#### Court investigation and possible hearing

- The court will gather information from every other Ohio court where you have a conviction. There is no time limit on the investigation process.
- After the court completes its investigation, it has 60 days within which to make a decision.
- The prosecutor may object and may also seek input from any crime victims from your past offenses.
- The court is not required to hold a hearing, but many choose to.

### Step 6

#### CQE granted! (Or not.)

- If the court decides in your favor, it will issue an order to DRC to give you a CQE. The court order is not the CQE.
- You must go back to <https://drccqe.com> to print off the actual CQE.
- You or any employer can verify the current validity of your CQE at <http://www.drc.ohio.gov/web/cqe.htm>.
- If the court denies your CQE, you can appeal. Or, the court may put conditions on your reapplying, such as completing certain programs or waiting longer to demonstrate your rehabilitation.

The complete and most recent version of this CQE workbook can be viewed and downloaded at

<http://bit.ly/OJPC-CQEworkbook>

# **Before you begin: Are you allowed to apply? Do you need help?**

Before you begin the process of applying for a CQE, first make sure that you are eligible to apply.

[a] **State or federal?** CQEs only work if you have state criminal offenses in Ohio, not federal offenses. Also, the employment barrier you are trying to overcome must be in *state* law, not federal. If a federal offense or a federal job restriction is causing you problems, a CQE will not help.

[b] **Waiting periods, felony vs. misdemeanor.** You can apply for a CQE after **1 year** from the final discharge of your last felony or **6 months** from the final discharge of your last misdemeanor. *Final discharge* means the date you were completely done with paying all fines, done with any jail or prison term, and done with probation or parole.

In limited circumstances, a person can apply for a CQE before the waiting period ends. For example, you might be able to apply “early” if any of the following conditions are true...



- You were released after earning a 90-day-credit or a 10% reduction for your prison term, by participating in programs in prison;
- You received a Certificate of Achievement and Employability;
- You were released from a local jail (not prison) and get a recommendation from the Sheriff;
- You were not incarcerated and did not receive community control as a sentence; OR
- You received early termination of community control and paid all fines and restitution.

Even if you can’t apply today, you are welcome to use the rest of this packet to begin thinking through everything you’ll need to apply for a CQE when your waiting period has passed.

[c] **Presumption of Eligibility.** If one year has elapsed since the final discharge of your misdemeanor sentence and/or three years have elapsed since the final discharge of your felony sentence, there is a “rebuttable presumption” that you are eligible for a CQE and that the Court should grant your petition. This means that there is an assumption that you are fully rehabilitated and deserving of a CQE if a year has passed since the completion of your misdemeanor sentence or three years have passed since the completion of your felony sentence. After these timeframes have passed without any new convictions, there must be a finding, by clear and convincing evidence, that you are not rehabilitated in order for the Court to deny your petition for a CQE.

[d] **Limited exclusions.** There are some state-law barriers that you **cannot** get relief from using a CQE. You can read the exact, complete list in Ohio Revised Code § 2953.25 (C)(5)

- Sex-offender registration and related duties;
- Certain driver’s license suspensions;
- Job restrictions to become a prosecutor or law enforcement officer;
- Certain license restrictions for healthcare professions only, if you were convicted of,

received treatment in lieu of conviction for, Aggravated Murder, Murder, Voluntary Manslaughter, Felonious Assault, Kidnapping, Rape, Sexual Battery, Gross Sexual Imposition, Aggravated Arson, Aggravated Robbery, Aggravated Burglary, Unlawful Distribution of Abortion-Inducing Drug;

- Job and license restrictions for healthcare jobs if you are found to be addicted to drugs or have illegally distributed drugs, even if you were not criminally convicted;
- Restrictions on working in pain clinics;
- Mandatory healthcare-license restrictions if you are in default on your child-support obligations.

**Do you need a lawyer?** After looking through at least Step 1 (p. 4–7), consider whether you need help from an attorney or someone else who has been trained to help with CQE applications. Your local legal aid may have attorneys that work on these. Find your local legal aid by calling 1-866-529-6446 or visiting the website [www.ohiolegalservices.org](http://www.ohiolegalservices.org).

## Step 1: Identify the barriers you want relief from

### Where do you want to work?

[1a] Answer any of these questions you find helpful in narrowing down your choices:

- What kinds of jobs have you had in the past? Where are you working now?
- What field of employment do you want to work in? Do you have any experience or transferable skills related to that job?
- What school or training are you in, or have you gone to, for a particular kind of job? What job were you training for?
- What special license, degree, or certification do you need to get the job you want?
- Even if your preferred job(s) are not specifically healthcare related—for example, food service, construction, or computer-network administration—do you want to have the option of doing those jobs in a healthcare facility, or in any facility that serves children or the elderly? Describe any of these special settings where you'd like to work.



A large rectangular area containing a light gray background with a faint grid pattern. In the top-left corner, there is a small icon of a pencil writing on a lined notebook. Below the icon, there are approximately 10 horizontal lines spaced evenly apart, intended for handwritten responses to the questions above.

# *What's on your criminal record?*

[1b] You also need to name all of your criminal offenses, from any state. You can rely on your memory, a court clerk's website (such as [www.courtclerk.org](http://www.courtclerk.org) for Hamilton County, Ohio offenses), or a printed criminal-history document. **Record every conviction on your record here:**

You will be typing all of this into your online CQE application.

## Step 2: Create an online CQE account

Your online application starts here

- [2a] Go to <https://drccqe.com>. Note that the address starts with “https://” not just “http://”. This is where your online application will live.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Ohio Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) website. At the top, there's a green header bar with the text "The Ohio Certificate of Qualification for Employment Online Petition Website". Below the header, there's a "System Login" button. On the right side of the page, there's a "Login" form with fields for "Username" and "Password", and a "LOGIN" button. Below the login form, there are links for "New User?" and "Forgot Password?". A message box on the left says "Welcome to the Ohio Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) online website". Another message box at the bottom says "Senate Bill 207 became effective September 29, 2012, and created a 'Certificate of Qualification for Employment'".

- [2b] You must have an email account to apply for a CQE. If you don't have one, scroll down on this first page of the website to find links to create an email account with Google, Yahoo, or Hotmail. Follow the instructions for creating a new account with one of those email providers then come back to the CQE website.



You will need to check this email address often after you submit your application to see if DRC has cleared you to then file your application in court (step 6a, p. 20)

- [2c] Once you have an email account set up, come back to the CQE website (<https://drccqe.com>) and click “New user” in the Login box in the top right. If your most serious offense was a felony and it has been more than a year since the final discharge of your last offense (see “Before you begin,” p. 3), check the box for “**Yes it has been more than a year.**” If your most serious offense was a misdemeanor and it has been more than six months, check the box for “**Yes it has been more than six months.**” Complete all the questions.

The image contains two side-by-side screenshots. The left screenshot shows the "Login" form with fields for "Username" and "Password", and a "LOGIN" button. Below these fields, there are links for "New User?" and "Forgot Password?", with "New User?" circled in red. The right screenshot shows the first question of a multi-question form. Question 1 asks: "1. The offense that resulted in the collateral sanction is a felony, and I have been released from all sanctions, including incarceration in a state prison for that offense." It has three radio button options: "Yes it has been more than a year", "No, it has been less than a year", and "My offense was not a felony". Question 2 asks: "2. The offense that resulted in the collateral sanction is a misdemeanor, and I have been released from all sanctions, including incarceration in a state prison for that offense." It also has three radio button options: "Yes it has been more than six months", "No, it has been less than six months", and "My offense was not a misdemeanor".

[2d] Then, below that, fill in all the identification and contact information required.

Contact Information

Name	Prefix	First	Middle	Last
Last Four SSN#				
Petitioner?	Yes *			
Address				

When you're done creating your account, click the SAVE button at the top right to save your data prior to proceeding.

*Now you have an online CQE account. Nice work...keep going!*

## Step 3: Fill out the “Certification Request” section

[3a] Click on OPEN MY TASKS and then on the text under NAME (it should be your name, the name of the county you live in, and a number).

The Ohio Certificate of Qualification for Employment Online Petition Website

Welcome John Petitioner Change My Picture

Instructions: Select the SHOW HELP button above for detailed instructions on the following:  
> Applying for a CQE Petition  
> Understanding your Tasks

Click View Current Petition button below to start a new petition process.

Hello John, please choose an option below.

My Inbox You have 0 new messages. Select the Open My Inbox button below to open your system message inbox. OPEN MY INBOX

My Tasks You have 1 new tasks. You have 0 tasks that are critical. Click the Open My Tasks button below to view your active tasks. OPEN MY TASKS

My Tasks

Info	Document Type	Organization	Name	Current Status
Petition		John Doe -	John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127	CQE Petition in Process

Under PETITION MENU, click on VIEW FORMS. On the next page, click on CERTIFICATION REQUEST AND CRIMINAL HISTORY.

Petition Menu

Document Information: [John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127](#)

View, Edit and Complete Forms

Select the View Forms button below to view, edit, and complete petition pages. VIEW FORMS

Change the Status

Petition Menu - Forms

Please complete all required forms below.

Document Information: [John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127](#)

Forms

Status	Page Name
Petition	Personal and Contact Information
	Certification Request and Criminal History
	Certification Rationale
	Employment History
	Reference(s)
	Family Members

- [3b] Enter a general statement for why you are requesting a CQE, including how you might use the certificate. This statement can short – even a few sentences – like the example below. You’re going to have an opportunity to give a lot of detail in the “certification rationale” section later.

**Certification Request**

Please write a general statement for why you are requesting a certificate of qualification for employment.

My criminal record prevents me from getting better jobs and many professional licenses, and I am requesting a CQE to remove these barriers. I am particularly interested in finding employment in the field of life insurance sales and getting licensed by the Ohio Department of Insurance. I take responsibility for my mistake, and am now seeking a CQE because advancing in my desired field of work has been difficult. See certification rationale. \*

443 of 500

Provide a description of how you intend to use the certificate of qualification of employment if granted.

**STOP RIGHT NOW AND CLICK SAVE.** The CQE website will kick you off without warning after a certain period of time and all your work will be lost if you haven’t clicked *Save*. The best idea is to type up in a separate document on your own computer (using something like Microsoft Word) everything you will be entering into your online application. Then, when the time comes you can simply copy and paste your typed up content into the website without fear of losing any of your hard work. Make sure to save when you complete any section, before moving on to other parts of the website.

- [3d] If the legal job barrier involves a particular licensing board, check the YES box and type in the name of the occupation and the licensing board. You can list more than one answer in the box.

Also, always select YES for the next question. (This has to do with the negligent-hiring protection described under “Erasing Employer Fear” on page 1.)

Provide a description of how you intend to use the certificate of qualification of employment if granted.

1. Do you intend to use the certificate to obtain an occupational license from a state licensing board? \*

Yes  No

If Yes, indicate the type of occupational license and which State of Ohio licensing board:

Occupation

Licensing Board

2. Do you intend to obtain employment and use the certificate as a means to provide potential employers with immunity from suit under the Revised Code? \*

Yes  No

[3e] Under SUMMARY OF CRIMINAL HISTORY, fill in the information you gathered on step [1b], p. 5.

**Summary of Criminal History**

Please indicate each criminal offense that is a disqualification from employment or licensing in an occupation or profession.

**Offense Number 1**

Year of Offense:

Offense:

County of Conviction

**Offense Number 2**

Year of Offense:

Remember  
to click  
**SAVE**  
often!

*Great progress.*

*The next section is the most important part of your application.  
Let's go!*



## Step 4: Complete the “Certification Rationale” section

Petition Menu - Forms  
Please complete all required forms below.  
Document Information: John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127  
Details

Status	Page Name
Petition	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Personal and Contact Information</a>
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<a href="#">Certification Request and Criminal History</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Certification Rationale</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Employment History</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Reference(s)</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Family Members</a>

[4a] This process will make more sense if you start with the second question:

**2. Define why a certificate will materially assist you in obtaining employment or occupation licensing:**

Discuss how your criminal record triggers particular laws or job restrictions that prevent you from working. Explain that CQEs give employers immunity from negligent hiring liability, so they will not be fearful to hire you. Other helpful facts to include if they apply to you:

- State whether you have specifically been denied a job, promotion, or license because of a criminal record.
- Describe with concrete examples how your employment has changed negatively since you got a criminal record.
- State whether a CQE would help you work in a particular field, get a professional license, and/or work in restricted facilities like hospitals, schools, and nursing homes.

**Define why a certificate will materially assist you in obtaining employment or occupation licensing:**

*Example: “My criminal record prevents me from pursuing a career in the healthcare field. I enjoy helping sick people, particularly children, elderly, and people with disabilities; however these fields are very restricted. Even though employers want to hire me during the application process, I have been denied or revoked job offers because of my record. A CQE would materially assist me by removing multiple collateral sanctions, such as working in nursing homes, hospitals, clinics, MRDD services, and home-health services. I already have my STNA Certificate (nursing assistant) and am studying to become an RN (registered nurse). A CQE would allow me to get my nursing license next summer and move forward with my career.”*

[4b]

**3. Define why you have a substantial need for a certificate in order to live a law-abiding life:**

Start with something like this: "**I have already been living a law-abiding life for years. I have a substantial need for a CQE to allow me to become an even more productive citizen.**" Then answer any of the following questions that fit best for your life story:

- Why are you so interested in this particular field of employment? Was it family connections, previous jobs, the prospect of better pay, or an inspirational story that got you hooked on this career path?
  - Emphasize how you want to serve the community and have the dignity of supporting yourself and your family by doing good work that you enjoy.
  - Do you need the CQE so you can get better wages, more hours of work, better benefits, or a promotion?
  - How have you already invested time and/or money in pursuing this career? Give the details about any training or education you have started or completed in order to get this license or job: name of institution where you trained; how long you trained for; when you completed the training or plan to complete the training.
  - Describe some of the significant limitations you have experienced because you couldn't get a better job or move ahead with your desired career. What has it been like to not have enough income to support your family? How has the fact that you have been blocked from advancing in your career affected your family?



**Define why you have a substantial need for a certificate in order to live a law-abiding life:**

## Remember to

**SAVE**

[4c]

**4. Describe why granting the petition would not pose an unreasonable risk to the safety of the public or any individual:**

Use this section to take responsibility for your past offenses, put your criminal records in context, and describe how you have changed.

Briefly describe what was going on in your life at the time of the specific offenses and how you have separated yourself from that lifestyle or situation. DO NOT retell the complete story of each offense or try to make excuses. You don't want to make it look like you are diminishing your responsibility, but it is helpful to give the criminal offenses some context. Discuss if you are surrounding yourself by different people and making different choices. **For example:**

During the time when I was convicted of these assaults, I was in a very unhealthy relationship with an abusive boyfriend. My family told me I shouldn't be with him, but I was afraid to leave. I know what I did was wrong. Finally, in 2009, I had the strength and resources to leave him. I now live in a different part of town. I have had various jobs over the past 3 years and I take good care of my children. I don't have any new offenses since that time because I'm a different person in a different situation. I keep healthy relationships and surround myself with safe, positive people.

Briefly describe how you have improved your life and how you contribute to the community. Mention volunteering and important situations where people have trusted you and it has gone well. **For example:**

I have been out of prison and off parole for 10 years. Since then, I have had several jobs and have volunteered in many situations where I was put in a position of trust. Not once has anyone complained or has anything gone wrong. In fact, I've had good reviews and promotions at work in the past. I am trustworthy and an asset to my community. For example, I'm an active member of my church, [name of church], and I sing in the choir. Last year, I volunteered to coach my son's baseball team. I've always gotten great feedback about my volunteering.

If this is true for you, point out how you do not have any violent offenses, or that you have no felonies, or that your record from long ago. **For example:**

I have six drug-related offenses from 1987 to 1997 when I was actively addicted to heroin. But I have had no offenses for over 16 years. I have never had any violent offenses.

If applicable, describe any court-ordered programming you successfully completed, such as substance abuse or behavioral health treatment, parenting classes, or anger management. What did you learn?

**Describe why granting the petition would not pose an unreasonable risk to the safety of the public or any individual:**



(4. ...why giving you a CQE would not pose a risk to public safety... continued)

Have you  
clicked  
**SAVE**  
lately?

[4d] Now go back and answer the first question.

**1. Define the reasons you believe the certificate of qualification for employment should be granted:**

Make this an introduction or summary of sections 2, 3, and 4. Keep it short and to the point. Explain your employment goals. Explain how your record creates barriers. You can mention positive things you have done, such as volunteering, drug/alcohol rehabilitation programs, job readiness programs, education programs, good standing while on parole or in jail, participation in religious programs, etc.

**Define the reasons you believe the certificate of qualification for employment should be granted:**

*Example: "I am ready and eager to become a home health aide, but I am facing many barriers to getting employment. I have been a state-tested nursing assistant for 5 years and have excellent reviews from my supervisors and patients. But I also have two drug offenses from over 15 years ago, when I was in my early 20s, and these convictions are blocking me from moving forward in a healthcare career. I have proven to the community that I am not a risk any longer and have successfully completed a drug rehab program; I have turned my life around. I volunteer at my church and at my children's school. Also, I've completed a job-readiness program at the Urban League, so I can be a great job applicant. I want a CQE so I can get a better job doing what I love: serving people as a home health aide."*



**SAVE**

your work!

*Your CQE application is coming along nicely. Well done.*

*This section of the application was definitely the hardest,  
but also the most important.*

*Keep going!*

# Step 5: Job History & References

- [5a] Go back to the PETITION MENU – FORMS page to access the EMPLOYMENT HISTORY, REFERENCES, and FAMILY MEMBERS sections.

**Petition Menu - Forms**  
Please complete all required forms below.

Document Information: [John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127](#)  
[Details](#)

Forms

Status	Page Name
Petition	
	<a href="#">Personal and Contact Information</a>
	<a href="#">Certification Request and Criminal History</a>
	<a href="#">Certification Rationale</a>
	<a href="#">Employment History</a>
	<a href="#">Reference(s)</a>
	<a href="#">Family Members</a>

**Click**  
**SAVE now!**

The information required for the EMPLOYMENT HISTORY section is just what you would expect: your current and past employers' name, address, and phone number; and the dates you worked there.

For (non-family) REFERENCES and FAMILY MEMBERS, try to find at least two in each category and make sure you **talk to those people before including them** in your petition. You want to be sure they will be prepared to say good things about you if they receive a letter or phone call from the court when it reviews your application.

- [5b] Print and check your work. Go back and edit anything you want to improve.

**Petition Menu - Forms**  
Please complete all required forms below.

Document Information: [John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127](#)  
[Details](#)

**Petition Menu**

Document Information: [John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127](#)  
[Details](#)

Info	Document Type	Organization	Role
	Petition	<a href="#">John Doe - Petitioner</a>	Petitioner

**View, Edit and Complete Forms**  
Select the **VIEW FORMS** button below to view, edit, and complete petition pages.  
[VIEW FORMS](#)

**Change the Status**  
Select the **VIEW STATUS OPTIONS** button below to submit, cancel or resubmit your petition.  
[VIEW STATUS OPTIONS](#)

**Access Management Tools**  
Select the **VIEW MANAGEMENT TOOLS** button below for print options of the CQE Petition.  
[VIEW MANAGEMENT TOOLS](#)

**Petition Menu - Management Tools**  
The menu below contains links to the tools that can be used to manage this document.

Document Information: [John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127](#)  
[Details](#)

**Management Tools**

**CREATE FULL PRINT VERSION**  
Select the link above to create a printable version of the document.

**CREATE FULL BLANK PRINT VERSION**  
Select the link above to create a blank printable version of the document.

**CHECK FOR ERRORS**  
Select the link above to check the entire document for errors.

- [5c] **Time to submit it!** When you're confident that your application is complete and as strong as it can be, then you formally submit the application to DRC for review.

The screenshot shows two side-by-side web pages. The left page is the 'Petition Menu' and the right page is the 'Petition Menu - Status Options'. Both pages have a header with 'Document Information: John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127' and a 'Details' link. The left page has sections for 'View, Edit and Complete Forms' (with a 'VIEW FORMS' button), 'Change the Status' (with a 'VIEW STATUS OPTIONS' button circled in red), and 'Access Management Tools' (with a 'VIEW MANAGEMENT TOOLS' button). An orange arrow points from the 'VIEW STATUS OPTIONS' button on the left to the 'PETITION SUBMITTED' button on the right. The right page also has sections for 'Possible Statuses' (listing 'PETITION CANCELLED' and 'PETITION SUBMITTED'), and a 'CLICK HERE TO CANCEL THE PETITION' button above the 'PETITION SUBMITTED' button.

Your application will now be reviewed by a Justice Reinvestment Officer (JRO), who is part of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC). The JRO will only review your application to be sure it is complete, not whether it is well written; the JRO cannot judge whether or not you will succeed in getting your CQE from the court. The JRO will email you if any corrections are needed. If no corrections are needed, **the JRO review usually takes about 1–4 weeks.**

This is a screenshot of a 'Certificate of Qualification of Employment Petition' form. At the top is the seal of the State of Ohio. Below it is the title 'Certificate of Qualification of Employment Petition' and the website 'www.drcqce.com'. The form is divided into sections: 'Personal Information' (containing fields for Legal First Name, DOB, Legal Middle Name, Social Security Number, Legal Last Name, and a checkbox for aliases), 'List all aliases and the Social Security Numbers associated with those aliases' (with a note about court names and maiden names), and 'Petition for: John Doe-FranklinCounty-2013-00127' at the bottom. A small 'Page' indicator is visible in the bottom right corner.

*Congratulations! You have finished the online part of your CQE application — that's the first big hurdle.*

*But you're not done yet...*

## **Step 6:**

### **Take your CQE petition to court**

- [6a] **Watch your email inbox!** As soon as your application is cleared by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC), you will get an *email*; you will not get a reminder in the mail or a phone call. **It is your responsibility to be on the alert for the email reminder.** You can also log back in to the CQE-application website (<https://www.drccqe.com>) to see if your application has been approved.
- [6b] **Gather supporting documents.** You may have noticed that the CQE petition does not allow you to attach important documents that show how you have turned your life around. But you should submit these documents to the court when you file. Now is the time to gather diplomas, certificates, and letters of recommendation that support everything you say in your petition.
- [6c] **Take your form to court.** When DRC gives you the go-ahead, **it is your responsibility to print your complete application**, make copies, and bring one copy to your local court of common pleas to file. No matter where your convictions are from, you **always file a CQE in the court of common pleas in the county where you live**—not the municipal court or “county court.” If you live outside of Ohio, file your application in a common pleas court of any county where a conviction in the CQE application occurred. Along with the CQE application, you can submit letters of recommendation, diplomas, program certificates, and other material showing how you are an excellent citizen.  
  
NOTE: a CQE application is a *civil* filing, not a *criminal* filing. Your clerk of courts may have different personnel, desks, or offices for civil vs. criminal filings.
- [6d] **Pay the fee.** There is a \$50 filing fee that must be paid to file your CQE petition. If you cannot afford the filing fee, **you have the right to ask for a fee waiver.** Ask the court clerk for their “indigency affidavit” or “*in forma pauperis* form” and submit that with your CQE petition. You may need to get that form notarized.

## **Step 7:**

### **Court investigation and possible hearing**

- [7a] The court will then conduct an **investigation**. They will ask for information from every other Ohio court where you have a conviction. The prosecutor can file comments or even oppose the CQE application; the prosecutor can also reach out to victims of your past crime(s) to get their input. If relevant, the state licensing board related to your CQE application may weigh in.
- [7b] **Decision time.** When the court determines it is done with its investigation, by law, it then has 60 days to make a decision about whether to grant your CQE. **The court may give you a hearing, but is not required to.**

## **Step 8: CQE granted! (Or not.)**

- [8a] If the judge decides in your favor, an order will be sent to DRC, which will then issue the official Certificate of Qualification for Employment. The court's order is *not* the CQE.
- [8b] Once DRC receives the judge's order, you must go back to <https://drccqe.com> to print off the actual CQE.
- [8c] You or any employer can verify the current validity of your CQE at  
<http://www.drc.ohio.gov/web/cqe.htm>.
- [8d] If the court denies your CQE, you can appeal. Or, the court may put conditions on your reapplying, such as completing certain programs or waiting longer to demonstrate your rehabilitation.

# **CONGRATULATIONS!**

**You are now the proud holder of a  
Certificate of Qualification for Employment!**

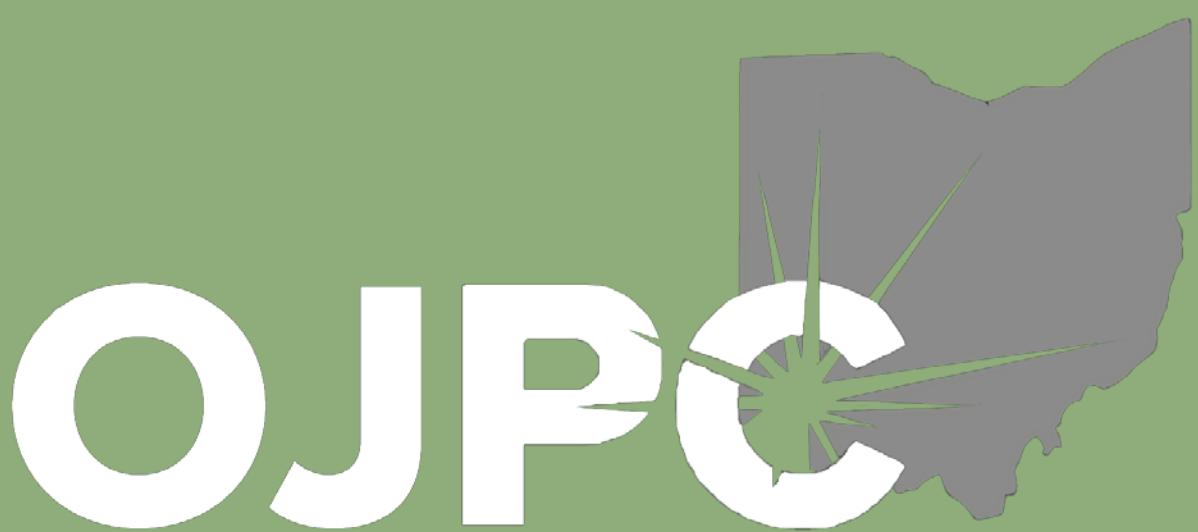
A couple more things to note:

Your CQE will be automatically revoked and invalid if you commit another felony.

You are not a *felon*. You are not an *ex-felon*, *ex-convict*, nor an *ex-offender*. You are and always have been a **person**, first and foremost. You happen to be a person who has a criminal record, but **that record does not define who you are. Don't ever forget that.** The CQE changes your legal status even though it doesn't remove the criminal record itself. The CQE acknowledges that you are a full-fledged citizen and positive community member.

*Good luck job hunting!*





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