



CERTIFICATE OF QUALIFICATION FOR HOUSING (CQH)

What housing providers need to know

WHAT IS A CQH?

Ohio law contains hundreds of legal restrictions, making it difficult for people with criminal records to obtain housing, employment, and reentry success. A **certificate of qualification for housing (CQH)** helps people who have been impacted by the criminal legal system to overcome barriers while searching for housing after they reenter society. A CQH gives housing providers the discretion to rent or sell to CQH holders, knowing the holder is rehabilitated and the housing provider's civil liability is limited if they choose to rent to a CQH holder.

WHY ARE CQHs IMPORTANT?

More than 1,155 laws restrict an Ohioan's ability to secure and afford housing if they have a criminal record.

1,155
laws

61%

People who received supportive housing through the Returning Home Ohio Program after their release were 61% less likely to be incarcerated post-release.

People incarcerated more than once experience homelessness at a rate 13 times higher than the general population.

13x

HOW DOES A CQH BENEFIT HOUSING PROVIDERS?

- **CQHs expand the pool of qualified tenant applicants.**

CQHs erase mandatory state legal barriers—laws that absolutely prevent the person with the specific criminal record from renting or buying a residence. With a CQH, the housing provider is required to individually assess a CQH holder to determine whether they are fit for the residence. CQHs create flexibility.

CQHs create a “rebuttable presumption of rehabilitation” when a person applies for housing. This means that a person's criminal convictions are insufficient evidence that the person is unfit for the housing opportunity.

- **CQHs protect housing providers from negligent-leasing liability.**

When a tenant applicant has a CQH, the housing provider can be confident that they won't get sued if the new tenant does something bad in the future. **The CQH creates limited liability from negligent-leasing lawsuits.**

- **CQHs do not guarantee housing.**

A CQH allows, but does not require, housing providers to lease or sell the residence to an applicant with a criminal record.

CQHs cannot do any the following:

- Erase a criminal record
- Require housing providers to lease or sell to people with CQHs
- Affect sex offender registry requirements
- Affect federal or another state's barriers

Disclaimer: This guide is a general source of information about certificates of qualification for housing. It is not a substitute for individualized legal advice. For answers to specific questions, it is best to consult an attorney. If you have questions about CQH eligibility and other ways to overcome the housing barriers of a criminal record, contact Ashley Ward, Ohio Access to Justice Foundation Justice for All Fellow, by registering for OJPC's Second Chance Legal Clinic at www.ohiojpc.org.

CQH Process Roadmap



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CQH-holders successfully complete a rigorous application process, showing their rehabilitation and identifying their housing goals. Applications are thoroughly reviewed by a Court of Common Pleas with potential input from prosecutors and multiple judges. CQHs are only granted if the individual has successfully maintained a crime-free record for a legally-prescribed waiting period.

Step 1: Check eligibility to apply

- A person can file an application for a CQH if the applicable waiting period has passed:
 - 1 year after the end of incarceration or other sanctions for a felony, or
 - 6 months after the end of incarceration or other sanctions for a misdemeanor.
- A CQH does *not* create relief from any of the requirements imposed by Chapter 2950 of the R.C. (sex offender registry).

Step 2: Identify records and desired housing

- An applicant must gather information about *all* their criminal offenses and think through the kinds of residences where they want to live.
- A CQH will *not* remove federal or another state's housing barriers.

Step 3: Apply for a CQH

- The applicant must complete a multi-part application form created by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC). The form can be found here: <https://ohiojpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CQH-Petition.pdf>.

Step 4: File application in court

- The complete application from the ODRC with supporting documents, like letters of recommendation, is filed in the court of common pleas:
 - If they live in Ohio, file in the county they live.
 - If they do not live in Ohio, file in the county where they were convicted.
- There is a \$50 filing fee for CQH petitions. If the applicant does not have enough income to pay for the filing fee, they can ask the court for a filing fee waiver.

Step 5: Court investigation and hearing

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

Step 6: CQH granted! (Or not.)

- If the court decides in the applicant's favor, it will issue an order granting a CQH. **This court order is the CQH. The court may also provide a certificate to represent the CQH.**
- Any housing provider can verify the validity of a CQH with the court that granted it.
- If the court denies a CQH, the applicant may appeal. The court may put conditions on the applicant reapplying, such as completing certain programs or waiting longer to demonstrate rehabilitation.
- A CQH will be revoked if the holder is later convicted of an offense of violence. See R.C. 2901.01.