



**Alert for Lawful Permanent Residents who want to apply for U.S. citizenship but have past criminal histories**

If you are a lawful permanent resident (“green card” holder) and have ever been arrested – regardless of the outcome of the case – consult a lawyer BEFORE applying for U.S. citizenship!

The mandatory background check will show your complete criminal history – including sealed or dismissed cases. If immigration believes you can be deported for your criminal record, they will likely start a deportation case against you and may even detain you in a jail. **Instead of becoming a U.S. citizen, you could face deportation.** Even if you don’t have a “deportable” offense, your criminal history could make you ineligible to become a U.S. citizen temporarily or permanently – leading your application to be denied and you to lose your filing fee.

BEFORE applying, get screened by an expert in criminal-immigration law!

**COLLECT the following documents for screening with a lawyer:**

In every place where you’ve been arrested or given a ticket by police, get:

- **ALL certificates of disposition**, even if charges were dropped, dismissed or expunged
- **Decline to Prosecute letters**

If you’re unsure of how to do this, contact the court clerk to request information.

**BEWARE:** Even cases that seemed minor, were a long time ago, or where charges were dropped can be a problem!

**ASK the lawyer the following questions before applying:**



- **Will my citizenship application lead the government to try to deport me?**
  - If I face deportation, would I be eligible to ask a judge to let me stay in the U.S. and keep my green card? Would I be detained in an immigration jail while fighting my case?
- **Does my criminal history make me ineligible for citizenship?**
- Would vacating the conviction(s) in criminal court or applying for a pardon allow me to get rid of the “deportable” offense(s) or become a U.S. citizen?

If you have had a criminal case in New York, Immigrant Defense Project can advise about how it impacts your status or eligibility for citizenship.

**Connect with us:** 212-725-6422  
**For more information on citizenship:** [immdefense.org/natz](http://immdefense.org/natz)

*This alert is not a substitute for individualized legal advice. Consult a lawyer to find out about your specific situation.*