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FEDERAL FIREARM RIGHTS RESTORATION GUIDE

*A Practical Guide to Understanding the Process,
Required Records, and Next Steps*

KNOWLEDGE • PREPARATION • OPPORTUNITY

2026 EDITION

Educational Information Only • Not Legal Advice

Quick Start: The Process in One Page

1. Identify every federal prohibition that may apply to you.
2. Review DOJ's current presumptive disqualifiers before spending money on records or filing.
3. Build a complete timeline: residences, arrests, convictions, sentence completion, supervision, treatment, military service, and other relevant events.
4. Collect the official records DOJ currently requires for your situation.
5. Choose three qualified character references and confirm they are willing to participate.
6. Wait until your application window is open; the online application is still being rolled out in stages.
7. After you begin the e-application, complete it within the time allowed by DOJ.
8. Follow the DOJ/USPS electronic fingerprint instructions exactly.
9. Monitor the portal, references, and government requests until a final decision.
10. If a legal classification is unclear, stop and get qualified legal advice before you guess.

CURRENT ROLLOUT SNAPSHOT

DOJ announced a staged launch: invited candidates beginning September 25, 2026; the first 5,000 public applicants beginning November 4, 2026; and an additional 500 public applicants beginning January 4, 2027, when the application fee begins under DOJ's current rollout announcement.

1. What This Guide Can - and Cannot - Do

The new federal firearm-rights restoration process is an individualized administrative process. This guide is designed to help you understand the workflow, organize your history, gather records, prepare references, and reduce avoidable paperwork mistakes before you submit anything.

What a strong preparation file looks like

A strong file is accurate, complete, internally consistent, and supported by reliable records. It allows a reviewer to understand why the federal prohibition exists, what happened afterward, whether all legal requirements were completed, what your life looks like now, and whether any current risk factor remains.

What this guide helps you do

- Understand the federal process and current rollout.
- Identify the federal prohibitor or prohibitors that may apply.
- Screen for presumptive disqualifiers.
- Build a residential, criminal, military, mental-health, and post-conviction timeline as applicable.
- Create a records inventory and request plan.
- Prepare three compliant character references.
- Prepare for fingerprints and government follow-up.
- Recognize when a problem is legal rather than administrative.

What this guide does not do

- Tell you that you are legally eligible in your specific case.
- Interpret a conviction, plea, pardon, set-aside, expungement, restraining order, mental-health record, military record, or state law for you.
- Guarantee approval or predict the outcome.
- Authorize firearm possession while you remain prohibited.

THE RULE OF CAUTION

If you are unsure whether a fact must be disclosed, whether a conviction fits a DOJ category, or whether another jurisdiction still prohibits possession, do not guess.

2. The Federal Process in 2026

For decades, the individual relief mechanism in 18 U.S.C. § 925(c) was effectively unavailable to most individuals. In August 2026, DOJ announced a final rule and a staged launch administered through the Office of the Pardon Attorney.

Current staged rollout

Date	Current DOJ rollout
September 25, 2026	Application opens to invited candidates.
November 4, 2026	Application opens to the public for the first 5,000 applicants.
January 4, 2027	An additional 500 public applicants can apply and the application fee begins under DOJ's rollout.

The basic sequence

11. Prepare before the online form opens to you.
12. Complete the official application when authorized.
13. Pay the applicable fee or request a permitted waiver/modification.
14. Submit electronic fingerprints through the required USPS process.
15. Provide three qualified character references.
16. Respond to requests from restoration specialists.
17. Receive the final disposition and follow the next-step instructions.

DOJ's current FAQ states that, once initiated, the e-application must be completed and submitted within 30 days. That is one reason this guide emphasizes gathering records first.

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