

Post-Conviction Justice Unit

What is the PCJU? The PCJU is the Post-Conviction Justice Unit created under District Attorney Alvin Bragg tasked with reviewing closed cases. The Unit was named “Post-Conviction Justice” to embrace the fact that convictions are not always “right” or “wrongful.” Instead there are multiple measures of justice that may be appropriate after a sentence is imposed.

The PCJU’s mission has three main pillars:

1. Independent and impartial post-conviction reinvestigation done in collaboration with impacted individuals and their counsel to determine whether a conviction should be vacated or modified where there is no longer confidence in the outcome.
2. Services and support to exonerees, as well as victims and survivors who may have been deprived of closure.
3. Promoting conviction integrity in future prosecutions by advising the office in best practices, including through new trainings and root cause analysis reports.

Who is eligible for PCJU Review?

PCJU review is available to anyone convicted of crimes prosecuted by the Manhattan D.A.’s Office. This is true whether there was a trial or plea bargain, regardless of whether the person is currently in custody, represented by an attorney or has already sought an appeal from the court. The PCJU does not review active cases.

How can I get my case reviewed? Fill out an application, and return it by email or mail to the address below. The PCJU reviews submissions from people convicted of crimes, their attorneys, and, in some cases, community members, clergy or investigative journalists.

New York County District Attorney’s Office
Post-Conviction Justice Unit
One Hogan Place
New York, NY 10013
PCJU_intake@dany.nyc.gov

How does the PCJU Review Cases? The PCJU embraces two principles of reinvestigating closed cases: independence and collaboration. Although these two values may seem different, for the PCJU they are not. The PCJU’s independence comes from its existence as a separate Unit within this office, apart from trial and appellate prosecutors. The prosecutors who handled the original trial or appeal do not participate in the reinvestigation.

At the same time, the PCJU realizes the importance of a collaborative reinvestigation with impacted people and their counsel. The PCJU embraces transparency in its reinvestigation process and will work in partnership with the applicant and their counsel to find the truth and achieve justice.

PCJU is specifically looking for credible claims of innocence or unjust conviction. Not all applicants will be accepted for reinvestigation by the PCJU, and not all reinvestigations will conclude with the relief the applicant requests. The PCJU will screen cases as expeditiously as possible, and will communicate in writing with applicants about whether the PCJU is reinvestigating their case.

How does the PCJU prioritize which cases to review? PCJU will prioritize cases where the applicant is convicted of a serious offense and is currently either in prison or under parole or post-release supervision.

Can I ask for the PCJU review instead of an appeal or motion? The PCJU process is not a substitute for an appeal, habeas or post-conviction motion. A reinvestigation by the PCJU does not extend any appellate timelines and does not toll, or pause, the statute of limitations. Because the PCJU process is collaborative, non-adversarial, and can be initiated at any time post-conviction, the PCJU may decline to reinvestigate a case that is in active litigation.

What does the PCJU do to prevent unjust convictions? In addition to reviewing individual cases, the PCJU leads initiatives to prevent future injustice. To that end, the PCJU will, as appropriate, initiate systemic review of issues that cause unjust convictions, such as unreliable witnesses or faulty forensic science tools, and conduct root cause analysis reports in cases where this office vacates a person’s conviction. Finally, the PCJU will engage internally with ADAs, and externally with institutional partners and community members to educate and learn about the underlying causes of, and remedies to, unjust convictions.