

## CRIMINAL RECORDS

After graduating from law school and passing the bar exam, each applicant for admission to the practice of law in New York State must undergo a character and fitness evaluation process, including submission of a written application to the appropriate Appellate Division and a personal interview before the Appellate Division's Committee on Character and Fitness.

Applicants are required to disclose prior criminal arrests, charges, convictions, pleas of guilty and similar court proceedings in response to questions on the application form and may be asked to supply supplemental information and documentation and be questioned further on such matters during an interview.

A criminal record is not an automatic prohibition to the admission of an applicant to the New York State bar. Rather, a criminal record, especially the nature and circumstances of the offenses as well as evidence of rehabilitation, is among the considerations forming the basis upon which an evaluation of an applicant's character and fitness is made by the Committee on Character and Fitness. In addition to a criminal record, the Committee also takes into consideration all other circumstances bearing on an applicant's character and fitness, including affidavits of good moral character from long-time acquaintances, former employers, and other sources.

The Appellate Division rules permit a prospective applicant to the New York State bar to petition for an "advance ruling" on the effect of a felony or misdemeanor conviction upon his or her character and fitness evaluation. Such advance rulings (infrequently sought or made) are available to matriculated law students or applicants to law school. If you believe you are eligible for such a ruling and wish to pursue an advance ruling, please contact the Appellate Division in which you reside; if you do not reside in New York State, please contact the Attorney Admissions Office of the Appellate Division, Third Judicial Department (see our [How to Contact Us](#) page).