

# Sealing Your Juvenile Records



2008

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# Why Should You Read This?

Even though you may have completed your probation time and plan to stay out of trouble, a juvenile delinquency adjudication can still affect your life. For example, it may make it more difficult for you to get a job or go to the college of your choice. Sealing your juvenile records can help you to leave your past behind and move on.

This pamphlet will explain what it means to seal your juvenile records, who qualifies to have their juvenile records sealed, and how to go about doing it.

### What is a Juvenile Record?

A Juvenile Record is all the papers, orders and reports in your juvenile court file AND all the papers relating to your case held by other agencies such as the District Attorney, the Probation Department and the police.

## What Does It Mean To Seal Your Records?

Sealing your records means that all records held by the police department, the court, the district attorney, and the probation department will be closed up and sealed off. Sealed court proceedings will be treated as though they never took place. If someone asks these agencies about a sealed record, the law requires the agencies to answer, "We have no record of that matter." The law says you can legally say that you were not adjudicated, and not even arrested, for the matter that gets sealed. (Welfare & Institutions Code section 781)

NOTE: A juvenile delinquency adjudication is NOT a criminal conviction.

• So, if you are asked in a job application whether you were ever convicted of a crime, you can truthfully answer "no" – even if you haven't yet sealed your records.

## What Gets Sealed?

All records and papers that are in the custody of the juvenile court AND other records relating to the case which are in the custody of other agencies and officials.

• Remember, records kept by the police, the probation department, and the district attorney are also sealed.

# Who is Eligible to Get Their Records Sealed?

You can seal your records if:

- You are at least 18 years old and have completed probation. Or, you are younger than 18 but at least 5 years have passed since your last arrest or discharge from probation.
- For example, if you completed probation or were last arrested at age 12, you can petition to have your records sealed at age 17.
- You have not been convicted of a felony or of any misdemeanor involving a crime of "moral turpitude" since your last arrest or discharge from probation.
- You can show the court that you have been "rehabilitated."
- Your case started and ended in juvenile court.

# AND

• You do not have an open civil suit regarding the actions that caused your juvenile record.

# What is a Crime Involving Moral Turpitude?

Moral turpitude crimes are crimes that reflect dishonesty or a deep lack of concern about what society views as right or wrong. For example, such things as fraud, theft, sex and drug-related offenses and offenses involving great bodily injury are considered to involve moral turpitude.

# Who Doesn't Qualify To Get Their Records Sealed?

- If you committed an offense that is listed in Welfare & Institutions Code section 707(b) when you were age 14 or older (see list at back of pamphlet). Make sure you know what offense was adjudicated against you—it may be different than the offense you were charged with!
- Traffic violations or offenses and parking violations cannot be sealed.

For example: a ticket for speeding.

# Once they are sealed can the records be unsealed again?

Generally, once your records are sealed, they cannot be unsealed. However, insurance companies are permitted by the Department of Motor Vehicles to look at your sealed records for the purpose of determining your rates. Only automobile-related violations should affect your rates. In addition, if you sue someone for defamation, that person may be able to look at your sealed records. Lastly, in certain circumstances your records may be unsealed to increase your sentence in a later crime under the "Three Strikes" Law.

# Is the Process of Sealing Automatic?

No, unless your records are being sealed through a procedure called "deferred entry of judgment." Otherwise, your records will not be sealed unless you file a petition with the court. Your attorney or public defender should be able to tell you if your records are sealed. You can also request your court file from the court where you were adjudicated and review the file to see if your records have been sealed.

Deferred entry of judgment means that you admitted your charges, but once you complete the program satisfactorily, the judge will dismiss your charges. Your charges and your arrest will be treated as if they had never occurred, and your juvenile court records will be sealed automatically.

### How Do I Get A Petition to Have My Records Sealed?

You must go in person, call or write to the clerk of the court in the county where the juvenile delinquency adjudication took place.

- In Los Angeles County, petitions can be obtained in person from any Juvenile Court, including: Eastlake, Sylmar, Los Padrinos, Pasadena, Inglewood, Pomona, Compton, Long Beach, Lancaster, or Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center.
- You may also request that the petition be mailed to you. In order to do so, send a self-addressed legal size envelope bearing \$ 0.55 postage to the following address:

Sealing Desk Superior Court / Juvenile Division 1601 Eastlake Avenue Los Angeles, Ca. 90033

You can call (323) 226-2854 to hear recorded information on how to obtain and complete a petition to seal your juvenile records.

• There is a fee of \$120.00 for filing the petition. If you can't pay, you may file a fee waiver. However, the fee is often waived automatically.

# How Do I Get My Arrest Record?

You must appear in person with valid photo identification at the Clerk's Office of any of the above-listed juvenile courts. You may need the information in this record to accurately complete the Petition to Seal Juvenile Records. Your Probation Officer also may be able to assist you with getting a copy of your arrest record.

## How Do I Complete the Petition?

A blank copy of the Petition to Seal Juvenile Records, brief instructions provided by the Superior Court and sample arrest records are included at the end of this booklet in an Appendix. We have provided more detailed instructions here, which may help you as you fill out your Petition. The sample Petition is divided into sections "A", "B", and "C".

**REMEMBER**: The petition must be filled out in a neat and clear manner or it will not be accepted. You should either type or print clearly in black ink.

#### Section A:

Write your name, address, sex, age, birthplace, birth date, current address, height, weight, date you will reach the age of thirty-eight, social security number, driver's license number, day time phone number, and mother's first and last maiden name.

#### Section B:

This next section is the most important part of the petition. The arrests / charges that you list here will be the only ones that get sealed. Be sure to follow the directions carefully when completing this section.

- Under "Date", write the day of your arrest (the day that the police stopped you,) not your court date.
- Under "Arresting Agency," write the name of the agency that arrested you, for example: Los Angeles Police Department, Whittier Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.
- Under "Violation" list the number and code section that you were charged with or arrested for under the Penal Code (PC) Health and Safety Code (HSC) or Vehicle (VC). For example, write PC 459 (Burglary) or HSC 11357 (Possession of Marijuana). Do Not simply write "Burglary" or "Petty Theft"- you must list the actual Code section.
- Under "Disposition" write the end result of your charge. Examples of dispositions are: Suitable Placement, Juvenile Traffic Court, Counsel and Release, Home on Probation, DJJ, DA Reject, Camp, or 654 WIC Probation.

#### Section C:

You need to answer the following question: "Is there any pending civil litigation directly relating to or arising from the criminal act that caused your juvenile records to be created?" In other words, is there a civil court case related to your arrest or court charges? For example, if you were arrested for battery (hitting someone,) is the person you were arrested for hitting also suing you in civil court for money damages?

If there is a civil case open, you are not eligible to seal your juvenile court records at this time because the civil court may need to access your juvenile record in order to resolve their case. You need to wait until the civil case is over.

If you do have an open civil case related to your delinquency charges, list the name of the case, case number and the court district where the case is being heard.

Lastly, date and sign the form.

The bottom part of the form is for the court to fill out. Do not write under the black line and the words "Court Order."

### **Helpful Hints:**

It is always helpful to include positive information about yourself on the application. You should not write any comments on the application itself. However, you should attach a statement letting the judge know some of your accomplishments since the juvenile case closed. For example, you should talk about getting a high school diploma, having a job, going to college, and volunteering for community or religious organizations.

If you are going to college and getting good grades, you can attach a college transcript. You can also attach letters of recommendation from employers, teachers, pastors, and others. All of these things will help show the judge that you are "rehabilitated" and deserve to have your records sealed.

## What Happens After I File the Petition?

After you file the petition, the court will hold a hearing. In Los Angeles County, it will take anywhere from two to nine months, depending on the court docket, to get a hearing date. You will receive a "Notice of Hearing" form in the mail approximately six to eight weeks prior to your court date.

At the court hearing, the judge will review the recommendation from the probation department as to whether your records should be sealed. You should do your best to be at the hearing. If you cannot attend, you can have an attorney or your parents appear on your behalf.

You, the district attorney, probation officer, or any other person who has relevant evidence may testify at the hearing. You can bring witnesses to testify on your behalf, for example, a pastor or a teacher.

If the court grants your petition, it will seal your court record and require other agencies, which have evidence of your juvenile court history to seal their records.

# What Happens if the Court Denies my Petition?

In many cases, if the court denies your petition, you may reapply at a later time. Sometimes, the court wants to wait a while and be sure that you are really on the right track before allowing you to seal your records. If you have questions about why your petition was denied, ask the judge at the hearing, and ask whether you would be eligible to re-apply at a later date.

### How Can I Check To Make Sure That My Rap Sheet Shows that My Records Were Sealed?

In order to make sure that the police, sheriff, and other agencies seal your records, you should request a copy of your juvenile records.

<u>For FBI records:</u> Send your name, address, date of birth, a set of fingerprints, and the appropriate fee to:

Criminal Justice Information Services SCUMOD D2 1000 Custer Hollow Road Clarksburg, West Virginia 26306

For California records:

Send your name, address, reason for requesting your record, fingerprints (fingerprint services are in the yellow pages and generally charge about \$10 for the service), and the appropriate fee to:

California Department of Justice P.O. Box 903417 Sacramento, CA 94203-4170 Attn: Records Review Unit

For local police records, check with your local police department.

### Once the records are sealed, do they get destroyed?

Yes. Your juvenile court file will be destroyed 5 years after it was sealed if you committed a 601 (status) offense, and on your 38th birthday if you committed a 602 offense. (See the back of this pamphlet for definitions of 601 and 602 offenses.) The probation department, police department, and other agencies can (but don't have to) destroy their records after 5 years.

### Are There Any Alternatives To Sealing Juvenile Records?

If you were arrested, but not taken before a court, you may request that you be found "factually innocent" and your records be sealed. "Factually innocent" means that there is no reasonable cause to believe that you committed the offense for which you were arrested.

If you do not file an application to seal your records, your juvenile court file only will be destroyed eventually, unless the court finds good cause to keep your file open:

- 601 (status offender) records at age 21
- 602 records at age 38

However, if you committed a 707(b) offense, those records will not be destroyed. In addition, the probation officer <u>may</u> destroy your probation records after 5 years.

If you committed or were arrested for an adult offense, there may be other ways to wipe away part or all of your record. You should consult an attorney.

## APPENDIX

(Note: code sections may change)

#### Welfare and Institutions Code 601:

#### § 601. Minors habitually disobedient or truant

(a) Any person under the age of 18 years who persistently or habitually refuses to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of his or her parents, guardian, or custodian, or who is beyond the control of that person, or who is under the age of 18 years when he or she violated any ordinance of any city or county of this state establishing a curfew based solely on age is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court which may adjudge the minor to be a ward of the court.

#### Welfare and Institutions Code 602:

#### § 602. Minors violating laws defining crime; ward of court

- (a) Except as provided in subdivision (b), any person who is under the age of 18 years when he or she violates any law of this state or of the United States or any ordinance of any city or county of this state defining crime other than an ordinance establishing a curfew based solely on age, is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, which may adjudge such person to be a ward of the court.
- (b) Any person who is alleged, when he or she was 14 years of age or older, to have committed one of the following offenses shall be prosecuted under the general law in a court of criminal jurisdiction:
  - Murder, as described in Section 187 of the Penal Code, if one of the circumstances enumerated in subdivision (a) of Section 190.2 of the Penal Code is alleged by the prosecutor, and the prosecutor alleges that the minor personally killed the victim.
  - (2) The following sex offenses, if the prosecutor alleges that the minor personally committed the offense, and if the prosecutor alleges one of the circumstances enumerated in the One Strike law, subdivision (d) or (e) of Section 667.61 of the Penal Code, applies:
- (A) Rape, as described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 261 of the Penal Code.

- (B) Spousal rape, as described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 262 of the Penal Code.
- (C) Forcible sex offenses in concert with another, as described in Section 264.1 of the Penal Code.
- (D) Forcible lewd and lascivious acts on a child under the age of 14 years, as described in subdivision (b) of Section 288 of the Penal Code.
- (E) Forcible sexual penetration, as described in subdivision (a) of Section 289 of the Penal Code.
- (F) Sodomy or oral copulation in violation of Section 286 or 288a of the Penal Code, by force, violence, duress, menace, or fear of immediate and unlawful bodily injury on the victim or another person.
- (G) Lewd and lascivious acts on a child under the age of 14 years, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 288, unless the defendant qualifies for probation under subdivision (c) of Section 1203.066 of the Penal Code.

#### Offenses listed in Welfare and Institutions Code 707(b):

- (1) Murder.
- (2) Arson, as provided in subdivision (a) or (b) of Section 451 of the Penal Code.
- (3) Robbery.
- (4) Rape with force or violence or threat of great bodily harm.
- (5) Sodomy by force, violence, duress, menace, or threat of great bodily harm.
- (6) Lewd or lascivious act as provided in subdivision (b) of Section288 of the Penal Code.
- (7) Oral copulation by force, violence, duress, menace, or threat of great bodily harm.

- (8) Any offense specified in subdivision (a) of Section 289 of the Penal Code.
- (9) Kidnapping for ransom.
- (10) Kidnapping for purpose of robbery.
- (11) Kidnapping with bodily harm.
- (12) Attempted murder.
- (13) Assault with a firearm or destructive device.
- (14) Assault by any means of force likely to produce great bodily injury.
- (15) Discharge of a firearm into an inhabited or occupied building.
- (16) Any offense described in Section 1203.09 of the Penal Code.
- (17) Any offense described in Section 12022.5 or 12022.53 of the Penal Code.
- (18) Any felony offense in which the minor personally used a weapon listed in subdivision (a) of Section 12020 of the Penal Code.
- (19) Any felony offense described in Section 136.1 or 137 of the Penal Code.
- (20) Manufacturing, compounding, or selling one-half ounce or more of any salt or solution of a controlled substance specified in subdivision (e) of Section 11055 of the Health and Safety Code.
- (21) Any violent felony, as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 667.5 of the Penal Code, which would also constitute a felony violation of subdivision (b) of Section 186.22 of the Penal Code.

- (22) Escape, by the use of force or violence, from any county juvenile hall, home, ranch, camp, or forestry camp in violation of subdivision (b) of Section 871 where great bodily injury is intentionally inflicted upon an employee of the juvenile facility during the commission of the escape.
- (23) Torture as described in Sections 206 and 206.1 of the Penal Code.
- (24) Aggravated mayhem, as described in Section 205 of the Penal Code.
- (25) Carjacking, as described in Section 215 of the Penal Code, while armed with a dangerous or deadly weapon.
- (26) Kidnapping, for purposes of sexual assault, as punishable in subdivision (b) of Section 209 of the Penal Code.
- (27) Kidnapping, as punishable in Section 209.5 of the Penal Code.
- (28) The offense described in subdivision (c) of Section 12034 of the Penal Code.
- (29) The offense described in Section 12308 of the Penal Code.
- (30) Voluntary manslaughter, as described in subdivision (a) of Section192 of the Penal Code.

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING PETITION TO SEAL JUVENILE RECORDS

#### PRIOR TO COMPLETING THE SEALING FORM, PLEASE CALL (323)226-2854, LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE, AND READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY:

- 1. Please type or print clearly with a black pen. Press down hard and make sure you can easily read the carbon copy.
- 2. Fill in completely all areas above the black line that says, "COURT ORDER."
- 3. You must list the date of each and every arrest in the column under "DATE." In the column under "ARRESTING AGENCY", list the name of the police or sheriff's department and division that arrested you on that date. In the column under "VIOLATION", list the number(s) of the code section(s) (Penal Code, Health and Safety Code, or Vehicle Code, etc.). In the column under "DISPOSITION", enter the final result of your case. If there is no disposition listed leave it blank. If there is not enough spaces to list all of your arrests, please continue on a second form. If you were arrested as a juvenile, but your case was ultimately decided in adult court, please indicate this in the "DISPOSITION" column.
- 4. If you want to seal a record concerning the California Highway Patrol, please put in the description of the incident (citation, arrest, or accident, including the appropriate numbers when available), the date of the incident, and the specific location of the incident (CHP Area or City).
- 5. If you remember the agency that arrested you but not the date of the arrest or violation, you should go to that particular agency and request the information. Computer generated information may be obtained from the Clerk's Office at Eastlake, Los Padrinos, Inglewood, Compton, Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center, Long Beach, Sylmar, or Antelope Valley. Information from the Clerk's Office must be requested in person with a picture identification card. Telephonic requests cannot be answered due to the confidentiality of juvenile proceedings.
- 6. When your form has been processed, a date will be set for you to appear in court, and you will receive a Notice of Hearing form via U.S. Mail. Your appearance in court is not mandatory. However, it may be in your best interest to appear as it will afford you the opportunity to address the court as to your reasons for feeling the court should seal your records, in the event the Probation Department has recommended that your records not be sealed.

#### YOUR COOPERATION IN FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY IS APPRECIATED AND WILL HELP REDUCE OR ELIMINATE ANY DELAYS IN THE PROCESSING OF YOUR PETITION.

# IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS FORM, PLEASE CALL (323)226-2854 OR (323)226-8945.

Return the completed form to: SUPERIOR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE

#### ATTN: SEALING CLERK 1601 EASTLAKE AVE. ROOM J LOS ANGELES, CA. 90033-1094

COMPLETE THE TOP PORTION OF THE "PETITION TO SEAL JUVENILE RECORDS" REGARDING PERSONAL INFORMATION AS INDICATED.

THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE ARREST INFORMATION LOOKS LIKE THIS:

THE DATE 020692 1030 AGY CARDENA PD BKC: J18555 FILE 92-0566 HARGE 211PC COUNTS 01 RODBLEY, ARMED W/DANGEROUS-DEADLY WEAPON HARGE 211PC MON-DETAINED PETITION PRD DSP PDJ¢ DA DSP ET DT (This is not CR PET CHARGE 0.SP CRT DSP -5 a disposition) Л CIDENT NO. DATE RESTING AGENCY VIOLATION DISPOSITION 02-06-92 211 PC GARDENA P.D. CAMP -Disposition means what the end result was: camp, CYA, HOP, reject, etc.,

#### 

In the event that you have been charged with more than one count of the same offense, it will look like this:

ARR DATE 020692 1 <u>CHARGE 211PC</u> ARR AGY DSP NON-D °ET DT C	COUNTS 02 RE ETAINED PETITION	PD DKG& J DDBERY, ARMED W/D PRD D31 HARGE DSP	P PDJ\$	WEAPON 1	this example shows hree counts of 211PC nd <u>one</u> 245(a)1PC.
HARGE 245A1PC	ETAINED PETITION	PD BKG÷ J W NO FIREARNS/GW PRD DS CHARGE DSP	I P PDJ¢	DA DSP RT DSP .	the charge only needs to be listed once regardless of how many counts there are and a separate line
HARGE 211PC 2- WOR AGY DSP NON-E "ET DT 031192 0	030 AGY GARDENA COUNTS 01 RO DETAINED PETITION RT\$ YJ03407 PET 0 KEY TO VIEW ADDI	DBBERY, ARMED W/D PRB DS CHARGE DSP 211PC	09266 GLG9 AG 9 0 210	20567 WEAPON	is not needed.
ARR DATE 020692 1 CHARGE 211PC 3. ARR AGY DSP ADDL	I DISMUKE 1030 ACY GARDENA COUNTS 01 R ALLEG FILED BY D CRT\$ YJ03407 PET 1	DBBERY, ARMED W/D A PRB DS	FILES S ANGEROUS-DEADLY P DA PDJS 09266	2474 PAGE 03 20567 WEAPON 570 DA DSP FIL. RT DSP	
				•	The listing on the
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	02-06-92	GARDENA PO	211 PC, 245(a)1 P	C CAMP	getition would
: 	02-06-92	GARDENA PO	211 PC, 245(a)1 P	C CAMP	getition would look like this
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In t it w RR DATE 020692 1 HARGE 211PC ET DT 031192 C ET DT 031192 C ER DATE 020692 1 HARGE 245(A)(1)P RR AGY D3P ADDL	02-06-92 the event that yo would look like t 030 AGY GARDENA COUNTS 01 RD ALLEG FILED BY DA RTФ YJ03407 PET C 030 AGY GARDENA	CARDENA PD u were charged w his: PD DKG: BPERY, ARMED W/DM PRB D31 HARGE D5P 211PC 7 PD DKL5 W NO FIREARHS/GM PRB D31 PRB D31	211 FC, 245(a)) F ith various all Files 9 ANGEROUS-DEADLY ( P DA PDLE 09266 SUS C FILES 9 FILES 9 P DA FDLE 09266	C CAMP egations, 20567 WEAPON 90 DA DSP FIL 7 20567	You need not use a separate line

INCIDENT NO .:	DATE	ARRESTING AGENCY	VIOLATION	DISPOSITION	
1	02-06-92	GARDENA PD "	211 PC,245(a)1 PC,664/	211 PC CAMP	The listing
					on the
					petition
		- OR -			would look
NODENT NO.:	DATE	ARRESTING AGENCY	VIOLATION	DISPOSITION	like this:
1	02-06-92	GARDENA PD	211 PC, 245(a)1 PC	CAMP	
			664/211 82		

5

#### SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES JUVENILE COURT

IN THE MATTER OF				CASE	NO.:		JAI #:	
		PET	ITIONER			AND	COURT ORD	LE RECORDS DER stitutions Code)
Your Peti	tioner respectfully	y represents:						
NAME:				SEX:	AGE:	BIRT	HPLACE:	BIRTHDATE:
ADDRESS:				CITY:		_	STATE:	ZIP:
HEIGHT:	WEIGHT:	WILL REACH AGE OF 38 ON:	SOCIAL	SECURITY	NUMBER:		DRIVER'S LICE	INSE NUMBER:
DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER: MOTHE				R'S FIRST	ND LAST MA	IDEN NAI	NE:	
()	1							

Petitioner requests that an order be made sealing all records, papers, and exhibits in petitioner's case in the custody of the juvenile court, including the juvenile court record, minute book entries, and entries on dockets, and other records relating to the case in the custody of such other agencies and officials named herein:

INCIDENT NO.	DATE	ARRESTING AGENCY	VIOLATION	DISPOSITION
1				
2				
3				
4				
5		· · · ·		
6				
7				2
8				
9				1
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
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16				
17				
18				

Are there any civil lawsuits pending directly relating to or arising from the criminal act that caused your juvenile records to be created?

If yes, list the name of the case, the case number, and the court district where the matter is being heard.

Dat	8:
	SIGNATURE OF PETITIONER OR AGENT (IF AGENT, STATE RELATIONSHIP TO PETITIONER)
	COURT ORDER The court has read and considered the probation report filed herein and said report is admitted into evidence by reference. E COURT RULES AS FOLLOWS:
	THE PETITION TO SEAL IS DENIED:
	Adult criminal record has been established.
	Insufficient time has elapsed due to seriousness of offense.
	Insufficient time has elapsed since termination of jurisdiction.
	Insufficient time has elapsed to prove rehabilitation of minor.
	The offense in incident(s) no.(s) is listed as one in Section 707(b) WIC and cannot be sealed
Date	۶ <u></u>
	JUDGE/COMMISSIONER/REFEREE OF THE JUVENILE COURT
9	THE PETITION IS GRANTED AS TO ALL INCIDENTS.
	The petition is granted as to incidents no.(s) and denied as to incidents no.(s)
	Any agency who has submitted records to FBI is ordered to recall same and seal accordingly.
	Department of Youth Authority, Sacramento, California, is ordered to seal their records, YA no.
	The Superior Court /Juvenile Division and the Probation Department of County are ordered to see their records, their case number
	The petitioner is relieved from the registration requirements under Penal Code 290 and the registration information in the custody of the Department of Justice and other agencies and officials listed in the petition shall be destroyed.

The clerk is directed to send a copy of the petition and order to each agency and official named therein, and each agency and official shall seal records relating to the case in its custody, shall advise the court of its compliance, and thereupon shall seal the copy of the court's order for sealing of records that it or he received.

Date:

JUDGE/COMMISSIONER/REFEREE OF THE JUVENILE COURT

## NOTES

Public Counsel, the public interest law office of the Los Angeles County and Beverly Hills Bar Associations, is the largest pro bono law firm in the U.S., and also is the Southern California affiliate of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Public Counsel coordinates the contributions of thousands of volunteer lawyers each year. Public Counsel serves those in need—such as children and the elderly, literacy projects and low income housing providers, refugees and the homeless—by providing legal representation and matching financially eligible clients with volunteer attorneys.

While this publication is designed to provide accurate and current information about the law, readers should contact an attorney or other expert for advice in particular cases, and should also consult the relevant statues and court decisions when relying on cited materials.

The contents of this brochure may be reprinted. Any adaptation or translation of the contents of this brochure must be authorized by Public Counsel.

You may find this booklet and other Public Counsel booklets at www.publiccounsel.org (First click on "Resources"; second, click on "Publications", third click on "Children's Rights Project.")

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# 213/385-2977 ext. 500

# or 800/870-8090 Adoptions: 323/526-6360 www.publiccounsel.org