



ARIZONA BOARD OF FINGERPRINTING

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WRITTEN STATEMENT

The written statement is an important part of the application package. It gives you a chance to put your criminal record in context, and it helps the Board understand what happened when you were charged. At the least, a written statement should do the following:

- Explain every criminal charge (whether or not it led to a conviction) on your record, no matter how long ago or how minor, even if the charge wasn't the basis for your fingerprint clearance card being denied or suspended;
- Describe any context for the charge, such as drug addiction, anger-management problems, youthful poor judgment, family tensions, financial crises, or anything else that may help explain how the incident arose;
- Identify steps you've taken to change criminal behavior, and describe how your life has changed. For example, have you attended therapy or drug treatment, did you go to anger-management classes, or has your life changed in any way?

Many applicants have trouble meeting the Board's requirement for written explanations of criminal charges or offenses. These instructions should help you write a statement that meets the application requirement.

There are two common problems with written statements.

First, applicants often don't address every criminal charge on the record. To avoid this problem, make sure your written statement addresses each criminal charge, no matter how long ago the incident occurred. You should explain the arrest or charge, even if you weren't convicted and even if the incident didn't appear on the letter you received from the Department of Public Safety denying or suspending your fingerprint clearance card.

Second, the explanations of criminal charges often lack sufficient detail. Below are made-up samples of written statements to help you understand what to do and what not to do. Please note that most explanations will need to be longer than the examples below to fully explain the charges.

Good Written Statement #1

"On January 1, 2004, I was charged with shoplifting. At the time of the offense, I was addicted to methamphetamine, which I used at least three times a day. My drug-using friends and I didn't have any money, so we decided we would shoplifting from a Wal-Mart. We would then sell the merchandise to someone I knew who would buy the goods from us and fence them. Then we'd have money to buy drugs. I concealed three packaged cell phones in my coat and tried to leave the store without paying. As I walked outside, security from the store stopped me and brought me back inside. The security officer said that I was observed taking the cell phones. He called the police, who arrested me after asking some questions.

“After I was arrested, I began attending Narcotics Anonymous. I have not used methamphetamine or any other drug or alcohol since the arrest. I attend NA twice weekly and communicate regularly with my sponsor. I enrolled in nursing school to pursue my dream of becoming a nurse, and my GPA average is 3.4. I have maintained the same job for three years without any negative incident.”

This is a good statement because the applicant explains, in detail, what she did and why she did it. She also explains how she addressed the drug addiction that was the root of her criminal behavior. Finally, she pointed out that she has a good grade-point average and steady employment, which she probably wouldn't have if she still were using drugs.

Good Written Statement #2

“From January 1, 1979, to March 12, 1992, I was a heavy drinker. Unfortunately, because of my alcoholism, I often blacked out. I don't remember a lot of the charges that occurred during that time. I'm not saying that they didn't happen, but I just don't remember them because of my alcohol abuse. I understand from my record that I was involved in domestic violence. I'm sure that's true. When I drank, I became violent, and my wife—now my ex-wife—often suffered the consequences.”

This statement is good, given that the applicant suffered blackouts and couldn't remember the charges. But be careful: the Board is skeptical when applicants claim they don't remember criminal charges. See the examples of bad written statements.

“On March 12, 1992, my father, who was also an alcoholic, died of liver cirrhosis. That was a wake-up call for me because I saw where I was heading. I checked into a rehab facility and spent 30 days in the inpatient clinic. I moved to a halfway house for six months. Even today, I attend Alcoholics Anonymous at least three times a week. You'll see that once I stopped drinking, I no longer committed offenses. I'm proud of the improvements I've made in my life since I quit drinking. Although I lost my wife through divorce, we've become friends.”

This statement is also good because the applicant describes what changes he made in his life since the most recent charge.

Two Examples of Bad Written Statements

#1. “This charge occurred 22 years ago. I don't remember that far back. I was cleared for a nursing license, and I don't understand why I have to go through this process.”

Statement #1 is bad because the applicant claims that she can't remember the charge. The Board believes that a criminal charge is a significant event in a person's life—one that the person should remember, even if it was a long time ago. It's almost always a bad idea to claim that you can't remember a charge. If you do make that claim, you should explain why you can't remember. Also, by state law, you have the burden of proof that you're rehabilitated. So if you don't give enough information, the Board won't have a basis for granting your application.

#2. “I was having difficulties with my husband at the time. We were fighting a lot. I got mad at him one night, and I did something that I regret. The police were called, and I was arrested.”

Statement #2 is bad because it doesn't explain what happened. Basically, it just says that she “did something.” But what did she do? The more detail you provide, the less likely it is that the Board's investigator will write to ask you for more information.