



**PUBLIC  
DEFENDER'S  
OFFICE**

[pdo.mlaw.gov.sg](http://pdo.mlaw.gov.sg)



**PUBLIC  
DEFENDER'S  
OFFICE**



In need of a lawyer but unable to afford one?

Apply for **criminal defence aid** with the Public Defender's Office



Scan for more information on criminal defence aid



# ABOUT THE PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

The Public Defender's Office (PDO) is established to enhance access to justice to vulnerable persons through the provision of criminal defence aid.

Set-up as a department under the Ministry of Law, the PDO will be staffed by full-time officers who are responsible for assisting the Chief Public Defender in carrying out his functions under the Public Defenders Act 2022.

Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents who are charged with non-capital criminal offences or wish to file/defend an appeal but are unable to afford legal representation due to limited means, may apply for criminal defence aid with the PDO. All applicants must satisfy both the means and merits criteria, and may be required to make a contribution, before being assessed as eligible for criminal defence aid.

## MINISTRY OF LAW SERVICES CENTRE

45 Maxwell Road  
 #07-11 The URA Centre (East Wing)  
 Singapore 069118

### OPERATING HOURS

Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.00pm  
*(Last queue ticket will be issued at 4.30pm. To avoid the crowd, members of public are advised to visit the Services Centre between 8.30am to 11.00am.)*  
 Closed on weekends and public holidays

## STATE COURTS (HELP CENTRE)

1 Havelock Square  
 #B1-18 State Courts  
 Singapore 059724

### OPERATING HOURS

Monday to Friday,  
 9:00am to 12:00pm, 2:00pm to 5:00pm

## ONLINE ENQUIRY

<https://go.gov.sg/contactminlaw>

## CALL

1800-225-5529

### OPERATING HOURS

Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.00pm  
 Closed on weekends and public holidays

REACH OUT TO US

# STEPS TO APPLY FOR CRIMINAL DEFENCE AID

1

## Check if you qualify

- A. Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident
- B. Already charged or wish to file/defend an appeal in Court
- C. Facing offences that are covered by the Public Defenders Act
- D. Do not have a lawyer representing you
- E. Have an average monthly per capita household income (PCHI) of \$1,650 or lower for the last 12 months



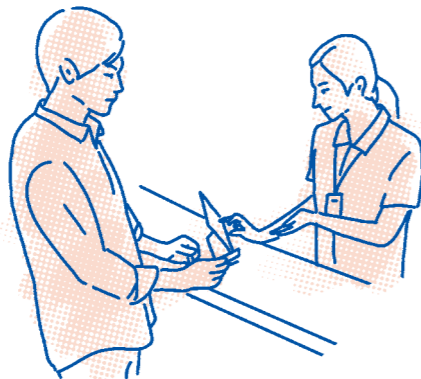
2

## Prepare your supporting documents

You will need to provide your

- a. Court documents, and
- b. all related information on your finances when submitting your application. (Please refer to the 'List of supporting documents' for the information you should prepare.)

If you do not submit all relevant documents, your application will be delayed or even lapsed.



3

## Submit your application

- A. **Online**  
Apply at <https://go.gov.sg/applypdo> (SingPass login is required.)



- B. **In-person**
  - i. **Ministry of Law Services Centre**
  - ii. **State Courts (HELP Centre)**

*Note: If you are in remand or in prison, please apply directly through the Singapore Prison Service.*

4

## Undergo two interviews

- A. **Means Test**  
To determine if you have limited financial means to afford private legal representation.
- B. **Merits Test**  
To determine if you:
  - i. will benefit from having legal representation to plead guilty;
  - ii. have reasonable grounds to defend your case in Court; or
  - iii. have reasonable grounds to file/defend an appeal/application

*These interviews will be conducted over the **phone**, and you must ensure you are available during your scheduled interview timeslots.*

5

## Receive a notification

You will receive your application outcome by email/mail. If your application is successful, the letter will include the amount of contribution to be paid to the Public Defender's Office.

Eligible cases may also be referred to Pro Bono SG, and they will advise you on the amount of contribution to be paid to them.



6

## Pay the contribution amount

You will need to pay the contribution amount within the stipulated timeline, failing which the aid will not be granted to you.

7

## Get assigned a lawyer

You will either be assigned to a Public Defender or volunteer lawyer under CLAS to handle your case.





## LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Please prepare the following supporting documents when you apply:

### Court Documents

- Bail bond
- Charge sheet(s)
- Cautioned statement(s)
- Latest court mention slip
- Grounds of Decision (if filing or defending appeal)
- Any other documents from the court, or medical reports where applicable

### Financial Documents

- Latest bank statement(s) or updated bank account passbook(s) with transactions of the most recent 3 months shown clearly (both joint and personal accounts)
- Payslips for the last 12 months (if employed without CPF contributions)
- Any other supporting documents to show employment and income (if self-employed)
- Latest Central Depository (CDP) account statement
- Latest statements of all investment products with a cash or surrender value (such as local or overseas stocks, fixed deposits, unit trusts, Singapore Saving Bonds and other investment products)
- NRIC (applicable for in-person applications)



## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Age</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 years old and above</li> <li>• If you are below the age of 21, your parent or guardian must apply for criminal defence aid on your behalf</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Residential Status</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Property</b>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner of only one property</li> <li>• Property owned must have an annual value not exceeding \$21,000</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Per Capita Household Income (PCHI)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average monthly PCHI must be \$1,650 and below</li> </ul> $\text{Average PCHI} = \frac{\text{Total gross income of all working household members in the last 12 months}}{\text{No. of household members} \times 12}$  |
| <b>Savings and Non-CPF Investments</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must not exceed \$10,000 (if below 60 years old)</li> <li>• If 60 years old and above, must not exceed \$40,000</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Type of Offence</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any criminal offence except the following:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Punishable by death</li> <li>+ Regulatory in nature</li> <li>+ Related to (i) gambling and betting, (ii) organised and syndicate crime, (iii) terrorism</li> <li>+ Prosecuted by private persons</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>See <a href="http://go.gov.sg/pdoscope">go.gov.sg/pdoscope</a> for full list of excluded offences</i></p> |
| <b>Other Criterion</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already charged/convicted and sentenced in Court</li> <li>• Not represented by a lawyer</li> <li>• Pass the merits test</li> </ul>  |

## WHAT HELP CAN I GET?



The PDO will work in partnership with Pro Bono SG (formerly known as the Law Society Pro Bono Services) to co-deliver criminal defence aid in Singapore.

If you meet the eligibility criteria for criminal defence aid, you will be assigned either a Public Defender or a volunteer lawyer under the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (administered by Pro Bono SG) who will represent you in Court.