

INFORMATION SHEET

What is the Midwest Innocence Project?

The Midwest Innocence Project (MIP) is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the investigation, litigation, and exoneration of wrongfully convicted men and women in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska. Founded in 2001 through the UMKC School of Law, MIP seeks to exonerate the innocent, educate students, and reform the criminal justice system by identifying and remedying the causes of wrongful convictions. Since that time, the MIP has grown to include programs with other law schools and paralegal schools. Together, MIP attorneys, local attorneys, law school professors, and law students work to review cases, investigate, and litigate claims on innocence.

What is the Nebraska Innocence Project?

The Nebraska Innocence Project is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to provide pro bono legal assistance to incarcerated individuals who have been wrongfully convicted of crimes in Nebraska and who no longer have a right to court-appointed counsel. We also educate the public about the problem of wrongful convictions and support reforms in the criminal justice system that will help prevent factually innocent people from being convicted in the future.

How do these two organizations work together?

Recognizing their shared interest in exonerating Nebraska residents who have been convicted of crimes they did not commit, these two organizations have chosen to enter into a collaborative agreement to further promote justice and secure exonerations within Nebraska.

What is the cost to me?

We provide our services to applicants free of charge.

What types of cases do these organizations accept?

We review cases where the applicant claims to be actually innocent of the crime(s) for which he or she is convicted. In order to challenge a conviction, there must be substantial new evidence to support a claim of innocence. This newly discovered evidence could be physical evidence that was not previously subjected to forensic examination, such as DNA testing. Newly discovered evidence may also include non-physical evidence, such as from an eyewitness who was previously unknown or a recantation from a victim, if such a recantation is supported by other new evidence. We investigate cases where there is a substantial chance new evidence can be discovered.

What types of cases will these organizations NOT accept?

We are unable to represent all applicants who apply to our project; we are only able to become involved in a select number of cases.

We **cannot** help if any of the following are true:

- You are currently awaiting trial or are still pursuing your direct appeal.
- You are currently represented by an attorney.
- You are not claiming actual innocence to the case for which you seek assistance.
- You have less than ten years to serve on the incarceration portion of your sentence.
- You played a minor role in the crime.
- You feel you should have been convicted of a different crime.
- You acted in self-defense.
- You claim the defense of insanity or intoxication.
- You were convicted of sexual assault for an encounter that you say was consensual.
- There is no newly discovered evidence.

Can any of these organizations help me with other types of cases?

No. Due to the large number of requests that we receive and our limited resources, we are only able to assist in cases where the applicant is claiming actual innocence.

How do I apply?

You may apply by filling out an "Application for Assistance." If you would like to request a copy of an application, you may request one by writing to the following address: Midwest Innocence Project, 605 West 47th Street, Suite 222, Kansas City, MO 64112.

What should I expect if I apply?Application for Assistance

Our process begins with our Application for Assistance. All persons seeking our assistance must fill-out an application. Our application is twelve pages long and asks many questions about your conviction. We ask that all applicants complete the application to the best of his or her ability. It is important for us to have the answers to as many of the questions as possible. Completed applications should be returned to our office: Midwest Innocence Project, 605 West 47th Street, Suite 222, Kansas City, MO 64112.

Intake Review

Once your application is returned to our office, it will be reviewed by our Intake Staff. Our Intake Staff reviews each application to determine if it meets certain basic program criteria. (See the explanation of cases MIP accepts and does not accept above.) After our Intake Staff makes their initial determination, we will write to you and inform you of our decision. Because of the large number of requests that we receive, it may take up to six months or more for our Intake Staff to review your request.

Waitlist and Screening Process

If our Intake Staff decides that your case warrants further review, we will place your case on our waitlist to be screened. Please know that if your case is placed on the waitlist, MIP does not agree to do anything other than review your case for potential meritorious claims of actual innocence. During this time, intake staff or law students will contact you and/or other investigating or state agencies to collect documents related to your case. Such documents may include transcripts, lab reports, police reports, etc. Please do not send documents unless requested by MIP staff or representatives. If at any time during this process you have upcoming court dates or deadlines, MIP is unable to assist you with these matters.

Eventually, the cases on our waitlist will be assigned to attorneys or law students, working under the supervision of a project attorney, to be screened. The screening is an in-depth review of your case documents that we gathered and it may take a year or longer to be completed. After the screening process has been finished and the results reviewed by the legal director, a determination will be made if investigation is warranted, which is the next step in our process.

Investigation

We investigate cases where there is a substantial chance new evidence can be discovered. When it is determined that your case merits investigation, it will first go on our investigation waitlist. Due to high demand coupled with limited staff and resources, the investigation waitlist is at least five years long. When your case is moved to active investigation, you will be contacted and given specifics regarding what activities we agree and do not agree to perform on your behalf.

How can I contact you?

While we prefer to respond to requests and questions from inmates via mail, we do accept collect calls from inmates as well as emails. We will speak with any person to whom you have given us permission in writing. Our mailing address is: 605 West 47th Street, Suite 222, Kansas City, MO 64112; phone number: 816.221.2166; email: office@themip.org.

Where can I find more information?

More information may be found on the internet at: www.themip.org and www.nebraskainnocenceproject.org.