



# CERTIFIED LEGAL SERVICES, Inc.

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## WHAT IS CLEMENCY?

**Clemency** is a way individuals who have been convicted of a criminal offense may seek and obtain relief from court-ordered supervision, including incarceration, probation, and parole or from the burden of a criminal record.

**Clemency** is a general term that refers to the act of reducing the penalties of a crime. In New Jersey, the Governor retains sole authority and discretion over all executive clemency decisions, though the Governor may be advised by a Board or other body. There are four types of clemency:

**Commutation:** reduces a sentence. It does not pardon the crime, and it does not exonerate the person convicted. For example, it may lower a death sentence to life in prison or reduce a prison sentence to time served.

**Pardon:** an act that grants official forgiveness to a person for a crime. This means that the administration will erase all the criminal records and have no sentence to serve. Once a pardon is granted, the person is again considered a law-abiding citizen with all rights restored, although it may not necessarily remove associated civil and legal consequences.

**Reprieve:** the temporary suspension of a prison sentence to release an offender under conditions which, if violated, permit re-imprisonment.

**Remission:** lessens the penalty but does not pardon the crime, thus leaving the conviction on the books while removing some or all of the punishment.

