NCIP Case Criteria for Legal Assistance

The resources of the NCIP are extremely limited. Therefore, we only consider cases of California prisoners who were convicted in Central and Northern California courts and are seeking to advance a claim of factual innocence.

Cases must meet the following criteria:

• The person must be actually innocent of the crimes for which he or she is convicted
• There must be a significant chance that substantial new evidence may be found to support a claim of innocence
• The person must have been convicted in a Central or Northern California state court of a serious felony
• The person must currently be incarcerated

NCIP cannot help if any of the following are true:

• The person is not claiming actual innocence
• The person seeks help with procedural challenges or legal claims
• The person is currently awaiting trial or pursuing a direct appeal
• The person is currently represented by an attorney
• The person was wrongfully suspected, arrested or charged, but not actually convicted
• The person played a role in the crime
• The person feels they should have been convicted of a lesser crime
• The person acted in self-defense
• The person claims the defense of insanity
• The person was convicted of sexual assault for an encounter that they say was consensual
• The person is seeking to challenge the length of their sentence but does not claim innocence
• The person’s case is based on a conviction in federal court
• The person was sentenced to the death penalty (and thus already has appointed counsel)

NCIP is not equipped to handle case applications or inquiries by email or over the phone. All case submissions and follow-up correspondence will be handled by mail.

To be considered by NCIP for representation, the person seeking assistance must submit an Initial Screening Questionnaire (Spanish Version here). The document must be fully completed in order to be reviewed and evaluated by NCIP. Please send the completed document directly to NCIP at:

• The Northern California Innocence Project
  900 Lafayette Street, #105
  Santa Clara, CA 95050
Please be aware that NCIP’s initial investigation can take up to 36 months to complete. Please do not call the NCIP office to inquire about the status of an application. NCIP does not have the staff to handle phone calls and they only slow down the review of applications.

If a person’s conviction occurred in a Southern California court and the person is seeking to advance a claim of factual innocence, contact the California Innocence Project at:

- The California Innocence Project
  225 Cedar Street
  San Diego, CA 92101