

Conviction Integrity Unit

The Conviction Integrity Unit for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia investigates fact-based wrongful conviction claims presented by defendants who were convicted of violent offenses in the District of Columbia Superior Court or the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

A defendant or attorney seeking to have a conviction reviewed should contact the CIU and provide the defendant's name, case number, year of conviction, and a description of the factual basis for the claim of actual innocence. If DNA testing is requested, the request should contain a description of the material to be tested and an explanation of how DNA test results will support the actual innocence claim.

The following prerequisites must be met before re-investigation of the case will be initiated:

- the claim of actual innocence must be predicated on a factual matter, not a purely legal issue,

- the claimant must proffer new evidence of actual innocence capable of being investigated and potentially substantiated,

- case records needed for re- investigation of the claim must exist and be available for review, the claim must not be frivolous, and

- the claimant must agree to cooperate fully with the Unit.

If the criteria for review are otherwise met, the CIU will investigate the claim regardless of any potential procedural bars that exist to formal litigation of the claim.

Decisions as to whether the CIU will re-open the case investigation, how the claim will be investigated, and how the claim will be resolved are made in the exercise of the U.S. Attorney's discretion, and are not reviewable by any court. There is no timeframe by which claims presented to the CIU will be resolved, but the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia will make every effort to expedite resolution of each claim. The government will not consent to the vacation of a conviction on grounds of actual innocence unless the reinvestigation of the case clearly and convincingly establishes the claimant's actual innocence based on the existence of credible evidence.

To present a claim, please email Peter Smith, Chief of the Special Proceedings Division, at peter.smith@usdoj.gov or mail claims to the Special Proceedings Division/Conviction Integrity Unit, United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, 601 D Street, Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20530.