

MANIFEST DREAMS CONSULTING & COACHING

FREE DOWNLOAD · LEGAL PREPARATION

Document Gathering Checklist

Know Exactly What to Bring Before Any Legal Appointment, Court Date, or Benefits Application

Manifest Dreams Consulting & Coaching
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Document Gathering Checklist

Walking into a legal appointment or court date without the right documents can cost you time, money, and outcomes. Use this checklist to prepare for any legal situation. Check off what you have, and make a plan to get what you don't.

General Documents Everyone Should Have Accessible

- Government-issued photo ID (driver's license, state ID, or passport)
- Social Security card (or know your number)
- Birth certificate
- Proof of current address (utility bill, lease, bank statement)
- Health insurance card
- Emergency contact information

Criminal Defense

- Police report (request a copy from the arresting agency)
- Charging documents / complaint / information (given at arraignment)
- Any paperwork received at arraignment or prior hearings
- Bail or release conditions paperwork
- Any prior criminal history (be honest with your attorney)
- Names and contact information of any witnesses who can help your case
- Any physical evidence or documentation relevant to your case

- Relevant communications (texts, emails, voicemails)

- Documentation of your alibi, if applicable

- Employment information (pay stubs, employer contact) – relevant for bail and sentencing

- Character reference letters (for sentencing)

Family Law / Custody

- Marriage certificate (for divorce)

- Birth certificates for all children

- Any existing court orders (custody, support, protection orders)

- Pay stubs (last 3 months)

- Tax returns (last 2 years)

- Bank statements (last 3 months, all accounts)

- List of all assets: real estate, vehicles, retirement accounts, investments

- List of all debts: mortgages, car loans, credit cards, student loans

- Communication logs with the other parent (printed texts, emails)

- Children's school records, report cards, attendance records

- Children's medical records

- Documentation of any domestic violence, substance abuse, or safety concerns

- Your current lease or mortgage documents

- Childcare costs and provider information

Protective / No-Contact Orders

- Any existing protection orders or no-contact orders
- Police reports related to incidents of abuse or harassment
- Photos of injuries, property damage, or threatening messages
- Printed or screenshot copies of threatening texts, emails, voicemails
- Names and contact information of witnesses
- Written log of prior incidents (dates, descriptions, what happened)
- Medical records if you sought treatment for injuries
- Documentation of any violations of existing orders

Housing / Eviction

- Your lease or rental agreement (full copy)
- All written communications with your landlord (emails, letters, texts)
- Any notices received (pay or vacate, eviction notice, lease violation)
- Rent payment history (receipts, bank statements showing payments)
- Photos of any property conditions you've complained about
- Documentation of repair requests and whether they were addressed
- Any housing assistance documentation (Section 8 voucher, etc.)
- Proof of income
- References from prior landlords (if applying for new housing)

Benefits Applications (SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, Housing)

- Photo ID

- Social Security cards for all household members

- Birth certificates for all household members

- Proof of current address

- Proof of income for all household members (pay stubs, benefit letters)

- Bank statements (last 30 days)

- Proof of expenses (rent/mortgage, utilities, childcare, medical)

- Immigration documents (if applicable)

- Any existing benefit award letters

- Documentation of any recent changes (job loss, medical emergency, etc.)

Notes

DOCUMENTS I STILL NEED TO GET:

WHERE TO GET THEM / WHO TO CONTACT:

A Note from Us

Being prepared is one of the most powerful things you can do for yourself. If you need help figuring out what documents apply to your specific situation, reach out.

These resources were created for people who were overwhelmed, confused, and alone in systems that weren't built to help them. You deserve better than that.

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