

COURT OF APPEALS OF OHIO, EIGHTH APPELLATE DISTRICT,
CUYAHOGA COUNTY

Bedford Hts. v. T.N.S.

2026-Ohio-2325 · No. 115751 · Decided June 18, 2026

SUMMARY

The Ohio Eighth District Court of Appeals held that the Bedford Municipal Court improperly followed a blanket policy of sealing records instead of expunging them. Because the applicant satisfied the statutory requirements for expungement under R.C. 2953.32, the appellate court reversed and vacated the trial court’s judgment and remanded with instructions to grant expungement of the criminal-damaging conviction and dismissed theft charge.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals of Ohio, Eighth Appellate District, Cuyahoga County
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Timothy W. Clary; Deena R. Calabrese; Eileen A. Gallagher
JURISDICTION	Ohio Court of Appeals, Eighth Appellate District, Cuyahoga County
DECIDED	June 18, 2026
DOCKET	115751
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	T.N.S. appealed the Bedford Municipal Court's denial of her application to expunge the record of her criminal-damaging conviction. The trial court instead ordered the conviction and dismissed theft charge sealed.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A trial court's disposition of an application for expungement is generally reviewed for abuse of discretion, but the applicability, interpretation, and application of R.C. 2953.32 present questions of law reviewed de novo.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Ohio Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	T.N.S. v. City of Bedford Heights

TOPICS

- post-conviction relief
- criminal procedure
- statutory interpretation
- appellate procedure
- standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal procedure

post-conviction relief

appellate procedure

statutory interpretation

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a trial court may deny an eligible applicant's request for expungement and order only record sealing after finding that the statutory requirements for relief are satisfied.
2. Whether the trial court may rely on a perceived statutory ambiguity or local policy to deviate from the requirements of R.C. 2953.32.

HOLDINGS

1. When an applicant properly seeks expungement under R.C. 2953.32 and the trial court finds that the statutory requirements are satisfied, the trial court must grant expungement rather than substitute record sealing.
2. A trial court may not deviate from the statutory requirements of R.C. 2953.32 by adopting a blanket policy of sealing records instead of expunging them or by relying on a perceived ambiguity that does not support another reasonable interpretation.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Because the trial court’s findings in support of sealing the records are the same findings required for granting an application for expungement and T.N.S. made an application for expungement, the trial court was required to grant her application for expungement after finding that all the requisite factors were met.” (¶ 19)

“The trial court’s purported reliance on a policy of sealing records rather than expunging them, even where an applicant makes an application for expungement and satisfies the statutory requirements, is erroneous.” (¶ 20)

“The trial court’s blanket policy against expungement was an improper deviation from the statute.” (¶ 24)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

T.N.S. was convicted in 2016 of misdemeanor criminal damaging, and a separate theft charge was dismissed. She paid her court costs and completed six months of probation, which was terminated in February 2018. In 2025 she applied for expungement; the city, probation department, and victim did not oppose the application. The trial court found facts supporting relief but ordered sealing rather than expungement because of its view that the statute was ambiguous and its policy was to seal records.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

T.N.S. was convicted of misdemeanor criminal damaging in 2016, while a separate theft charge was dismissed. After completing probation and paying court costs, she applied in 2025 to expunge the conviction and related records under R.C. 2953.32. Although the city and victim did not object and the trial court made findings supporting relief, the court followed a policy of sealing rather than expunging the records. The Eighth District

sustained T.N.S.'s sole assignment of error, vacated and reversed the trial court's judgment, and remanded with instructions to grant expungement.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Bedford Heights Municipal Court was directed to grant T.N.S.'s application for expungement of the records related to her criminal-damaging conviction and the dismissal of her theft charge.

CASES CITED

- N. Olmsted v. J.S., 2025-Ohio-1460, ¶ 7 (8th Dist.)
- State v. M.E., 2018-Ohio-4715, ¶ 6 (8th Dist.)
- State v. L.M., 2025-Ohio-3076, ¶ 7 (8th Dist.)
- State v. B.J., 2018-Ohio-5358, ¶ 9 (8th Dist.)
- State v. N.S., 2025-Ohio-5166, ¶ 19 (1st Dist.)
- State v. R.S., 2022-Ohio-1108, ¶ 9 (1st Dist.)
- State v. Aguirre, 2014-Ohio-4603, ¶ 36
- State v. N.S., 2025-Ohio-5166, ¶ 25 (1st Dist.)
- State v. E.K., 2024-Ohio-5496, ¶ 12 (10th Dist.)
- State ex rel. Toledo Edison Co. v. Clyde, 1996-Ohio-376, ¶ 24
- Euclid v. R.C., 2026-Ohio-457, ¶ 12 (8th Dist.)
- State v. G.K., 2022-Ohio-2858, ¶ 27