



For Immediate Release

Harris County misdemeanor courts offer expanded services for children, Spanish-speakers at Fresh Start fair in North Houston

Judges to giveaway 100 backpacks with school supplies to children in North Houston on July 30.

July 20, 2022 — Harris County criminal misdemeanor courts are hosting their third Fresh Start Resource Fair, this time in a new location and with expanded services for children and Spanish-speaking community members.

The late July fair will feature a variety of new resources, including help with immigration and citizenship issues, public library cards that double as photo IDs, COVID vaccines for anyone 6 months and up, mental health support, voter registration, and a backpack and school supplies giveaway for the first 100 kids in attendance.

It also will move from Fifth Ward to North Houston, as it begins to rotate locations through Harris County in an attempt to reduce traditional barriers to justice and make the Fresh Start program more accessible to all residents.

“If we can address a person’s basic needs and help them get back on track, we have a real chance to break the cycle of recidivism,” said Judge Genesis Draper, presiding judge for the Harris County Criminal Courts at Law. “That benefits not only the person we’re helping but ultimately our entire community.”

Launched earlier year, Fresh Start helps eligible non-violent, low-level offenders get back on track after experiences with the criminal justice system by sealing their criminal records and connecting them to community support services.

The program does this by hosting community resource fairs. The next one is set for **Saturday, July 30, 2022, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Community Center at Victory International Church, 170 Rittenhouse St. in North Houston.**

The fairs — which are free and open to the public — feature programs providing vital support services such as job training, adult education, assistance for food and transportation, and help applying for state benefits, among other things.

Attendees also can sign up for prescreening to see if they’re eligible to have their misdemeanor charges sealed. Prescreening is limited to the first 50 people.



Fresh Start Resource Fair July 30, 2022, 10 a.m. to noon Community Center 170 Rittenhouse St.

- **Seal your Criminal Record:** Sign up to see if you're eligible (*Limited to first 50 people*)
 - **Backpacks & school supplies** giveaway
 - **Jobs:** Access to job training, coaching & placement programs
 - **Immigration:** Help with immigration issues & applying for citizenship
 - **Education:** GED, adult high school, workforce training, English language classes
 - **COVID-19 vaccines** for 6 months and up
 - Support for adults & youth who were **previously incarcerated**
 - **Enhanced Library Cards** w/ photo ID (*Proof of ID & residency required. See list of accepted documents: [English](#) | [Spanish](#).)*)
 - Help applying for **state benefits**
 - **Mental health** resources
 - Programs for youth and adults
- More info: www.bit.ly/FindAFreshStart

Eligible individuals will have their charges sealed, which means they don't have to be disclosed publicly — on job or rental applications, for example — but can still be viewed by criminal justice agencies.

Fresh Start is the inaugural program offered by BAYOU City Community Court, an initiative developed by the Harris County misdemeanor court judges to encompass their community outreach efforts.

Fresh Start partners include Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department, Harris County Public Defender's Office, Harris County Precinct 2, Harris County Public Health, Harris County Public Library, Harris County Elections, Houston Volunteer Lawyers, Houston Food Bank, Houston Community College, Goodwill Houston, WorkFaith, Workforce Solutions, Baker Ripley, Launch Point CDC, The Harris Center, and Career and Recovery Resources Inc.

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