



For Immediate Release

## Harris County misdemeanor courts expand misdemeanor record sealing services with 'DIY' Pro Se Workshop pilot program launching in April in Southwest Houston

*Online pre-registration for criminal record screening and sealing opens at noon on March 27.*

March 24, 2023 — When Fresh Start Resource Fair returns for its 2023 debut next month, it will include a new 'DIY' Pro Se Workshop designed to better accommodate the growing demand for misdemeanor criminal record screening and sealing services.

The second chance program will continue to offer its original record-sealing program with full-service legal representation for 30 people per event. However, the new group workshop, which teaches attendees how to fill out and file their own paperwork, has space for up to 200 more, allowing the program to help seven times as many people.

**Online pre-registration is required for both programs.** Those who don't pre-register can attend the resource fair but can't access criminal record screening and sealing services.

"We're really excited to be able to expand our reach because the need is just so great," said Harris County Criminal Courts at Law Presiding Judge Genesis Draper, noting that past events often drew upwards of 150 people vying for as few as 25 slots.

"Our ultimate goal is to help people better meet their basic needs, which reduces recidivism and makes our communities safer in the process. This workshop is a way for us to effect change in our communities on a broader scale."

The pilot workshop will be held in conjunction with the next Fresh Start Resource Fair on Saturday, April 22, 2023, at the HCC Alief Bissonnet Campus in Southwest Houston. The resource fair will be held from 10 to noon, with the group workshop immediately following from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Fresh Start launched last spring as the first initiative offered under BAYOU City Community Court, the outreach arm of the Harris County Criminal Courts at Law. The April event is offered in partnership with the Harris County Public Defender's Office and Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department, as well as Houston Community College and Harris County Precinct 4.

Free and open to the public, the program aims to help people change course after experiences with the criminal justice system by sealing their low-level, non-violent misdemeanor criminal records and connecting them to vital support services.



**April 22, 2023**

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**Resource Fair**  
10 a.m. to noon

**'DIY' Workshop**  
Noon to 1:30 p.m.

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**HCC - Alief  
Bissonnet Campus**  
13803 Bissonnet St.  
Houston, TX 77083  
Southwest Houston  
Harris County Pct. 4

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**Pre-registration required**  
for criminal record sealing:  
[ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm](http://ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm)

The resource fair features programs for job training and placement, adult and student education, COVID-19 and flu vaccines, help applying for state benefits, general health resources, and re-entry support for people who were previously incarcerated, as well as legal support for criminal record screening and sealing.

**Online pre-registration for misdemeanor criminal record screening and sealing opens at noon on March 27, 2023.**

Pre-registration is required to allow legal staff time to screen criminal histories and determine eligibility in advance. Those notified as eligible for the program still must attend the resource fair in person and check in with event staff to receive services. Time of check-in will determine the program to which attendees are assigned and the order in which they will be helped.

**For more information or to pre-register, visit [www.ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm](http://www.ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm).** Pre-registration closes at 5 p.m. on Friday, April 14 — or as soon as all 230 spaces are full.

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## MEDIA CONTACT

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