



For Immediate Release

Fresh Start criminal record sealing program to return Aug. 10 with new resources for immigrants seeking citizenship and Mexican citizens living in Houston

Pre-registration for the next criminal record screening and sealing event launches Monday, July 22 at noon.

July 19, 2024 — Fresh Start is returning next month with its popular record screening and sealing program and housing rights workshop, as well as a new naturalization class for immigrants interested in learning about the citizenship process.

The upcoming event is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 10, 2024, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Harris County Jury Plaza, 1201 Congress St. in downtown Houston. Online pre-registration is required for record screening and sealing and opens at noon on Monday, July 22, 2024: ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm. No registration is needed for other services or programs.

“At the misdemeanor level, we have a real opportunity to make a difference, to help people change their trajectory before they become too entrenched in the criminal justice system,” said Judge Shannon Baldwin, presiding judge for the 16 Harris County Criminal Courts at Law. “That’s what Fresh Start is all about – helping people get back on track, stopping the cycle of recidivism, and making our community safer.”

Launched in 2022, Fresh Start helps eligible people course correct after encounters with the criminal justice system by sealing their eligible criminal records and connecting them with community resources. The program aims to help people meet their basic needs — reducing recidivism and making communities safer in the process.

In addition to record screening and sealing, the August event will feature resources related to evictions, immigration, naturalization, and legal services for Mexican citizens living in Houston:

- **Know Your Rights Housing Workshop* for Landlords and Tenants:** 30-minute, come-and-go sessions covering topics such as contracts, expectations, landlord and tenant rights, and the eviction process.
- **Consulate General of Mexico in Houston:** Support for Mexican citizens in need of legal services or legal documents. Includes help with criminal, civil, immigration, labor, and administrative matters, as well as passports, birth and death certificates, military records, wills, and other documents.
- **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services:** Learn about naturalization, including the application and interview process, prerequisites for citizenship, and available community-based legal resources that provide support throughout the process.

Fresh Start is offered by Harris County Criminal Courts at Law and their community outreach arm, BAYOU City Community Court, in partnership with Harris County Public Defender’s Office, Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department, Harris County State District Criminal Courts, Harris County Civil Courts at Law, Neighborhood Defender Service of Texas, Houston Apartment Association, Harris County Constable Precinct One, and Harris County Sheriff’s Office.

For more information about Fresh Start, event parking, or to pre-register, go to ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm.

**The information provided during the free Know Your Rights Housing Workshop for Landlords and Tenants is not legal advice. Legal information is not the same as legal advice. The information provided during the workshop is not a substitute for and does not replace the advice or representation of a licensed attorney. You should consult a licensed attorney of your selection to ensure that the information provided during the workshop and your interpretation of it are appropriate for your particular situation. You should not and are not authorized to rely on information provided as a source of legal advice.*



MEDIA CONTACT

Holly Huffman, Communications Director, Office of Court Management
Email: Holly_Huffman@ccl.hctx.net