



For Immediate Release

Participation in Fresh Start criminal record screening and sealing program hits record-high this past spring

Next Fresh Start set for Saturday, Aug. 2; Online pre-registration opens Monday, July 14 at noon.

July 9, 2025 — The Fresh Start record screening and sealing program drew a record-high number of participants during its last event on May 2.

The popular second-chance program registers 300 people each quarter for free criminal record screening. Those who are determined to be legally eligible can then access record sealing services at Fresh Start.

Roughly 75 percent — or 226 — of the people who registered for Fresh Start in May were determined to be legally eligible for record sealing. Of those who were eligible, about 62 percent — or 141 people — followed through with the program, accessing record sealing services at the event.

The May numbers mark a continuing trend: An increasing number of people who register are eligible for record sealing, and an increasing number of those who are eligible follow through with the process and attend the event to access record sealing services.

“We’re excited to see the numbers continue to grow — not just for the success of Fresh Start but for the success of the real people in our community that these numbers represent,” Harris County Criminal Courts at Law Presiding Judge Erika Ramirez said.

“These are people who want to get back on track; they just need a little help getting there. Fresh Start provides that help.”

Launched in April 2022, Fresh Start helps eligible community members change course after experiences with the criminal justice system by sealing their eligible criminal records and connecting them to community resources.

The program aims to help people meet their basic needs, reduce recidivism, and make communities safer.

Since its inception, Fresh Start has screened more than 2,800 people. Nearly 1,100 of those people have had or are in the process of having their records sealed. The remaining 1,800 or so participants have received advice and counsel, but no other services — either because they were not eligible or because they did not follow through with the process.

The next Fresh Start is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 2, from 10 a.m. to noon, at Harris County Jury Plaza, 1201 Congress St. in downtown Houston. Online pre-registration for record screening and sealing opens at noon on Monday, July 14. Space is limited to 300 people, and slots fill quickly. For more information or to register, visit www.ccl.hctx.net/FreshStart.htm.



In addition to record sealing, the August Fresh Start will feature:

- **Know Your Rights Housing Workshop* for Landlords and Tenants:** Learn about contracts, expectations, landlord and tenant rights, and the eviction process.
- **South Texas College of Law Legal Clinics:** Apply to determine your eligibility for assistance with civil legal matters, including debt relief and estate planning.
- **Consulate General of Mexico in Houston:** Access support for Mexican citizens in need of legal documents or legal services, including criminal, civil, immigration, labor, and administrative matters.
- **Harris County Public Health**
 - **ACCESS Harris County:** Register for wraparound support and resource assistance related to education, food security, job placement, counseling, peer support, healthcare and insurance, housing, and transportation.
 - **Lead Poisoning and Prevention Program:** Learn about lead poisoning and get tested to find out if you or your children have been exposed.

Fresh Start is offered by the Harris County Criminal Courts at Law and their community outreach arm, BAYOU City Community Court, in partnership with the Harris County Public Defender's Office, Harris County Criminal District Courts, Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department, and Harris County Constable Pct. 1.

**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.*

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