



For Immediate Release

## **UPDATE: Fresh Start record sealing program returns Nov. 9 with housing rights workshop, new health resources, and consular support for Mexican citizens**

*Online pre-registration for criminal record screening and sealing launches Thursday, Oct. 24 at noon.*

Oct. 23, 2024 — Fresh Start will return next month with its final criminal record sealing program of the year, as well as resources for evictions, health, voter registration, and consular support for Mexican citizens.

The newest offerings include on-site lead testing and registration for ACCESS Harris County, a wraparound support and assistance program that helps coordinate care and services for participants with multiple needs.

**The upcoming Fresh Start is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 9, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Harris County Jury Plaza, 1201 Congress St., in downtown Houston. Online pre-registration is required for criminal record screening and sealing and opens at noon on Thursday, Oct. 24. Spots are limited and fill quickly.**

“As we wrap up our third year, the demand for record sealing services has only increased. These are people who made mistakes, did their time, and now want to move on and be productive. Helping them do that benefits not just the individuals but the entire community,” said Judge Shannon Baldwin, Presiding Judge of the 16 Harris County Criminal Courts at Law. “As we plan for our fourth year, we’re continuing to look for ways to expand our program and help more people.”

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 November event also will feature:

- **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.
- **Harris County Voter Registrar:** Meet with the Outreach Team and get registered to vote.
- **Harris County Public Health**
  - **ACCESS Harris County:** Register for wraparound support and resource assistance related to education, food security, job placement, counseling, peer support, health insurance, primary care, housing, and transportation.
  - **Lead Poisoning Prevention Program:** Learn about lead poisoning and get tested to find out if you or your children have been exposed. Pregnant women and children under 6 — especially those living in low-income communities or housing built before 1978 — are at increased risk.

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, and Harris County Constable Precinct One.

For more information about Fresh Start, event parking, or to pre-register, go to [www.ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm](http://www.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.

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