

The Job Center And Land Of Lincoln Legal Aid Host Jersey County Fresh Start Expungement Day

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CRIMINAL RECORD

JERSEYVILLE — The Job Center and Land of Lincoln Legal Aid are joining forces to host a free event, Jersey County Fresh Start Expungement Day.

The Expungement Day will take place Thursday, October 14, 2021, from 8:30 am until 3 pm, in the Auditorium at the Jersey County Government Building, 200 N. Lafayette Street in Jerseyville, IL. At the event, Land of Lincoln attorneys, volunteer attorneys, and paralegals will meet with applicants to help them prepare petitions to request to expunge and/or seal their Jersey County criminal records. After petitions are prepared, participants must take them to the Jersey County Circuit Clerk's Office in the nearby Jersey County Courthouse for filing.

Participants must register to attend. The registration deadline is October 11, 2021.

Tony Fuhrmann, Director of the Job Center, said finding employment with a criminal background can be difficult.

"Expungements make them (applicants) more employable," Fuhrmann said.

An expungement is a legal court order that destroys a criminal record and removes it from public view. Records that cannot be expunged because they resulted in convictions may be eligible to be sealed. Sealing limits who has access to the records. It may be several months from when a petition for expungement and sealing is filed until a decision is made by a judge.

Daniel R. Kuehnert, a senior staff attorney with Land of Lincoln, said that criminal records often prevent people from landing a job or getting a higher-paying job.

"The mistake you make at 18 years old shouldn't prevent you from getting a job when you're 40," Kuehnert said. "A criminal record can be a major barrier in seeking employment, housing, and education."

Kuehnert said it is more beneficial to society to allow citizens the opportunity to work and live productive lives than to be held back by youthful missteps resulting in an arrest or conviction. He said although Illinois law prevents a potential employer from asking someone if they've been arrested on a job application, as someone moves further into the process of being hired, a background check may still show the arrest.

"By clearing their criminal histories as much as possible, people are granted freedom to seek better opportunities to improve their lives," he said.

Event attendees will be able to make appointments for the same day with The Job Center, which is located in the same building and can provide resume help, job listings, and other job search help. The Job Center is a part of the Southwestern Illinois WorkNet Center, which utilizes partnerships and technology to access workforce development

resources aimed at individuals, employers, and workforce/education partners. Event attendees will also be provided with information about other job searches, educational, and other resources that will help them build a better future.

“Once a person’s record is expunged they have more options,” Fuhrmann said.

Registration for the event is required and is open to the first 75 people. Visit <https://linktr.ee/jersey.co.summit>, email jersey.co.summit@gmail.com, or call (618) 462-0029, ext. 3027 to sign up. Throughout the upcoming weeks, Land of Lincoln staff will regularly check the website, email, and voicemail, and follow up with interested individuals to see if they qualify for the event and register them.

Individuals who qualify will be given an appointment for a specific time to arrive at the event. Due to COVID-19 precautions, it is important that individuals only attend the event at the time of their appointment and do not attend if they do not have an appointment. All participants will be asked to wear masks throughout the event.