

# Press Release

## SANTA BARBARA CLEAN SLATE CLINIC

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**Santa Barbara County Residents Clear Criminal Records with Help from Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office, Santa Barbara County Probation Department, Santa Barbara County Public Defender's Office, Santa Barbara Defenders, People's Justice Project, California Rural Legal Assistance ("CRLA"), and The Colleges of Law – Santa Barbara.**

August 22, 2025: Santa Barbara, Calif. – Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office, Santa Barbara County Probation Department, Santa Barbara County Public Defender's Office, Santa Barbara Defenders, People's Justice Project, CRLA, and The Colleges of Law – Santa Barbara will host a free legal Clean Slate Clinic for Santa Barbara County residents for criminal record expungement, felony reduction, and arrest record sealing on Friday, August 29, 2025 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at The Colleges of Law – Santa Barbara campus located at 20 East Victoria Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101.

The purpose of the Clean Slate Clinic is to help eliminate barriers to employment and housing for individuals who have criminal records. A criminal record—no matter how old or how minor—can be a significant barrier to reentry for people when most employers, property managers, and universities use background checks to screen applicants.

"Our office is committed to helping people lead productive and engaged lives while keeping public safety at the forefront. Criminal records that are now qualified for legal expungement can prevent people from obtaining employment or housing," said **John T. Savrnock, Santa Barbara County District Attorney**. "By partnering with local justice agencies to assist individuals who are legally eligible for criminal record expungement, we demonstrate our commitment to economic opportunity across Santa Barbara County's diverse communities while protecting public safety," he said. "When someone has earned the chance for expungement under the law, it can open the door to stability and hope," said **Jennifer Karapetian, Chief Deputy District Attorney**. "The opportunity to secure steady work and housing not only supports the individual, but also strengthens our community as a whole. That stability reduces the likelihood of reoffending, while promoting public safety."

"The expungement services provided at the August 29, 2025, Clean Slate Clinic are critical to breaking down systemic barriers that keep too many people from pursuing higher education, meaningful employment, and stable housing. Expungement is not just about clearing a record—it is about opening doors, restoring dignity, and giving people a real chance to build stability for themselves and their

families. When someone can move beyond a past mistake, they can save for a child's education, obtain health insurance, and plan for retirement. By providing this opportunity, we are not only changing individual lives—we are strengthening the future of our entire community,” said **Tracy Macuga, Santa Barbara County Public Defender.**

“A criminal record represents a substantial and enduring obstacle standing in the way of individuals who have served their time,” said **Holly Benton, County of Santa Barbara's Chief Probation Officer.** “By expunging criminal records, we are helping our community members become full, productive members of society once again and move past their prior offenses,” she said.

“Record clearance is crucial to ensuring that the collateral consequences that stem from a criminal record are eliminated or significantly reduced for the millions of individuals trying to rebuild their lives toward a successful future. It is difficult to overestimate the negative impacts of an unremedied criminal conviction in the ever-changing employment and housing markets, not to mention in the realms of immigration, education, litigation, professional licensure, and even travel,” said **William C. Makler, Attorney and President of the Santa Barbara Defenders.**

“Even a misdemeanor conviction or probation violation disqualifies a person from a wide range of benefits and opportunities,” said **Joseph Doherty, Managing Attorney at CRLA, President of People's Justice Project, and Professor of Law at The Colleges of Law.**

Under federal law, any probation violation for any type of misdemeanor disqualifies an individual from welfare benefits, including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (“TANF”), food stamps, low-income housing, and Supplemental Security Income for the elderly and disabled. The consequences of a drug misdemeanor conviction are particularly harsh and can include the loss of healthcare coverage, welfare, and student financial aid. Another benefit of this work that we have seen is that community members who get their expungement petitions granted are not returning to the criminal justice system.

Criminal record expungement confers numerous benefits for individuals convicted of certain misdemeanors and felonies. When applying for most jobs, individuals who successfully expunge their criminal record can lawfully answer “No” if asked whether they have been convicted of a crime. Moreover, an employer is not permitted to consider an expunged conviction that is discovered through a background check in making a hiring decision.

An expungement also benefits those seeking state professional licenses. To be sure, even after an expungement in many circumstances, an individual must disclose a conviction in response to a question posed in an application for a state license (e.g., a contractor, or real estate agent, or massage therapist) or in an application for public office. However, many licensing agencies are more likely to look favorably upon individuals who have successfully completed probation and whose convictions have been expunged. Further, under California law, “a person shall not be denied a license on the basis of any conviction, or on the basis of any acts underlying the conviction” if the conviction has been dismissed.

“Record clearing services allow individuals to obtain equal access to legal representation and justice and our law students are an essential part of that access,” said **Brandy Price, Dean of the Colleges of Law-Santa Barbara.** “Through our law school's Clean Slate Clinics, community members feel heard and seen through the expungement process, a feeling that many have never felt before.”

The California Policy Lab estimates nearly 1 in every 8 Californians with a criminal record is potentially eligible to obtain a full criminal record expungement; 81% of Californians with a criminal record are estimated to be eligible to have at least one prior arrest or conviction expunged. If you are interested in clearing your criminal record, please make an appointment to receive services at the Santa Barbara Clean Slate Clinic on **August 29, 2025 at (805) 902-CRLA or [reentry@crla.org](mailto:reentry@crla.org)**. Walk-ins are welcome.