

FAITH IN ACTION

Creating Expungement Events

“Justice,
Justice
Shall You
Pursue.”

Deuteronomy 16:20



KEY FACTS

- ▶ Over 70 million Americans, or **1 in 3 adults**, have a criminal record.
- ▶ A criminal record can be a life sentence to poverty. It reduces a job seeker's chance of getting a callback or job offer by nearly **50 percent**.
- ▶ One year after their record is cleared, people who have been incarcerated are **11% more likely** to be employed and are earning **22% higher wages**.

Put faith in action and join the national effort to help people who have had criminal justice involvement get their lives back on track by clearing their criminal record.

You can help restore justice in your community by working with local justice partners to plan a one-stop expungement event.

WHAT IS EXPUNGEMENT?

Expungement is the legal process of clearing someone's record, whether that record is from a prior arrest or a conviction.

Even a minor record can sentence someone to poverty because background checks are pervasive and the stigma of criminal justice involvement can prevent a person from getting a job.

Expungement policy varies widely from state to state. The eligibility of specific types of convictions and arrests, the process of expungement, the fees—even the term “expungement” is different across the country, but all states allow people to petition for “expungement,” “sealing” or “restricting records” from public access for some types of criminal records.

Navigating the record-clearing process can be extremely challenging. It often requires expensive legal assistance and court fees—putting it out of reach for millions of people who are legally entitled to this relief from the stigma of a criminal record.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

A criminal record has a lasting impact. It reduces the opportunity for people to find employment.

It keeps them from being eligible for hundreds of professional licenses. It can make it difficult to be approved by a landlord and it can prevent access to public housing. People with a record are denied some college loans, which hampers the hope of an education. Even an arrest record that did not result in conviction shows up on digital background checks, limiting options for people who were never judged guilty of anything. For people who served time, the consequences of that criminal record extends the punishment long beyond the length of their sentence. Essentially, having a criminal record in the U.S. disenfranchises people from fully and successfully reentering their communities. And the collateral consequences effect a person's family and the community as a whole.

KEY FACT

NEARLY 9 IN 10

employers run background checks on applicants.

SOURCE: CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

People leaving prison “enter a hidden underworld of legalized discrimination and permanent social exclusion.”

KEY FACT

Nearly

50%

of American children have a parent with a criminal record.”

SOURCE: CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*

All across the country, faith communities are mobilizing to work for change. Join them.

People of faith and moral courage are making a difference in the lives of their neighbors to help them get the second chance they have earned and deserve.

When people have served their time, it is in the collective interest that they are supported in rebuilding their lives to be productive citizens. No one gains if the only path we as a community leave open is a return to criminal solutions to poverty.

While people in the criminal justice reform community and legal community know about expungement, many people in the broader community don't. People who can benefit from expungement may not have the resources or the knowledge to pursue it. The general public may not understand how the collateral

consequences of a criminal record are destroying families and communities. That needs to change.

The film **FAITH IN ACTION** takes place in Atlanta and Augusta, Georgia, and tells the story of a new model that has emerged across the country as houses of worship collaborate with community justice partners to bring judges, prosecutors, court clerks and pro bono attorneys into the space of a sanctuary to expedite paper work and processing, provide on-site legal counsel and speed up the expungement process.



Join this movement and help make a difference now for individuals, their families and communities that have been affected by mass incarceration.



FAITH IN ACTION was filmed at Ebenezer Baptist Church, The Temple in Atlanta and Good Shepherd Baptist in Augusta, Georgia and depicts events from Fall of 2016 through Fall of 2018. The film captures the human toll of a criminal record, the relief of expungement and the commitment and enthusiasm of congregational volunteers and their justice partners working together to provide one-day processing to clear criminal records.

FAITH IN ACTION is available at no charge as a video tool to inspire more one-stop expungement events.

[▶ Download the film](#)

Use This Roadmap



This toolkit is intended as a roadmap to help you plan an expungement event in your community in collaboration with government officials in your local justice system.

It is a guide for identifying local community justice partners, developing a planning timetable, preparing for expenses, promoting the event to people who may be eligible for expungement, and ensuring that the event runs smoothly.

You might also consider taking your expungement event to the next level by using it to advocate for just and fair policies for people who have served their time and need to rebuild their lives.

The toolkit covers how to:

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All links in the toolkit are live to organizations and resources.

“I think the future generations will be asking us, what were we doing while this human rights nightmare unfolded in our midst called mass incarceration? These expungement events are just one more opportunity to address the ways in which the tentacles of mass incarceration are wrapped around the throats of people of color and are literally suffocating our communities to death. So this is a real opportunity to make redemption, salvation, second chances. All of this language that we use in church about grace... this is making grace real and literally changing people’s lives.”



The Rev. Dr. Raphael Gamaliel Warnock, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia

“If you want to lessen mass incarceration, if you want to lessen the crime rate, you’ve got to provide people something to do. You’ve got to give people a vehicle to take care of their families. And let me tell you, it’s remarkable that in the states allowing the records restrictions for nonviolent felonies and nonviolent misdemeanors, the crime rate went down. I believe that this project that we have set about is geared to give people an opportunity to get jobs, to be employed and take care of their families.”



Paul L. Howard, Jr., District Attorney, Fulton County, Georgia

Get Started



Planning an expungement event can be a complicated process. Policies regarding eligibility and the process for applying can vary greatly from state to state, county to county, and city to city.

What your institution can provide is leadership, a safe space for the event, and a team of volunteers to help dozens—or hundreds—of people get the chance to move forward with their lives.

Once you have organized one event, the next is much easier. Many houses of worship choose to host one or two events each year, amplifying impact in their community.



What's happening with expungement in your state?

In the past ten years, over 30 states have passed laws on expungement, many of which expanded the number of arrests and convictions that can be removed from someone's record. Some state laws allow a record to be expunged or destroyed. Others seal or shield a person's record from the public, making it accessible only to law enforcement.

- ▶ **Find out your state policy regarding expungement:** [50-State Comparison Judicial Expungement, Sealing and Set-aside](#)
- ▶ **Find out if others are already hosting expungement events in your area.** The movement to increase access to expungement has been slowly building, and different types of entities in addition to houses of worship have started to host one-stop expungement events, including county clerks, community colleges and reentry service providers. A quick web search will help you learn if any efforts are underway for you to join or if this is a gap you should fill.
- ▶ **Ask potential justice partners about applicable policies and procedures and reach out to community partners to enlist their support.** The public defender, the county clerk or a pro bono attorney can explain what charges or convictions are eligible for expungement, the requirements for paperwork and fees, and what the process entails.
- ▶ **Make new contacts—or strengthen existing relationships—with social justice organizations and social service providers in your community.** Consider hosting a lunch or dinner screening of **FAITH IN ACTION** to share your vision for an expungement event and discuss how to bring this model to your community.

INSIGHT

An analysis of criminal records in Baltimore found **23,386** instances in which people convicted of crimes could have had their records expunged, but less than one third had petitioned to clear their record.

That's not out of the ordinary. Many Americans are not taking advantage of the growing number of state laws allowing people to clear their criminal record. Part of the reason is lack of understanding about the remedies that the laws allow; part of the reason is the cost. In Kentucky, Louisiana and

Tennessee, for example, filing to expunge a criminal record costs around \$500. Lawyers can charge thousands of dollars to help an individual with the legal process—an insurmountable barrier for the very people who may need expungement most: those who are poor and struggling to get work.

Build support for an expungement event among your congregation.

This project might be a first step for your congregation's engagement with the issue of mass incarceration, or it might be an expansion of work you are already doing for criminal justice reform. In either case, take some time to explain the issue to your congregation, talk about how the project might be an expression of shared values, and enlist their energy and commitment in this endeavor.

- ▶ Show **FAITH IN ACTION** followed by a panel discussion.
- ▶ Invite legal professionals from your community to participate (possibly a public defender and prosecutor).
- ▶ Include one or two people who have struggled because of a criminal record who can describe the impact. A reentry organization in your community might help you to identify speakers.



During an expungement event members of your congregations can help in many roles.

“Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket.”

—
Genesis 22:13

INSPIRING WORK

Rev. Adrienne M. Zackery

CROSSROADS UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
COMPTON, CALIFORNIA



In 2016, Reverend Zackery attended a conference on mass incarceration, and was very touched.

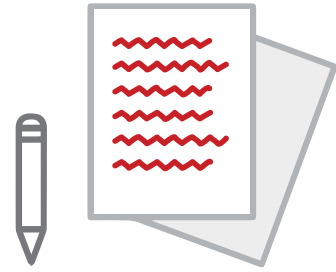
“I recognized that ministry takes place outside the four walls of the church, in the community, and I wanted to do something,” she says. Compton has a history of gang violence, and many members of the community had served time. People needed employment to replace criminal activity, and they couldn't get a job with a record. Doing an expungement clinic seemed like a good way to address this legacy and help the community get back on its feet.

“I invited the congregation to join on this journey, and it wasn't immediately accepted,” Zackery remembers. “Some members of the congregation were reluctant to have 'criminals' come into our church. But Matthew 22:35 means that as a church we are called to do this work. God is the god of another start.” Rev. Zackery turned to a member of the congregation who is an attorney, and even though Karen Henry had no criminal law experience, she took on the task of organizing the first event. She persuaded her law firm to provide pro bono legal help and contribute some money for expenses. The city of Compton lent tables and chairs. Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles provided a host of legal volunteers to put the petitions together and to train others to do them. “In Compton there are not a lot of financial resources, but there are other kinds of resources, and we pulled them together. You have to believe there is a ram in every bush,” she says. Slowly the congregation's reluctance evaporated. “In addition to the scriptural basis, you need to give people a role. Whether it's organizing refreshments for the day or making copies, if you create a job for everyone it promotes their buy-in.”

The Crossroads community learned a lot from that first experience. Not everything went smoothly, particularly with very hot weather and inadequate air conditioning. But for every problem, the church team found a solution, and over the past three years they have regularly hosted more expungement events. “Crossroads is a small church, but we are mighty in commitment,” says Zackery. “I believe every church should be able to have an expungement clinic that is organic to your community. So go out there and do it.”

Make a Plan

Depending on your resources, there are a variety of ways to structure your first expungement event. You might want to begin with a limited event, and then get more ambitious as your expertise and community support builds.



Consider hosting a free public informational clinic for people who may be eligible for expungement during a weekday evening or weekend afternoon. This can be planned in a month or two.

- ▶ At an informational clinic, the public defender, the county clerk or a pro bono attorney can explain the charges or convictions eligible for expungement, the paperwork and fees involved, and what the process entails.
- ▶ This is a useful first step to learn more about the issue for future planning.
- ▶ It's also an opportunity for your house of worship to be identified as a resource for the community regarding expungement and to build your network of connections with partner organizations that offer services.

When you are ready to organize a full expungement event—giving people the opportunity to get their record cleared on the spot—then anticipate a four- to six-month planning period.

- ▶ **Put together a small working group** of four to six people to take the lead. Ideally your group will include individuals with some legal expertise, some marketing know-how, some connections to the social service community and some fundraising capacity.
- ▶ **Decide on the scope of your event.** Half day or full day? How many people do you hope to serve? Will you include a job fair or tables with information on social services like substance use treatment programs or housing support?
- ▶ **Consider the venue.** Ideally, the venue should be accessible by public transportation and large enough to provide multiple spaces for the work of the expungement effort.
- ▶ **Target a date.** There is a lot involved in selecting a date for one of these events: weather prospects; other demands on your calendar; the availability of volunteers. Fall and spring are often ideal seasons. April is Second Chance Month. November has Veterans Day. Think about how the choice of a date might strengthen the opportunity for press coverage.
- ▶ **Will you provide food or child care services?** For a daylong event, you will probably need to provide breakfast and lunch for volunteers and the legal teams working. Waiting applicants appreciate coffee, water and snacks. Some entertainment for children—or a supervised play space—can relieve stress for people as their paperwork is processed.

Consider providing wraparound services if you have ample space and volunteer leadership to manage it.

- ▶ One-day expungement events can offer even more benefit if you are able to organize a job fair or provide information on community services available to people in reentry and their families.
- ▶ Some houses of worship start by doing their first one-day expungement event, then expand to include additional services.
- ▶ Depending on how much space you have available, there are many local service providers you could collaborate with to distribute information about their programs and sign participants up for services. Here are some ideas:
 - ▶ Reentry programs
 - ▶ Work source centers
 - ▶ Employment agencies
 - ▶ Veterans services
 - ▶ Supportive housing and tenants' rights organizations
 - ▶ Homeless shelters and services
 - ▶ Community-based health centers
 - ▶ Substance use treatment programs
 - ▶ Food pantries and food assistance programs
 - ▶ Community colleges with scholarship opportunities
 - ▶ Voting rights and advocacy groups

Ask local government agencies to participate, including: departments of health, social services, mental health and reentry. They can also steer you to potential nonprofit partners.

Meet the Legal Requirements



You will need to look to your justice partners to determine the requirements for the expungement process in your state and work with them to structure an event that will meet those needs. This takes careful planning and open communication with the agencies and personnel who do this work.

Some questions to ask:

- ▶ What identification and documents do the applicants need to bring?
- ▶ What officials must the applicant engage with?
- ▶ What documents must be protected as confidential?
- ▶ Is fingerprinting required?
- ▶ What databases will need to be accessed during the event (court case databases, prosecutors databases, etc.)?
- ▶ How long will the process take per applicant?
- ▶ Will it be necessary to cap the number of people who pre-register? To control capacity, should the number of convictions that people can apply to clear be limited?

Consider requiring pre-registration so records can be located in advance.

- ▶ Can you create a pre-registration website?
- ▶ What information would need to be collected?
- ▶ What processes can be done in advance to expedite record review at the event?
- ▶ Can you staff a phone number for people who have questions?

For registration and check-in, think about:

- ▶ If you need separate tables for misdemeanors and felonies?
- ▶ How will walk-ins be handled?

What needs to be the order of process at the event?

- ▶ Will people be given a number and called individually?
- ▶ Is it better to assign people to small groups (Group A, Group B, etc.) and call them as a cluster?
- ▶ How many separate stations will need to be set up?

TIPS

- ▶ Schedule more people than you can serve because some people may not show up.
- ▶ Check that the databases you need will be accessible and are not being serviced, updated or closed during your event.
- ▶ If you don't have the capacity to handle walk-ins, record their name and contact information and refer them to other legal services.



Ché Alexander
CEO, CHECKREIN CONSULTING



Detria Russell EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MARTIN LUTHER KING, SR. COMMUNITY RESOURCES COLLABORATIVE

“An important part of each event is to tell to people that day that their record is cleared.”

—
Detria Russell

It is essential to have a dedicated team working to figure out the details of an expungement event that accommodates the stringent legal process while also making every applicant feel welcomed and respected, even when they might number in the hundreds.

In Atlanta that team included Ché Alexander, who at the time was Chief of Courts for the Fulton County Clerk of Superior/Magistrate Court. Alexander has deep knowledge of the legal process in Georgia and she collaborated closely with Detria Russell, who had experience planning large community events.

Their challenge was to streamline a legal process that usually takes 190 days into a one-day event at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Key to the process was having applicants pre-register and then pulling their criminal records in advance of the event. “We set up a secure website for registration that could be accessed by links off of each of the prosecutor’s websites, then certified court employees pulled the records and organized them,” says Alexander. “There really is quite a bit of work that gets done behind the scenes, and you need a point person to facilitate that.” Alexander worked with Russell to map out how an applicant would go through each stage of the process. “I did a survey with all our justice partners so that I could understand what their needs were, and I met with them one-on-one so that we could design a process for the

event that would get all the steps done,” says Russell. “The workflow of the day had to match the expectation of confidentiality—that meant only certain authorized people could be in certain spaces where private documents were accessible.”

For the process in Georgia—and states vary—that meant a separate room for the judges, secure space where criminal records can be reviewed, and private areas where attorneys could meet and provide alternatives to applicants who were not eligible for criminal records restriction. “In the beginning it was hard to get everyone to understand how secure these spaces needed to be,” remembers Alexander. “The key,” says Russell, “is making sure the leadership is on board because they will ensure that agencies not accustomed to working together will collaborate.”

Each event at Ebenezer has gotten easier, and the rewards are high. “An important part of each event is to deliver the answer to people that day that their record is cleared. Those of us on the frontlines doing the work want to see the people that we are helping—that’s what gives it the impact,” says Russell. Over

time, continuous public education has put the word on the street that this is a real thing, and that the process works. Alexander, who is now CEO of Checkrein Consulting, says, “It’s amazing how this idea is spreading. I have been providing technical assistance to counties all across Georgia. It so important that people have a shot at a second chance.”



An expungement event can create a joyful feeling of accomplishment for everyone involved.

Budgeting & Fundraising

Holding a one-day expungement will require resources for setup, supplies and marketing. Formulate an operations budget for the event, considering needs like:



- ▶ Tables and chairs
- ▶ Rental copiers/printers/paper supplies
- ▶ Computers and WiFi hotspots
- ▶ Breakfast/lunch for volunteers
- ▶ Coffee/water/snacks for attendees
- ▶ Security
- ▶ Marketing
- ▶ Professional staffing

There are court costs involved in processing expungements, which can be an obstacle for potential applicants. Work with your justice partners to eliminate as many expenses and direct costs as possible so the expungement process can be free for applicants. Fundraise to cover any unavoidable costs.

- ▶ Explore if state/county filing fees can be waived.
- ▶ Line up fee waivers for live scans—the inkless fingerprinting the process may require. Reach out to your state Department of Justice to find out what their live scanning process is and if fee waivers are possible.
- ▶ Professional court staff will need to do both advance work and processing on the day of the expungement; can costs be absorbed by agency budgets?
- ▶ Recruit pro bono legal help from law offices in the community. Use the **FAITH IN ACTION** film to make a presentation at the local bar association and at area law schools to attract attorneys.

TIPS

- ▶ A local foundation or business might cover some of the staffing and filing fee costs, in addition to the event costs.
- ▶ Look for in-kind donations for food/refreshments, printing services, tables/chairs.
- ▶ Ask if work time for paid professional staff such as court clerks and uniformed officers can be offset by compensatory time off instead of an overtime charge.



In Atlanta, the Temple's Rothschild Social Justice Institute contributed to the cost of its event.

“The criminal justice system that is in place right now is not a fair one, and there is a particular disadvantage based on race and based on class. There is a racial and economic inequity in the prison system in our country and that’s something that should raise red flags for all religious faiths. We are our brother’s keeper. Our job is to look out for one another and to support one another when the system is failing.”

Rabbi Peter Berg, The Temple in Atlanta, Georgia

Enlist Volunteers

An all-day expungement event requires a lot of hands on deck. There are plenty of roles for members of your congregation in planning and preparation, as well as on the day of the event.



Tap the expertise and contacts of members of your congregation. Are there any attorneys who can volunteer and get their law firm involved? Does anyone work for a marketing agency that could contribute poster and T-shirt design and help with media contacts? Are there business people who could take the lead on fundraising? Who is good with computers and can oversee IT functions?

On the day of the event, you will need volunteers for tasks like directing parking, greeting applicants, escorting people through the flow of the process, staffing the copier machine, setting up coffee and snacks for the volunteers and people waiting, perhaps providing some child supervision in a playroom. Depending on the number of volunteers you have available, try to schedule two- to three-hour shifts.

Give every volunteer a T-shirt so they are easily identifiable. That will make it easier for them to help those attending.

Conduct a volunteer training session about two weeks prior to the event. Show the film **FAITH IN ACTION** and have one of your justice partners on hand to explain the expungement process step by step. Make sure everyone is clear on how the day will unfold, how they can help, and what to do if a problem arises.

Remind your volunteers that the applicants might feel overwhelmed and nervous, so it is important to be positive and to treat all expungement candidates with courtesy and respect.

TIPS

- ▶ Designate one person as the volunteer coordinator to make assignments. That person should have a list with contact information for each volunteer on the day of the event.
- ▶ An online tool like Signup Genius is a great way to register volunteers and make assignments.
- ▶ Be sure to have some volunteers who speak multiple languages and can help translate.
- ▶ Assign your strongest volunteers to the check-in and check-out desks. That is where the most questions usually arise.

STORY



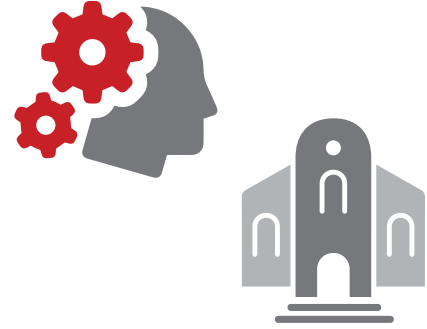
Luggage You Can't Set Down

“I usually wake up around 3:30 in the morning. Start my morning prayer. Get myself prepared, start my journey, so I can get to work.

I am stuck at making \$60 a day. Most jobs today are doing background checks. If they see something they don't like, they are not going to hire you. I was in jail for 30 days, the charge was reckless conduct and that's a misdemeanor. From that time, my life took a different turn.” Jones served in the Air Force and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. He has repeatedly applied for jobs, gone through the interviews, and not gotten hired. He says “regardless of what my certifications say, regardless of what my degrees say, everything is fine until they start doing the background check. It's like luggage that you can never set down. It's always there.”

Thomas Jones tells his story in the film **FAITH IN ACTION**.

Event Logistics & Management



Houses of worship are often an ideal venue to host an expungement event.

They are trusted spaces in the community, which is a significant factor for people who have had negative experiences with the criminal justice system and will want to feel safe as they undertake this legal process. They also usually have large open spaces as well as smaller rooms, parking and/or good public transportation access, and AV equipment and computer connections.

Space Assignments

- ▶ **Legal Process Requirements.** The space use and table setup will need to be carefully mapped as part of the overall process of planning the logistics for the day. Work collaboratively with your justice partners to ensure the room setup meets the needs of the process. Also be mindful that people are going to want privacy to discuss their legal situation. If you don't have enough rooms for this function, consider setting up partitions so confidential information can be shared privately. Judges and DAs also may need private spaces.
- ▶ **Waiting time.** Consider how to make people comfortable while they wait their turn to move through the process. Musicians might be stationed to play for people who are lined up to enter. Some event organizers have arranged for food trucks to be outside. An alternative is to make free water, coffee and snacks available. You might invite some community groups to provide helpful service information in lobby areas that people can visit. Children can be a distraction during the event, so perhaps there can be an area set aside for them to play or watch videos. Consider what spaces in your facility will work for these purposes.

People Flow

Think through crowd management, and how best to avoid bottlenecks at each stage of the day.

- ▶ **Traffic control.** Consider entrance and exit points so the volume of people is dispersed. Designate different entrances for staff, volunteers and participants and make sure that information is communicated in advance.
- ▶ **Parking.** Assign separate parking areas for justice teams, volunteers and applicants. Depending on the size of your parking lot and the capacity of your event, you may need to station some volunteers to direct people to the appropriate area.
- ▶ **Signage and communication.** Produce signs to help people unfamiliar with your facility find their way to the correct spaces for waiting, child care, legal consultation, etc. Clear and prominent signage will reduce confusion and frustration.
- ▶ **Schedule appointments.** When people are pre-registered, tell them what time to arrive. It can be helpful to assign people in clusters—Group A, Group B—and give them a two-hour window to arrive. That way, you can avoid a crunch at the start or an overflow of people toward the end of the day.

Equipment and Technology

- ▶ **Computers.** The expungement process may require the use of computers and access to the internet. Figure out how many you will need and where they will be located. Will the computer need to be connected to a printer? If this equipment is set up in advance, consider how it will be secured. Make sure that all the IT is working before the event begins.
- ▶ **Copiers.** The procedures may also require use of a copier. Determine if a small portable machine will be adequate, and check that you have an adequate supply of toner and paper.
- ▶ **Cell phones or walkie talkie.** You will need to communicate throughout the day with professional staff, volunteers and leadership. Check that there is adequate service within the sanctuary and other space.

Security

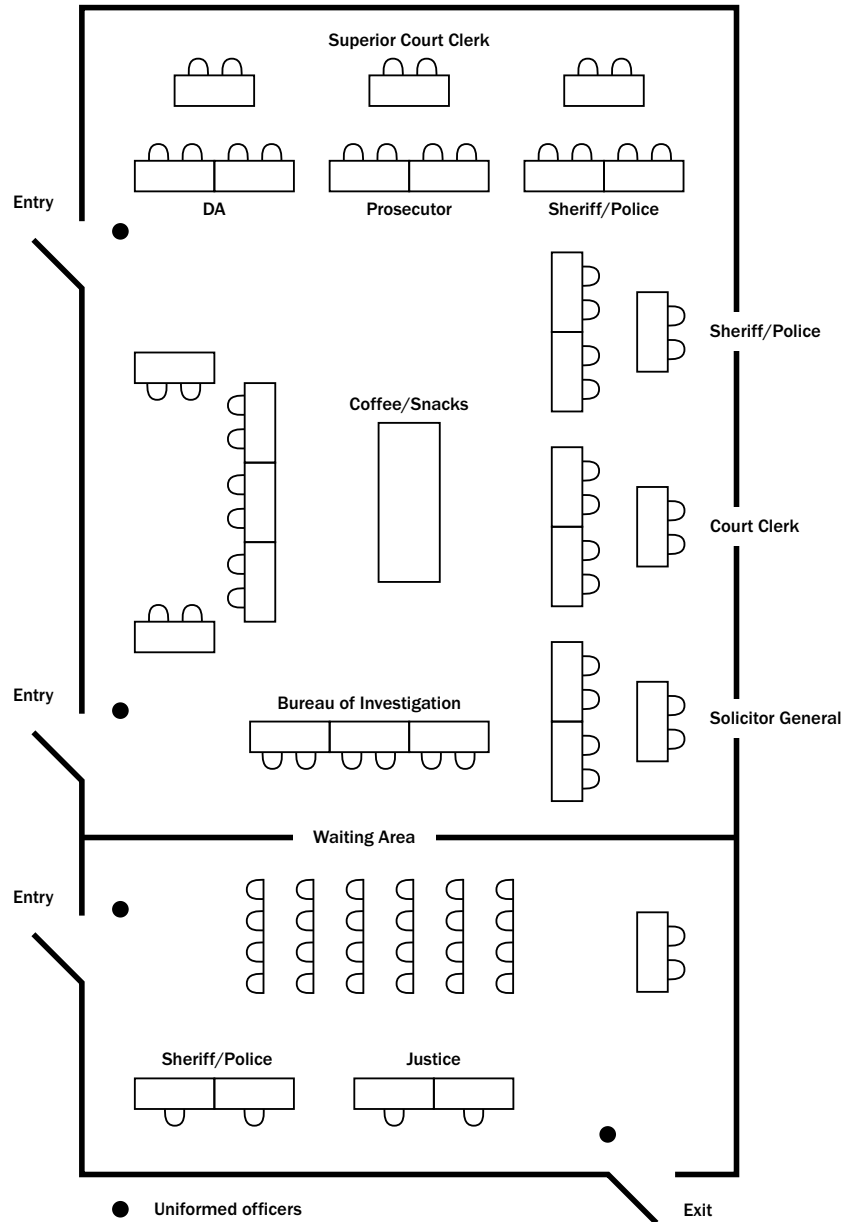
Like any large public event, it is important to have security on hand for crowd management and safety. There are a variety of ways to approach this. One option is to work with the local sheriff or police chief to schedule uniformed officers to be on-site during your event. They can assist with traffic control and be stationed at event entrances to do security wandering and routine bag checks. An alternative option is to use plainclothes officers or private security.

Create a floor plan that supports the legal process

It will be helpful to ensure that you have accommodated the required people flow, document confidentially, and other concerns if you carefully lay out the floor plan that will be set up for expungement day. This floor plan will enable you to review the layout with your justice partners and provide your set up team with clear guidance.

Consider where you will place chairs for the people waiting. Assign spaces for public defenders and other legal service providers nearby for applicants who have questions. Designate table space for the necessary government officials such as the prosecutor, the sheriff, the police department, etc. Indicate where uniformed officers will be on duty. Consider where you will need computers, printers and copiers to support the process and if there are sufficient electrical outlets for this equipment.

If you are using more than one space in your facility, it can be useful to create a lay out like this for each of the areas that will be set up for expungement day.



INSIGHT

Some communities are very sensitive to a police presence, and potential candidates might be apprehensive about uniformed officers.

Work with your justice partners to declare the event a “NO ARREST DAY” so potential candidates do not have to fear they will be apprehended for some past encounter with the justice system. Feature this declaration prominently in your marketing materials and include in any media interviews. Ensure that your volunteer greeters are warm and welcoming on the day of the event to set a positive tone and reduce anxiety about the security presence.

Marketing & Public Relations



There are three main steps to promoting your expungement event:

- ▶ **Spreading the word** well in advance of the event so people who are candidates for expungement will pre-register.
- ▶ **Securing publicity** the week leading up to the event to maximize participation.
- ▶ **Raising awareness** in the community about the value of expungement to enable people to rebuild their lives through news coverage of the event.

For your event to be a success you need to develop a marketing plan that will focus on each of these critical steps, and then produce marketing materials you can disseminate through community partners and the news media. Tailor your materials to your target audience, making them welcoming, culturally competent and bilingual as needed. You will likely need:

- ▶ Graphic design/logo for the event name that you can use on all materials, such as T-shirts, signage, etc.
- ▶ Printed fliers to promote the pre-registration process and deadline
- ▶ Press release announcing the event and pre-registration deadline
- ▶ Banner for outdoor display
- ▶ Media advisory to circulate to press the day before event
- ▶ Press release with key messages to distribute at the event

Try to line up pro bono help from a local marketing or public relations firm to steer your plan, support graphic design and messaging, and use their media contacts to encourage coverage.

HONORABLE DOROTHY BROWN
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY

**SECOND CHANCE EXPUNGEMENT SUMMIT
REGISTRATION SUNDAYS**

**May 19, 2019
& May 26, 2019**
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

DO YOU HAVE A
RAP SHEET?
We are here to HELP

Bring your RAP Sheet to Registration Sunday to REGISTER for the Second Chance Expungement Summit

KING OF GLORY TABERNACLE COGIC 2314 E. 93rd St. Chicago, IL	GREEN GROVE M.B. CHURCH 1049 W. Marquette Rd. Chicago, IL	EVENING STAR M.B. CHURCH 4295 S. Cottage Grove Chicago, IL
JLM ABUNDANT LIFE CENTER 2622 W. Jackson Blvd. Chicago, IL		PEOPLE'S CHURCH OF THE HARVEST COGIC 3570 W. 58th Ave. Chicago, IL

REGISTRATION REQUIRED FOR THE EXPUNGEMENT SUMMIT!
RAP SHEET NEEDS TO BE UPLOADED WITH THE REGISTRATION!

Obtain RAP Sheet(s) at Chicago Police Department, Access and Review Division, 3510 S. Michigan Ave., 1st Floor. Fingerprints taken Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Adult fee: \$16; Juvenile: No Fee. (312) 745-5570.

Bring your RAP Sheet to Registration Sunday and we will help you register in advance for the SECOND CHANCE EXPUNGEMENT SUMMIT SAT., JUNE 1, 2019, at WESTINGHOUSE COLLEGE PREP

Call (312) 603-5200 for more information.
WWW.COOKCOUNTYCLERKOF COURT.ORG

This poster for a series of expungement events at Chicago churches includes a lot of important information in a bold, eye-catching format.

Start promoting registration

Start outreach as soon as possible to reach potential candidates, providing fliers and social media graphics that can be widely distributed.

Materials should have key information including: Legal services being offered; eligibility requirements; necessary documents; any costs; and how to register.

Feature a pre-registration website if available, and provide a phone number for questions.

Collaborate with community-based grassroots organizations to spread the word to people who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. Try to engage public defenders' offices, reentry programs, substance use treatment programs, homeless shelters, veterans groups and criminal justice reform groups. It also is helpful to give posters to libraries, community centers and other houses of worship.

You will broaden your reach if you put out a press release announcing the event, approaching newspapers as well as local radio stations to publicize this opportunity to get free legal help and a clear record. Consider who to offer for interviews from both your institution and among your justice partners.

Promoting awareness of the issues

- ▶ **Hold a press conference.** A press conference on the day of the event is an effective way to garner media coverage, and to build community awareness of the issues and the need you are filling by helping people to clear their records. Several speakers should represent both the house of worship and the justice partners. Try to identify one or two people who have pre-registered who are willing to speak to the press and be photographed. Have them sign a release.
- ▶ **Issue a Media Advisory.** Whether or not you hold a press conference, distribute a media advisory a day or two before the event including key WHO WHAT WHEN WHERE information to encourage coverage. Specify that expungement candidates can only be photographed from behind their head to maintain confidentiality unless they explicitly agree to be identifiable in a picture.
- ▶ **Provide a Press Release.** Have a press release ready for media who attend that includes key messages about the event and the issue and quotes from your leadership. Make sure that any media that show up are well managed. Each reporter and TV producer should have an escort from your team, preferably one with some PR experience, who will ensure that they do not take photos or video of people who have not signed releases.

INSPIRING WORK

Rabbi Lydia Medwin

THE TEMPLE IN
ATLANTA, GEORGIA



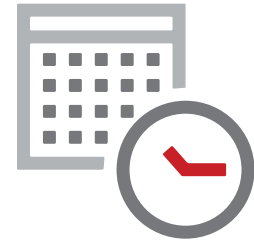
Criminal records of arrests for misdemeanors of felonies that did not result in conviction can be restricted in Fulton County, Georgia, where an estimated 1.5 million arrests are still on the books.

But many people don't know how to get that done—or can't afford it. "That's a huge problem here," explains Rabbi Lydia Medwin. Many employers use companies that do background check searches on potential hires and turn up these arrests as well as convictions. "Even if the charge did not result in a conviction, there is still a stigma and a perception that the person must have done something wrong to get arrested," says Medwin. The Temple in Atlanta planned their records restriction event in conjunction with Veterans Day. Many veterans who have struggled to reintegrate after a tour of duty have criminal justice involvement.

The Temple event was a big effort, and many lay members of the congregation volunteered to help. Applicants were required to pre-register so their criminal records could be pulled in advance of the event to speed up the process. "We did a lot of outreach, and 312 people pre-registered," says Medwin. The team was also prepared on the day of the event to manage up to an additional fifty people if they just walked in. "It was very moving for our members to see how happy and relieved people were once their records were restricted," recalls Medwin. "Now we are talking about our next event, and expanding to include community partners with information on local services and jobs."

Create a Timetable

It is essential to create a detailed timetable for the day of your event and provide it to staff and volunteers, so everyone is clear on what is happening and where they are expected to be.



The day of your expungement event will likely be very hectic with a lot of moving parts. With careful planning and preparation, you should be able to avoid problems, but there will always be the unexpected. Keep calm as you work through situations that arise. Having a detailed schedule and contact list can be helpful.

Keep in mind that people who are attending may have some anxiety about the process, particularly dealing with officials who represent a criminal justice system that may not have treated them respectfully in the past. Paperwork and bureaucracy is always challenging for people and waiting time can be frustrating.

Day of Expungement Sample Timetable

This timetable is based on an event at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Use it as a guide to develop your own.

THE NIGHT BEFORE

- ▶ Set up tables and chairs
- ▶ Put all signage in place
- ▶ Make sure technology is working
- ▶ Volunteer coordinator should confirm everyone's participation

TIPS

- ▶ Start to map out the day during the months leading up to the event and continue to refine it as adjustments are required and details are filled in, such as room locations and parking instructions.
- ▶ Use the Ebenezer example below as a checklist to remind you of issues you still need to address.
- ▶ Distribute the final DAY OF EXPUNGEMENT TIMETABLE several days before the event to ensure everything runs smoothly.
- ▶ Print extra copies for people who forget to bring their timetable on the day of the event.

7:00 AM

Event team & security arrival

- ▶ Breakfast/coffee station setup
- ▶ Place event/direction signage

8:00 AM

Staff/volunteer check-in

- (Specify entrance address)
- ▶ Event crew set up tables/chairs if not done night prior

8:00–9:00 AM

Early patron gathering and line-up outside venue

- ▶ Music for gathering time
- ▶ Greeters organizing and educating patrons/document preparation
- ▶ Food trucks arrive for patrons and community

8:15 AM

Breakfast open for staff and volunteers

- (Specify location—beverage and snack station open all day)

9:00 AM

Doors open for security screening

- (Specify entrance)
- ▶ Seat prescreened individuals in the sanctuary. Provide numbers and call others on a first-come, first-served basis.
 - ▶ Seat people who have not been prescreened in the orientation room (For information only—applications will not be taken on-site)

9:30 AM

- Press conference** (If you choose to do one, early morning is best for coverage)

10:00 AM

Event kickoff—speakers and informational presentations.

- (Produce a separate program document to specify speaker order and timing)

Processing people for expungement gets underway

- ▶ People with approved applications will be escorted to congratulations room
- ▶ People with pending/denied applications escorted to the public defender room for legal counsel
- ▶ Keep applicants up to date with wait times and any other relevant information to help them remain patient

Community services

- (Specify address and entrance)
- ▶ Job fair area opens

12:30–2:30 PM

Lunch served to staff and volunteers on second floor

- (Beverage and snack station open all day)

4:00 PM

Doors close to public—last people waiting are assisted

- ▶ Release food trucks

5:00 PM

Begin breakdown and load-out

- ▶ Remove exterior signs
- ▶ Break down tables

6:00 PM

Clear premises

Advocate for Systemic Change

An important dividend of hosting a large-scale, public expungement event is that it raises public awareness of the issues involved when people's lives are hampered by a criminal record.

As you are helping people immediately by providing the relief of expungement, there is also the opportunity to advocate for systemic change in the criminal legal system. The public relations efforts outlined on page 12 focus on ensuring the you will attract a large pool of applicants for expungement. Meanwhile the day-of press coverage will mainly promote awareness of the event itself, the leadership that organized the effort, and the people who applied.

By taking some additional steps you can make an even bigger impact and generate greater understanding of the criminal justice system and what needs to happen in your county or state to promote a more just system.

- ▶ **Holding a press conference the day of your event** is a good place to start to create more media coverage. You can amplify the importance of the press conference if you connect your messaging to an advocacy agenda that highlights specific state or regional policies that should be changed. A press conference is the opportunity to put your state's policies in national perspective and call for greater support for people who have been entangled in the justice system.
- ▶ **Write an op-ed about why you are doing the event, and what needs to change in your state.** In Georgia, for example, the criminal justice reform community is focused on expanding eligibility for clearing criminal records because the state has one of the most restrictive policies nation-wide. In other states, the advocacy agenda might include increasing support for people in reentry across a range of programs from job training to housing to health care and substance use treatment.
- ▶ **Consider inviting political leaders to your event.** Their public support for the event and the issues will add momentum to your advocacy agenda. Reporters covering the event may ask them to state their positions on criminal justice issues and that puts their stance on the public record.
- ▶ **Gather testimonials from the people applying for expungement relief.** Ask people if they are willing to share stories of the obstacles they have faced in employment, housing or education as a consequence of their criminal record. How has it effected their life and their family? These stories will be valuable as you try to convince legislators that the system needs to be changed.

An expungement event is also about building relationships with people in your community who are determined to drive change. Celebrate the success of your event, start to think about how the next one might be improved, and collaborate with your new partners to demand change at your city hall and state house.



The Georgia Justice Project provides direct legal representation and advocates for criminal justice reform with tools like this [postcard](#).

Learn More



These organizations are at the forefront of efforts to research the consequences of a criminal record as well as the positive impact of expungement while maintaining public safety. Check them out to get a deeper understanding of the issues.

The Restoration of Rights Project provides information on obtaining relief from the various legal restrictions faced by people with criminal records and criminal statutes. It contains detailed [federal](#) and [state-by-state analyses](#) of the laws, as well as an [overview of these laws](#) relating to the restoration of rights—particularly those pertaining to expungement, records mitigation and voting—following an arrest or conviction. The project also has an overview of [pardoning practices](#) by state.

Canlexpunge, a project of the Rights Restoration Project, is an online application that helps people expunge their criminal records in California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland and Massachusetts, with Minnesota and Texas scheduled to come soon. The group is currently working on applications for the remaining states, but is in need of legal advisors to fulfill this mission.

The Papillon Foundation offers [state-by-state](#) criminal record forms and resources for sealing, expungement and other relief. It also has helpful criminal record expungement [FAQs](#) for adults and juveniles.

The HIRE Network (National Helping Individuals with criminal records Re-enter through Employment) provides state-specific information about governmental agencies and community-based organizations that [assist people with criminal records](#).

Legal Services Corporation is an independent nonprofit established by Congress to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. [Enter an address, city, or zip code](#) to find an LSC-funded legal aid organization near you.

The Collateral Consequences Resource Center provides frequently updated news, analysis and tools related to the collateral consequences of arrest or conviction. See its latest report documenting [new state laws](#) aimed at restoring the rights and opportunities for people with a criminal record.

The Clean Slate Campaign, launched by the Center for American Progress and partner organizations, advocates for states to adopt policies that automatically clear certain types of arrests and convictions after a set amount of time. The campaign began in 2018, after Pennsylvania became the first state to pass a “clean slate” law. [Introducing Clean Slate](#) is a two-minute film produced by the campaign that explains the consequences of having a criminal record, the importance of clean slate laws and the policy model it developed.

To advocate for change in your state, see the campaign’s [clean state toolkit](#), which includes sample op-eds, social media posts with shareable graphics, talking points and more. While clean slate legislation is starting to gain momentum in a number of states, enacting legislation remains a longer-term goal. For the foreseeable future, expungement events described in the toolkit are desperately needed to help give people with criminal records a second chance.

Prison Fellowship spearheaded [Second Chance Month](#), a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the barriers facing people with a criminal record. See their [social media toolkit](#) that includes shareable messages and statistics to help spread the word.

The #TimeDone campaign, launched by the [Alliance for Safety and Justice](#), raises awareness around the legal barriers that people living with convictions face and mobilizes people to change policies, with a focus on California. The Alliance’s sister organization, Californians for Safety and Justice, has a [series of short personal story videos](#) related to #TimesDone, collateral consequences and more.

The Vera Institute reviewed a wave of legislation enacted by 41 states and the District of Columbia aimed at mitigating the collateral consequences for people with certain convictions. Their [report](#), “Relief in Site? States Rethink the Collateral Consequences of Criminal Conviction, 2009-2014,” offers summaries of legislation, analysis of its limitations and recommendations for future efforts.



The film **FAITH IN ACTION** and this companion toolkit were produced by Public Square Media to inspire replication of one-stop expungement events.

The film is available at no cost to share with your congregation. Download the film at publicsquaremedia.org.