

Expungement assistance set for Oct. 13 and Oct. 30 in Jackson

Oct. 1, 2015

Two free legal assistance events are scheduled for Oct. 13 and Oct. 30 in Jackson to help low income people with record expungement.

An expungement workshop is scheduled for 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Oct. 13 at the Metrocenter Mall Event Center at 3645 U.S. 80 in Jackson. The workshop, which is open to the public, will outline charges that qualify for expungement and the process that applicants must follow. Persons attending the workshop will be screened to determine if their charges qualify for expungement.

Low-income people who meet financial guidelines for assistance and whose charges qualify will be invited to participate in the expungement legal clinic scheduled for Oct. 30 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the same location. People seeking legal assistance at the Oct. 30 clinic must first attend the Oct. 13 workshop and be pre-screened.

Volunteer attorneys will assist applicants in preparing documents. Volunteer attorneys may explain the proceedings, provide general information and answer questions. The attorneys are not obligated to accompany clinic participants to court and file documents for them. The expectation is that individuals will be able to represent themselves in court.

The expungement events are intended to assist people who have low-level non-violent convictions, or who have old arrests that did not result in convictions. State law limits the charges that can be considered for expungement. Similar workshops in Jackson in the past have attracted more than 100 people, said Tiffany M. Graves, executive director of the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission.

Graves said, "The Mississippi Access to Justice Commission is pleased to co-sponsor the clinic to help people who cannot afford attorneys get access to expungement services. We are grateful to the attorneys who have volunteered to help local residents begin the process of restoring their lives. The clinic will provide a tremendous service to low-income individuals who have been unable to move forward with their lives because of their pasts."

Attorney Jennie A. Eichelberger of the Pro Bono Committee of the Mississippi Association for Justice said, "The Mississippi Association for Justice is pleased to team up with a group of organizations that are dedicated to providing legal services to the under served and those who cannot afford to hire an attorney. Expungements allow people that made a mistake in their past to gain a clean slate and have a second chance to move forward with their lives. We are pleased to provide this free legal clinic to those individuals in our state that so desperately need the assistance."

Other sponsors include the Capital Area Bar Association, Sen. Sollie Norwood and the City of Jackson.

The American Bar Association has designated Oct. 30 as the And Justice for All: ABA Day of Service as part of the national celebration of Pro Bono Week. Graves said, "We are excited to have our event on this special day as we join other states in recognizing the important role pro bono services play in providing access to justice for all."

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