



Spring 2024

Sealing and Expungement Events Help Citizens Clean Arrest Records

Prosecutors have a well-earned reputation of seeking to convict criminal defendants. The State Attorney's Office recently showed the community how there is another way it works to keep our community safe. That is, by helping individuals wipe away their arrest history, if eligible, so they can gain employment and become productive members of society.

A team of our attorneys and support staffers arranged a four-hour workshop in Riviera Beach where 100 citizens attended with the hope of having their records of a single arrest get sealed or expunged. The event was open to anyone charged with a crime as an adult in Palm Beach County, with the key requirement that their case did not result in a conviction – and they did not have an adjudication of guilt in a different case.

Representatives of the Riviera Beach Police Department, the Clerk of the Court & Comptroller for Palm Beach County, and the Public Defender's Office provided assistance. Thanks to this special program, nearly 40 people received a completed, notarized application to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, complete with fingerprints.

Once FDLE issues a certificate of eligibility, these applicants will be able to file a court petition for records to be sealed or expunged from their arrests on charges including grand theft, possession of marijuana, domestic battery, DUI, and insurance application fraud.

Sealing records means that they are hidden from the public but can still be accessed by certain government agencies and law enforcement under specific circumstances, such as during background checks. Expungement goes a step further by physically destroying or erasing the records.

"We want to help people who have had a one-time misstep in their life to be able to get a job again, and be productive, law-abiding, taxpaying citizens," said State Attorney Dave Aronberg. "It's another example of how we work for a safer community."

Planning is underway for future workshops to be held around the county.