



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
May 13, 2014

CONTACT

Stephanie Medley, Youth Justice Director, RYSE Youth Center | stephanie@rysecenter.org | 510.932.9847
Jesse Stout, Policy Director, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children | jesse@prisonerswithchildren.org | 415.633.6280

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY DROPS JUVENILE RECORD SEALING FEE

RICHMOND, Calif... In an important shift for Contra Costa County, officials removed record sealing fees for juveniles seeking a clean slate.

Past offenses often present potential barriers to successful rehabilitation and reentry when youth apply for jobs, professional licenses, loans, or housing. In this way, a lingering juvenile record can have lasting impact on a young person's life.

While record sealing has long been an option, its price tag made it unattainable for many juveniles. Recognizing the opportunity to make a fresh start more accessible to youth county-wide, the Contra Costa County Probation Department, which sets the fee for sealing the county's juvenile records, has eliminated the application fee entirely.

Previously, a young person had to pay up to \$150 and petition the juvenile court in their county of residence to seal their record.

"Many young people do not realize that their juvenile record is not automatically sealed until they've been denied a job, housing, or other life necessity," says Stephanie Medley, Youth Justice Director at RYSE Youth Center in Richmond (RYSE). "Eliminating the fee creates accessibility and opportunity to a fresh start for young people."

Together with national organizing initiative All of Us or None, RYSE has advocated directly with the Contra Costa County Probation Department regarding elimination of the record sealing fee since November 2013.

"With the court's consideration and final approval, we want to provide the most meaningful opportunity for our youth to focus forward and not be encumbered by a prior juvenile record," said Phillip Kader, Contra Costa County Chief of Probation, regarding the County's decision to move forward on the elimination.

The Probation Department's fee removal is aligned with AB-1756, Assemblymember Nancy Skinner's "Starting Over Strong" bill. On March 25, 2014, the California Assembly's Committee on Public Safety voted to pass the bill. If enacted, it will further increase access to the juvenile record sealing process for youth by eliminating the fee statewide. Bill co-sponsors include Youth Justice Coalition, East Bay Community Law Center, and Legal Services for Prisoners with Children.

"The price tag of sealing a juvenile record can keep a young person, who has successfully stayed out of trouble, from getting on the right track," says Jerry Elster of All of Us or None.

Sponsors argue that the fee removal creates the space necessary to examine the youth reentry process and take steps to break down barriers young people face from past mistakes, potentially reducing recidivism.

RYSE Youth Center

Grounded in social justice, RYSE builds youth power for young people ages 13-21 living in Richmond and West Contra Costa County to love, learn, educate, heal and transform lives and communities. Since 2008, more than 3,000 young people have participated in programs and activities. For more information go to www.rysecenter.org.