

Expunge Assist (expungeassist.org)

Expunge Assist is a free digital tool designed to aid Californians clear past arrest and conviction records. A personal statement is the most important proof of rehabilitation included with an expungement petition. Our letter generator assists users write their statements to the court. The tool prioritizes personal privacy by not using AI or storing sensitive information. Community organizers, government agencies, and legal advocates are making incredible impacts in the clean slate and criminal justice fields. Expunge Assist aims to support that work.



History

In 2019, Hack for LA (HfLA) participated in a National Day of Civic Hacking (NDoCH) on the themes of justice, equity, and record clearance. Alongside over 80 volunteer civic tech organizations from around the country, HfLA identified ways to use tech in the domain of record clearance locally, launching a project now known as Expunge Assist. The aim of this project is to facilitate expungement for Californians with criminal records.

Problem

1 in 5 Californians has a criminal record of some kind. These records can create discriminatory roadblocks even after a person has completed probation or served a sentence.

Expungement can reduce these roadblocks by ensuring that they no longer appear on background checks. No longer held back by outdated records, people can move into the future when applying to new jobs, schooling, and housing opportunities. These opportunities can be transformative, both for individuals and communities.

Most misdemeanor and felony convictions in California are now eligible for expungement. Millions of criminal records (like cannabis convictions and other non-violent and non-serious offenses) are automatically cleared by the courts. For everything else, a person must individually submit a petition to request expungement. A crucial part of this petition is a personal letter to the court.

The letter, along with other evidence of rehabilitation, can make or break the court's decision to grant a person's request.

Upcoming 6 to 12 Month Roadmap

- Launch beta version of letter generator
- Solicit non-profit and government partnerships in the record clearance space
- Research opportunities to expand informational campaigns
- Create marketing materials for outreach

