Can your criminal record be expunged? This is the question that the Access to Justice Lab at Harvard Law School has partnered up with Kansas Legal Services to find out. They launched a study exploring the effectiveness of criminal record clearing on housing and employment stability in Kansas. Their study views two hypotheses: 1. The existence of a criminal record, even a record devoid of convictions, acts as a significant barrier to stable housing and employment opportunities. 2. Lack of stable housing and lack of stable employment are serious risk factors for recidivism and re-offense.

Through the study on these hypotheses they may be able to establish evidence that the existence of a criminal record is a severe barrier to a successful re-entry strategy for justice-involved individuals. This study will be used to also locate successful strategies that overcome these barriers for those with a minor or outdated record can acquire housing, employment, and educational opportunities without hindrance. Participants in the study are linked with free, local legal services to aid in the record clearing process. If you would like to help with this research, then here are a few ways:

- Refer to Kansas Legal Services individuals with outdated charges and/or arrests who are looking to expunge or seal their criminal records
- Spread the news of this study/expungement opportunity with your clients.
- Share this information with others and organizations to help gather information for the study and to aid others in clearing their criminal records.

Individuals who are interested in participating can be directed to the Kansas Legal Services at 1-800-723-6953 or their website. A reference chart can be used to understand the eligibility process. Partners will screen for eligibility and direct participants to the appropriate representative to handle their specific case. To find out more about this study contact Renee Danser at rdanser@law.harvard.edu or (617)496-7992.

New Year For H.O.P.E.

With the new year just around the corner everyone is starting to make a list of their new year resolutions. On that list should be H.O.P.E., Helping Ourselves to Prosper Economically. This is a free 6 to 12-month program through HCCI and United Way of Greater Topeka that offers families and individuals a personalized plan to reach financial self-sufficiency. Through this program participants work with a team of professionals to increase goal attainment, better money management skills, improved savings debt levels, and credit scores. Contact Teresa Baker at 785-234-0217 ext. 310 or visit www.hcci-ks.org for more information.

Clearing Criminal Records Study

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