

# **Kansas Legal Services**

A non-profit law firm and community education organization helping low and moderate income people in Kansas



[www.kansaslegalservices.org](http://www.kansaslegalservices.org)

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## **Harvard A2J Lab and KLS Team to Provide Expungements**

A new program in Kansas aims to study the long-term value of giving legal assistance to persons trying to clear their criminal records.

The Harvard School of Law A2J Lab will enroll participants in the study who want to change their lives by making a clean slate. There's a catch – Harvard wants to keep track of program participants for up to five years or more to see if their lives and income improve after receiving help.

A recent study showed that nearly one-third of American adults have been arrested by age 23. This criminal record will keep many people from obtaining employment, even if they have paid their dues, are qualified for the job and are unlikely to reoffend. Helping people with expungements, or record-clearing, has become an important effort in the fight to reduce poverty.

Some other studies have shown that after record-clearing, ex-offenders tend to increase their earning capacity and make other lifestyle enhancements. Harvard School of Law A2J Lab wants to study this problem more comprehensively than other studies have, by using two control groups: One group will get attorney representation and the other group will proceed by representing themselves, using online legal forms and coaching from a lawyer.

Marilyn Harp, Executive Director of Kansas Legal Services (KLS), says, "KLS is proud to work with Harvard School of Law A2J Lab as a partner to provide legal assistance, education and access to free legal forms for program participants. This project has a great potential to find promising practices that will reduce recidivism and give support to ex-offenders to improve their lives."

The A2J Lab, a part of Harvard Law School, has an impressive history of designing research on legal strategies that work and turning those results into actionable plans. KLS serves over 20,000 low income persons a year in Kansas in a wide range of civil legal issues.

The project partners are hoping to find ex-offenders willing to participate in the study who will also benefit from the services provided. Ex-offenders will be responsible for the filing fees required for each offense expunged, but will be provided free legal assistance. Persons who wish to participate in the study should apply at Kansas Legal Services, [kansaslegalservices.org](http://kansaslegalservices.org)

For more information, please contact Marilyn Harp, Executive Director, Kansas Legal Services, 785-233-2068.

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