



# COUNTY OF YOLO

Office of the County Administrator

*Patrick S. Blacklock*  
County Administrator

Beth Gabor  
Manager of Operations & Strategy

625 Court Street, Room 202 ▪ Woodland, CA 95695  
(530) 666-8042 ▪ FAX (530) 668-4029  
[www.yolocounty.org](http://www.yolocounty.org)

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Contact: Beth Gabor, Public Information Officer  
(530) 666-8042 [w] ▪ (530) 219-8464 [c]

## **Public Defender's Record Mitigation Clinic Helps Clear Criminal Records**

**(Woodland, CA)** – Individuals with criminal convictions face numerous barriers to establishing a productive and law-abiding lifestyle. Many jobs require disclosures and background checks, and the presence of a criminal conviction can taint an otherwise attractive resume. A criminal conviction can cause individuals to be denied a professional license, prevent them from obtaining financial aid for school and serve as a barrier to enlisting in the military. Private landlords are typically more wary of renting to someone with a criminal record and the opportunity to receive subsidized housing may be lost for good.

These additional civil penalties that attach to criminal convictions are called “collateral consequences,” although they can hardly seem collateral when they exceed, in both severity and duration, the criminal penalty itself. Even after the sentence is served, a criminal conviction is never in the rear view mirror. Individuals suffer collateral consequences for as long as the conviction remains on their record, and sometimes forever.

When a criminal conviction cannot be avoided, the Yolo County Public Defender's Record Mitigation Clinic can help clear up a criminal record. California law allows certain offenders to petition the court to expunge past convictions, reduce felony convictions to misdemeanors, receive early termination of probation or seal juvenile or arrest records. At little to no cost, the clinic assists offenders with applications to the court for these post-conviction legal remedies.

“The Record Mitigation Clinic was formally established in 2013 with the mission of helping justice-involved individuals rebuild their lives,” said Yolo County Public Defender Tracie Olson. “By clearing or mitigating criminal records, ex-offenders gain increased stability, especially in the form of employment and benefits. This is good for public safety because stable and employed individuals are less likely to commit new crimes.”

The clinic is funded in part by the Yolo Indian Gaming Local Community Benefit Committee's Gaming Special Distribution Fund. The Gaming Special Distribution Fund's support has allowed the clinic to place special emphasis on identifying offenders who were arrested and convicted for conduct occurring on tribal casino grounds. The most recent award of \$22,391 is the second received from the committee since 2014.

All persons, including those with a casino-related conviction, are encouraged to contact the clinic to find out if they are eligible for help. To start the process, go to [www.clearmyrecord.org/apply/](http://www.clearmyrecord.org/apply/) or call (530) 406-4565.

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