

Rolling Out Michigan's Clean Slate Act

Expungement is the process of petitioning a court to have convictions removed from public record.

People who have a criminal record are told they need to “pay their debt to society” for the crime they committed. Too often this ends up feeling like a life sentence no matter how brief their assigned punishment was because their criminal record follows them for the rest of their lives. Every time they apply for a job or housing or otherwise try to plug back into society they are faced with the judgment and rejection associated with their conviction.

Unfortunately, a strong connection between disability and the criminal justice system exists. While the national shift toward the deinstitutionalization of people with disabilities is widely accepted as a positive thing, during the same time frame, people with disabilities—particularly those with mental health conditions—began being absorbed into the criminal justice system, often due to minor infractions. Reports show that federal and state jails and prisons now house three times as many people with mental health conditions as do state hospitals. With this alarming statistic, expungement becomes a significant issue in the disability community.

In October 2020, Governor Whitmer signed the Michigan Clean Slate Act legislation into law. Prior to the Clean Slate Act, the expungement process



was available to a more limited category of people and was a long and complicated process. As a result of the complexities of the process, nearly 95% of people eligible for expungement don't even apply for it; people with disabilities face even more barriers due to lack of accessibility.

The Clean Slate Act expands eligibility to petition for expungement in several ways and creates a new process that will automatically

seal certain non-violent conviction records if a person has remained conviction-free for a designated period of time. The Clean Slate Act comprises several separate laws, most of which go into effect on April 10, 2021, including the expansion of eligibility. Automatic sealing of non-violent conviction records does not go into effect until December 30 of 2022. Because of the delayed start of the automatic expungement process, expungement clinics will be held throughout the state to assist people in applying under the newly lowered requirements. For more information and details regarding the Michigan Clean Slate Act and the expungement process, visit Safe and Just Michigan online at www.safeandjustmi.org.

Leatrice Fullerton, Program Manager of Advocacy & Community Education at Disability Network Southwest Michigan, reached out to all of

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Michigan's Representatives and Senators in our service area to inquire about the accessibility of the application process. Leatrice said, "Many people with disabilities are going to be able to benefit from this important legislation. For this reason, it is very important for the application process to be as accessible as possible." Several elected officials responded with support and encouragement. Representative Christine Morse's office offered to co-host an expungement clinic in the Kalamazoo area with Disability Network to ensure that the process is fully accessible. Our Advocacy team has been working in coordination with Morse's office to connect with state and local officials, as well as the Kalamazoo Defender's Office, to host the event this spring.

Michigan Clean Slate Expungement Clinic at Disability Network Southwest Michigan – Kalamazoo

FREE

Part One will be held online in late April

Part One of the clinic will take place online and serve as an introduction and overview to the Clean Slate Act. Participants will learn about how the expungement law has changed, who is eligible, and what the process and requirements are for applying for expungement. Following the presentation, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions. Register (see below) to receive details.

Part Two will be held in May by appointment

Part Two of the clinic will take place in person, by appointment only, at our Kalamazoo office. At Part Two, professionals will be available to assist participants, if needed, with completing their application for expungement. The Sheriff's office will fingerprint applicants, and the Kalamazoo Defender's office will schedule a court date for their expungement hearing.

Part Two will be held in person at Disability Network Southwest Michigan located at 517 Crosstown Parkway, Kalamazoo MI 49001. Registration is required to obtain an appointment. Register (see below) to make an appointment.

To Register:

Visit our [website](#) to register or contact Leatrice: fullertonl@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x118.

SAVE THE DATE

ADA Anniversary Celebration Scheduled for July 23

This year is the thirty-first anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. We will be holding our annual celebration on Friday, July 23. We don't know yet what this year's celebration will look like; watch for more details to come.



Business Community Resources

At Disability Network Southwest Michigan, we don't only work with people with disabilities, we also work with the communities we serve to inform and educate everyone about disability. We provide a wide variety of services to the business community to promote greater accessibility and inclusion. As an employer, business owner or organization serving the public, there are considerations and laws regarding disability that you may not be aware of.

We have added a [Business Community Resources](#) page to our website (under Resources/Information) to serve the business community. There you will find a range of services specific to businesses and organizations.

Training & Education

Our Community Education team is available to provide trainings at one of our offices, at your location, or as an online interactive webinar. We offer a selection of webinar topics that are directly relevant to businesses and we can tailor a training to your specific organization.

Accessibility Audits & Assessments

We are committed to helping businesses, organizations, and government agencies understand their rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Disability Network has two certified ADA Coordinators on staff who can provide information and technical assistance and perform professional accessibility assessments and audits.

Policy & Procedure Review

If you have a question about the accessibility of your organization's policies and procedures, we can review them and provide feedback on how those policies can be improved to be more inclusive.

If you would like more information about how Disability Network can assist your organization in being more welcoming and accessible, contact Leatrice: fullertonl@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x118.



Disability Advocacy Virtual Film Festival



- April 19 | 10:30 to 12:00 Film: The R-Word
- April 19 | 1:30 to 2:30 Film: Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy
- April 20 | 10:30 to 12:00 Film: DeeJ
- April 20 | 1:30 to 2:30 Film: Ku-Kanaka: Stand Tall
- April 21 | 10:00 to 12:00 Film: Becoming Bulletproof
- April 21 | 12:30 to 2:00 Arts & Advocacy Panel Discussion
- April 21 | 2:30 to 3:30 Creative Writing for Disability Activism Workshop
- April 21 | 3:30 to 4:00 Closing/Next Steps

This event is presented by Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living in collaboration with Disability Network Southwest Michigan and with support from ADA Michigan.

For more info and to register, visit <https://sites.google.com/view/dcal/disability-advocacy-virtual-film-festival> or contact Eliot: ecarter@aacil.org or (734) 249-8118 at the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living.

New & Upcoming Programming

In addition to our ongoing Community Education offerings, Disability Network Southwest Michigan has a number of new and upcoming programs and services you may be interested in.

Options Counseling

When someone is wondering if they need to make a change in their living situation due to their health or what services are available to assist them with their home-care needs, Options Counseling can help. [Options Counseling](#) provides comprehensive counseling regarding long term community supports tailored to the individual's personal needs and their financial situation. Our counselor can assist people in identifying and connecting to services that will allow them to live independently. For more information, contact Lisa: brinkl@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x111.

Advocacy Academy 2021

[Advocacy Academy](#) is a paid 8-week summer job where participants choose a disability advocacy issue to learn about and create an advocacy campaign for. This is an opportunity to get involved in the disability rights movement and learn the skills of advocacy and leadership. Advocacy Academy will be offered in our Kalamazoo office. For more information, contact Miranda: grunwellm@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x120.

Spirit Club

We started [Spirit Club](#) in January on a trial basis; we have now added an additional day and extended it into the fall. Spirit Club is a one-hour virtual exercise program that is specifically designed to present a range of options to suit everyone. Spirit Club is held each week on Tuesdays at 3:00-4:00 PM and Thursdays at 10:30-11:30 AM. For more information, contact Lisa: brinkl@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x111.

Autistic Support Group

The [Autistic Adult Peer Support Group](#) is an opportunity for Autistic adults to enjoy authentic social interactions and build genuine friendships in a safe and non-judgmental space. All Autistic adults are welcome to attend, including self-diagnosed Autistics and those who were previously diagnosed with Asperger's or PDD. Meetings are being held on Zoom each week on Thursdays from 4:00–5:00 PM. For more information, contact Max: hornickm@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x126.

LVT Speak Up/Speak Out

LVT Speak Up | Speak Out is an advocacy group specifically for residents of Lake View Terrace in St. Joseph to develop and enhance self-advocacy skills. The group meets twice a month. One meeting each month will focus on discussing residents' concerns. The other meeting will present learning opportunities related to advocacy and community connections. Note this group is only open to residents of Lake View Terrace. If you have a need for [disability advocacy](#) in your area, we can help you develop an advocacy group as well. For more information, contact Leatrice: fullertonl@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x118.

Community Education Online Programing

Due to COVID-19, we continue to offer our Community Education programming online. Participants can join using a computer or call in on a phone. Register for the events you want to participate in and you will be sent the needed information to connect to the event. To register for any of these events, visit our website or contact Miranda: grunwellm@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x120.

Next up in April . . .

Webinar: **Disability & Employment: How, When & Why to Disclose a Disability to an Employer**

In this webinar you will learn the only reason you have to tell an employer about your disability or medical condition and the best way to ask for an accommodation at work. We will discuss your rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and resources that can help you.

- Tuesday, April 20 at 3:00 – 4:30 PM
- Thursday, April 29 at 9:30 – 11:00 AM

Webinar: **Employee Disclosure: What To Do When an Employee Discloses a Disability**

This webinar is designed to help employers understand their responsibilities when an employee discloses a disability. Topics will include conditions under which an employee must disclose a disability, why they may not want to and how to determine what a “reasonable accommodation” is.

- Wednesday, April 14 at 1:00 – 2:30 PM
- Tuesday, April 27 at 9:00 – 10:30 AM

Web Movie: **The R-Word**

A documentary film that confronts the inappropriate use of the word retard(ed) as a derogatory term used to marginalize and dehumanize an entire population of people. This film will challenge viewers to put their mind where their mouth is and encourage people to think before they speak.

- Wednesday, April 7 at 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Web Movies: **Disability Advocacy Virtual Film Festival**

In April we are collaborating with the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living to present a series of films and discussions related to disability advocacy. (See details on page 3.)

Coming in May & June . . .

Look for details on our website for these events as they get closer.

- Webinar: **Do's & Don'ts of Assistance Animals**
- Webinar: **Accessible Content**
- Web Movie: **Keep the Change**
- Webinar: **Ableism 101 & Ableism 102**



About Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Office Locations:

- Kalamazoo: 517 E. Crosstown Pkwy., Kalamazoo, MI 49001, phone: (269) 345-1516
- St. Joseph: 2900 Lakeview Avenue., St. Joseph, MI 49085, phone: (269) 985-0111

For the accessibility and well-being of our employees and visitors, Disability Network Southwest Michigan is a fragrance-free office. Please do not wear perfume, cologne or other scented products when visiting.

Our Publications:

The LINK is our quarterly newsletter, available in print or emailed in electronic format and is available in alternative format upon request.

Disability Digest is a monthly e-publication focused on the Disability Rights Movement and upcoming Disability Network happenings. Available in electronic format only.

You can sign up online for our publications at www.dnswm.org; or contact Dale at abbottd@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x123. Current and past issues of our publications are available on our website at www.dnswm.org.

This newsletter is available in alternative format upon request.



Find us on
Facebook



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