

Texas Reentry Center
Legal Aid & Court Navigation Guide
How to Handle Warrants, Fines, Records, Courts & Lawyers in Texas

INTRO

The legal system feels impossible because it was not designed to be user-friendly.
This guide gives you practical steps to handle:

- warrants
- fines
- open cases
- missed court
- legal aid
- finding a lawyer
- record clearing
- court navigation
- common legal scams

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FIRST STEPS AFTER RELEASE

- check for warrants
 - check pending cases
 - update your address with courts
 - get ID and Social Security card
 - gather all old court paperwork
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HOW TO CHECK COURT RECORDS

Most counties use public search portals.

Texas Judicial Records Search:

<https://www.txcourts.gov/judicial-directory/>

Major counties:

- Harris County: <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/edocs/public/search.aspx>
 - Dallas County: <https://www.dallascounty.org/services/record-search/>
 - Tarrant County: <https://odyssey.tarrantcounty.com/portal/>
 - Bexar County: <https://apps.bexar.org/Search/CrimSearch.aspx>
 - Travis County: <https://odysseypa.traviscountytexas.gov/portal/>
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ACTIVE WARRANTS

Don't ignore warrants. Steps:

1. .Confirm the warrant online or by phone
2. Contact the court clerk
3. Ask if warrant recall or walk-in docket is available
4. Show up early for walk-in court (if offered)
5. Ask for payment plan if fines involved
6. Bring documentation of reentry progress

MISSED COURT DATES

Missing court does NOT automatically mean jail.

Steps:

- call the clerk immediately
- ask for a new court date
- explain reentry, housing, medical, or transportation issues
- keep all documentation

Script:

“I recently reentered the community and missed my hearing. I’m requesting a reset so I can appear and resolve this.”

COURT FINES & PAYMENT PLANS

Texas allows:

- payment plans
- deferred payment
- community service work credits
- indigency waivers (rare but possible)

Ask the clerk:

“What options are available for indigent or low-income defendants?”

PUBLIC DEFENDERS & LEGAL AID

Public defenders exist in:

- Harris County
- Dallas County
- Travis County
- Bexar County

If your county has no PD office, ask the court for a **court-appointed attorney**.

Legal aid options:

- Lone Star Legal Aid
 - Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
 - Disability Rights Texas
 - Houston Volunteer Lawyers
 - Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program
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EXPUNGEMENT & NONDISCLOSURE BASICS

(You already have the full PDF. This is the summary.)

Expungement = deletes the record

Nondisclosure = hides it from the public

You may qualify if:

- case dismissed
 - acquitted
 - completed deferred adjudication
 - completed pretrial diversion
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HOW TO HANDLE POLICE CONTACT

Rules:

- stay calm
- keep hands visible
- answer basic identification questions
- do NOT consent to searches
- ask: "Am I free to leave?"
- request a lawyer if questioned

TENANT / LANDLORD ISSUES

Legal aid can help with:

- evictions
- unsafe living conditions
- landlord harassment
- deposit disputes
- utility shutoff threats

CHILD SUPPORT LEGAL HELP

Texas does NOT provide lawyers for child support cases.

But:

- Texas Access & Visitation
 - Legal Aid
 - Law school clinics
- can help with modifications and enforcement questions.

SCAMS TO AVOID

- ✗ Fake warrant recall services
- ✗ “Guaranteed lawyer match” sites
- ✗ Upfront-fee expungement services
- ✗ Fake clerk calls
- ✗ “We can delete your charges” companies
- ✗ Anyone asking for gift cards or Zelle

WHEN TO USE THE CHATBOT

Ask it for:

- how to check warrants
- how to reset court dates
- how to find legal aid
- what’s on your record
- filing instructions
- scripts for clerks and attorneys

LINKS & CONTACTS

Texas Law Help:

<https://texaslawhelp.org>

Lone Star Legal Aid:

<https://www.lonestarlegal.org>

Texas RioGrande Legal Aid:

<https://www.trla.org>

Legal Aid of Northwest Texas:

<https://internet.lanwt.org>