A new study out of Stanford University demonstrates that criminal record clearance—or “expungement”—offers substantial benefits. Five students in the Stanford Public Policy Program conducted the study for the San José State University Record Clearance Project (RCP). Working under Stanford faculty supervision, the students analyzed new survey data on people with criminal histories and conducted interviews with legal experts and criminal justice system stakeholders. At 9:30 a.m. on March 14, 2014 the Stanford team will present the results of their study at San José State University, Engineering Room 285/7. Location: sjsu.edu/maps/.

According to the study, an expunged record makes it easier for people with criminal histories to find employment. Increased employment in turn benefits the government through increasing tax revenues and decreasing public assistance payments. Most benefits of expungement accumulate over time while expungement processing costs and court costs do not. The person with a record, his/her family, the government, and the public at large all benefit from record clearance.

Based on the high net benefits of expungement, the group recommends that the government take action to increase the number of records cleared. Under California law, people can apply for expungement of convictions after completing probation and/or a jail sentence (prison sentences are ineligible for expungement). However, many people do not pursue expungement due to lack of awareness and/or resources. The Stanford study will present the results of the cost-benefit analysis and address the advantages to the public of increased record expungement.

The report will be available on Monday, March 17 at publicpolicy.stanford.edu/ba.practicum.

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3.6.2014