



“Now, I can do anything. The whole world is open to me.”

-Janessa, 21



**charlotte center
for legal advocacy**

Legal Assistance Helps CPCC Students Find Safety, Security, Stability & OPPORTUNITY

Janessa, 21, had been taking classes at Central Piedmont Community College in hopes of earning a degree that will put her on a better path in life when she walked into the campus Single Stop office last fall.

A few years ago, she found herself hanging out with the wrong friends and making bad decisions that resulted in misdemeanor charges for larceny and drug possession. The charges were ultimately dismissed, but they remained on her criminal record.

She had no idea that these mistakes would follow her into her adult life. It wasn't until she started applying for jobs that she realized she had a criminal record. She remembers interviewing for a local retail position and sailing through the three interviews necessary for the job.

“I was doing great, but then it came down to them asking if I had any problems with them running a background check,” Janessa says. “I knew what they would find, so I told them about the charges.”

She didn't get the job. Every time she filled out a job

application, the necessary background check was her barrier – to employment, to a stable income, to opportunity.

A friend told her about the legal assistance Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy offers to students through the Single Stop program. She met with an attorney not knowing if she could even get assistance. She was surprised to learn she was eligible to have the charges removed from her record by applying for an expunction. With the help of her attorney, she applied and waited six months for a decision from the state.

In April, a few weeks before graduation, she got the answer that would ultimately open the door to opportunity. Her application had been approved, and she no longer had charges listed on her criminal record.

“Now I can do anything,” she says. “The whole world is open to me.”

After years of trying to put her mistakes in the past, Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy helped Janessa find a fresh start as she heads out into the world with her degree in hand and a determination to succeed.

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