

Announcing C-CAT 2.0

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Several years ago the School obtained a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation to create an online, searchable database of the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction in North Carolina. In 2012, after two years of legal and IT work, we launched the Collateral Consequences Assessment Tool, or C-CAT for short, to assist attorneys, reentry professionals, affected individuals, and policymakers in understanding the impact of a criminal conviction. We're happy to announce we have given C-CAT a new look. It is available, still at no charge, at <http://ccat.sog.unc.edu/>.

Before explaining the new features, I want to tout the two people who spearheaded the creation of C-CAT—[Whitney Fairbanks](#), formerly with the School and now Assistant Director and General Counsel for the Office of Indigent Defense Services (IDS); and [Daryl Atkinson](#), previously at IDS and currently the Second Chance Fellow for the U.S. Department of Justice. Both devoted extensive time to researching and compiling the myriad collateral consequences of a criminal conviction in North Carolina and translating the information into an accessible, online format. Their work has become a model for similar efforts in other parts of the country.

The new version of C-CAT, undertaken by Jeff Austin (an attorney and part-time researcher at the School responsible for keeping C-CAT up to date) and Nicole Benes (one of the School's IT magicians), includes the same information as the original version. It covers the major categories of collateral consequences resulting from a criminal conviction, such as employment and professional licensing and civic rights. For each consequence, such as the loss of a particular professional license, C-CAT displays an "index card" with key information, such as the type of offense that triggers the consequence, whether the consequence is mandatory or discretionary, the duration of the consequence, and whether a restoration procedure is specifically authorized. Links to the applicable statutes and regulations are included.

Reflecting the consequences imposed or authorized by North Carolina law, some of the categories are huge, particularly the employment category. To make it easier to sift through search results, C-CAT now displays collapsible subcategories of consequences. You can see individual consequences within a subcategory or you can click on the "collapse results" button and see only the subcategory titles. The new look of C-CAT is also much friendlier for mobile device users. Try it out!

Ordinarily, the most effective way to search is by consequence category, such as employment, or by keyword, such as electrician (C-CAT will then prompt you to search by electrical and will bring up results for electrical contractors). On the opening screen of C-CAT, you'll see new, large buttons (red in color on my computer) for consequence and keyword searches. You'll also see a large button to search by crime characteristics, which may be useful if you have a specific crime in mind. The drawback to searching by specific crimes, however, is that the results will often be under-inclusive. For example, if you search for the consequences of a felony drug offense, you'll find drug-specific consequences, but you won't find consequences that arise from the conviction of a felony of any kind. Because a felony conviction triggers so many consequences, the results may be too large to evaluate effectively. Attorneys and reentry professionals therefore should consider exploring the areas of greatest concern for their clients, such as employment in particular occupations. With that information, they can then search by consequence category or keyword to determine the impact of a conviction.

C-CAT continues to include links to related resources, such as a guide to expunctions and other types of relief from a

conviction and papers on sex offender registration and monitoring. You can also find information about the impact of a conviction in other jurisdictions.

Let us know what you think of C-CAT. The advantage of having an online tool is that we can update it as we learn new things (and in this complicated area of law we are always learning new things). Feel free to contact [Jeff Austin](#) or [John Rubin](#) with suggestions or comments.