

Reentry Supportive Workplaces

On average, 1 in 4 Americans possess a criminal record and this untapped talent pool is often overlooked by employers. Individuals with criminal records experience a higher rate of unemployment than the general public and 75% of formerly incarcerated jobseekers are still unemployed a year after being released from prison or jail. Employers that create reentry supportive workplaces see the positive impact that justice-involved employees bring to their businesses. Research shows that reentrants are more productive, loyal to their employers, and bring new talent into the workplace.

Here are some ways that your organization can support reentry.

GET STARTED

Adopt Fair Chance Hiring best practices.

- Train HR employees on federal, state, and local hiring legislation, including any regulations specific to the industry your business operates in.
- Discuss qualifications first. Avoid excluding candidates based on stereotypes and assumptions.
- Make sure that HR employees or hiring managers understand how to read a Pennsylvania criminal record. If using a consumer reporting agency, make sure their methods align with fair chance hiring practices and law.
- Only consider charges that are relevant to the job posting and review the time that has passed since the conviction.
- Allow and encourage candidates to discuss the findings of the background check before making final decisions – context is important.
- Review all signs and evidence of rehabilitation – give candidates the opportunity to present evidence and experience.
- Research! Encourage hiring professionals to do their own research on fair chance hiring practices as recommendations evolve and change.



Employees who were formerly incarcerated were found to be 1 to 1.5% more productive than other workers, according to Evolve.

People who have been formerly incarcerated or have a record have their job callback rate reduced by at least 50% when scanning for a criminal history is involved in the initial hiring process. This initial screening is harmful both to the applicant and to the business.

DIVE IN DEEPER

Utilize the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal incentive program that encourages employers to hire individuals with barriers to employment, including returning citizens. Employers can receive up to \$2,400 for each person that they employ who has been convicted of a felony or released from prison for the felony within the last year.

Utilize Federal Bonding.

Federal Bonding provides fidelity bond coverage of up to \$5,000 for an employee's initial six months of employment. This not only provides protection for the business and assets, but also creates a chance to bring in new talent. Bonds can be put in place for any employee that is working full or part time. Additionally, employers can purchase bonds for existing employees in order to prevent layoffs or assist in a transition to a different position.

Understand how to read a PA criminal record.

When considering a criminal record, it's extremely important that the individuals reviewing the record understand how to interpret what it may contain. Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) developed a resource (linked below) that can assist in reviewing an applicant's criminal record. It highlights disposition definitions and appropriate use when considering employment.

How to read a PA criminal record

- Review guidance offered by PLSE on navigating a criminal record.
- Consider
 - the type and gravity of the offense
 - the amount of time that has passed since the offense, conduct, and if the person finished their sentence
 - the type of job the person's applying for and their qualifications

EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT

Dave's Killer Bread

At Dave's Killer Bread, we believe in Second Chance Employment: hiring the best person for the job, regardless of criminal history. We have witnessed its transformative power, and that giving someone who is ready to change their lives a chance – a Second Chance – gives people an opportunity not only to make a living, but to make a life. Learn more at daveskillerbread.com/secondchances

Partner4Work is here to assist local employers interested in adopting reentry supportive workplace practices.

For more information or to start collaborating, contact Bonny Yeager, Manager of Industry Solutions at byeager@partner4work.org or 412-745-0269.