

Talking about Criminal Backgrounds

(Can be applied towards being "let go" from a position as well)

If you have a conviction on your record, and you get called back for a job interview, you'll want to be ready to discuss your conviction in a way that assures the employer of a few things:

1. You've learned from any past mistakes you've made
2. You're committed to being successful
3. You're not a risky hire

Here are a few tips to help you make the most of an opportunity to convince an employer to hire you:

- **Be honest.** Never lie to an interviewer or put false information on your resume or application. This will disqualify you when the employer does a background check or checks your references.
- **Make a good first and last impression.** Avoid talking about negative issues at the very beginning or the end of an interview. If possible, try to address your criminal history in the middle of the interview. End with a summary of your qualifications and interest in the job.
- **Keep it simple, and emphasize the positive.** If asked to give information about your past (convictions, incarceration, drug and/or alcohol abuse), avoid telling "your side of the story." Even if you were wrongly convicted, you will leave a negative impression. Keep focused on what you have to offer the employer, not your personal story. Say something like:

I understand that you have questions about my background. I assure you that I have learned from my mistakes and have corrected past problems. I have spent time training for this career path because I am more mature now and have a solid plan for my future. If given the chance, I will give your company 100 percent effort. I know you will not be disappointed if you hire me.

- **Focus on your current activities and future plans.** Emphasize the education and job training, community work, and other activities you have done since your release. Talk about your career goals, how you chose them, and how the job you are applying for fits them.