

HANDLING BACKGROUND ISSUES

Reference on handling background issues



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Quick Facts



- In 2018 Washington banned the box which means employers are prohibited from asking about convictions until the applicant has been deemed qualified.
- Applications are prohibited from asking about criminal history on job applications.
- If you were able to work while incarcerated you can put "State of Washington" as the employer on your resume.
- You do not have to reference your criminal history in your cover letter.

- Once you have qualified for an interview employers can ask about recent criminal history (within the past 10 years).
- It is important that you prepare a statement for these questions and be honest with the employer.
- For a comprehensive overview of reentry go to <http://wareentryguide.org/>.

Talk to an employment specialist at one of your local workforce development offices for guidance on your job search.

Preparing a Statement

Although an employer is prohibited from asking about your criminal history prior to you qualifying for the job, it is necessary to prepare a statement for the moment the question is asked. This could happen during an in-person interview or over the phone.

When preparing a statement remember RSLA*

R

Right to Know - The employer has a right to know if the person they are hiring has a background issue that could impede their work.

S

Sincerity - Be honest about your record and what led up to the incident.

L

Learned - Share what you have learned from the incident and what changes you have made in your life.

A

Advantage - Highlight your skills, strengths and abilities and what you will bring to the organization.

Example: I wanted to let you know of an incident in my history. Three years ago I started partying too much and ended up letting drugs take over my life. In order to pay for my habit I stole from a neighbor. I was arrested and went to jail for 6 months. Since then I have realized that I have to surround myself with positive people and stay clear of that life. I have a goal of finishing my degree and becoming an Office Manager. I am very organized and detailed and have worked as an administrative assistant. I have letters of recommendation from several people. If you have any questions about this I would be happy to answer them.

*https://www.prattlibrary.org/uploadedfiles/www/locations/central/job_and_career_information_center/how-to_guides/ex-offender%20examples%202014.pdf



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