

# Job Search Tips If You Have a Criminal Record

## Seeking Employment



- There are employers who will hire those with criminal histories. They are harder to find, but they are out there!
- Be prepared that you may have to submit many more resumes than someone who does not have a criminal history.
- Smaller, private employers may be more likely to hire persons with criminal histories than state offices and larger companies.
- Pay attention to how your record reads to an employer. For example: if you have a theft charge on your record, a position that requires handling money or small merchandise may not be a strong option, whereas warehouse, food service, or construction may be more open to you.
- Be willing to go door to door rather than relying on the internet to submit applications.

## Completing the Application



- Take with you: information (names, addresses, and phone numbers of previous employers and references), pen, and your resume.
- Dress professionally, speak politely, and be on time.
- Answer every question. If the question does not apply to you, you can put "N/A" (not applicable).
- Read over your application and answers carefully before giving it to the potential employer. Make sure it is neat and easy to read.
- Ask how you can check on the status of your application. You may need to be persistent.
- For online applications be sure to have an electronic resume and cover letter available to upload.

## Answering the Criminal Background Question



- Get a copy of your criminal history and review it to be sure it is correct before applying for jobs.
- Convictions ONLY "come off" your record when they have been restricted and sealed (expunged). More information about what convictions CAN be cleared from your record can be found at [www.GJP.org](http://www.GJP.org).
- Do not write "will discuss at interview." Many employers may consider this a waste of their time and will not consider your application.
- Answer everything asked by ONLY what is asked. If they only asked about convictions, do not give information about any arrests that DID NOT result in convictions.
- Be truthful. Always assume that the employer will run a background check before hiring.
- Remember that you DO NOT need to include juvenile cases.
- Even charges that have been restricted (expunged) need to be reported if the application asks for all arrests.

## Writing a Separate Statement



- If the application asks about your criminal history, consider writing a statement that outlines the nature and circumstances of your criminal history.
- Submit this statement on a separate piece of paper from the application, resume, and cover letter.
- Consider beginning with, "I would like to explain the information you will see on my criminal background check."
- Keep it brief, simple, and focused on you. Show how the person who was arrested is different from the person applying for the job. Include information about lessons learned, treatment programs, and how you are taking responsibility for your life. Do not discuss how you may feel you were treated unfairly. Employers are looking for people who take responsibility.
- You can also attach relevant court dispositions, like documents showing that a pending arrest has been resolved with dismissal.
- Only use this extra sheet when you feel comfortable or feel that it will help you.
- Have letters of recommendation to include with your personal statement readily available if requested.

## Employment Services/Agencies in Atlanta

Employment Services and Agencies	Area	Address	Phone Number
Workforce Development Office	Atlanta	818 Pollard Blvd, Atlanta	404-658-9675
	Fulton (South Metro)	5710 Stonewall Tell Rd Suite 160 College Park	404-613-6800
	Fulton (North Metro)	7741 Roswell Road Suite 205 Sandy Springs	404-613-4480
	DeKalb	774 Jordan Lane Bldg. 4 Decatur	404-687-3400
GA Department of Labor	Fulton (South Metro)	223 Courtland St. NE Suite 200 Atlanta	404-699-6900
	Fulton (North Metro)	774 Jordan Lane Decatur	404-687-3400
Atlanta Urban League	Atlanta	229 Peachtree St. NE Suite 2600 Atlanta	404-659-1150
First Step Staffing	Fulton	236 Auburn Ave. NE Atlanta	404-577-3395



## Job Search Tips If You Have a Criminal Record

You must write a letter that fits your specific situation and criminal history.  
This sample may be helpful if you have an extensive history.

(Date)

(Name of hiring manager)

(Company)

(Address of company)

Dear (Name of hiring manager):

I have applied for a position as a XXXXX with your company. I anticipate that you may have some concerns about my criminal history, so I wanted to provide you with some explanation.

From the time I was 18 years old until I turned 25 I was arrested many times, primarily for drug-related crimes. Twice I was convicted of felony offenses, once in 1998 for Drug Possession and once in 2001 for Theft by Taking. *(Don't go into extensive detail, just state the facts)*

I regret this period of my life and I take full responsibility for my actions. At that time, I struggled with addiction. After my 2001 conviction, I entered a residential drug treatment program for 18 months. I successfully completed the program and have not used drugs for 11 years. *(Speak to your specific situation)*

I have also moved forward in other areas of my life. I obtained my high school diploma and a degree in XXXXXX from Atlanta Technical College. *(What have you done to improve yourself?)*

Thank you for considering this information. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX .

Sincerely,

XXXXXX XXXXX



# Job Search Tips If You Have a Criminal Record

## Sample Letter Explaining First Offender Act

This sample may be helpful if you were discharged under the First Offender Act and you do not have any subsequent convictions.

(Date)

(Name of hiring manager)

(Company)

(Address of company)

Dear (Name of hiring manager):

I have applied for a position as a XXXXX with your company. I understand you may be concerned about a charge from my past.

I was sentenced under the First Offender Act in XXXX (year) for XXXXX (*Charges for which you were sentenced*). I successfully completed my probation and all records of the arrest and charges have been removed from my official criminal history maintained by the Georgia Crime Information Center. Unfortunately, the charge appears on reports from private background check companies.

The First Offender Act (O.C.G.A. § 42-8-60) is Georgia's "second chance" law. People who have never been convicted of a felony can be sentenced under the First Offender Act. If the person successfully completes the sentence, they will not have the burden of a conviction as they move on with their life. I was sentenced as a first offender and successfully completed my probation. The record of the arrest and sentence are sealed from my official criminal history record.

The law states that once my case is sealed (discharged) under the First Offender Act, I do not have a conviction for that offense. The law says I can honestly answer that I do not have a conviction when asked by a potential employer. Georgia law also prohibits employers from using the arrest that has been discharged under the First Offender Act to deny employment (O.C.G.A. § 42-8-63).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at XXX-XXX-XXXX. I look forward to speaking to you about my qualifications for this position.

Sincerely,

XXXXXX XXXXXX