

GETTING GEORGIANS BACK TO WORK

Opening Access to Occupational Licenses

Did you know?

1 in 7 jobs require an occupational license. Because **40%** of adult Georgians have a criminal record, they may be barred from these jobs.



Unemployment rate for people with criminal records is **five times higher** than the state-wide unemployment rate.

Occupational licenses can be a barrier to well-qualified individuals obtaining good jobs and long-term careers. Every licensing applicant with a criminal record risks denial because of their record, even if it is old, pardoned, or expunged.



Common sense solutions can open opportunities, reduce recidivism, fill employee shortages, and boost communities.

GJP's PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- 1 Licensing boards **should only consider recent and relevant** convictions or pending cases.
- 2 All licensing boards **should recognize criminal record expungement** and pardons.
- 3 ALL agencies **should make a common-sense evaluation of whether a conviction is still relevant.** Georgia law requires 42 licensing boards and agencies to consider whether a criminal record is relevant to the profession at issue. But 9 are not required to do so.
- 4 Boards and agencies **should provide guidance on how records are evaluated** to allow Georgians to make informed decisions. Lack of clarity/guidance discourages motivated people with records from investing time and money in pursuing their dream careers.
- 5 Applicants **should receive written explanations** of denials and the **opportunity to appeal**. When people are denied licenses, they should know why and be given the chance to explain themselves.
- 6 Licensing boards **should collect and release data about how applications are handled.**

Want to learn more? Contact Wade Askew, GJP Supervising Attorney at Wade@GJP.org or 404.827.0027 ext. 214

About GJP

For 35 years, Georgia Justice Project (GJP) has served Georgians impacted by the criminal legal system. GJP approaches social change in three ways: through legal and social services - including holistic criminal defense, early termination of probation, criminal record clearing, and other reentry services; by advocating for a better Georgia, resulting in 22 changes to Georgia law so far; and by educating communities statewide on criminal justice and reentry issues. These approaches advance GJP's goals to lower the number of Georgians under correctional control and reduce barriers to reentry.

SECOND CHANCE HIRING IN LICENSED OCCUPATIONS



Reduce Worker Shortages, Benefit the Economy & Lower Recidivism

Georgia Justice Project (GJP) works to reduce barriers to opportunity for people with a past criminal record through direct representation and policy change. Employer resources, including more information on the data and research cited below, can be found at [GJP.org/employers](https://gjp.org/employers).

SECOND CHANCE HIRING CAN HELP YOUR INDUSTRY AND COMPANY



- There is untapped talent within the **4.6 million people** who have a Georgia criminal record.
- Research shows employees with criminal records often have **better retention, less turnover, are promoted faster, and are more motivated than their counterparts**.
- **Second chance hiring benefits all Georgians** by strengthening the economy, increasing public safety, and providing economic opportunity.

CONCERNED ABOUT RISK? CONSIDER THE DATA



- Research about desistance and recidivism shows that **most recidivism happens within 3 years of an arrest**, and almost all occur within 5 years.
- **Employment is the best antidote to recidivism**. Individuals with a job are more likely to avoid arrest than their unemployed counterparts.
- Georgia has some of nation's strongest **employer liability protection** for criminal records.

DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT CRIMINAL RECORDS



- "Felony" often conjure up a troublesome image for employers, but **felonies encompass a very wide range** of behaviors — from murder to shoplifting to writing a bad check to possession of marijuana.
- **Only 10% of felony convictions in Georgia are for serious violent or sexual offenses**, and less than 40% of people with a felony conviction in Georgia were ever sentenced to time in prison.
- **Georgia has very long prison sentences, and the longest probation sentences in the country**, so someone may still be on probation for an offense that occurred many, many years in the past.
- You will likely find **old convictions** on a person's record in Georgia — this doesn't mean a court denied them expungement.
- 40% of adults in Georgia have a criminal record, yet Georgia's expungement law is very limited and difficult to access — **only about 6% of people eligible for expungement get their record expunged**.