

# Reentry Employment Guide

Obtaining employment is important when it comes to a successful reentry and will help you become financially stable, self-sufficient, and have a sense of belonging amongst your community. This Reentry Employment Guide includes job training and job search resources; tips for cover letters, resumes, and job interviews; employer benefits of hiring justice-impacted individuals; entrepreneurship details; and record clearing resources.

## Job Training Resources

<b>Career Addict</b> (Employment Articles) <a href="http://careeraddict.com/companies-hire-felons">careeraddict.com/companies-hire-felons</a>	<b>Exoffenders.net</b> (List of reentry programs and assistance) <a href="http://exoffenders.net/reentry-programs-assistance">exoffenders.net/reentry-programs-assistance</a>	<b>Fair Shake Reentry Resource Center</b> (List of reentry programs and assistance) <a href="http://fairshake.net">fairshake.net</a> <a href="mailto:information@fairshake.net">information@fairshake.net</a>
<b>Goodwill – Career Services</b> (Employment Services, Job Training) <a href="http://goodwill.org">goodwill.org</a>	<b>Library of Congress Research Guide</b> (Employment Resources) <a href="http://guides.loc.gov/reentry-resources/employment">guides.loc.gov/reentry-resources/employment</a>	<b>National Reentry Helpline!</b> <a href="http://thenationalreentrynetwork.org">thenationalreentrynetwork.org</a> <a href="mailto:info@thereentrynetwork.org">info@thereentrynetwork.org</a> (844) 916-2577
<b>National Urban League</b> (Employment Services, Job Training) <a href="http://nul.org">nul.org</a> (212) 558-5300	<b>Salvation Army USA</b> (Reentry Services) <a href="http://salvationarmyusa.org/usn/assist-the-unemployed">salvationarmyusa.org/usn/assist-the-unemployed</a> 1 (800) SAL-ARMY	<b>U.S. Department of Labor</b> <a href="http://dol.gov">dol.gov</a>
<b>U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs</b> (Veteran Services) <a href="http://va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp">va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp</a> <a href="http://va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp">va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp</a> (844) 698-2311	<b>United Way 211</b> (Support Services) <a href="http://211.org">211.org</a>	<b>WorkforceGPS</b> (Employment Services) <a href="http://reo.workforcegps.org">reo.workforcegps.org</a> <a href="mailto:support@workforcegps.org">support@workforcegps.org</a>

<b>Apprenticeship USA</b> Brings together jobseekers, businesses, and training providers to facilitate apprenticeship opportunities. <a href="http://apprenticeship.gov">apprenticeship.gov</a>	<b>PrimeWeld</b> Guide to starting a trade career <a href="http://primeweld.com/blogs/news/trade-careers-for-formerly-incarcerated-people">primeweld.com/blogs/news/trade-careers-for-formerly-incarcerated-people</a>
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**PIN Reentry Resources**

All states and territories have multiple organizational resources that can help returning citizens find employment post-incarceration. [Probationinfo.org/reentry-resources](http://Probationinfo.org/reentry-resources) has state-specific pages for all 50 states and 5 major territories containing local resources for finding jobs, training, and apprenticeships.

## Job Search Resources

<p><b>Career One Stop</b> (Employment Services) <a href="http://careeronestop.org/ExOffender">careeronestop.org/ExOffender</a> (877) 872-5627 <a href="mailto:info@careeronestop.org">info@careeronestop.org</a></p>	<p><b>Center for Employment Opportunities</b> (Employment Services) <a href="http://ceoworks.org">ceoworks.org</a> (212) 422-4430 <a href="mailto:info@ceoworks.org">info@ceoworks.org</a></p>	<p><b>The Felons Guide</b> <a href="http://thefelonsguide.com/need-a-job-quick-the-best-temp-agencies-that-hire-felons">thefelonsguide.com/need-a-job-quick-the-best-temp-agencies-that-hire-felons</a></p>
<p><b>Goodwill</b> (Employment Services, Job Training) <a href="http://goodwill.org">goodwill.org</a></p>	<p><b>Help for Felons</b> <a href="http://helpforfelons.org/temp-agencies-that-hire-felons">helpforfelons.org/temp-agencies-that-hire-felons</a></p>	<p><b>Jobs For Felons Hub</b> (Employment Services) <a href="http://jobsforfelonshub.com">jobsforfelonshub.com</a></p>
<p><b>National Urban League</b> (Employment Services, Job Training) <a href="http://nul.org">nul.org</a> (212) 558-5300</p>	<p><b>People Ready Staffing Agency</b> (Employment Services) <a href="http://peopleready.com">peopleready.com</a> (844) 775-8326</p>	<p><b>U.S. Department of Labor</b> <a href="http://dol.gov">dol.gov</a></p>
<p><b>United Way 211</b> (Support Services) <a href="http://211.org">211.org</a></p>	<p><b>PIN Reentry Resources</b> All states and territories have multiple organizational resources that can help returning citizens find employment post-incarceration. <a href="http://Probationinfo.org/reentry-resources">Probationinfo.org/reentry-resources</a> has state-specific pages for all 50 states and 5 major territories containing local resources for finding jobs, training, and apprenticeships.</p>	
<p><b>Online profiles: Consider creating online profiles and uploading your resume to:</b> <a href="http://indeed.com">indeed.com</a>      <a href="http://linkedin.com">linkedin.com</a> <a href="http://monster.com">monster.com</a>      <a href="http://simplyhired.com">simplyhired.com</a></p>		

## Cover Letter

A cover letter offers an opportunity for justice-impacted individuals to explain employment gaps. It can highlight your skills, as well as the progress you made during your incarceration. This will show prospective employers that you are more than your criminal history.

### How to Write a Cover Letter

#### Contact Information

- Include your name, phone number, and email address.
- Some employers may consider your residential address when determining your eligibility. Feel free to include or omit it depending on your personal preference.
- Include your LinkedIn profile if you have one.

#### Greeting

- Include a formal greeting and address the cover letter directly to the hiring manager by including their name if possible.
  - This can show that you took the time to research the company and or position you are applying for.

#### Introduction

- Introduce yourself by name and mention the position for which you are applying.

## Body Paragraph

- Describe how you will be a great fit for the role and list your positive skillset.
- Highlight your qualifications.
- Provide examples of the skills that you have and how they fit the position to which you are applying.
- List any achievements.

## Mention your criminal background

- Explain, but do not offer excuses or shift blame.
- If you are not comfortable explaining this here, offer to explain your gap in employment during your potential interview.

## Restate your interest

- Express your interest in the job.
- Thank the person for their time.

## Closing

- Use a polite closing.
  - Example: Sincerely, Kind regards, Thank you
- Sign/type your name.

## Cover Letter Example

John Doe  
123 Main St. Atlanta, GA 30101  
(123) 867-5309  
John.doe@ineedajob.com  
Linkedin.com/in/john-doe/1a2b

Dear Mrs. Janet Smith

My name is John Doe, and I am interested in applying for the open line manager position with Abc Inc.

During my previous role with Xyz Co., I coordinated with technicians and executive leadership teams to ensure process flows were established timely and efficiently. I believe my take charge attitude will contribute to success in this role.

In anticipation of any possible background check, I would like to mention my history with the criminal justice system and how I learned from my mistake. I was convicted of drug trafficking and spent 5 years in prison. During this time, I came to understand the harm I caused to my community and family. I realized this is not a path I want to continue and vowed to make an honest living once I served my time. While incarcerated, I focused on my education and training, and believe I am a stronger candidate now more than ever.

I am certain that my qualifications and experience will be a good fit for this role or future openings at Abc Inc. Thank you for taking the time to read through my qualifications and I look forward to meeting.

Sincerely,  
John Doe

# Resume

A resume is a document used by an individual to show their background and work experience. This document typically includes accomplishments, skills, relevant job experience, and education.

## How to Write a Functional Resume

For justice-impacted individuals, a **functional resume** may be the best format because it highlights skills more than work experience, taking attention away from gaps in your employment history.

### Contact Information

- Include your name, phone number, and email address.
- Some employers may consider your residential address when determining your eligibility. Feel free to include or omit it depending on your personal preference.
- Include your LinkedIn profile if you have one.

### Qualification Summary

- This section is meant to emphasize your most notable accomplishments in order to help your potential employer decide if you are the best fit for the position.
- List important skills and accomplishments relating to the position for which you are applying.
- This section can be formatted using bullet points or a few concise sentences.
  - Overall, this section should be treated as the introduction to your resume.
- Avoid listing general accomplishments.
  - Be as specific as possible. Every qualification summary should be written to effectively emphasize the reasons why you are the one for the job.

### General Skills

- Separate from your professional skills, this is your moment to list the general skills that you believe best describe yourself.
  - Examples include communication skills, strong work ethic, responsibility, etc.

### Professional skills

- Cater your resume to each job application.
  - The functional resume style emphasizes your individual skills, therefore each time you apply to a job it is important to list your most important skills that relate to the position.
- Be specific and precise.
  - Be sure to emphasize your efficiency in each skill and show employers that you are an excellent candidate for this position.
- Include skills even if they were acquired during incarceration.
  - If your skills or accomplishments earned during incarceration can be useful to your future job, be sure to include them. Wording is important here, though. Listing a past employer as “State of Maine” looks better than “Maine State Prison.”

### Work and Volunteer Experience

- If your work history is scarce, you can include volunteer work.
  - Employment gaps due to incarceration may result in a lack of experience on your resume. Including volunteer work can show employers additional experience.
- Describe each of your previous positions in detail.
  - Include information such as the company, your position, daily responsibilities, and length of employment.

### Education

- List your highest level of education first.

- If your education section lacks information, consider including relevant coursework, academic awards, and extracurricular activities.
- If you are concerned about age discrimination or a considerable gap between your education and the job application, you do not have to include the years of attendance for your educational experiences.

## References

- If able, it is beneficial to include references on your resume.
  - References can help employers see past your criminal history and help them determine what type of employee you are.
- Use professional references only. Refrain from including friends and family.
- Use references who are aware of your criminal history and are still willing to endorse you.

## Resume Example

### AMBER WRIGHT

404.123.4567 | am.wright@email.com | 1 AC. St. Rex, GA 30339 | [linkedin.com/in/a-wright/1a2b](https://www.linkedin.com/in/a-wright/1a2b)

**QUALIFICATION SUMMARY**

- Marketing Sales Representative with over 5 years of experience
- Exceeded departmental and companywide goals by 150%
- Awarded top performing sales representative 5 times during my employment

**GENERAL SKILLS**

- Effective communication skills
- Great problem-solving skills
- Superior time management skills

**PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

- Microsoft Office Suite
  - 5+ years. Advanced knowledge of Microsoft Office applications. Microsoft Excel certified.
- Customer and data analytics
  - Data analysis expert who understands customer behavior and patterns.
- Strategic planning
  - Strong and driven ability to set short-term and long-term goals while achieving positive results, mitigating risk, and exceeding defined metrics

**WORK AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

**Marketing Sales Rep I**  
 Olson Harris - Atlanta, GA 5 years 7 months  
 Sold college textbooks to universities nationwide, set up product demos in effort to reach out to administrative staff and college students to pique interest, quoted and sold paper textbooks & e-text books. Awarded Top Performer of the quarter over the course of 5 years.

**Volunteer**  
 Meal Village - Seattle, WA 1 year  
 Volunteered in kitchen as meal prep staff, packaged meals to be delivered, worked in donation bank making cold calls to businesses in the community to ask for donations.

**EDUCATION**

Microsoft Excel Certification  
 Seattle Height High School – Seattle, WA

**REFERENCES**

Jane Smith Team Lead - Olson Harris Inc, <a href="mailto:Smith@olsenharris.com">Smith@olsenharris.com</a> (474) 555-1233	John Doe Support Staff – Meal Village <a href="mailto:John@mealvillage.com">John@mealvillage.com</a> (474) 555-4545
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# Interview Tips

Interviews are important both to you and the prospective employer. The purpose of an interview is to decide if you are a qualified, motivated, and suitable candidate for the job in question. It is also an opportunity for you to gauge whether or not this employment environment is a good fit for you.

## **Tip 1 – Prepare a resume**

Employers will want to see a prepared resume, regardless of the industry or type of position for which you are applying. It is important to have your resume on hand for the interview and is wise to bring several copies. Make sure to know your resume very well.

## **Tip 2 – Research the employer**

Before your interview, research the potential employer to better understand the company's mission and core values, and where the open position fits into the larger organization. This will prepare you to answer any questions the interviewer may ask you.

## **Tip 3 – Practice your interview**

Practicing a mock interview with a friend or family member (or even alone in front of a mirror) can have huge benefits for your interview. This will help you project calm and confidence and help you to practice answering some common questions that are given in an interview. Some organizations, such as certain regional Goodwill centers, offer practice interviews.

## **Tip 4 – STAR interview method**

The STAR method is a technique used to help guide you when responding to behavioral questions that ask about how you reacted to certain situations at past jobs. Example: "Tell me about a challenge you faced and how you handled it" or "Give an example of a time you stepped up and led your team." This method will help give you real-life responses that are concise and can help the employer determine if you are a good fit for the position.

- **Situation** – Explain to the interviewer a specific situation. Give context to your story by sharing a few details surrounding the situation. Be sure not to spend a lot of time on this part because the interviewer will likely be more interested in the actions taken by you.
- **Task** – Describe what your role in the situation was. Discuss one or two points that best describe the task that needed to be handled. Spend minimal time on this component as well.
- **Action** – Describe the specific actions taken to address the situation. Discuss what steps were taken to find a solution. Be sure to highlight what you contributed even if it was a team effort. This section is where you will go the most in-depth in your response as it is what interviewers will be looking most closely at to determine if you are a good fit for the role.
- **Result** – Explain the result you reached through your actions. Focus on a few main points of your outcome and discuss how it impacted you. What did you learn? How can you grow from this experience? How has it made you a better employee?

## **Tip 5 – Be aware of nonverbal communication**

Body language can speak volumes about a person. Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake and a smile. Maintain eye contact and good posture.

## **Tip 6 – Dress professionally**

Plan what you will wear to the interview. Be sure what you choose is appropriate for the job. A simple business casual look will suffice for most positions. Example: button down shirt with slacks and dress shoes, blouse with slacks/knee-length skirt and dress shoes, etc.

## **Tip 7 – Address your criminal history with honesty**

When addressing your involvement with the criminal justice system, keep it short and do not go into great detail. This is an opportunity to explain, but not excuse. Be sure not to place blame on anyone else, but

rather focus on how you have grown in a positive way since incarceration and what you have learned from the experience. Even if the interviewer does not mention your criminal history, it is best to be upfront about it, as omitting this information could be seen as dishonesty if later discovered through a background check. Even if you have already mentioned this in your cover letter, it is best to address the topic during your interview. Typically, the middle of the interview is the best time to bring this up.

### **Tip 8 – Explain employer benefits for hiring a returning citizen**

See section below.

### **Tip 9 – Next steps after the interview**

Within a few days after the interview, it is important to follow up with the employer either by email or letter. Thank the interviewer for their time, explain that you enjoyed learning more about the position and that you are still interested.

## **Employer Benefits for Employing Returning Citizens**

Given the adversity that many justice-impacted people face when seeking employment post-incarceration, it is important to be aware of the benefits that employers can receive by employing you.

**Federal Bonding Program** offers bonds ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000 to employers as insurance in case the employee causes any damages to the company in the first six months of their employment.

[bonds4jobs.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/FBP-Employers-Job-Seekers-Brochure-update-1.pdf](https://bonds4jobs.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/FBP-Employers-Job-Seekers-Brochure-update-1.pdf)

**Work Opportunity Tax Credit** is a benefit employers can receive for employing returning citizens within one year of their release from prison. The credit amounts to 40% of the employee's first year's wages up to \$6,000.

[irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/work-opportunity-tax-credit](https://irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/work-opportunity-tax-credit)

## **Entrepreneurship**

Finding employment post-incarceration is one of the biggest obstacles to reentry that justice-impacted individuals face. One possible solution to this is to become your own employer.

### **How to Start a Limited Liability Company (LLC)**

1. Choose a name for your LLC.
2. Designate a Registered Agent for the LLC.
3. Create and File Articles of Organization with the state.
4. Create and sign an Operating Agreement for the LLC.
5. Obtain an Employee Identification Number from the state.
6. Set up a bank account to be used for the LLC.

Some resources for starting your own business:

[legalzoom.com/business/business-formation/llc-overview.html](https://legalzoom.com/business/business-formation/llc-overview.html)

[llcuniversity.com/how-to-start-an-llc](https://llcuniversity.com/how-to-start-an-llc)

## How to Fund Your Business

Receiving funding for your company can be more difficult if you have a criminal record, however there are still many opportunities to receive loans and grants:

<p><b>Grants.gov</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> allows you to search for federal grant opportunities that may be available for business owners with criminal records. State-level grant opportunities may be available as well.</p>	<p><b>Inmates to Entrepreneurs</b></p> <p>Inmates to Entrepreneurs has a list of funding opportunities: <a href="https://inmatestoentrepreneurs.org/small-business-grants-and-loans-for-felons">inmatestoentrepreneurs.org/small-business-grants-and-loans-for-felons</a></p>
<p><b>SBA Loans</b></p> <p>Small Business Administration (SBA) loans are available to business owners with criminal records: <a href="https://sba.gov/funding-programs/loans">sba.gov/funding-programs/loans</a></p>	<p>Raise money by using a crowdfunding platform such as <a href="https://www.gofundme.com">gofundme.com</a> or <a href="https://www.kickstarter.com">kickstarter.com</a>.</p>

While the vast majority of industries are open to those who are formerly incarcerated, there are a few areas of practice that you may not be eligible to pursue, depending on federal, state, or local laws and individual supervision restrictions. Familiarize yourself with these rules while exploring the possibility of entrepreneurship.

## Clear Your Criminal Record

Clearing your criminal record, if eligible, presents many benefits such as increasing your chances of:

- Gaining employment
- Obtaining some business and occupational licenses
- Receiving business loans

Visit our **How to Clear Your Criminal Record** guide for more information:

[probationinfo.org/record-clearing](https://probationinfo.org/record-clearing)