

Looking for a Job in Georgia with a Criminal Record

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Seeking Employment



- Be optimistic! Employers DO hire people with records.
- Employers generally cannot have blanket bans against hiring someone with a record. They must consider how much time passed since the arrest, the nature of the offense, and if the record is related to the job.
- Be prepared to submit multiple resumes to different employers. Smaller, private employers may have less strict background checks.
- There are two kinds of background checks - official (fingerprint-based) reports and private background check company reports.
- Get a copy of your official criminal history to see what is on your record. You can get your official GA criminal history from an arresting agency for a fee (request a Purpose Code U report but don't share it with employers) OR a national criminal history from the FBI. Note: If you may have a warrant, consult with an attorney before requesting your criminal history.
- Private background reports look different depending on the company. Use a reputable company or one you know a potential employer will use.
- Restrict and seal (expunge) eligible criminal records. Read more [HERE](#).
- Consider your charges. A theft charge may make it difficult to get a position in retail or handling money.

Completing the Job Application



- Be persistent and willing to go door to door, rather than relying on just the internet to submit applications - make an in-person connection.
- Have an electronic resume & cover letter available for online applications.
- Answer every question. If the question does not apply to you, put "N/A" (not applicable).
- Read over your application and answers carefully before submitting.
- For interviews, bring your resume, prior employment history, reference information(names, addresses, and phone numbers), and pen/paper for notes.
- If offered an interview, dress professionally and be on time.
- Ask how to check the status of your application and follow-up.

Answering Arrest/Conviction Background Questions



- Don't bring up your record first. **Only answer the questions asked.**
- If asked about your record, be truthful and assume the employer will run a background check. Employers may treat these questions as an honesty test.
- Do not leave background questions blank or say "will discuss at interview."
- Arrest history does not "fall off" a record, no matter how long ago it occurred.
- Non-convictions (like dismissals) can appear on private background reports for 7 years unless sealed.
- Convictions stay on your record in Georgia until they have been restricted and sealed.
- Sealed records should not appear on private background checks (like Sterling or Chekr). If inaccurate or sealed records appear on a private background check, dispute it! View our **Background Checks and Your Rights** handout.
- Even if a record has been restricted and sealed, a GA employer can ask about it and you need to answer questions truthfully.
- If denied a job due to your record, you have a right to a copy of the background check used by the employer. Ask for a copy and save it. Proof of job denials can help show a court why your case should be restricted and sealed.

Should you write a separate statement?



- It can be helpful to prepare a statement about your record if the employer asks for more information about your criminal history. Be brief, honest and take responsibility. Begin with, "I would like to explain the information on my background check."
- Generally, you would not provide this statement until asked to provide an explanation.
- Keep it simple and focused on you. Talk about how you have changed since your last arrest. Talk about lessons learned, treatment or educational programs completed, and positive steps since the arrest.
- You may need to provide relevant court dispositions, which are documents showing the arrest's outcome you get from the clerk of court where your case was handled. Have those documents ready ahead of time.
- Have letters of recommendation to include with your personal statement from people who can speak to your character.
- You may not want to talk about how you were treated unfairly by the system. Even if true, employers may feel you are not taking responsibility.



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