

TIPS & EXAMPLES FOR WRITING INCLUSIVE JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS

Creating job descriptions that welcome applications from justice-involved individuals requires intentional language, skills emphasis, and inclusive hiring statements. Here are tips and examples to help make job postings accessible and appealing to candidates with criminal records.

1. USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN THE JOB POSTING

Avoid discouraging language like:

- ✗ “Must have a clean background check”
- ✗ “No criminal record”

Instead, use language that encourages justice-involved candidates to apply:

- ✓ “We welcome applications from individuals with diverse backgrounds, including those with justice-involved experiences.”
- ✓ “Candidates with non-traditional career paths or gaps in employment are encouraged to apply.”

EXAMPLE – INCLUSIVE HIRING STATEMENT

“We believe in second chances and recognize that a person’s past does not define their future. We welcome applications from individuals who are justice-involved and are committed to building meaningful careers.”

2. FOCUS ON TRANSFERABLE SKILLS OVER TRADITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Justice-involved individuals may have gained valuable skills through previous jobs, prison training programs, or volunteer work. Highlight skills instead of rigid job history requirements.

Skills to highlight:

- Adaptability & Problem-Solving
- Conflict Resolution
- Leadership & Teamwork
- Warehouse & Logistics Experience
- Culinary & Hospitality Skills
- Carpentry, Plumbing, Electrical, or Other Trades

EXAMPLE – SKILLS-BASED JOB POSTING FOR A WAREHOUSE ASSOCIATE

Instead of:

- ✗ “3+ years of warehouse experience required”

Use:

- ✓ “Experience with logistics, inventory management, or physical labor is valued. Candidates with backgrounds in training programs, apprenticeships, or non-traditional work settings are encouraged to apply.”

3. OFFER ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS

If a job typically requires a degree or certification, provide alternative pathways.

EXAMPLE – SKILLED TRADE ROLE

Instead of:

✗ “Must have a state-recognized certification in plumbing”

Use:

✓ “Plumbing certification is preferred but not required. Candidates with hands-on experience in training programs, apprenticeships, or related work are encouraged to apply.”

EXAMPLE – CUSTOMER SERVICE ROLE

Instead of:

✗ “2 years of customer service experience required”

Use:

✓ “Strong communication and problem-solving skills are essential. Experience working with people in any setting—including community programs, informal work, or volunteer roles—is valued.”

4. ACKNOWLEDGE GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT WITH ENCOURAGING LANGUAGE

Many justice-involved individuals have gaps in employment due to incarceration. Create an application process that allows candidates to explain transferable experiences instead of automatically screening out gaps.

✓ “We recognize that work experience comes in many forms and understand that career paths are not always linear. If you have gaps in employment, we encourage you to share any skills you’ve gained through volunteer work, training programs, or personal projects.”

5. HIGHLIGHT SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Make it clear that your company supports inclusive hiring and has a workplace that values growth and opportunity.

EXAMPLE – SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE STATEMENT

✓ “We are committed to an inclusive workplace where all employees have opportunities for growth. We partner with organizations that support second-chance employment and provide mentorship and training programs for justice-involved individuals.”

✓ “We believe in supporting individuals looking to build a stable future. Our company offers on-the-job training, career mentorship, and structured advancement opportunities.”

6. CONNECT TO EMPLOYER OR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Mention if your company partners with reentry programs, workforce development organizations, or fair-chance hiring initiatives.

EXAMPLE – JOB POSTING WITH REENTRY SUPPORT

✓ “We proudly partner with [Local Reentry Program] to provide career pathways for individuals with diverse backgrounds, including justice-involved individuals.”

✓ “This position is open to individuals from all walks of life. We offer structured training and advancement opportunities through programs like [XYZ Workforce Development].”

By following these guidelines, employers can tap into a skilled and motivated workforce while supporting individuals in building stable and successful careers.