

Career Management Digest

Overcoming Barriers to Employment

At the WorkForce Centers, we often many jobseekers say they have barriers to employment and that those barriers or obstacles are keeping them from finding the right job or any job. Although this makes finding or keeping a job more difficult, it's not impossible. Some barriers, such as lack of transportation, are temporary and easier to address than others. Some of the information included in this month's Career Management Digest may help you address those barriers and

Are You Operating in a S.O.L.A.R. mindset? Using SOLAR SOLUTION TOOLS to Overcoming Barriers To Employment:

S --- LEARNING A NEW SKILL will remove many barriers. Sometimes the skill need is vocational, such as using a computer or getting a certification. Often it's gaining a soft skill like TENS (Touch, Eyes, Name, Smile (* concept from the book referenced at the end of this article) or how we read a bus or a train schedule. It could be how to dress for a job, how to create "PROVE ITS" to explain your job skills, how to find good childcare or how to use side doors to meet the person who can hire you.

O --- ADJUST YOUR OUTLOOK Many of our barriers are the result of our attitudes toward them, and when you can adjust your outlook – the barriers disappear. For example, if you believe no employer will hire you due to your age, your attitude in the interview will insure that they won't. However, if you adjust your outlook by realizing that people your age are hired every day in this country so you can and will make the effort to develop good answers and use side doors, you will eventually find an employer who needs your positive attitude and skills.

L --- CHANGE WHERE YOU LOOK For barriers that you can't change or don't want to change, the answer is to change where you look. There are thousands of employers and they all value different things. So find an employer who does not view your barrier as a problem, and who in fact may view it as a selling point.

For example, tattoos may be a barrier for an upscale retail shop, but a selling point for a trendy retail store, where people with tattoos are the primary customers. The same goes for a lack of computer skills... look where it won't matter... some employers won't need you to have computer skills.

A --- DEVELOP A GOOD ANSWER For any barrier the employer may find out about when they meet with you, the job seeker (age, obvious disability, stuttering), or when they do a reference check (criminal record, being fired), or what may come out in an interview (gaps in work history, poor literacy, poor transportation) --- you must create a **Good Answer**. A **Good Answer** should do three things:

- 1) Reduce the employer's concern
- 2) Meet the employer's needs and expectations, and
- 3) Increase your own self-confidence within the interview. If it does not do all three, then it is NOT a **Good Answer**.

Listen and think like an employer regarding your answers. Replace any scary words such as "burglar, fired, wanted to start a family" with words that will keep them listening and not be distracting. Scary words distract and employers may stop listening. Try words or phrases like "took some things" or "contract ended" or "was released" or "right now I am focused on my career." Keep your **Good Answers** short and to the point – about 60 seconds long. If the barrier is of perception (age, gender, disability, etc.) You then must prove that you are the exception to the rule in their belief about job seekers in this or that group. Never apply for a job as a member of a group. You are an individual with unique skills, quali-

cations and talents that can earn the dignity and respect of the employer.

R --- FIND A RESOURCE Sometimes as a job seeker, you need help in getting helpful information (colleges that offer the training needed, a list of anger management programs, names of employers who have openings in your field, etc.) Other times you might require an item toward the field you're looking at (professional tools, clothing for the interview, a bus pass, or mobile phone, etc.) or a service (resume writing, a recovery program, a life coach, emergency housing, etc.). Finding and using resources can help you overcome many barriers to employment. See if you can find a community resource list where information about such issues and specific contacts that are readily available if need be.

SOURCE: Ideas and Intellectual Property of Debra Angel McDougall and Elisabeth Harney Sanders-Park:

*Authors of: **The 6 Reasons You'll Get The Job: What Employers Look For – Whether They Know It or Not...***

~ Submitted by Ed Duda, Workforce Development, Inc. Career Counselor, Olmsted County





BEYOND THE BOX

A U.S. Department of Education Resource Guide for
Increasing Access to Higher Education for Justice-Involved Individuals

Looking into Higher Education with a Criminal Record

“A study of those seeking higher education at the State University of New York revealed that **nearly two-thirds of individuals with a felony criminal offense** record stopped the application after being asked about criminal justice involvement.”

According to ed.gov/beyondthebox, **an estimated 70 million United States citizens (1 in 3 adults) has a criminal record.**

The U.S. Department of Education is working to remove the barrier of not going to college by providing colleges and universities with information about the impact that asking about criminal record has on college applications.

“Expanding access to higher education for justice-involved individuals can help them step out of the shadow of their pasts and embark on the path to a brighter future.” -Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch

The U.S. Department of Education is actively working to educate colleges and universities about the hindering impact of asking about criminal background history can have, as research has shown that universities/colleges that openly admit those with past criminal backgrounds have no greater crime rate than those who don't. (Beyond the Box fact sheet).

In terms of paying for college, barriers continue for those with criminal backgrounds:

Federal Student Aid Barriers:

Your ability to receive financial aid to pay for college may be hindered depending on certain factors. Check out the link below for more information: studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/criminal-convictions

Second Chance Pell Grant: New pilot financial aid program. A local school that offers it: South Central College, Faribault MN

Resources:

<http://www.ed.gov/beyondthebox>

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-launches-second-chance-pell-pilot-program-incarcerated-individuals>

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/criminal-convictions>

~Submitted by Amy Lofquist, Workforce Development, Inc., Career Counselor, Steele County



Websites To Explore:

<http://worknetsolutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/6-Ways-to-Overcome-Any-Employment-Barrier-MPR-6-20131.pdf>

<https://jobseekerslife.wordpress.com/2013/01/29/what-are-barriers-to-employment/>

<https://reentrytraining.com/resources/>

<https://www.careerwise.mnscu.edu/exoffenders/index.html>

<https://mn.gov/deed/data/research/workforce-program-success/tool-employment-barriers.jsp>

<http://www.50plusworks.com/how-to-identify-typical-barriers/>

<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/barriers-to-employment.html>

~Submitted by Bonnie Vanecek, Workforce Development, Inc. Customer Service Specialist, Wabasha County

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