



## Smart Hiring Policies

### *Finding Undiscovered Talent from a Full Range of Applicants*

*“In my experience, people with criminal records are often model employees. They are frequently the most dedicated and conscientious. A lot of doors are shut to them, so when someone gives them an opportunity, they make the most of it.”* Brad Friedlander, CEO Red Restaurant Group.<sup>2</sup>

Employment applications often include a box asking about arrest or conviction records. However, is this smart or good for business? Many employers and local governments across the nation are now saying, “No,” because ***“the box” prevents employers from accessing highly qualified employees, it is bad for the economy, and it prevents people who want to work hard from escaping the cycle of poverty and dependence on social services.*** One in four Americans has an arrest or conviction record. Many have obtained degrees, offer a wide variety of skills, and have worked hard to regain their self-respect and provide for their families. But when individuals with criminal records check the box, their applications are often immediately thrown out; as a result, employers miss out on people who could be qualified, successful and dedicated employees.

**Smart Justice Spokane is joining 13 other states, 96 local jurisdictions** (including the City of Spokane), and countless private businesses to support Smart Hiring Policies. A Smart Hiring Policy involves removing “the box” from the initial application and delaying the inquiry into criminal history until after the person is deemed otherwise qualified and has an opportunity to explain their offense and their rehabilitation.

*“Criminal background information requests [will] be delayed until after the city has determined the applicant meets minimum qualifications, providing applicants with arrest and conviction records an equal opportunity to compete for employment with the city,”* Mayor David Condon at a press conference August 4, 2014

**We ask employers in Spokane to consider Smart Hiring Policies. Here’s why.....**

#### **Smart Hiring is Good for Business**

- Major employers such as Walmart & Target have “banned the box” because it makes business sense. “Wal-Mart removed the criminal history box from its application in 2010,” said spokeswoman Dianna Gee. “The removal does not eliminate the background check or drug test, but it offers those who’ve been previously incarcerated a chance to get their foot in the door.”<sup>1</sup>
- There are subsidies & tax incentives that help business’s bottom line when employers hire qualified applicants with criminal backgrounds.

## Smart Hiring Creates Safer Communities and a Stronger Economy

- The nation's economy is losing \$57 to \$65 billion each year by preventing people with conviction or arrest records from participating in our job market.<sup>3</sup>
- The number one factor in determining whether or not someone will re-offend is whether or not they have a job.<sup>4</sup>
- When people have jobs, crime goes down and that makes all of us safer. For example, Hawaii's 1998 "ban the box" law lowered repeat offending by 57%.<sup>5</sup>
- Incarceration is expensive. It costs nearly \$47,000 per year to keep someone in prison<sup>6</sup> and approximately \$130/day to keep someone in our Spokane County Jail. Nearly 7,600 people are released from Washington prisons every year.<sup>7</sup> A year later, only around 25% have a job.<sup>8</sup> By encouraging a return to the workforce, taxpayers will spend less on incarceration and other criminal justice costs. In turn, individuals will be able to pay off their legal debts (including victim restitution) sooner, and will be less reliant on public benefits and social services.
- When qualified job-seekers with criminal records are given the opportunity to work, they add to the tax base and local economy.

## Smart Hiring complies with the Civil Rights Act of 1964

- The EEOC recommends that to comply with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 1) Employers should not ask about convictions on job applications; 2) employers should not have blanket exclusions against hiring people with criminal records; 3) if a background check is done after the initial screening process, that it be limited to only those convictions that are job related; and 4) the employer should consider the nature of the crime, the time elapsed, and rehabilitation by the applicant.<sup>9</sup>

**Please join us in asking that businesses in Spokane adopt Smart Hiring Policies. It's happening all across the nation and it's the right thing to do for our community here in Spokane too!**

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1 "Target to Ban Criminal History Box on Job Applications," Star Tribune, (Oct. 26, 2013)

2 "Give Criminals Another Employment Shot," Crain's Cleveland Business, (May 21, 2012)

3 "Ex-offenders and the Labor Market," Center for Economic and Policy Research, (November 2010)

4 "Reentry and the Ties that Bind," *Justice Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (April 2011)

5 D'Alessio, J., Stolzenberg, L., & Flexon, J (2014) "The Effect of Hawaii's Ban the Box Law on Repeat Offending," *American Journal of Criminal Justice*

6 "The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers," *Vera Institute of Justice*, 2012

7 [www.doc.wa.gov](http://www.doc.wa.gov)

8 [www.ncjrs.gov](http://www.ncjrs.gov), [www.nij.gov](http://www.nij.gov), or see Petersilia, J. (2000) "When Prisoners Return to the Community," *US Department of Justice*

9 [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov), "Background Checks: What Employers Need to Know."