Employment Support for Persons with Challenging Backgrounds

December 6, 2018
Learning Objectives

• Use strength-based principles to write an explanation letter for employers review.

• Seek out employers who hire individuals who are justice involved.

• Tailor job development presentation while job searching for/with consumers with challenging backgrounds.
Justice Involved

• 2009
• Justice System Involvement and Employment
  Johnson & Johnson- Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program
• Employment Specialists from Eight states and Washington, D.C. surveyed 128 employers
• 63% of the employers stated they knowingly hired a person with a felony
Businesses That Knowingly Hired

- Accounting Firm
- Auto Dealer
- Bridal Retail
- Catering
- Chamber of Commerce
- Cleaning Service
- Gas Station
- Medical/Health Care
- Recording Studio- multimedia
- School District
- Truck Rental and Storage

IPS Employment Center
Offense

- Drug Related
- DUI
- Theft
- Assault
- Sexual Offense
- Domestic Violence
- Armed Robbery
- Murder
- Reckless Driving
- Criminal Trespassing
- Manslaughter
- Gun Charge

IPS Employment Center
Why Hire?

- Qualified to do the job
- Presented well in the interview
- Had a connection to the employer (vouch)
- The Employer believed the applicant changed his/her life
- Length of time from offense
- Applicant demonstrated sincerity and honesty
- Employer felt the applicant would be dependable

IPS Employment Center
Some Advice To The Applicant

• Be honest and upfront
• Take responsibility
• Dress Well
• Show/Talk about work experience
• Have good references
• Provide information about bonding

IPS Employment Center
Some Advice To Vocational Staff

• Know the clients history
  – Make sure client knows their own history
  – Have conversations about it

• Use strength based language and encourage it
  – Helps people to describe their situation with less stigma
The Power of Language in Strengths-Based Approaches:

The Glass Half Empty,
The Glass Half Full:

Exercise and Group Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deficit-based Language</th>
<th>Strengths-based, Recovery-oriented Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A schizophrenic, a borderline</td>
<td>A person diagnosed with...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Case Manager</td>
<td>Recovery coach/guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front-line staff/in the trenches</td>
<td>Direct support staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse/abuser</td>
<td>Person living with...SU interferes with...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering from</td>
<td>Living with/recovering from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Team</td>
<td>Recovery team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-functioning vs. Low Functioning</td>
<td>A person symptoms/addiction interferes with the following...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic</td>
<td>Idealistic, high expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistant/non-compliant</td>
<td>Disagrees with, chooses alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>Barriers to change; Support needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining clinical stability/abstinence</td>
<td>Promoting life worth living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puts self/recovery at risk</td>
<td>Takes risks to try new things/grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment works</td>
<td>Person uses tx as a tool in recovery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Content of table derived from the following sources: Tondora and Davidson, 2006; White, 2001; and Meta Services, 2005.
Date: 3/10/2015

From: Jeffery Smith

To: ABC Management

Re: Explanation of Justice Involvement

Dear Mr. Greene:

In 2010 I was arrested and charged for carrying a gun without a license; I plead guilty to the charge. I was sentenced to three years probation, which I completed without violation. I have not had any arrest or charges since that incident.

I recognize that my behavior and decisions that I had been making at that time in my life were not good ones. I also recognized that I not only valued my life, but the life of the people around me.

At that point I decided that I needed more structure so I landed in a series of jobs which still didn’t offer me the structure I felt I probably needed. I then decided to get into a trade, and went to the Bayline Management Training Center. I completed the course in Building Management in 2012, and have maintained a building management certificate ever since.

I also went back to school in 2011 and obtained my Maryland high school diploma.

I’m currently attending Maryland College of Technology, completing the required courses to receive a certificate in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC).

I think that I am an excellent candidate for a position in your company. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you and further discuss my progress, as well as the qualifying skills I have for a job in your company.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeffery Smith
Date: 3/10/2016

From: Jimmy Ricky

To: ABC Management

RE: Explanation of Justice Involvement

Dear Mrs. Flower:
In early 2012 I was found guilty of aggravated assault, during that time I was living with the symptoms of an undiagnosed mental illness, which played a role in the decisions that I was making. I have now been in treatment for four years and have had no other incidences. Mental health treatment makes it possible for me to make safe and responsible decisions.

I would appreciate an opportunity to meet and share with you the experiences and successes that I have had since re-entering into the community. I am particularly proud of the time that I spent working at a shelter for youth. During my time there I worked with the administrative assistant processing paperwork, as well as mentoring to the young people.

I am eager to learn and enhance my skills, and I know I can do the work that you need done. I am also bonded by the Federal Bonding Program.

While I do not have a lengthy work history, you will find that my work ethic and commitment to complete the task given to me is strong.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Ricky
Ban The Box

• That box that asks...
  “have you ever been convicted of a felony?”

• Delaying the background check asking later in the hiring process.

• Removing that barrier to employment.
Twenty-four states
Over 100 cities
Some states have laws prohibiting private employer from asking any variation of the question

- Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode...

[National Employment Law Project](http://example.com) (pdf link)
Individuals Seeking Bonding

The Federal Bonding Program provides fidelity bonding for the first six months of employment for hard-to-place job applicants. If you are seeking bonding services and/or a job you should call the following toll-free number for 1. the location of the workforce office/one-stop center nearest your home and, 2. the telephone number of the State Bonding Coordinator for your state. In those states without a state bonding coordinator, callers will be referred to the nearest career center/one-stop center for employment assistance.

Call toll free: 1.877.US2.JOBS (1.877.872.5627)

The McLAUGHLIN COMPANY 9210 Corporate Blvd., Suite 250 Rockville, MD 20850

PHONE: 800.233.2258 or 202.293.5566
Federal Bonding Program

• Have a clear understanding of bonding
  – What is bonding
    • Insurance that projects the employer from “at-risk” employees
  – Who is eligible to be bonded
    • Justice involved applicants
    • Recovering substance users
    • Applicants who have little to no work history
    • Applicants who receive Entitlements
    • Have poor credit history

– Is there a cost to the applicant?

Federal Bonding Program
Expungement

• Have a clear understanding of expungement
  – What can and cannot be expunged?
    • Misdemeanor can be expunged
    • Felonies can’t be expunged (fact or myth?)

  – What is the cost?
    • $30 for single case
    • Fee Waiver

  – What paper work needs to filled out and where?
    • The request must go to the arresting agency

  – What do you do after something has been expunged?
    • Check with reporting entity
Resources

Expungement and Criminal Records: State-Specific Information

Directory of State Bonding Coordinators
Life Mapping

Applicant

Neighbor Steve
Owns Dealership

Mom’s Friend
Ms. Lilly
Manages Insurance Office

Aunt Sally
Owns Bridal Shop
Job Development Strategies

• Visit employers before the job seeker to build relationships
• Talk to the person who has the power
• What is the company’s policy
• Keep track of employer contacts
• Learn what the hiring process is once an application has been submitted
• Say “thank you!”
The Approach

• I work for an agency that assists adults with getting back to work. I’m here in the community to learn about employer’s needs. Do you have a moment to talk? Or...I can come back at a time more convenient to talk?
  – Ask questions
  – Ask what the hiring policy is for working with justice involved
  – Explain how you support employers

• Treat warm calls the same as you would cold calls.
Rural Communities

• Agency partnership building

• Community events

• Board member relationships

• Employer references
THANK YOU!

Meka McNeal email: mmcneal@som.umaryland.edu