

# Discussing Criminal History

There are at least five different ways that your criminal background can be made aware to the employer during the job search / interview process.

1. When you are initially applying for a job by application or resume, you may decide to attach a statement discussing your criminal background. When doing this be sure to turn in your application or resume to the **hiring manager**. At this time you can have a conversation with the potential employer about your skills for the job applied for and be up-front about your background in person.
2. In the interview, generally one of the first questions is something like, "Tell me something about yourself." Be sure to match your skills to the job applied for, how long you have been doing this type of work, touch on some of your past responsibilities and give a few of your personal attributes. Then, you may say something like, "In addition to these experiences, I would like to take this time to share something more personal about myself. Then, tell the employer your prepared statement.
3. The third way your conviction(s) could be revealed in the interview is when the employer asks you about it. You have checked the box on your application and you said you would like to discuss it in the interview. Now, give your prepared statement. Or, you are asked the question, "What is your biggest weakness?" Give your prepared statement.
4. At the end of the interview, the employer has asked all of his/her questions and you have asked a few questions, you could say something like, "Before I leave here today, there is something I would like you to know." Then, tell the employer your prepared statement.
5. Now, the interview is over and you did a great job selling your skills to the employer and they make you a job offer. This is the time to accept the offer and disclose to the employer about your criminal background. "Mr. Smith, I am happy to accept this offer and I would like to take this opportunity to let you know some additional information about myself." Tell them your prepared statement.

# Rules to Responding About Your Criminal Background

**Be Honest.** Never lie on the application or in the interview. If the company hires you and you have not told them about your conviction(s) and they find out, you can/will be fired because the employer may feel you can't be trusted and may be wondering what else you have lied about.

If you have multiple convictions on your record, mention it, not just the most recent conviction. The employer will do a background check and see everything on your record. You don't want the employer to think you are not telling the full truth.

## Steps to Responding to the Conviction Question

### 1. Take Responsibility

Put time / distance between your conviction date and today's date **e.g.**

1. Five years ago, I made some poor choices.
2. I was hanging around the wrong group of people.
3. I was in possession of a controlled substance and my judgment was clouded.

### 2. What's Different Now

Through my rehabilitation, I've earned my GED and participated in a variety of programs that helped me to take a deeper look at myself. Also, I have obtained my forklift certification and am enrolled in a two year manufacturing training program this fall.

### 3. What have you Learned since

1. I have learned that I can do positive things and have positive outcomes.
2. Working hard and paying for things is more rewarding than taking things that don't belong to me.
3. I didn't want to continue down that road and I needed to make some changes.

### 4. Skills related to job applied for

I would like to use my experience in your warehouse. I am very organized and understand the importance of quality control and maintaining customer satisfaction. I work well under pressure and will be an effective team member. I really want to be apart of your team.

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## 2. What's different now

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## 4. Skills related to job applied for

## **Putting it all Together**

### **Sample Conviction Response**

Mr. Smith when you check my background you are going to see some things that I am not very proud of. There was a time in my life, 5 years ago, when I was being careless and using poor judgment. I thought the fast life was the way to go. As a result, I was in possession of a controlled substance.

I've since gone through rehabilitation. During this time, I completed several positive programs such as work readiness, thinking 4 a change, Life Skills, etc. Also, I obtained my GED, a certificate in cabinet making, and painting and decorating.

I've learned that an honest living is the best way to go. Now, I am living with a set of core beliefs and values that begin with integrity and end with community.

In viewing my resume, I am certified to operate a stand-up and sit-down forklift both propane and electric. I am hard working and get along well with my peers. I plan to continue my education in business management and use my skills assisting your company in meeting its production goals.

### **When talking about your crime(s) soften it up, but still being honest. Here are some examples:**

- I was in possession of a controlled substance
- I was in a verbal / physical confrontation and as a result someone lost their life
- I had an unauthorized entry into a residential / commercial property
- I was using my body as a means of earning a living
- I took someone's possessions by force
- I have a sexual misconduct
- I was under the influence of drugs / alcohol while operating a motor vehicle (as a result some lost their life- vehicular homicide)
- I said some things over the phone that I should not have
- I had an unauthorized possession of a firearm
- I put my hands on another person in a way that I should not have
- I helped some during a crime that took place
- I don't notify the proper authorities of my current status (sex offender)
- I used my authority / access to take money / property that did not belong to me