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Job Seeking Tips

Where do you FIND a Job?

Currently, much of job opportunities rely on online applications and weblinks to advertise positions. Aside from search engine sites, going to specific companies (ie, Walmart) Human Resource pages will show open positions for the companies. Although you may apply initially for a position through the company website, it is advisable to follow up with a trip to the agency in person, to provide them with a hard copy of your resume, as well as to give the manager a face to go along with the name on the application. Seeking new employment can appear overwhelming, but fortunately there are agencies that are available to help you navigate through the job sites, understand the job market, and point you in a successful direction.

Resume and Application tips

Keeping an up to date resume is extremely important. This serves not only as a cheat sheet for your work history when filling out applications, but is also a demonstration to the employer as to your written and organizational skills. Resumes should be reviewed and modified at least once every six months, whether seeking employment or not. This periodic review will keep your information current in the event you should need it.

When filling out an application, use pen. If you are concerned about errors, take two copies of the applications and have a "draft" if needed. Be honest and complete when filling in job history, and make sure you have identified references who can speak positively about your work ethic, and that you have asked permission from these individuals to use them as a reference.

When addressing criminal history on an application, always be honest and check YES if you have been convicted. When asked about the details of the crime, simply put "will explain upon interview".

Before the interview

Make sure to investigate the company that you are applying with in order to have a clear understanding of their mission statement, objectives and policy. Having this information before the interview will give you an opportunity to show the employer just how interested you are.

Practice standard interview questions, such as "why do you want to work here" or "what can you bring to the company" and develop thoughtful responses that are appropriate in length (approximately one minute is usually sufficient).

Have all documents prepared and organized, including copies of your resume and reference page, personal identification documents (ID, SS Card, BC) as well as information on Federal Bonding and Tax Credits. While you do not want to rely on these bonding programs as selling points, it is good information to provide to potential employers who show reservation when hiring someone with a criminal background.

First Impressions

Interview outfits should traditionally be at least two steps above what would be appropriate for the company. For example, if the job is a construction job, wear khaki's and a button down shirt...it likely would. If the job is for a teacher, wear a suit. Avoid excessive jewelry (men and women), colognes or perfumes, and ladies should be conservative with their makeup, if they should wear it at all.

Your job interview starts the moment you walk into the business of potential employment. Your attitude with lobby attendants, security and patrons all show the employer how you may conduct yourself on the job. While in the lobby, be aware of how you are sitting (SIT UP) and your actions. This is a good time to review your resume, or make small polite conversation with the receptionist. This is not a good time to start a personal cell phone conversation, or flirt with the pretty lady who is also waiting in the lobby. The clock has started for your interview at this point and your actions count.

Handling the Criminal History question

If you stated on your application that you would explain your conviction upon interview, be prepared to do just that. This does not mean bring it up; simply have a script as to how you will address the concerns. This conversation should be brief, as you do not want to shift the focus from your employability to your criminal history. When talking about your conviction, there are three things that are important:

- **Take responsibility for your actions.** Regardless of the circumstances of the crime, a potential employer does not want to hear that you were in the wrong place at the wrong time, or that you were hanging with a bad crowd and got caught up. The reality is YOU CHOSE to hang with that crowd or be in that place. Statements such as " I was convicted of Armed Robbery. I made a mistake that I will work the rest of my life to correct, by doing the right thing and giving back to the community that I took from".
- **Show the change in yourself.** Talk about programs both in and out of prison that you have engaged in to demonstrate a commitment to a real change. This can include recovery meetings, volunteering, or any trainings/educational opportunities you have taken advantage of while incarcerated or presently.
- **Show Commitment to the change.** If you are still involved in any recovery, educational, or volunteer programs to support your recovery/commitment, talk briefly about these programs.

After the Interview

Make sure to leave the interview with confidence in your ability to perform the duties of the job and a positive impression on the employer. Within 24 hours after the interview, send a short thank you note to the employer (preferably not an email) , acknowledging the time and consideration that was given to you. Sample thank you letters are available in the Employment Resources folder.