

DEALING WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT A DIFFICULT BACKGROUND

People with criminal backgrounds have some of the brightest red flags flying. In Kansas alone, one in 54 adults is currently under the supervision of some level of corrections, either in a facility or the community. Nationwide, there is 1 out of every 31 people who are currently incarcerated in prison or jail or on probation or parole. Over 158 million people in the United States have been in the control of the corrections system.

That's millions of red flags waving in front of employers! So, why would an employer want to hire someone with a criminal background? The answer is simple: **Thousands of employers hire ex-offenders each day because they have desirable skills and work habits; many also work for very low wages.** But they want to hire rehabilitated ex-offenders who take responsibility and do not pose problems for the employer and fellow employees.

Other tips to remember:

- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer throughout. Remember, you do not want to seem dishonest by avoiding looking at the interviewer in the eye.
- Make your comments positive and concise and to the point. Do not ramble on and on out of nervousness. A little silence is all right.
- **Avoid introducing the subject early** in the interview. You want to have a chance to impress the interviewer with your positive attributes and make a favorable first impression. Also, **avoid introducing the subject of a red flag behavior at the very end** of the interview unless you have overcome the problem in a truly significant way. You want the final thing the interviewer remembers about you to be positive.
- Immediately while talking about the crime, tell the employer about the federal bonding program that you are eligible for, give the employer a brochure about the program, and talk about what an advantage that can be for the employer.
- Tell the truth in the most positive manner possible, but do not confess more than is necessary.
- Avoid blurting out all your weaknesses or negatives, limiting your answer to the work situation, and do not bring your home life into the discussion.

Remember, you are a mature, trustworthy, and loyal individual who has the requisite motivation, attitudes, and skills to do the job in question. You've learned important life lessons. Now you want to get on with a new and productive life. You only ask that the employer give you a chance to earn his trust and prove your value.

