

Right<sub>on</sub>  
CRIME  
★

# TALENT UNLOCKED

A H A N D B O O K F O R E M P L O Y E R S



# RUNNING A BUSINESS ISN'T EASY

Every day, you're making decisions about market demands, solving customer problems, and building a team you can rely on.

The question is: how do you find and keep quality employees in today's challenging workforce landscape?

At Right On Crime, we understand that workforce shortages aren't just frustrating—they can hold your business back. That's why we created this Employer Handbook: to give you practical tools for strengthening your team while making a positive impact in your community.

Inside, you'll discover why second chance hiring is working for businesses nationwide—and how you can tap into an untapped workforce to drive growth, loyalty, and success.

# THE BUSINESS OF SECOND CHANCE HIRING

More than 80 million Americans—roughly 1 in 3—have a criminal record. Many have served their time, returned to their communities, and faced significant barriers when trying to find work.

Research shows that individuals with a criminal history are often more loyal and dependable than those without, and providing a steady paycheck can turn someone from a tax burden into a productive taxpayer.

Some of America's largest companies are already seeing the benefits, successfully hiring thousands of individuals with a criminal record, including American Airlines, Georgia-Pacific, JP Morgan Chase, Koch Industries, Starbucks, Target, and Walmart.

It's natural to have concerns about hiring someone with a criminal history—but it's worth remembering that 95% of everyone incarcerated are eventually released. By proactively tapping into this workforce, you can strengthen your team, grow your business, and boost your bottom line.

***Stronger businesses mean stronger economies, safer communities, and a brighter future for everyone.***



# POSITIVE IMPACTS ON FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Nearly half of all children in the U.S. have a parent with a criminal record. By embracing second chance hiring, employers do more than fill a position—they help break the cycle of poverty and crime that can span generations.

A steady job provides financial security, stable housing, and is the single best predictor of preventing future crime.

The impact is real: 38% of children with parents involved in the justice system live at or below the federal poverty level, and half of these children are under 10 years old, with nearly 1 in 5 under the age of 4.

Businesses that champion reentry help reduce recidivism and create lasting positive change in their communities—proving that second chances are good for people, families, and business alike.

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————— ” —————

**BRETT TOLMAN**  
ROC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# EMPLOYER LIABILITY LAWS

## PROTECTIONS FROM EMPLOYEE WRONGDOING

To address employer concerns about negligent hiring liability, many states have passed laws that limit employer risk when hiring individuals with a criminal record.

While the scope of protection varies, the trend is clear: states are making it easier for businesses to confidently participate in second chance hiring.

Currently, protections exist in states including Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Washington —with more states actively considering similar legislation.

# EMPLOYER CONSIDERATIONS

Employer liability laws help guide decisions about whether someone with a criminal background is a good fit for a position. The Michigan Department of Corrections suggests considering:



**Relevance:** Does the offense relate to the job?



**Timeframe:** How long ago did it occur? (After seven years of law-abiding behavior, risk levels are the same as those with no record.)



**Severity:** Was the offense serious or work-related?



**Progress:** What has the individual accomplished since—job skills, education, treatment, or personal growth?

# FEDERAL BONDING PROGRAM

To ease concerns about liability, the U.S. Department of Labor created the Federal Bonding Program (FBP) in 1966. This program provides free fidelity bonds—insurance that protects employers against employee theft of money or property.

The FBP offers coverage in \$5,000 increments up to \$25,000 for six months, with no cost and no deductible to the employer. Bonds apply to any job, in any state, covering full- or part-time employees (including those hired through staffing agencies) for dishonesty on or off the worksite.



# WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT

The WOTC is a federal incentive for employers who hire individuals with a criminal record. The credit is based on wages paid during the first year of employment, capped at \$6,000.

- 25% (\$1,500) credit for employees who work 120–399 hours
- 40% (\$2,400) credit for employees who work 400+ hours

To qualify, employers and applicants must complete Form 8850 (Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request) on or before the job offer is made.



# WORKING WITH PROBATION AND PAROLE

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, over 1.8 million people are incarcerated in the U.S., and another 4.5 million are under community supervision, mostly for non-violent offenses. For many, employment is a key condition of parole or probation.

Probation officers, correctional agencies, and nonprofits often partner with businesses to connect these individuals to training and jobs—creating a steady pipeline for second chance hiring.



# PARTNERING WITH NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Nonprofit organizations play a unique role as both employers and service providers. Many offer critical support—such as job training, transportation, mental health care, and substance abuse services—that helps individuals with criminal backgrounds rebuild their lives and strengthen communities.

These organizations often partner directly with businesses by providing on-the-job training and connecting employers to local, state, and federal agencies for potential tax benefits. In many states, correctional agencies also work closely with nonprofits to support reentry and expand employer engagement.



# PARTNERING WITH PUBLIC AGENCIES

Correctional and government agencies often provide training and resources to prepare individuals for reentry. Soft skills programs cover essentials like job readiness, money management, parenting and family relationships, communication, victim awareness, and substance abuse prevention. Many facilities also offer job skills training through vocational and technical programs.

Since many entering prison were unemployed at the time of their crime, these programs play a key role in successful reentry. In some states, individuals can even earn occupational licenses or complete the training needed for licensure before release. Right On Crime supports legislation requiring state licensing boards to review criminal histories case by case, ensuring qualified applicants aren't unfairly excluded.

# DEBANKING & FINANCIAL ACCESS

## **Supporting Workforce Stability for Second-Chance Employees**

Access to basic banking services is often an overlooked barrier for second chance employees. Individuals returning from incarceration may struggle to open or maintain accounts due to prior closures, unpaid fees, or lack of identification.

Without access to banking, employees may experience delayed pay, rely on costly check-cashing services, and face added financial stress. Over time, this instability can impact attendance, performance, and retention, creating avoidable challenges for employers as well.

Employers can help by offering flexible payroll options. While direct deposit is standard, it should not be the only method. Alternatives like paper checks or low-fee payroll cards ensure employees can access their wages reliably. Partnering with banks or credit unions that offer second-chance accounts can also expand access and reduce barriers tied to past banking history.

Onboarding is another key opportunity. Employers can provide guidance on opening accounts, outline required documentation, and connect employees with trusted financial institutions when possible.

Improving access to safe, affordable banking is a simple step with long-term impact. Employees who can consistently access and manage their wages are more stable and engaged, leading to lower turnover and stronger workforce outcomes.

# TALENT UNLOCKED

## EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT FORUMS

Across the country, Right On Crime hosts employer engagement forums to share best practices for hiring and retaining talent. These forums go beyond traditional crime reduction efforts to explore innovative ways businesses can strengthen their workforce.

By participating, employers learn how to build reliable, motivated, and engaged teams while creating meaningful opportunities for individuals reentering their communities.



# Right<sub>on</sub> CRIME

Right On Crime is a national campaign of the Texas Public Policy Foundation that supports conservative criminal justice solutions resulting in less crime, fewer victims, and safer communities. The movement was born in Texas in 2007 and has led the way in implementing conservative criminal justice reforms across the nation.

The Texas Public Policy Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-partisan research institute.

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