



Department of County Management
MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

Human Resources
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 10, 2007

TO: Multnomah County Human Resources Managers

CC: Barbara Willer, Multnomah County Deputy Chief Operating Officer
David Rogers, Executive Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice
Patty Katz, Beyond Barriers Program Director

From: Travis Graves, Multnomah County HR Director

RE: Multnomah County Applications

In response to a request from the Partnership for Safety and Justice, Multnomah County is joining a number of counties and cities across the country in using best practices in regard to supporting the hiring of formerly incarcerated people and people with conviction histories. Supporting the success of formerly incarcerated people reduces recidivism, increases public safety, and helps lower the cost of incarceration. Securing stable employment is one of the primary factors in making a successful transition back into the community and we have determined there are fairly simple steps that we can take to provide meaningful support. In the past year and a half, major municipalities including Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Minneapolis and St. Paul, among others, have changed their hiring policies and practices to reduce the barriers to hiring qualified people with past convictions. Much of these changes revolve around when and how questions about an applicant's criminal history are asked.

We evaluated our application process specifically with regard to an applicant's conviction history and removing the question about conviction history from the county's initial, generic job application is a solid first step. Asking the question so early in the process is unnecessary and discourages people who may be the best candidate for the job from applying. In conjunction with the Chair's Office and after discussions with Human Resource Managers, I made the decision to remove the conviction question from our application as I do not believe that it is necessary to ask it up front if it is not being used to screen or evaluate applicants. Effective October 1, 2007 Multnomah County's online and hard copy applications have removed the question, *"Have you ever been convicted of a felony."*



I realize that some jobs have statutory or policy requirements which bar hiring those with conviction histories. For these positions Departments should continue to note on the job announcement the requirements and request specific information about convictions as part of the supplemental questions section.

I want to reiterate and encourage your units to use a consistent and thoughtful approach when determining the relevancy of conviction histories to employment. There should be an individualized determination of relevance and the conviction should bear a rational relationship to the employment. Important factors to consider:

1. The nature of the crime for which the applicant was convicted.
2. What positive changes the applicant has achieved since conviction.
3. The time elapsed since the applicant was arrested.
4. The applicant's age when he or she was arrested.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Patty Katz and David Rogers from the Partnership for Safety and Justice for providing suggestions with this process. They will continue to coordinate with Multnomah County to help shape the framework we use to formulate our County background check policy and process.