

## CRIMINAL RECORD AND EMPLOYMENT



During the end of April, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the United States decided that they would make changes to the way employers are using the criminal background checks during the process of weeding through applicants and figuring out whom to hire. With the new guidelines in place, employers will not be allowed to not hire someone due to a past arrest or even a conviction, due to the Civil Rights Act. The only time that the employers will have the opportunity to deny an individual employment based on arrests and convictions is if it has to do with their particular position. Some people feel that it was necessary for the EEOC to make these changes, especially since at least 1 in 4 people in the United States have been arrested before or have been convicted of something in the past. This means that there are many people in the United States who are having a hard time finding employment simply because of their past. The vast majority of employers, over 90 percent, have used criminal background checks to learn more about a person and in most cases; those with prior arrests and convictions have not received the job they were applying for. In fact, when a survey was performed to find out whether or not employers would hire individuals with arrests and convictions, more than half of them said they would not hire someone who has a past criminal record. Applicants that may have the skills, experience, and even the necessary credentials could have found themselves being denied for position just because of their record. A decision like this has been waited on for quite a while, especially because not hiring someone due to their criminal past could end up being more along the lines of racial discrimination. The fact of the matter is that Hispanic and African American men are more likely to have a criminal past and even if they have changed their ways, it was often hard for them to find employment. These individuals would usually be denied for positions, even if they had the right credentials for the job. Some could say that is racial discrimination, since a larger portion of minorities will have a criminal record than Caucasian individuals. And, this is the primary reason that the EEOC decided that they had to do something about it and make some changes. While changes have finally been made to the guideline, which is the first changes to have been made within the past two and a half decades, there are still many people who are pushing for the EEOC to make even more changes to the guidelines, believing that this was only a minor improvement.

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