

# INCLUSIVE HIRING

## TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS

Strategies and  
considerations for  
employers to build  
truly inclusive  
workplaces for  
women with a  
history of  
involvement in  
the criminal  
justice system



**VERMONT  
WORKS  
FOR WOMEN**

EQUITY MATTERS HERE.

Individuals with a history of involvement with the criminal justice system represent a large, untapped potential workforce that can fill a critical need for labor across Vermont, while providing employers with motivated, dedicated, loyal employees. We know “fair-chance” hiring is good for business; opening the workforce to justice-involved individuals widens the talent pool, decreases turnover (saving on average \$4000 per employee), supports diversity and inclusion goals, and has the global benefits of improving community safety, and stabilizing families and communities. By excluding formerly incarcerated individuals from the workforce, \$78-88 billion is lost from the gross national product. Furthermore, inclusive organizations are 8x more likely to achieve better business outcomes, 6x more likely to be innovative and agile, and 2x more likely to meet or exceed financial targets.

Vermont’s women’s prison, Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility (CRCF), has housed an average of 101 individuals per year since 2020. A recent employment and training survey at the facility, which garnered 78 responses, indicated that 73.1% of those currently residing there are interested in job training classes, 91% of respondents are proficient in reading, and 69.2% are proficient in math. Furthermore, 96.1% wish to work part or full time upon reentering the community. Vermont Works for Women has been providing contracted employment readiness services within the women’s prison for decades. Our programs offer personal and professional development, including soft skills such as conflict resolution, time management, effective communication, stress management, goal setting, and more, while offering hands-on training and work opportunities to build skills and experience. When women leave the facility, they face numerous challenges and barriers to reintegration. However, with continuity of wraparound support, access to services and opportunities, and employers who are fully inclusive and prepared, they stand ready and eager to meet labor needs in our state.

The workforce is changing as employers and workers alike continue to recognize the need to build a culture that embraces inclusion and belonging, as well as the need for flexibility and workplaces that meet the needs of individuals. Vermont faces a critical labor shortage to meet demand in the climate, infrastructure, manufacturing, outdoor recreation, and other growing industries. We have an opportunity – and an obligation – to harness the potential of all workers. Implementing policies that are good for all workers, but especially for those from historically marginalized groups, takes continuous evaluation, learning, and support.

**This toolkit outlines basic strategies and considerations for employers to build truly inclusive workplaces for women with a history of involvement in the criminal justice system.**

With a focus on removing barriers, offering flexibility and access to resources, and understanding individual needs, the toolkit is a jumping off point to build supportive policies and cultures that result in loyal, long-term employees.



# BUSTING MYTHS

## MYTH:

Past imprisonment impedes someone's ability to perform as an employee.

## FACT:

A study of 1.3 million military enlistees found that enlistees with past convictions had superior performance compared to those with no convictions.

## MYTH:

People with past convictions are unreliable

## FACT:

Employees with past convictions are no more likely to be fired and are more likely to have longer tenure than employees without convictions.

## MYTH:

Someone with a past record is going to behave badly on the job.

## FACT:

Work-related misconduct of workers with criminal records is, on average, less serious than other workers.

## MYTH:

People with past convictions have a greater tendency to be violent on the job site.

## FACT:

While employers are concerned with negligent hiring judgements for violent acts, there is no evidence to support this concern.



**VERMONT  
WORKS  
FOR WOMEN**

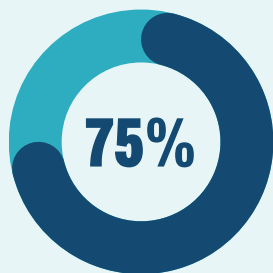
\*Data Sources Listed on Page 27

# STATISTICS

## THAT WILL SURPRISE YOU



% OF FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS STILL UNEMPLOYED 1 YEAR LATER



SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PREDICTOR OF RECIDIVISM:



**NOT  
HAVING  
A JOB**

# OF AMERICANS WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD

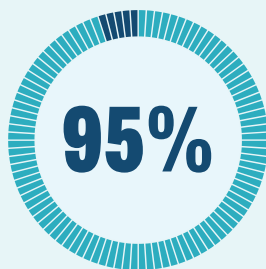


BY EXCLUDING FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS FROM THE WORKFORCE, HOW MUCH MONEY IS LOST FROM GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT?



**\$78-\$87  
Billion**

% OF PEOPLE IN STATE PRISONS THAT WILL REENTER THE COMMUNITY AT SOME POINT



WHAT IS THE TURNOVER COST SAVINGS PER EMPLOYEE OF INCLUSIVE HIRING PRACTICES?



**Performance:** 81% of business leaders and 85% of HR professionals believe workers with criminal records perform their jobs about the same or better than workers without criminal records.

**Work Quality:** 4 out of 5 HR professionals believe the quality of workers with criminal records is about the same or better than workers without – up from 67% who said the same in 2018.

**Hiring Costs:** 81% of HR professionals felt the cost-per-hire of workers with criminal records was about the same or less than workers without criminal records.

**Reliability:** 73% of business leaders and 75% of HR professionals said workers with criminal records were just as or more dependable than workers without criminal records.

\*Data Sources Listed on Page 27



# UNDERSTANDING IMPLICIT BIAS, BARRIERS, AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

Becoming a fully inclusive workplace culture begins with building an awareness of implicit bias throughout the organization and learning strategies to mitigate the impacts of such bias. Implicit bias is the attitudes or stereotypes about groups of people, characteristics, or traits (gender, age, race, etc.) that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. A good starting point for understanding one's own implicit bias is to take the Harvard Implicit Association test (IAT) online (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>). The mission of the IAT is to educate the public about bias. It measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. The IAT may be especially interesting if it shows that you have an implicit attitude that you did not know about. Please see the resources section at the end of this document for additional information and resources on implicit bias.

Justice-involved individuals have historically faced many biases in our communities that result in extreme barriers to building social capital, accessing employment, and participating in the economy fully. Understanding lived experience is important for building an inclusive culture that supports everyone's success in the workplace. Incarceration can have significant effects on individuals, however with the right opportunities and wraparound supports, these can be mitigated. Starting from a place of understanding will help with communication and setting expectations and will help to address issues before they become serious.



# IMPACTS OF INCARCERATION



## Conditions Within the Prison:

Individuals exiting incarceration have become accustomed to a very rigid system starkly different than what it is like living in the community. They have very little autonomy, and there is a dynamic of power and oppression that persists within the facility. Their schedules, movement within the facility, and contact with family are controlled by the Department of Corrections. Residents are encouraged to seek assistance from officers when conflicts arise and are not encouraged to manage and resolve conflict on their own. There is a disconnect from technology and family; although everyone is issued a tablet, there are costs for utilizing anything such as communicating with family, streaming music, or playing games. On the other hand, the realities of scarcity in the facility breed creative problem-solving – for example, using unusual and unique materials to create art. All of these conditions require significant adjustment upon returning to the community.



## Substance Use Disorder:

According to the VT Department of Corrections, roughly 66% of currently (as of February 2024) incarcerated women in Vermont are receiving medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD). A majority of women will be navigating recovery from substance use disorder upon reentry to the community. The risk of an opioid overdose is 40x higher in the two weeks post-release compared with that faced by the general population.



## Medical Health:

The Association of American Medical Colleges reported in a 2023 study that formerly incarcerated individuals are 1.5 times more likely to report a history of diabetes, asthma, or high blood pressure. With individuals likely to have no health insurance or connection to care upon reentry, the risk of dying within two weeks of release from prison is nearly thirteen times higher than that faced by other individuals even after adjusting for age, race, and sex. Additionally, impacted individuals are contending with a lack of skills necessary to navigate the health care system and little faith that the system will work for them.





## Trauma/ Mental Health:

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, formerly incarcerated individuals are up to five times as likely to meet the threshold for serious psychological distress, often struggle to find meaning and purpose, and feel a disconnection from family, loss of autonomy, boredom, isolation, and unpredictability of surroundings due to a separation from social networks and loved ones. For incarcerated women, separation from children often causes guilt, distress, depression, anxiety, and fear of losing mother-child attachment. Many, in fact, suffer from “Post-Incarceration Syndrome,” a syndrome similar to PTSD, meaning that even after serving their official sentences, many people continue to suffer the mental effects. Further compounding the trauma and mental health impacts at Vermont’s women’s prison are the inadequate conditions at Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility. According to the VT DOC, the facility has outdated and degraded physical infrastructure and was never designed for sentenced population or long-term habitation, and there are chronic issues with cleanliness, habitability, and lack of programming space.



## Lack of Housing/Community Supports:

According to the VT Department of Corrections, individuals with lived experience, as well as advocates, point to a lack of transitional and permanent housing as major impediments to successful community reintegration and reentry. Waitlists exist for beds in SUD recovery centers, as well as transitional housing. Even if granted a bed, many individuals struggle to find sustainable employment earning enough to afford an apartment when the temporary situation comes to an end, or the inventory of available housing is so limited they cannot find anything.

Additionally, DOC states that there is a lack of community supports due to “reduced Vermont community capacity due to funding and staffing constraints, and lack of statewide services.” Vermont community service providers see these issues regularly when women they support reenter the community from CRCF. Chronic issues include being released without an ID, which leads to further complications as a valid ID is necessary for employment, housing, driving, setting up a bank account, medical appointments, and more. Moreover, many do not have access to transportation which presents a barrier to accessing appointments and treatment, among other things. DOC notes that women have fewer familial supports than male counterparts while in custody. A majority of incarcerated women in Vermont are mothers, and therefore upon reentry they are often working toward reunification with their children, which adds emotional stress and additional appointments and supervised visits with DCF.

# QUOTES

FROM FORMERLY AND CURRENTLY INCARCERATED WOMEN IN VERMONT



## What should an employer understand about formerly incarcerated workers?

"Not to judge people so quickly based off their background. Everybody deserves a chance. People can change based off whatever beliefs people may have."

*Autumn, formerly incarcerated*

"Formerly incarcerated workers may be very committed employees. Having been given a second chance to be in the community post-release, they can be highly motivated to succeed and contribute."

*Anonymous, currently incarcerated*

"That some of them have held jobs while being incarcerated. They have skills and also have had a chance to get certain certificates for some jobs."

*Anonymous, currently incarcerated*

## What kind of supports may a formerly incarcerated person need for job success?

- Support with anxiety and/or mental health
- Flexibility to access appointments and meetings (i.e., required probation meetings, medical, mental health appointments)
- Higher level of communication to make sure needs can be met without creating interferences
- Better pay than what incarcerated employees get in the facility (currently \$3-\$10 per shift)
- Sponsors/mentors to provide guidance and advice, and take an active role in supporting career advancement
- A job that offers opportunity for higher promotions with increases in pay for job mobility



## What is the biggest misperception about formerly incarcerated people?

**"I think a misperception about formerly incarcerated people is that they won't be worthwhile employees. Incarceration is not a reflection of character or of work ethic. Many formerly incarcerated folks are extremely hard-working and can be as excellent of an employee as someone who has never been to jail. Many of us use the experience to redirect our lives and work on ourselves to become better people and better workers."**

*Anonymous, currently incarcerated*

**"That there is no change. We are violent, drug addicts, thieves; not trustworthy and unreliable and will automatically mess up and end up in jail regardless."**

*Stephanie, currently incarcerated*

**"That 'once a criminal, always a criminal.' I've been here two years and have absolutely no intentions on ever returning here or creating any other crimes for that matter. I haven't allowed this experience to ever change who I am or become an 'ex-con.' And I have taken all programs to help better myself as to having the best chance at success."**

*Anonymous, currently incarcerated*

**"That they are not good people because they have been incarcerated. Even though most of them are good people that have just made a mistake in life."**

*Anonymous, currently incarcerated*

**"That people don't change and that just because someone has a record it means they're going to be a problem."**

*Suzi, currently incarcerated*

# GETTING STARTED

## BEST PRACTICES FOR HIRING AND RETENTION



When your company or organization is ready to start the work of building a truly inclusive workplace for justice-involved individuals, there are some important overall considerations:

- You must have “buy in” from all levels
- This work requires a change of perspective
- Address implicit biases from the start
- Be prepared to reinvest applicant screening funds into building inclusion
- “Fair chance” hiring may not be appropriate for all positions

Examining recruitment strategies, hiring processes, company culture, and retention and advancement opportunities is necessary to thoroughly review and assess your business’ readiness, and to set goals for becoming an inclusive workplace for justice-involved individuals. Some best practices and policies are outlined below.

## Hiring practices

“Open hiring” is a recruiting method that presents the opportunity of employment to anyone that can meet basic expectations. It discontinues hiring practices focused on screening out potential “risky” candidates. Open hiring removes background checks and interviews for entry-level positions and instead accepts applications on a rolling basis. Applicants are kept on a list and selected based on who is next in the queue. This process focuses on whether candidates are on-time, respectful, and ready to work, and provides on-the-job training for the skills needed for the job.

If you must interview for all positions, follow best practices to eliminate bias in the hiring process such as conducting structured, skill-based interviews that focus on strength-based questions. Include your commitment to inclusive hiring on your applications and explain it during the interview. It’s important to train all HR and hiring managers on implicit bias to reduce its impact on the hiring process.



“At Rhino, we offer a crash course (2-day training/orientation program), resource coordinator (20hrs/week), Pharmacy Benefit Manager, PT services by Injury & Health Management Solutions, and recovery coach (every Thursday morning). The whole beauty about open hiring is that it gives people hope. This model works very well for Rhino because we offer entry-level, front-line positions where workers are trained on the job. It’s about today and tomorrow and not the past. We do not require background checks, interviews, or experience. We have three expectations from day one: be on time, respectful and ready to learn. We had a 26% decrease in turnover during our inclusive hiring pilot, we lowered our recruiting costs, and we increased our recruiting pipeline and loyalty.”

**Inclusive Hiring at Rhino Foods:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5zPYXPF3CM>



The Second Chance Business Coalition’s Onramps guide offers the following best practices for job postings, applications, and hiring :

- We use inclusive application language that is accessible to diverse audiences
- Our job descriptions clearly state relevant requirements
- Our job descriptions focus on qualifying skills and competencies
- Our job descriptions do not require candidates to disclose past convictions (we "Ban the Box")
- If we conduct background checks, we notify candidates on our applications (in a manner consistent with applicable law)
- We state on our job posting that we are a second chance employer

## Background checks

Background checks can understandably be a barrier for justice-involved applicants. Evaluating your background check policies should include conversations on whether background checks are really required for each position. If they are necessary for certain roles, make sure to use a reliable, accredited agency and make the background check the last step in the hiring process. Limiting the lookback period and encouraging proactive candidate discussions about any past convictions can help reduce barriers and create opportunity. Convictions more than 3-7 years back are less likely to influence present job performance. If a conviction surfaces during a background check process, you may consider the following:

- Does the conviction pose a job-related risk?
- How serious is the prior offense?
- How serious is the potential harm?
- Has the applicant been referred by an established reentry community partner/organization?

“Values-led hiring is about eliminating barriers for people who want to get back into the workforce. At Ben & Jerry’s, we ended the practice of criminal record inquiries as part of the initial application process...We did it for two reasons. First, we did it because it became clear to us that the practice reinforced systemic racial and economic inequities. Secondly, we realized that requiring disclosure of a criminal record in the first phase of the application process stands in the way of our aspiration to build a diverse, inclusive and high-performing team.”

<https://www.benjerry.com/values>



## Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Guidance

It's important to be aware that there are specific guidelines outlined by the EEOC related to an employer's use of an individual's criminal history in making employment decisions. Specifically, EEOC says that these decisions may, in some instances, violate the prohibition against employment discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. It further states the following :

*“The fact of an arrest does not establish that criminal conduct has occurred, and an exclusion based on an arrest, in itself, is not job related and consistent with business necessity. However, an employer may make an employment decision based on the conduct underlying an arrest if the conduct makes the individual unfit for the position in question. In contrast, a conviction record will usually serve as sufficient evidence that a person engaged in particular conduct. In certain circumstances, however, there may be reasons for an employer not to rely on the conviction record alone when making an employment decision. A violation may occur when an employer treats criminal history information differently for different applicants or employees, based on their race or national origin (disparate treatment liability).”*

## Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

WOTC is a federal tax credit available to employers who invest in American job seekers who have consistently faced barriers to employment. Employers may meet their business needs and claim a tax credit if they hire an individual who is in a WOTC targeted group. Employers must apply for and receive a certification verifying the new hire is a member of a targeted group before they can claim the tax credit. After the required certification is secured, taxable employers claim the WOTC as a general business credit against their income taxes, and tax-exempt employers claim the WOTC against their payroll taxes. Currently, WOTC is authorized until December 31, 2025.



“The concept is simple; Open Hiring means no interviews, no background checks, no resumes. Individuals put their name on a list, and when the next opening comes up, they get a job. Greyston Bakery is 40+ years of proof that Open Hiring works. Our workforce successfully produces millions of first-rate brownie products enjoyed worldwide thanks to our longtime partnership with Ben & Jerry’s.” <https://www.greyston.org/job-seekers/>

At Greyston, Open Hiring has:

- Reduced time-to-hire by 80%
- Reduced hiring costs up to 93%
- Increased positive perception of work culture and trust in employer
- Generated positive economic impact directly to the local community



## Orientation & Onboarding (Training)

Research shows that offering a well-structured orientation and onboarding program that includes mentorship and ongoing training serves to set justice-involved employees up for success and promotes greater retention. One study found that new employees who were provided a structured orientation were 69% more likely to stay at the company for up to three years (<https://www.gettingtalentbacktowork.org/learn-more/>).

Mentorship programs provide newer employees, including those with criminal records, a place where they are able to ask questions and gain comfort in a new company. It’s important to be conscious of the fact that justice-involved individuals are coming from an environment where a lot of individuality and decision-making has been stripped away and may require ongoing support and training to help build these skills as they make this transition. Pairing them with a seasoned employee for guidance can make a big impact. If all employees are trained around inclusive hiring, they will be better prepared and motivated to take on a mentorship role, and this will continue to build an inclusive culture and make all employees feel like they belong.



# Orientation & Onboarding (Training), cont.

Supervisor and manager training is imperative to inclusive hiring. Supervisors need to understand the lived experience of individuals coming from an incarcerated setting and how it may impact their behavior and performance in the workplace. Things are not always what they seem; for example, a number of external and complicated factors could be underlying issues at work such as:

- Being under supervision
- Probation/parole meetings at convenience of PO
- Restrictions on being able to accept overtime hours
- Restrictions on working at additional work sites
- Knowing a PO can stop by place of employment at any time
- Critical medical appointments
- Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) appointments
- Counseling/therapy requirements
- Reunification with children
- Transportation
- Housing
- Debt/Credit issues
- Recovery from addiction

Proper training and resources and establishing policies and procedures upfront as to how you will address workplace issues will help mitigate problems and concerns that arise. Questions to consider in advance are:

- What can be considered a reasonable accommodation?
- Where do you have to draw the line? Is there a backup/coverage plan?
- How do you decide if it's not working and it's time to separate?
- What other supports and resources can you bring in?





# Retention & Advancement

Some of the top barriers to advancement include focusing on credentials instead of skills, and unclear prospects – advancement opportunities not clearly outlined and announced to all employees. Frontline employees (defined as hourly workers, primarily individual contributors, making \$22 per hour or less and employed in the customer service, financial and professional services, healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, retail, shipping, and logistics and transportation industries) who have previously been involved in the criminal justice system typically demonstrate high motivation, despite historical underinvestment in their career advancement. For example, according to a 2022 McKinsey & Company study, these workers are more likely to dedicate nonwork hours to upskilling (14 percentage points higher for respondents with involvement in the criminal justice system) and to apply to advancement opportunities (as much as nine percentage points higher). Employers that hire for skills, not credentials, can open advancement opportunities for diverse employees, tap into new and highly motivated talent pools, and build a more inclusive workforce. McKinsey found that the top motivators for frontline workers in the workplace are job growth or promotion, learning opportunities, an aligned skill set, and a supportive manager.

The Second Chance Business Coalition's Onramps guide offers these key retention best practices for supporting employees with a history of justice involvement\*:

- We have reviewed our benefits package with a lens of inclusivity
- We offer transportation options and subsidies for employees
- We provide flexible and transparent scheduling opportunities
- We support candidates and employees with expungement or record sealing
- We provide benefits that help employees build toward goals such as home ownership and further education
- We offer milestone incentives to reward retention and ongoing training
- We facilitate ongoing professional development and credentialing opportunities for employees
- We are able to provide letters and references to support probation and parole hearings, record sealing, pardons and other justice-related issues

\*BONUS, these best practices also support retention and advancement of women and other underrepresented groups!

# EMPLOYER CHECKLIST

## FOR GETTING STARTED



Use this checklist as a starting point to evaluate where you are at with your current policies, and what may be a good place to start making changes or improvements toward inclusive policies and practices that support justice-involved individuals. There may be low-hanging fruit and easy steps that are a good entry into this work! Adapted from: <https://www.envoy.us/assessment>

Question	Not there yet	Needs Improvement	Good Start	Getting There	Best Practices
<b>What is your internal policy for running background checks?</b>	Run background checks for all positions <u>before</u> conditional offer made	Run background checks for a subset of relevant positions <u>before</u> conditional offer made	Run background checks for all positions <u>after</u> conditional offer made	Run background checks for subset of relevant positions <u>after</u> conditional offer made	Do not utilize background checks and consider all candidates regardless of conviction
<b>How far back do your background checks look?</b>	Consider all convictions regardless of how long ago they occurred	Consider convictions within past 0-10 years	Consider convictions within past 0-5 years	Consider convictions within past 0-3 years	Do not utilize background checks and consider all candidates regardless of conviction
<b>How does your organization approach candidate hiring decisions?</b>	Decline candidates whose background checks reveal past convictions	Use a hiring matrix that determines which candidates are declined based on conviction and position	Use hiring matrix that guides decisions; invite each candidate to discuss circumstances before making final decision	Review each candidate's convictions in context of specific job requirements	Do not consider conviction histories in hiring decisions



Question	Not there yet	Needs Improvement	Good Start	Getting There	Best Practices
<b>How does your team approach recruiting candidates with past convictions?</b>	Purposeful about not posting and recruiting in channels likely to attract candidates with past convictions	Do not proactively recruit or avoid recruiting candidates with past convictions	Deliberate posting in places that will reach candidates with past convictions	Proactively recruit candidates with past convictions through community partnerships and referrals	Comprehensive and embedded programs to engage candidates that are currently and formerly incarcerated
<b>How does your team address potential employment challenges for people with recent justice-involvement?</b>	Zero-tolerance policy for time missed due to personal challenges	No resources to support employees through personal challenges	Members of our team trained to help address personal challenges employees may face	Partnerships with outside organizations that have expertise in addressing reentry challenges	Offer on-site supports to candidates who may be facing challenges to reentry
<b>How does your team approach talent development and mobility for justice-involved individuals?</b>	Do not offer career pathways or opportunities for advancement	Promotion and advancement opportunities available, but no process in place to share with employees	Create development and advancement plans with each employee and check in regularly	Offer training and professional development to support employees with goals	Offer tailored incentives, training, and/or advancement opportunities to employees with justice involvement to accelerate

Question	Not there yet	Needs Improvement	Good Start	Getting There	Best Practices
<b>How does your team approach coaching and training staff on reentry and justice involvement?</b>	Have not considered coaching and training staff on reentry and justice involvement	Are aware of community resources on reentry and justice involvement and have at least one staff trained	Have communicated our values, policies and practices on inclusivity and have resources available for staff	Offer training to HR staff and relevant managers on impacts of justice system and how to support employees	Offer training to HR staff and managers on impacts of justice system, how to support employees, and offer ways for staff to engage in this work
<b>How does your team approach language and messaging around justice-involved individuals?</b>	Use language that aligns people with their convictions (ex-con, felon, etc.)	Do not explicitly address or provide guidance on language	Broadly encourage people-centered language	Use people-centered language explicitly in communicating about justice involvement	Provide guidance and training to staff on people-centered language
<b>What is your strategy to communicate your Fair Chance hiring commitments and practices?</b>	Do not communicate or engage externally about Fair Chance hiring	Willing to share our policies and practices, but do not have strategy to disseminate	Share our commitments to Fair Chance hiring on application, website, and other	Seek opportunities to speak publicly and take leadership role on Fair Chance hiring	Advocate to our vendors, partners, policymakers and peers to improve inclusive hiring



# CONCLUSION



Vermont is faced with a chronic labor shortage, combined with low unemployment, which is burdening our employers and having an impact across industries. Employers can harness an untapped, eager workforce by building an inclusive workplace and implementing supportive policies that remove barriers for justice-involved individuals to access meaningful work and economic stability. This takes intentional work and dedicated resources from employers; however, the return on investment has been proven. Employers who are leaders in this work make a commitment beyond just updating policies and procedures; they make real cultural change, build intentional relationships, offer wraparound supports, and celebrate and advocate. Some additional ways you can support, advocate, and celebrate these initiatives are:

- Talk with local legislators and lawmakers about your experience and successes
- Show up – at panels, events, workforce coalitions, etc. to share your stories
- Write letters for employees with records for expungement, probation, court, etc.
- Celebrate the personal successes of justice-involved individuals in your workforce

You don't have to do it alone! Though it can seem daunting, there are resources, research, and assistance available to support you and success stories from businesses that are leaders in these initiatives. Many community organizations in Vermont stand at the ready to support your workplace, and to directly support justice-involved individuals on the job. This toolkit serves as an overview of steps toward building an inclusive workplace for justice-involved employees and a starting point for discovering more information and resources. We encourage you to take this knowledge back to your team and discuss the opportunities, further explore national models, and reach out to local organizations for support and guidance on your journey to inclusive and fair chance hiring. This is a movement, and each new step is progress that builds momentum!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alison", is positioned above the name and title.

Alison Lamagna  
Director of Impact



# GLOSSARY

## OF TERMS



Below is a list of common terms related to the transition from incarceration back into the community and the workforce. Employers may come across these terms on their journey to remove barriers and create inclusive workplaces for justice-involved individuals. It is important to note that using the proper terms and inclusive language in the workplace is one key strategy to building inclusion and belonging. Avoiding derogatory terms such as “addict” or “felon” and instead focusing on people-centered language such as “person in recovery” or “formerly incarcerated individual” goes a long way to signaling a safe, inclusive environment.

### **Ban the Box:**

An initiative, turned into law in 37 states, which removes the ability to ask about any type of conviction history on an initial job application.

### **Community Supervision:**

A term used to describe the various types of corrections supervision in the community and includes probation, parole, and furlough.

### **DCF:**

Department of Children and Families

### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging (often abbreviated as DEI or DEIB):**

The abbreviation for efforts undertaken in a workplace or organization to build environments and cultures that support all individuals regardless of background or identity.

**Diversity** is the range of human differences.

**Equity** is evenly distributed tools and assistance for fairness in outcomes.

**Inclusion** is involvement and empowerment.

**Belonging** is feeling valued, heard, and accepted.

### **DOC:**

Department of Corrections

### **Felony:**

A crime status set by state statute.

### **Furlough:**

An incarcerated sentence served in the community at the discretion of the Department of Corrections with conditions set by DOC and supervised by DOC; the most common furlough is the Community Supervision Furlough (CSF).



**Implicit Bias:**

The attitudes or stereotypes about groups of people, characteristics, or traits (gender, age, race, etc.) that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

**Inclusive Hiring:**

The business practice of not only a willingness to hire people with criminal backgrounds, but also a commitment to support them and provide flexibility as appropriate for these employees to thrive and provide excellent work production.

**Intersectionality:**

A lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. For example, race inequality is often talked about as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality, or immigrant status. However, what's missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.

**Maximum:**

The final date of a conviction sentence. On this date, the person is no longer in the custody of corrections or under any type of supervision. They have completed their sentence and are free. For example, you may hear people say, "I maxed out on June 7th."

**Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT):**

The use of medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, which is effective in the treatment of opioid use disorders (OUD)

**Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD):**

Is an approach to opioid use treatment that uses FDA-approved medications as the treatment for people diagnosed with opioid use disorder.

**Minimum:**

The least amount of time a convicted person is required to serve before being eligible to be released on one of the types of community supervision.

**Misdemeanor:**

A crime status set by state statute.

**Overdose:**

When a person ingests too many or too much of a drug and the body begins to shut down in response. If medical attention/intervention is not immediate, many individuals die from drug overdoses. As of 2023, Vermont has the highest overdose rate per capita in the U.S.

**Parole:**

A type of community supervision; individuals can be supervised on parole at different levels for all types of offenses. Parole is granted by the parole board; conditions are set by the parole board and supervised by DOC. Violations of parole conditions go back before the parole board.

**Power & Privilege:**

Privilege is the unearned advantage we get from being part of a dominant group whose needs have traditionally been prioritized. With privilege comes power and your power is your ability to make an impact.

**Probation:**

A form of community supervision. Probation conditions are set by the court and supervised by DOC.

**PO:**

Abbreviation for Probation/Parole Officer.

**Probation/Parole Officer:**

The DOC employee assigned to supervise an individual sentenced to the custody of the Department of Corrections.

**Recidivism:**

The tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend.

**Reentry:**

The process in which an individual is released from prison, ideally with basic needs and essential appointments like doctors, mental health providers, etc., in place.

**Scarcity Mindset:**

Can be defined as a pattern of thinking that focuses on what you don't have and the underlying belief that you're not ever going to have the things that you want, even when you have access to basic needs, like food, water, housing, income, etc. This scarcity mindset consumes "mental bandwidth" — brainpower that would otherwise go to less pressing concerns, planning ahead, and problem-solving.

**Second Chance Act:**

Federal act that supports (including grants) states, local, and tribal governments and nonprofits in their work to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for people returning from state and federal prison. Authorizes federal grants for vital programs and systems reform aimed at improving the reentry process.

**Sentence:**

The amount of prison time and/or community supervision someone receives at their court hearing for a criminal charge, also known as a "sentencing" hearing.

**Substance Use Disorder (SUD):**

The current acceptable term for people struggling with drug/substance use.

**Technical violation:**

A violation of conditions of community supervision, but not necessarily a new crime. Multiple technical violations with a refusal to engage in an intervention (for example, misuse of substances on multiple occasions with a refusal to engage in treatment) could result in incarceration.



# APPENDIX

## SOURCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



### Local Vermont Community Organizations That Can Support This Work:

Organization	Website	Resources/Programs
Vermont Works for Women	<a href="http://www.vtworksforwomen.org">www.vtworksforwomen.org</a>	Employment support for justice-involved women; training and resources for inclusive hiring
Working Fields	<a href="https://workingfields.com/">https://workingfields.com/</a>	Inclusive staffing agency
Working Bridges	<a href="https://unitedwaynwvt.org/community-impact/our-programs/working-bridges/">https://unitedwaynwvt.org/community-impact/our-programs/working-bridges/</a>	On-site resource coordinators for workplaces; employer training
Recovery-Friendly Workplaces	<a href="https://recoveryvermont.org/becoming-a-recovery-friendly-workplace-implementation-in-4-steps/">https://recoveryvermont.org/becoming-a-recovery-friendly-workplace-implementation-in-4-steps/</a>	Employer resources and training
VT Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence	<a href="https://www.vtnetwork.org/">https://www.vtnetwork.org/</a>	Support for survivors; network of local providers across Vermont
Mercy Connections	<a href="https://mercyconnections.org/">https://mercyconnections.org/</a>	Vermont women's mentoring program; support for individuals who are justice-involved, in transition from prison, treatment court, addiction, and/or mental health crises
Lund	<a href="https://lundvt.org/">https://lundvt.org/</a>	Residential and outpatient SUD treatment for parents; supporting children of incarcerated parents
VT Community Justice Centers	<a href="https://www.vcjn.org/">https://www.vcjn.org/</a>	Restorative responses to conflict and crime; network of centers throughout Vermont

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### Local Vermont Community Organizations That Can Support This Work:

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Vermont Works for Women	<a href="http://www.vtworksforwomen.org">www.vtworksforwomen.org</a>	Employment support for justice-involved women; training and resources for inclusive hiring
Working Fields	<a href="https://workingfields.com/">https://workingfields.com/</a>	Inclusive staffing agency
Working Bridges	<a href="https://unitedwaynwvt.org/community-impact/our-programs/working-bridges/">https://unitedwaynwvt.org/community-impact/our-programs/working-bridges/</a>	On-site resource coordinators for workplaces; employer training
Recovery-Friendly Workplaces	<a href="https://recoveryvermont.org/becoming-a-recovery-friendly-workplace-implementation-in-4-steps/">https://recoveryvermont.org/becoming-a-recovery-friendly-workplace-implementation-in-4-steps/</a>	Employer resources and training
VT Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence	<a href="https://www.vtnetwork.org/">https://www.vtnetwork.org/</a>	Support for survivors; network of local providers across Vermont
Mercy Connections	<a href="https://mercyconnections.org/">https://mercyconnections.org/</a>	Vermont women's mentoring program; support for individuals who are justice-involved, in transition from prison, treatment court, addiction, and/or mental health crises
Lund	<a href="https://lundvt.org/">https://lundvt.org/</a>	Residential and outpatient SUD treatment for parents; supporting children of incarcerated parents
VT Community Justice Centers	<a href="https://www.vcjin.org/">https://www.vcjin.org/</a>	Restorative responses to conflict and crime; network of centers throughout Vermont

<b>VT Probation and Parole Offices</b>	<a href="https://doc.vermont.gov/probation-and-parole-offices"><u>https://doc.vermont.gov/probation-and-parole-offices</u></a>	Support for individuals under supervision; 12 community-based facilities at locations across the state
<b>Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform</b>	<a href="https://www.vcjr.org/"><u>https://www.vcjr.org/</u></a>	Resources, Drop in Reentry & Recovery Center

## Additional Resources/Bibliography:

### FAIR CHANCE HIRING TOOLKITS & EMPLOYER EXAMPLES

<b>Dave's Killer Bread Foundation</b>	<a href="https://dkbfoundation.org/playbook-3/"><u>https://dkbfoundation.org/playbook-3/</u></a>	Playbook/Toolkit
<b>Manufacturing Institute</b>	<a href="https://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/workers/second-chance/"><u>https://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/workers/second-chance/</u></a>	Resource guide, best practices, retention
<b>California Employers' Fair Chance Hiring Toolkit</b>	<a href="https://www.rootandrebond.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/California-Employers-Fair-Chance-Hiring-Toolkit.pdf"><u>https://www.rootandrebond.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/California-Employers-Fair-Chance-Hiring-Toolkit.pdf</u></a>	Resource guide, toolkit (some CA specific info)
<b>Getting Talent Back to Work</b>	<a href="https://www.gettingtalentbacktowork.org/all-resources/"><u>https://www.gettingtalentbacktowork.org/all-resources/</u></a>	Toolkit
<b>Center for Employment Opportunities: A Fair Chance Hiring Guide Toolkit 2023</b>	<a href="https://ceoworks.org/assets/downloads/publications/CEO-A-Fair-Chance-Hiring-Guide-Toolkit-2023.pdf"><u>https://ceoworks.org/assets/downloads/publications/CEO-A-Fair-Chance-Hiring-Guide-Toolkit-2023.pdf</u></a>	Business strategies and best practices



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## SOURCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



### FAIR CHANCE HIRING TOOLKITS & EMPLOYER EXAMPLES, CONT.

National Reentry Resource Center	<a href="https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/resources/fair-chance-hiring-employer-engagement-toolkit">https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/resources/fair-chance-hiring-employer-engagement-toolkit</a>	Fair Chance Hiring Employer Engagement Toolkit
Cincinnati Women's Fund	<a href="https://secondchancecitizens.org/employer-toolkit">Second Chance Citizens – Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation (employertoolkit.org)</a>	Resources, research, toolkit
TED talk on hiring fairly	<a href="#">Nyra Jordan: 4 steps to hiring fairly -- and supporting criminal justice reform   TED Talk</a>	Fair hiring video
Orlando Business Journal	<a href="https://www.bizjournals.com/orlando/news/2019/04/16/why-inclusion-is-good-for-business-and-how-it.html">https://www.bizjournals.com/orlando/news/2019/04/16/why-inclusion-is-good-for-business-and-how-it.html</a>	Inclusive workplaces
Greyston Bakery	<a href="#">Greyston Foundation for Employers   Greyston Foundation</a>	Employer leader in inclusive and fair chance hiring

### EMPLOYER CHECKLISTS

Second Chance Business Coalition	<a href="https://secondchancebusinesscoalition.org/get-started">https://secondchancebusinesscoalition.org/get-started</a>	Onramps Guide – helpful step by step checklists
Envoy	<a href="https://www.envoy.us/learning-center">https://www.envoy.us/learning-center</a>	Employer leader in inclusive and fair chance hiring

## INTERSECTIONALITY/IMPLICIT BIAS

Time Magazine	<a href="https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/">https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/</a>	Kimberle Crenshaw & Intersectionality
Harvard Implicit Association Test	<a href="https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html">https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html</a>	Understanding implicit bias
Verna Myers Ted Talk	<a href="#"><u>Verna Myers Ted Talk, How to Overcome Our Bias? Walk Boldly Toward Them</u></a>	Understanding implicit bias

## IMPACTS OF INCARCERATION

Mental Health & Wellbeing	<a href="https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/there-will-always-be-more-overcoming-scarcity-mindset#:~:text=Scarcity%20Mindset%20can%20be%20defined,%2C%20housing%2C%20in%20come%2C%20etc">https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/there-will-always-be-more-overcoming-scarcity-mindset#:~:text=Scarcity%20Mindset%20can%20be%20defined,%2C%20housing%2C%20in%20come%2C%20etc</a>	Scarcity mindset
American Psychological Association	<a href="https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/02/scarcity">https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/02/scarcity</a>	Scarcity mindset
Prison Policy Initiative	<a href="https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/13/mentalhealthimpacts/">https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/13/mentalhealthimpacts/</a>	Mental health impacts of incarceration
Association of American Medical Colleges	<a href="https://www.aamc.org/news/out-prison-struggling-stay-healthy#:~:text=People%20released%20from%20incarceration%20suffer,to%20die%20soon%20after%20release">https://www.aamc.org/news/out-prison-struggling-stay-healthy#:~:text=People%20released%20from%20incarceration%20suffer,to%20die%20soon%20after%20release</a>	Medical impacts of incarceration

# APPENDIX

## SOURCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



### LOCAL VERMONT INFORMATION & TOOLS

DOC Legislative Report	<a href="https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/WorkGroups/House%20Judiciary/Department%20of%20Corrections/W~Isaac%20Dayno~DOC%20and%20Agency%20of%20Human%20Services%20Presentation%202-14-24~2-14-2024.pdf">https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/WorkGroups/House%20Judiciary/Department%20of%20Corrections/W~Isaac%20Dayno~DOC%20and%20Agency%20of%20Human%20Services%20Presentation%202-14-24~2-14-2024.pdf</a>	VT Corrections data and statistics
Chittenden County Opioid Alliance	<a href="https://www.uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/sites/default/files/uploads/CCOA_EMPLOYER_TOOLKIT.pdf">https://www.uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/sites/default/files/uploads/CCOA_EMPLOYER_TOOLKIT.pdf</a>	Toolkit for employers – VT specific
Rokeby Museum Panel discussion	<a href="https://vimeo.com/870533860">https://vimeo.com/870533860</a>	Local VT advocates panel
Crime Research Group VT	<a href="https://crgvt.org/reports">https://crgvt.org/reports</a>	Stats on criminal justice system in VT, arrests, intersectionality, etc.
Vermont & Substance Use Disorder information	<a href="https://www.uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/sites/default/files/uploads/CCOA_EMPLOYER_TOOLKIT.pdf">https://www.uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/sites/default/files/uploads/CCOA_EMPLOYER_TOOLKIT.pdf</a>	Substance Use Disorder Employer Toolkit
Department of Corrections work/training survey results	<a href="https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/WorkGroups/House%20Corrections%20and%20Institutions/Bills/H.836/Witness%20Documents/H.836~Kim%20Bushey~CRCF%20Vocational%20Training%20Survey~2-13-2024.pdf">https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/WorkGroups/House%20Corrections%20and%20Institutions/Bills/H.836/Witness%20Documents/H.836~Kim%20Bushey~CRCF%20Vocational%20Training%20Survey~2-13-2024.pdf</a>	Data on women wanting to work, reading levels, etc.



## LEGAL/POLICY RESOURCES

<b>Work Opportunity Tax Credit</b>	<a href="https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wotc">https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wotc</a>	Legal and tax credit information
<b>McKinsey &amp; Company</b>	<a href="https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/bridging-the-advancement-gap-what-frontline-employees-want-and-what-employers-think-they-want">https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/bridging-the-advancement-gap-what-frontline-employees-want-and-what-employers-think-they-want</a>	Advancement for frontline employees
<b>US Equal Opportunity Employment Commission</b>	<a href="https://www.eeoc.gov/employers/small-business/criminal-records">https://www.eeoc.gov/employers/small-business/criminal-records</a>	Info on legal requirements, etc.
<b>National Employment Law Project</b>	<a href="https://www.nelp.org/insights-research/ban-the-box-fair-chance-hiring-state-and-local-guide/">https://www.nelp.org/insights-research/ban-the-box-fair-chance-hiring-state-and-local-guide/</a>	The Fair Chance / Ban the Box Toolkit, helpful overview of policy

## DATA SOURCES

- Center for Employment Opportunities, A Fair Chance: Hiring Guide and Toolkit: <https://ceoworks.org/assets/downloads/publications/CEO-A-Fair-Chance-Hiring-Guide-Toolkit-2023.pdf>
- Prison Policy Initiative: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/directlyimpacted2022.html>
- Bureau of Justice Statistics: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/reentry.pdf>  
<https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/eprfp10.pdf>
- American Civil Liberties Union: <https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/re-entry#:~:text=Formerly%20incarcerated%20people%20need%20gainful,most%20important%20predictor%20of%20recidivism.>
- Scholars at Harvard: [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/pager/files/pager\\_ajs.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/pager/files/pager_ajs.pdf)
- Prison Policy Initiative: [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/economics\\_of\\_incarceration/#:~:text=The%20Business%20Case%20for%20Criminal,job%20seekers%20from%20the%20workforce.%E2%80%9D](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/economics_of_incarceration/#:~:text=The%20Business%20Case%20for%20Criminal,job%20seekers%20from%20the%20workforce.%E2%80%9D)
- Second Chance Business Coalition <https://secondchancebusinesscoalition.org/why-it-matters>
- Deloitte Review, The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution 7) [Second Chance Business Coalition https://secondchancebusinesscoalition.org/why-it-matters](https://secondchancebusinesscoalition.org/why-it-matters)

Vermont Works for Women is working to create an equitable Vermont where people of all identities and backgrounds have equal access to opportunities and to thrive economically, where they make confident, deliberate choices about life and work that reflect an expansive grasp of what's possible.

From career exploration programs for middle and high school girls and gender-expansive youth, to job training and career coaching for women, to gender equity consultation for businesses and schools, VWW is committed to improving educational and economic outcomes for Vermont youth and women.

VWW has always held strong values around the transformative power of work and the potential within every individual to take positive risks, face challenges, and pursue their interests as they develop a greater notion of what is possible. These values are the foundation of our work supporting currently incarcerated women, and women with a history of justice involvement.



# THANK YOU!

Vermont Works for Women would like to thank the current and formerly incarcerated women who graciously shared their experiences and perspectives for this toolkit, as well as Kathy Astemborski, DOC Women's Services Division Director and the Vermont Department of Corrections.



# **EQUITY MATTERS HERE**



**VERMONT  
WORKS  
FOR WOMEN**



# INCLUSIVE HIRING

## TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS



**VERMONT  
WORKS  
FOR WOMEN**

EQUITY MATTERS HERE.

Vermont Works for Women promotes economic justice by advancing gender equity and supporting women and youth at every stage of their career journeys.

[www.vtworksforwomen.org](http://www.vtworksforwomen.org)



@vtworksforwomen



@vtworks4women