

Certificate of Restoration of Opportunity (CROP)

Many people who have criminal records are restricted from working in certain occupations even though they are otherwise qualified to do so. In Washington, these occupation restrictions apply to jobs as diverse as chemical dependency counselor, commercial fishing, and barber. Overall, there are more than 90 career paths that may be closed to someone because of a prior conviction.

The Certificate of Restoration of Opportunity (CROP) will improve public safety, increase employer choices and strengthen families by creating an opportunity for people with a criminal record to have their rehabilitation efforts verified, creating a pathway for obtaining necessary occupational licensure and jobs.



Prison Population, 1980-2011 (Source: The Sentencing Project)

1 in 5 Washington adults has a criminal record. Washington's prison population, like that of the entire United States, has been steadily and dramatically increasing over the past 30 years. Increasingly lawmakers and citizens have recognized that this level of growth is unsustainable and bad for our state. Policymakers from across the aisle are committed to reducing the prison population while ensuring the safety of our communities.

Access to jobs reduces recidivism. A key part of reducing our prison population is ensuring that people who serve their time can benefit from their rehabilitation by being able to prove their credentials and become licensed. One study found that people who were employed had an 18% recidivism rate, compared to a 52.3% rate for the general release population.

Reducing Recidivism is a Bipartisan Issue

"Let's focus more resources on rehabilitating those offenders so we can ultimately spend less money locking them up again."

-Rick Perry, Governor of Texas

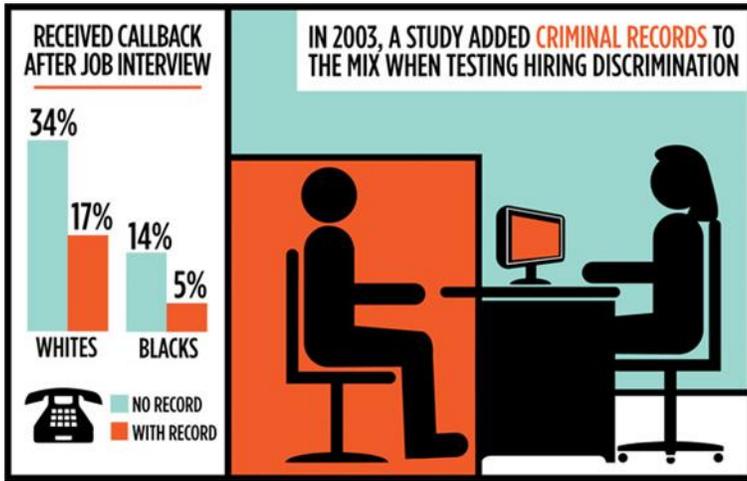
"Collateral consequence statutes and policies impose additional burdens on people who have served their sentences, including denial of employment . . . without increasing public safety . . . Public safety requires us to carefully tailor laws and policies to genuine risk while reducing or eliminating those that impede successful reentry without community benefit."

-U.S. Attorney General Holder

"It is time to fundamentally rethink how we treat and rehabilitate our prisoners."

-Newt Gingrich & Pat Nolan

It is time for Washington to ensure opportunities for all residents and reduce unnecessary barriers to employment that do not contribute to public safety.



(Source: The Nation)

While creating **Certificates of Restoration of Opportunity** will mark Washington as a leader in the movement to be smart on crime and justice, other states have paved the way with proven policies that reduce barriers to employment and certification.

Andrea M’s Story*

Andrea M struggled with a serious drug addiction for many years. As a result, she had a criminal record due to her drug use. Eventually, she sought treatment and engaged in recovery. She went back to school because she wanted to help others who struggle with chemical dependency. She studied addiction counseling and worked hard to obtain her degree.

In spite of all her efforts, there were legal barriers in her way. Although she met all the other qualifications necessary to be a substance abuse counselor, her criminal record prohibited her from pursuing her chosen profession. She was denied her license, and she did not know where to turn.

Finally, she obtained legal assistance from the Union Gospel Mission. An attorney represented her through a grueling eighteen month appeals process to prove that her criminal record should not disqualify her. In the meantime, she could not work in her field.

Eventually, Ms. M was granted her license and now gives back to her community by helping others overcome and recover from drug addiction. If she had had a Certificate of Restoration of Opportunity, she would have received her license when she applied for it, avoided an eighteen month legal battle and helped more people during that time.

Other States

*Pseudonym

State	Type of relief	Process	Felonies Included in Relief	Removes barriers to employment
Arizona	Setting aside judgment	Judicial	Yes	Yes
	Restoration of civil rights	Judicial	Yes	Yes
California	Certificate of rehabilitation	Judicial	Yes	Yes
	Dismissal of charge	Judicial	Yes	Yes
Colorado	Order of collateral relief	Judicial	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	Certificate of employability	Administrative	Yes	Yes
	Certificate of suitability for licensure	Administrative	Yes	Yes
Illinois	Certificate of relief from disabilities	Judicial	Yes	Yes
	Certificate of good conduct	Judicial	Yes	Yes
Iowa	Certificate of employability	Administrative	Yes	Yes
New Jersey	Certificate suspending certain restrictions for employment	Both	Yes	Yes
New York	Certificate of relief from disabilities	Both	Yes	Yes
	Certificate of good conduct	Administrative	Yes	Yes

For more information and to become a sponsor of CROP, contact Merf Ehman or Melissa Lee at 206-464-0838.