



Justice-Involved Workers Bring Benefits and Stability to the Workplace

HR experts find reasons to hire, not turn away, workers with convictions

LANSING, Mich. — Employers shouldn't shun job applicants who have been incarcerated or who have criminal convictions on their records, leading human resource experts said during a webinar co-hosted Wednesday by SHRM — the Society for Human Resource Management — and Safe & Just Michigan, a Lansing, Mich.-based organization that advances criminal justice reforms. The event, titled "Best Practices for Second Chance Hiring: The high value of justice-involved employees," featured a panel discussion with **Johnny C. Taylor Jr.**, the president & CEO of SHRM; **Robert Bennett**, business operations specialist for SHRM; and **Stacy Hickox**, an associate professor at the Michigan State University School of Human Resources & Labor Relations. Safe & Just Michigan Executive Director **John S. Cooper** moderated the discussion.

"People with criminal records are a large and growing portion of our workforce, and many employers have misconceptions about 'second chance' hiring — from performance and reputational concerns, to concerns about recidivism and potential negligent hiring liability," Cooper said. "Correcting these misconceptions is in all of our interests, as removing distortions in hiring will improve economic productivity in our communities *and* improve public safety."

SHRM has championed giving second chances to people who have a criminal past but have gone on to demonstrate their ability and readiness to become a vital part of the workforce. In May 2018, SHRM [published a survey](#) that found that:

- About two-thirds of HR professionals say their company has experience hiring workers with criminal records.
- More than 80 percent of managers and two-thirds of human resource professionals feel that the value workers with criminal records bring to the organization is as high as or higher than that of workers without records

- Three-quarters of managers and HR professionals believe the cost of hiring workers with criminal records is the same as or lower than that of hiring workers with criminal records as for those without.
- A majority of workers in all roles say they are willing to work with individuals with criminal records, and an additional 30-40 percent report that they are neither willing or unwilling.
- Top reasons for hiring workers with criminal records include a desire to hire the best candidate for the job regardless of criminal history, making the community a better place, and giving individuals a second chance.

Despite these facts, several people who make hiring decisions still hesitate to hire a candidate when they see a criminal record in their past. Those concerns can be managed when organizations adhere to human resources best practices, Taylor said.

“When people with criminal histories have gainful employment, it breaks the prison cycle, positively impacting an ecosystem of families, employers, communities and the country,” Taylor said. “That’s why we are urging companies to rethink their attitudes about hiring candidates with criminal backgrounds and to weigh the considerable benefits.”

A video of the webinar will be hosted on the SHRM website following the event.

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Safe & Just Michigan (www.safeandjustmi.org) works to advance policies that end Michigan’s over-use of incarceration and promote community safety and healing. We partner with Michigan organizations and leaders from across the political spectrum, including business and community leaders, faith communities, crime survivor organizations, formerly incarcerated individuals, prisoners and their families, as well as Michigan taxpayers statewide.

SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management, (www.shrm.org) creates better workplaces where employers and employees thrive together. As the voice of all things work, workers and the workplace, SHRM is the foremost expert, convener and thought leader on issues impacting today’s evolving workplaces. With 300,000+ HR and business executive members in 165 countries, SHRM impacts the lives of more than 115 million workers and families globally. Learn more at SHRM.org and on Twitter [@SHRM](https://twitter.com/SHRM).