

So you made a mistake, a big mistake, a mistake that got you in trouble with the law. This trouble resulted in you spending some time in a facility as a guest of the penal system. All is not lost, “Move Forward and Reintegrate” yourself into the job market despite your past.

KCDEE provides a workshop full of winning strategies to help you overcome employment obstacles that exist for offenders and how to secure employment.

Not everyone is as fortunate as Martha Stewart, former politicians, or Robert Downey Jr. to have enough money or talent to pick right back up in a position that they held prior to being incarcerated. Most individuals who have an offense on their record will have to start over in the job market, let alone at the bottom rung of a career ladder. Often there are certain jobs that ex-offenders may no longer hold depending upon the offense they committed. Once you have established the types of jobs you will be seeking, you may want to review and attend some of the other career skills workshops offered by KCDEE.

Once you are ready to begin filling out job applications and, hopefully, going on job interviews. Here are a few tips to help you overcome the obstacles related to your previous offense.

1. **Always tell the truth on your application.** The truth, however, can be stated in the best possible way. For example, a question on the application asks “Have you been convicted of a felony in the past 5 years?” Your conviction was 7 years ago, you can truthfully answer NO. If it was, then you need to answer YES, but provide an explanation that includes your regret and what positive things you done with that time.
2. **Don’t leave unexplained gaps in your resume.** Employers look at consistency in employment to find a potential employee who will help them meet their goals. Any gap raises a red flag and can often cause your resume or application to be put in the “reject” pile. Learning how to properly word a period of incarceration can make all of the difference between being seen for an interview or being bypassed.
3. **Use a Functional resume approach.** When you use this type of resume, you are able to highlight your skills rather than the chronology of your employment.
4. **Offer a letter of Explanation.** If you are fortunate to have an interview scheduled, you will need to explain your offense in person. If you don’t have an interview but are asked for more details about your offense, you should have a letter of explanation available that may be provided to a potential employer. The letter should include information about benefits the Department of Labor and the Internal Revenue Service offer to employers who hire ex-felons.
5. **At the interview.** Offer, at the appropriate time, a three minute incarceration speech. The speech should key on three key points – the mistake you made, why you exhibited poor judgment, and assure them of the changes you have made.

One of our biggest success stories is about a gentleman who was convicted of trafficking marijuana. After he served his 6 ½ year sentence, he returned to society with a high school diploma and no marketable skills. KCDEE provided the mechanism and funding for tuition that allowed him to start over. He has since completed an expedited computer related training, a Bachelor’s degree, and a Master’s degree. Throughout his education, he was progressively moving forward up the career ladder. Today he has experience and most importantly a future.

How we can help – This workshop and many other resources are available to help you find a job that can turn into a career. The Employment and Training Representatives at **Kane County Department of Employment and Education** can help you find all the information you need to find your passion, make a plan, and achieve your dreams.

Four Offices to serve you:

Elgin	30 DuPage Court 847-888-7900 x 230
N. Aurora	2 Smoketree Plaza 630-844-6640 x 203
DeKalb	1701 E. Lincoln Hwy. 815-756-4893 x 240
Yorkville	811 W. John St. 630-553-8304

www.kcdee.org

