

Improving Services to Youth with Experience in the Criminal Justice System

Summary

An aerial photograph of a multi-lane highway with several cars driving. The highway curves through a landscape of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, yellow, and red. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a cloudy sky, featuring several tall skyscrapers.

Report highlights:

- Challenges facing individuals with criminal records seeking to re-enter the labour market
- Steps the City is taking to address the issues being faced by unemployed and underemployed residents with experience in the criminal justice system

The Problem

Individuals with experience in the criminal justice system face specific and significant challenges in the labour market.

Criminal record checks can disclose non-conviction records such as conditional discharges, withdrawn/dismissed charges, stays of proceedings and acquittals.

New legislation governing record suspensions and an increasing use of police reference checks by employers further add to challenges faced by ex-offenders

While youth represent 23% of Ontario's population, they account for 56% of all individuals charged with a crime

Impacts of Legislative Changes Related to Record Suspensions

Double the waiting period to apply

Increased from 3 to 5 years for summary convictions and 5 -10 years for indictable offences



Decline in the number of record suspension applications by 58.5%, from 29,849 in 2011/12 to 12,384 in 2015/16

Increased application fees

From \$150 to \$631



Increased use of police reference checks - 51% of employers in Ontario require police background check as part of routine hiring practices, although not a legislative requirement

Bill 168 An Act to Amend the Ontario Health and Safety Act

Additional requirements for employers to assess the risks of workplace violence and create policies to respond to those risks



The Case for Toronto

- Statistics Canada, police-reported data show that youth 18-24 have the highest rates of criminal offending of any age group
- Marginalized and racialized populations are overrepresented in the justice system
- According to the 2011/12 Annual Report of the Office of Correctional Investigator the number of federally incarcerated black inmates has increased by 75% with black inmates now accounting for 9.3% of the total federal prison populations while representing just 2.9% of the Canadian population

49%

of those living in Toronto (1,264,395 people) identified as a visible minority compared to 19% nationally

At 19.3%

the incidence of low-income in Toronto is significantly greater than in Canada (14.9%), Ontario (13.9%) and the rest of the GTHA (11.5%)

Ontario Works Context

6,000+

have a criminal record (based on self-reported information)

90%

are currently
unemployed

Almost 50%

have been on OW for more than
3 years and have declared that
they are unprepared for
employment

6%

are enrolled in
school or training
programs

Common barriers reported: poor health, a lack of education and skills,
transportation, and addiction(s) and substance abuse

Our Current Work

1

Simplifying the process to obtain record suspensions

2

Advancing inclusive hiring practices

3

Developing an integrated service response

4

Collecting and analyzing relevant data

5

Advancing innovative service delivery approaches

Recommendation

Toronto Employment & Social Services and Social Development Finance & Administration, to work with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and Employment Ontario to expand the existing Employment Connections table by including appropriate city divisions, select employers, educational institutions, training providers and residents to inform the development of a co-ordinated city approach to more effectively address the service needs of individuals with criminal records.