



# Applying for Jobs and Housing: What I Need to Know About My Criminal Record



## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Jobs, Housing, and Criminal Records in Connecticut

This FAQ is color-coded so you can easily find the most relevant information for your situation.

**Red** = Criminal records and employment

**Green** = Criminal records and housing

**Purple** = Legal protections

#### What does it mean to have a criminal record in Connecticut?

If you were arrested or convicted of a crime in adult court, you may have a criminal record. Cases in juvenile court are not public criminal records. Also, if you successfully completed a special program like Accelerated Rehabilitation, or if you received Youthful Offender Status, those cases do not count as criminal records. You can check your Connecticut criminal records at <https://jud.ct.gov/crim.htm>. Other states have different ways to check if you have a criminal record.

#### Can an employer refuse to hire me because of my criminal record?

There are some jobs you may not be able to do because of your criminal record. In general however, unless your criminal record would negatively affect your work, an employer cannot refuse to hire an applicant because of a criminal record if the applicant is otherwise qualified for the job.

To determine if your record would negatively affect your work, you should look to the type of work you want to do, the type of crime you committed, the time that has passed since the crime, and what you have done to rehabilitate yourself. For example, if you have many recent convictions for theft, an

employer could probably refuse to hire you to work with money. You should not be denied a job or housing based solely on an arrest when you have not been convicted.

### **Are there certain jobs I cannot do because of my criminal record?**

Yes, your criminal record can keep you from getting certain jobs or licenses to perform certain work. In general, these restrictions apply to jobs where it is important for you to be extra trustworthy, such as jobs in law enforcement, childcare, schools, and hospitals. The type of criminal record you have will also be important to determine whether you can work in certain jobs. For example, a sex crime conviction will be more important in determining whether you can work in schools than a trespass conviction would be.



### **What should I do if I'm not hired, or I'm fired, because of my criminal record?**

- The first thing you should do is ask the employer to put the reason for not hiring you in writing, and you should ask for a copy of your criminal background check.
- You should then ask your employer to do an “individualized assessment” before they make

a final decision. An individualized assessment means the employer should speak to you about the crime you committed, the time that has passed since the crime, and what you have done to rehabilitate yourself since.

- If after an individualized assessment the employer still says you are not qualified for the job, you should ask if there are other positions for which you are qualified.
- If in the end you feel you were not treated fairly, you can file a complaint with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. You can do this by yourself, or with the assistance of an attorney. More information is available at [portal.ct.gov/CHRO](https://portal.ct.gov/CHRO).

### **Can a private property owner or public housing provider refuse to rent me an apartment because of my criminal record?**

Similar to applying for a job, in most cases a private property owner cannot deny you an apartment because of your criminal record unless the property owner has a legitimate reason. An example of a legitimate reason is if the owner believes your criminal record shows you are a danger to the property or other residents who live there. Also like an employer, a property owner must first do an “individualized assessment” before they can deny you the apartment. This means they should look at the type of crime committed, how long has passed since the crime, and what you have done to rehabilitate yourself. You should not be denied a job or housing based solely on an arrest when you have not been convicted.

Similar to a private property owner, every public housing provider (like Section 8) must do an individualized assessment of your criminal record. Some people think public housing is stricter because often public housing providers have written plans of who they will and will not accept. But even

though they have that plan, they still must do an individualized assessment. There are however two crimes that absolutely prohibit you from living in public housing: 1) Your conviction requires you to register as a lifetime sex offender; or 2) You have been convicted of producing methamphetamine in public housing. If you are denied public housing because of a crime, you must be given a copy of your criminal record and chance to explain why your record should not stop you from living there. If you are denied public housing or a voucher for any reason, including a criminal record, you have the right to request an informal hearing to appeal the decision.

### **What should I do if I'm denied an apartment because of my criminal record?**

- The first thing you should do is ask the landlord to put their reason in writing, and you should ask for a copy of your criminal background check.
- You should then ask the property owner to do an individualized assessment before they make a final decision. An individualized assessment means the landlord should speak to you about the crime you committed, the time that has passed since the crime, and what you have done to rehabilitate yourself.
- If the property owner still says you are not qualified for the apartment, you should ask if there are other apartments for which you are qualified.



- If in the end you feel you were not treated fairly, you can file a complaint with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. You can do this by yourself, or with the assistance of an attorney. More information is available at [portal.ct.gov/CHRO](https://portal.ct.gov/CHRO).

### **If I have a criminal record, how can I give myself the best chance of getting a job or an apartment?**

You should be prepared as best you can to discuss your record with an employer or landlord during the application process. First, you will want to know exactly what is on your criminal record so you can be prepared to speak about it. This may mean finding out how to do a background check in other states if you were arrested there.

It may also be helpful to give the employer or landlord letters from people that can speak to your good character such as a probation officer, mentor, previous employer or landlord, or staff from a rehabilitation program. In addition, you may want to make a list of all the good things you have done since your conviction, and be prepared to give this list to the employer or landlord when your criminal record comes up.

Last, consider erasing your criminal record if you qualify. More information about record erasure can be found at <https://portal.ct.gov/BOPP/Pardon-Division/Pardon/Absolute-Pardon>.

Beginning January 1, 2023, Connecticut will automatically erase from criminal records most misdemeanors after 7 years and some felonies after 10 years. You may also want to apply for a Certificate of Employability so the employer knows your record is not a barrier to specific employment <https://portal.ct.gov/BOPP/Pardon-Division/Pardon/CoE>.

**Are there special protections under the law for members of minority ethnic groups?**

Yes, because African Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities have been unfairly impacted by racist criminal justice practices, these groups have special protections under the law. Members of these groups are the only ones who can file a discrimination complaint based on a criminal record against a private employer or private housing provider. Anyone of any race can file a discrimination complaint because of a criminal record against a government employer or government housing provider.

**Are there special protections for people with a disability or victims of domestic violence?**

If you can show your criminal record is a result of your disability, it can be illegal for an employer or housing provider to discriminate against you because of your criminal record. Your disability may also require the employer or housing provider to make reasonable accommodations for you. In addition, if you have a criminal record because of an incident where you were a victim of domestic violence, it may also be illegal for an employer or housing provider to use that criminal record when making a hiring or renting decision.





For more information, please contact:

**Center for Children's Advocacy**  
**Hartford office:**  
2074 Park Street  
(860) 570-5327

**Bridgeport office:**  
211 State Street  
(203) 335-0719

The information in this guide reflects the law as of January 2022.

**cca-ct.org**  
**speakupteens.org**