

CAREER RE-ENTRY PATHWAYS



**Construction
Inclusion Week**

TOOLBOX TALKS

04



Estimated Time:

15 minutes max



Audience:

**All employees and supervisors,
jobsite, office, leadership**

CIW PILLARS:

*Community Engagement, Economic
Opportunity, Commitment & Accountability*

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

This Toolbox Talk is provided as a voluntary workforce development resource in support of Construction Inclusion Week. It does not impose or endorse any directives, quotas, or identity-based exclusions or preferences.

The content reflects voluntary best practices and is designed to promote safety, opportunity, and inclusive team culture benefiting everyone across the construction industry, to help support, attract, and retain top talent.

Construction Inclusion Week does not control or endorse the content of third-party links. Activities should be adapted to align with your company's legal policies and job-related criteria.



CAREER RE-ENTRY PATHWAYS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This conversation helps teams understand how the construction industry can offer new chances to people rebuilding their lives and careers.

- Understand what “second chance” means and how it benefits the industry.
- Recognize the strengths and potential of non-traditional career paths.
- Learn how to support teammates who are starting over. Explore ways to reduce bias against teammates who are starting over and build trust.
- Understand how second-chance helps with retention and workforce growth.

DEFINITIONS

Second Chance Hiring:

Employment practices that provide opportunities for qualified individuals reentering the workforce based on role requirements, qualifications, safety readiness, and job-related criteria.

Inclusive Hiring: Practices that expand access to opportunity for all.

Reentry Support: Programs that help people transition back into the workforce, including job training, mentorship, and mental health services after periods of unemployment, justice involvement, caregiving, health, or other life events.

Opportunity Barrier: Anything that makes it harder for someone to get hired or stay on the job (like no transportation, no references, or a lack of recent experience).

KEY CONCEPTS:

- **Construction is a great path for people to start over because we build skills and careers, not just projects.**
- Many workers returning to the workforce bring valuable skills, commitment, and motivation to succeed.
- Second-chance workers seek fair, skills-based opportunities to contribute, earn trust, and grow.



KEY CONCEPTS:

- **Respect, patience, mentorship, and clear expectations help second-chance employees succeed.**
- Hiring this talent helps reduce turnover, build stronger teams, and support our communities.
- Opportunities are based on qualifications, safety readiness, and job-related criteria, consistent with the law.

People enter the workforce through many different paths. Some people enter construction after a break in their work history or a career change. But a second chance at work can be a first step toward building something better, not just for the worker, but also for the teams and organizations they join.

Construction is one of the few industries where people can start over, grow their skills, and make a living. **Many workers who get that second chance bring valuable experience and commitment to team success.** But success doesn't happen by luck; it takes support, structure, and respect.





Every jobsite and office has the opportunity to support pathways to employment and growth, or simply creating a culture that values individuals for their current contributions and potential.

That can mean giving someone a shot at a new role, offering a bit of extra coaching during their first weeks, or simply creating a culture that values individuals for their current contributions and potential.

Second-chance hiring is also good for business. It helps fill labor gaps, improves retention, and brings in people who are truly motivated to succeed. The impact extends beyond the jobsite. It helps reduce recidivism and supports stronger communities.

Second chances work when teams are willing to support each other and when leadership creates room for growth. We maintain standards and remove unnecessary barriers to qualified applicants.





ACTIVITY OPTIONS:

General Ask:

Reflect on a time when someone gave you a second chance, at work, in life, or somewhere in between. What did that chance mean to you? How did it change your path? Now imagine what it means for someone to be trusted and trained after facing big challenges.

The following page includes ways to practice mentorship, on site, in the office, or with community partners:



JOBSITE



OFFICE



**SCHOOL/
COMMUNITY**



GROUP



JOBSITE ACTIVITIES

- Talk about what “starting over” might look like in construction.
- Review how we welcome new people, what works and what could be better.
- Share stories (anonymously if needed) of teammates who have rebuilt their lives.
- Ask: What do new team members need in their first 2 weeks to feel supported?
- Highlight a trade partner or program that works with reentry or recovery groups.
- Check your jobsite signage, tone, and rules: do they reflect trust and growth?



OFFICE ACTIVITIES

- Review current hiring and onboarding policies; look for language or steps that could exclude reentry talent.
- Invite a guest speaker from a local reentry or workforce support program.
- Host a **“Build Your Second Chance”** learning session across departments.
- Encourage hiring teams to look at skills and attitude, not just resumes.
- Challenge HR/teams to identify opportunities within their firms that second-chance employees could apply for.



SCHOOL/COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Invite guest speakers to share how they built careers after overcoming challenges, focusing on skills, growth, and persistence.
- Partner with training, recovery, or second-chance programs to offer site tours or info sessions.
- Share your company’s story about supporting someone who started over and found success.
- Visit a local youth or justice organization understand to explain what jobs in construction look like.
- Lead a group talk about bouncing back from setbacks and building a future.



GROUP ACTIVITIES

- Draft a simple proposal for one second chance hiring initiative or job fair your company could sponsor or attend.
- In teams, list what it takes for someone to succeed on your crew, then ask: are we making that possible for everyone?
- Discuss: What kind of support would you want if you were new and had a tough past?
- Build a “Team Promise” to support people who are starting over.
- Watch a short video of someone who turned their life around through trades (e.g., Helmets to Hardhats or The Last Mile)



***Everyone deserves
a chance to build
their future; **and**
construction is
where it begins.***



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does a second chance mean to you?
2. What helps someone feel safe and included when starting over?
3. What assumptions do we make about people's backgrounds, and are they fair?
4. How can we help supervisors, and team leaders support second-chance workers?
5. What's one thing our team could do better when welcoming someone new?

Second chances can change lives and strengthen teams. Let's be the bridge to something better.



THIS WEEK:

- Welcome someone new to the team and ask how you can help.
- Share a second-chance success story with your team.
- Ask HR about your company's inclusive hiring policy.
- Reach out to a community partner working with reentry programs.
- Post a story or highlight someone who's thrived after a second chance.



POST YOUR IMPACT:

#ConstructionInclusionWeek
#CIWOpeningDoors
#CareerReentry

Resources:

- Center for Employment Opportunities
- Operation New Hope
- National Reentry Resource Center
- Home - The Last Mile