How to handle the job search process with a criminal record

Finding a job is tough when you have an arrest record or prior conviction. No one can tell you what job you can apply for or who will hire you, but the following steps will help you with job search:

Here are some steps:

1. What employers will hire me with a criminal record?
   Employers will look at your background and the type of job you are applying for. Some employers always do background checks because of the nature of the job. For example: nurses, child care providers, public school jobs, policemen, etc. There is not a list of employers who do or do not hire candidates with a criminal record. You may need to call some employers in your job search area to see what their hiring process involves.

2. How to become a stronger job candidate.
   Volunteer or have work experiences to establish some skills and strong references. This will go a long way in helping you land a job by having references who can provide first-hand knowledge of your work abilities. Be sure to list all relevant work experiences including internships on your resume. Talking with your family and friends is the best way to land a job, by asking them to hire you or recommend you.

3. Should you tell the employer about your offense?
   You do not need to mention your criminal background on your resume. If the employer or application form ask for your criminal background, be honest. If you were arrested but not charged or convicted then you do not need to disclose it. Know what is on your criminal record should a background check be pulled. Many employers routinely process these checks, so be truthful and knowledgeable.

4. Try to get an offense sealed or expunged from your record.
   Ask your attorney, public defender or your parole/probation officer if this is possible. Know exactly what you were convicted of and what is on your criminal record. You might want to obtain a copy of your record or ask your parole/probation officer.

5. Getting your resume ready!
   Make sure your resume is written specifically toward the job you are applying for. You can find resume help on the Career Services website: [http://www.coloradomesa.edu/career/resume.html](http://www.coloradomesa.edu/career/resume.html) and you can call Career Services at 970-248-1404 to make an appointment for help in resume creation and editing.

6. You are ready to start the job searching process.
   Consider the type of company you are applying to and eliminate companies/jobs for which your record will automatically disqualify you. For example: government jobs requiring security clearances, military jobs, insurance or banking jobs, jobs working with children, etc. Narrow down possible companies and jobs you would be interested in. Review the application form and see if a criminal background check is included. You can always call the employer and ask if your criminal record would eliminate you from being considered for the job. View the Career
Services website for tips on job searching:
http://www.coloradomesa.edu/career/JobSearchStrategies.html

7. **Preparing for your interview.**
   Always dress professionally, this is the employer’s first impression of you. Be honest during your interview, if there are any questions concerning your criminal background you will need to be prepared to talk about it. Practice answers for typical interview questions which can be found on the Career Services website: http://www.coloradomesa.edu/career/interviewing.html
   Make an appointment with a Career Services staff to practice interviewing by calling 970-248-1404.

8. **Persistence will pay off!** Try not to get discouraged, it is rare for anyone to get the first job they apply for. The employer who won’t consider you because of your record probably isn’t the employer you’d want to work for anyway.

Additional Resources:

http://www.wikihow.com/Get-a-Job-with-a-Criminal-Record

http://jobsearch.about.com/od/employmentlaw/a/criminalrecord.htm

http://www.snagajob.com/resources/felon-job-applications/