

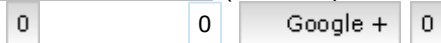
Rhode Island Employers May No Longer Ask About Criminal Convictions on Employment Applications

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Rhode Island has joined a growing number of states that prohibit employers from inquiring on job applications about applicants' criminal histories. Previously, Rhode Island law prevented employers from asking about arrests and criminal charges on written applications, but the new law will include criminal convictions as well. The term "convictions," as used in the new law, includes guilty verdicts, guilty pleas, and pleas of no contest. Employers that wish to inquire into an applicant's criminal past will have to wait until the initial interview. There are limited exceptions to the law, including law enforcement positions and positions for which state or federal law categorically prohibit workers with criminal convictions.

Employers that have Rhode Island employees and use standard applications across multiple states should pay particular attention to this change. The law goes into effect on January 1, 2014, and these employers should consider including Rhode Island specific language on their standard employment applications to ensure applicants do not answer what are in some other states routine criminal history questions. A blog post with additional information on this change is available on the Ogletree Deakins blog website at: <http://blog.ogletreedeakins.com> under "State Developments."

Note: This article was published in the August 2013 issue of the *Rhode Island eAuthority*.

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