

## PROFESSIONAL RESUMES

A **resume** is a document that describes your professional and academic accomplishments. Most people know they need an updated resume to apply for employment opportunities, but resumes can also be a required element of the college application process, particularly if you are enrolling in an academic program that includes a required internship. For example, graduate programs typically require resumes as part of the application process because internships are not only required but are required early in the program.

It's a good idea to begin building and updating your resume early if you are planning to participate in a degree program with an internship component. To determine whether an internship will be required for you to complete your degree, ask an academic advisor on campus for help reviewing your degree plan. You may also be able to receive assistance in preparing your resume from the campus career services department.

Even if an internship is not a required component of your academic program, you may want to consider participating in an internship anyway. Internships can help you develop experience and job skills and can also help you develop a professional network. The relationships you cultivate through an internship can be of help to you in the future. For example, your internship contacts can potentially provide you with letters of reference, and employment and mentorship opportunities as you progress towards your academic and career goals.

When developing your resume be sure to include:

- Your name and contact information, including a reliable phone number and an email address that you check regularly
- A brief description of your professional experience, including experience you may have gained while incarcerated
- A brief description of your academic and professional achievements, including:
  - Academic awards you may have received
  - Publications your written work was included in, with dates
  - Certifications you have completed
  - Valid professional licenses that you hold
- A brief description of volunteer and community involvement and leadership experience, including experience you may have gained while incarcerated
- Relevant technical skills, such as the ability to type or use word processing technology such as Microsoft Office programs
- Relevant interpersonal skills, such as the ability able to work well with others and effective communication

## RESUME RESOURCES

For more information on how to construct a resume see Appendix I for some examples. You might also find a resource guide in the library of the prison where you are located or through the resources offered by Phase Three of Transitional Services. If you have returned to the community, you can also get help developing your resume through your local public library system, or in the career center located on your college campus. Talk to the librarian in your local library to identify other potential sources of help.

## PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC REFERENCES

Some colleges and universities require that undergraduate applicants provide professional and/or academic letters of reference. All graduate programs will require both professional and academic letters of reference. These references should be written by people who are able to speak truthfully and meaningfully about your academic or professional skills and your commitment to your education.

Although you may have collected letters of reference from people in your professional and academic network while you were incarcerated, most colleges will only accept letters sent to them directly from your reference.

Colleges and universities that require letters of reference will typically have a section on the application for the contact information of your chosen references. Usually an email address is required, but you might also be able to provide a mailing address and phone number as an alternative way for the college to contact your references. Once you have provided the email address, an email will be sent asking them for a letter of reference. Here are some tips to help you provide letters of reference if this is a required component of the college application process:

- **References should be people who have known you professionally.** This means that they know you because they had a relationship with you through employment, education, church, or community involvement. You should not use personal references—friends or family—as professional references unless these individuals have also had a professional relationship with you.
- **Always contact your references before submitting their contact information** on your college application. Let your references know that you are applying to college and would value having them provide a letter that articulates your unique skills and commitment to your educational and career pursuits.

- **Ensure that the reference contact information is accurate** and the best way for the educational institution to contact them. Get an email address whenever possible, as this is typically what is required.
- **Be sure to double check the reference contact information** that you submit in your application materials. If you make a mistake and enter incorrect contact information, your reference may never be contacted by the college or university and you may never know that the mistake has occurred.
- **Always give your references plenty of time to prepare a letter.** Remember that your reference is going out of their way to support your application and that they have a busy life of their own. Out of consideration, try to give your references four to six weeks before the reference letter is due.
- **Recognize that your reference may need additional information** to provide a high- quality reference letter for you. Provide them with information on the academic program you are applying to and a copy of your updated resume.
- **Make sure to thank your references for submitting letters on your behalf.** Professional references are extremely valuable people who you may return to repeatedly as you advance academically and professionally. It's important to treat them well! Let them know how much the reference means to you and be sure to let them know when you've been accepted to a college program or make advancements towards your goal. Even if you are not accepted, be sure to send your reference a note thanking them for their efforts.

## RECORD OF ARRESTS AND PROSECUTIONS (RAP) SHEETS

A rap sheet is a record of your arrests and convictions. If you have ever been arrested in New York State and fingerprinted, you have a New York State rap sheet. You may also have a rap sheet from another state or states. Neither CUNY nor SUNY have questions pertaining to applicants' criminal records in their applications, but background checks may be requested when applying to internships or jobs on campus. Private colleges and universities may ask you about your criminal record on their applications. If you are familiar with the information on your rap sheet you can be prepared to answer questions about the information contained in your record.

Rap sheets often contain mistakes that can hurt your chances of getting a job, an internship, an occupational license, or a place to live. You can get ahead of this issue by requesting a copy and reviewing your rap sheet to

identify inaccuracies. If your rap sheet contains mistakes you can request that they be corrected and that eligible convictions be sealed or expunged. Expunged records are effectively erased from your history, but New York only allows expungement for a very few types of convictions. Sealed records are not erased, and can still be viewed with your permission, or by people who may want to employ you in capacities where you would be required to carry a gun, or by police officers, but these records do not usually appear on background checks.

If you would like a copy of your rap sheet you can contact one of the following agencies:

### DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES (DCJS)

All New York State rap sheets are produced by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. If you are currently incarcerated, you can acquire a copy of your New York State rap sheet for free by contacting the DCJS Record Review Unit by mail:

#### Record Review Unit

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services  
80 South Swan St., 5th Floor  
Albany, NY 12210

If you have returned to the community, you may request a copy of your rap sheet from DCJS. To do so, fingerprints and a fee are required. You may be eligible to have the fee waived if you are currently receiving public benefits. More information on how to request a copy of your rap sheet from DCJS is available online at: [www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/ojis/recordreview.htm](http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/ojis/recordreview.htm)

You can also contact DCJS by phone or email:

#### By phone:

1 (518) 485 7675  
1 (518) 457 9847  
1 (800) 262 3257

#### By email:

[recordreview@dcjs.ny.gov](mailto:recordreview@dcjs.ny.gov)

### COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

*Non-profit legal organizations can also assist people with reviewing and managing their criminal history records. Below are two organizations that provide free services related to rap sheets. Although these services are free, you will still need to be fingerprinted for DCJS to release your rap sheet to these agencies.*