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After State Civil Rights Investigation, City of Signal Hill to Update Hiring Policies

Settlement includes training and \$93,000 in compensation for job applicant

SACRAMENTO – The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today announced a \$93,000 settlement with the City of Signal Hill in Los Angeles County to resolve allegations that the city violated the California Fair Chance Act. The Fair Chance Act aims to reduce barriers to employment that can prevent people with past arrests or convictions from successfully reintegrating into their communities. As part of the settlement, the city will update its hiring policies, train staff on the Fair Chance Act, and compensate a job applicant who was allegedly rejected based on an old and unrelated offense.

“Workers deserve to be assessed based on their skills, not on outdated stereotypes,” said **CRD Director Kevin Kish**. “The Fair Chance Act helps ensure nobody is unfairly locked out of the job market. Through this settlement, the City of Signal Hill is taking important steps to come into compliance with California’s civil rights protections.”

Application Denied

In 2025, CRD received a complaint against the City of Signal Hill alleging that an applicant was unlawfully rejected for a job within the city’s Public Works Department. The worker had applied for a water systems operator position — which included hydrant and pipeline repairs, reading meters, treating groundwater, and customer service — and successfully completed multiple rounds of interviews before the city made a conditional offer of employment.

However, after a background check, the city allegedly rescinded the offer without following steps required by the Fair Chance Act, such as conducting an individualized assessment of the applicant’s specific conviction history. According to the complaint, the city also allegedly ignored information submitted by the applicant challenging the accuracy of the background check and relied on criminal history information that was more than seven years old and unconnected with the job.

Fair Chance for All Workers

The Fair Chance Act aims to combat the stigma associated with conviction histories and ultimately enhance public safety by reducing undue barriers to employment for people who have been previously involved in the criminal legal system. In passing the Fair Chance Act, the Legislature recognized that “employment is essential to helping formerly incarcerated people support themselves and their families” and reduces the likelihood of an individual reoffending.

The law generally prohibits employers with five or more employees from asking about a job applicant’s conviction history before making a conditional job offer, requires specific procedures for considering an applicant’s criminal history after a conditional job offer, and requires that employers make an individualized assessment — asking whether an applicant’s conviction has a direct and adverse relationship to the job in question — before they deny someone an employment opportunity.

In short, the law aims to help ensure employers pick people based not on stereotypes, but rather on their ability to do the job.

Investigation Leads to Results

After conducting an initial investigation, CRD provided the city an opportunity to resolve the allegations through mediation. As a result of the settlement, the City of Signal Hill, without admitting wrongdoing, will:

- Modify its hiring policies to ensure compliance with the Fair Chance Act.
- Update notices to workers on employment decisions tied to criminal history.
- Consider information submitted by job applicants prior to making a final decision.
- Train staff on the requirements of the Fair Chance Act, including on how to consider examples of rehabilitation or mitigating evidence.
- Report to CRD for a year on all job denials related to criminal history.
- Pay \$93,000 in compensation to the job applicant.

If you or someone you know has experienced employment discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about civil rights protections, including with respect to the [Fair Chance Act](#).

The settlement announced today was secured by Staff Counsel Victoria Ellis. It was mediated by Senior Mediator Andrea Fernandez-Jackson.

You can learn more by [reading the settlement](#).

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The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. CRD's mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov.

