

A JOB SEEKER'S GUIDE TO FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYMENT

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. GET SUPPORT. START YOUR CAREER.

fairchance

**department
of economic
opportunity**
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Powered by Root & Rebound, LeadersUp and TaskForce

QUICK REFERENCE

Pathways to Rejoining the Workforce	4
Know Your Rights	5
Addressing Your Past With Confidence	9
Job Opportunities in High-Growth Industries	10
WORKING IN TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING	10
WORKING IN HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES	10
WORKING IN PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES	10
WORKING IN SPORTS, ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND RECREATION	12
WORKING IN THE CONSTRUCTION / GREEN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY	14
America's Job Centers of California (AJCC): Your Partner in Your Fair Chance Journey	15

OPPORTUNITY STARTS WITH A FAIR CHANCE

Hello!

We made this toolkit with you in mind to help meet your needs and help you in your journey to employment. While rebuilding your future, a lot of things may be on your mind. If getting a job is on your priority list, **we're here to help.**

On February 27, 2024, the **Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to adopt the County's Fair Chance Ordinance for Employers (FCO).** This Ordinance is in line with the California Fair Chance Act (FCA), or Ban the Box, which was created to make sure that individuals with criminal records have fair and equal access to opportunities for gainful employment. With the Ordinance now in force, the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), together with its partners Center for Employment Opportunities, Root & Rebound, and TaskForce are bringing together Fair Chance employers and system-impacted job seekers to close the hiring gap.

We hope this toolkit can be your companion in navigating some of the challenges of rejoining the workforce, as well as identifying opportunities for your skillset. This toolkit will help you understand your rights under the LA County Fair Chance Ordinance. It provides information about a few high-growth industries that are on the lookout for talent like you. This toolkit highlights available tools and resources to help you work on your employment and career goals. Finally, this toolkit will lay out some of the steps you can take to get started and connect you with resources and organizations that can support you during your search.

There are so many incredible opportunities to take advantage of in the workforce. Thank you for bringing your personal experience, talents, and skills to the table. **We are here rooting for you as you embark on your Fair Chance journey.**

-Los Angeles County Department of Economic Opportunity

PATHWAYS TO REJOINING THE WORKFORCE

The road to employment may be filled with twists and turns, but know that you have a variety of pathways to take to get to the career you want. Some job seekers may follow the traditional path of advancing from high school to college, while others may take alternative routes. Have a look at what is best for you and your career journey.

EARN A TRADE CERTIFICATE

Trade certificates are career-specific certifications that you can earn at local community colleges or trade schools. These certifications are often highly valued by employers and show qualifications for certain roles. Some employers may not require a college degree and may accept a **trade certificate to prove your qualifications for the role**. A few examples of these trade certificates are welding certificates, forklift certificates, and construction certificates.

HIGHER EDUCATION

While not all employers require degrees earned in educational institutions, many of them value educational achievements even if you earned them while incarcerated. This includes credits earned while attending community college (even if through correspondence), obtaining an AA degree, and **any additional degrees or certificates you earned while incarcerated**. Do not discredit the education that you earned while incarcerated.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING/ APPRENTICESHIP

Getting on-the-job training or undergoing an apprenticeship allows you to have hands-on training under the guidance of a supervisor. This is a great way to learn the ins and outs of a job. America's Job Centers of California (AJCC) provides you the unique opportunity to get **specialized training from an employer while getting paid**, and they're located throughout LA County.

If you are denied your occupational license and would like support to challenge the denial, please reach out to Root & Rebound for legal support. Root & Rebound's Free Reentry Legal Hotline number is 510-279-4662. It is open every Friday between 9am - 3pm. Please mention that you were referred by the LA County Fair Chance hiring program.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LA COUNTY HIGH ROAD TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS

The LA County Department of Economic Opportunity supports many job seekers through high-road training partnerships. Through their network of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, you can receive training for jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits made available to you upon completion of their training program. **For more information, visit opportunity.lacounty.gov.**

GET AN OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE

In California, people who work in certain jobs are required to get a license from the state for that specific job. There are over 200 kinds of jobs in California that require a professional or occupational license—ranging from barbers and cosmetologists to security guards, contractors, teachers, nurses, doctors, and lawyers. Professional and occupational licenses are granted and regulated by different licensing boards, agencies, and bureaus.

Each licensing board has its own rules and regulations around criminal records. In general, a licensing board may deny your application for a license based on a criminal conviction **if your conviction is substantially related to the qualifications, functions, or duties of the business or profession**. When you apply for a professional license, some licensing boards can see your entire criminal history, including convictions that have been “expunged” while others may not. If a licensing board denies you the license based on your record, you will generally have the opportunity to appeal its decision and provide mitigating and rehabilitative evidence for the board to consider.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

YOUR RIGHTS AS A JOB SEEKER

At the state and local level, laws exist to help protect your rights as a job seeker. This also means employers are expected to follow certain rules, and there can be consequences if they don't.

The Los Angeles County **Fair Chance Ordinance** (FCO) ensures fair hiring practices for individuals with a criminal history throughout Los Angeles County. It complements California's Fair Chance Act (Ban the Box laws) and introduces stricter requirements and enforcement mechanisms for employers.

Here are some examples:

EMPLOYERS CANNOT:

- Ask about your criminal record on a job application, during an interview, or before offering you a job.
- Check for criminal history without letting you know first, and letting you know what they will be checking for.
- Take a job offer away without following the Fair Chance process created by the County, which requires them to complete a few assessments and give you the opportunity to explain how a past conviction won't interfere with your ability to perform the job.
- Consider convictions older than 7 years to disqualify you from a position. This has some exceptions, such as positions that are either required by law to conduct a more extensive background check or positions that work directly with vulnerable populations.

This is not a complete list of your rights under the LA County Fair Chance Ordinance.

To learn more visit: dcba.lacounty.gov/fairchance, email fairchance@dcba.lacounty.gov, or call (800) 593-8222.

To Report: visit dcba.lacounty.gov/fairchance

PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW & BACKGROUND CHECK

NO EMPLOYER IN CALIFORNIA IS ALLOWED TO ASK ABOUT YOUR CRIMINAL HISTORY UNTIL AFTER THEY OFFER YOU A JOB.	This law, created in 2018, is known as the California Fair Chance Act, or the Ban the Box law.
DON'T ASSUME A CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK IS AN AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION.	If an employer is conducting a background check, it means they are considering you for the job based on your experience or capabilities.
KNOW WHAT'S ON YOUR CRIMINAL HISTORY REPORT SO YOU'RE PREPARED TO DISCUSS IT.	You can do this by conducting a criminal history check on yourself. There are nonprofit organizations that can assist you with this. Be aware that some criminal history reports may be inaccurate or outdated. If you find an error, you can reach out to reentry organizations like Root & Rebound for help.
FIND OUT IF THE EMPLOYER IS CONDUCTING CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS.	Under this new ordinance, most LA County employers with more than 5 employees are required to state in the job bulletin if they will conduct a criminal history check. They must also inform you in writing before they conduct the background check. If they plan to check other information, such as credit history or social media history, they must inform you about that as well.
NEVER VOLUNTARILY DISCLOSE YOUR CRIMINAL HISTORY, EVEN IF THE EMPLOYER ASKS YOU TO DO SO.	You may end up sharing information that doesn't appear on a background check.
EMPLOYERS CAN ONLY CONSIDER CONVICTIONS THAT OCCURRED WITHIN THE PAST 7 YEARS WHEN DECIDING IF A CONVICTION WILL INTERFERE WITH YOUR ABILITY TO PERFORM THE JOB.	This 7-year "look-back" period refers to the date of conviction, not your release from incarceration. There are exceptions to this rule, such as when the job requires working with minors, dependent adults, individuals over 65, or handling public funds.

HIGHLIGHT WHO YOU ARE TODAY

- Prepare **Evidence of Rehabilitation**. These are achievements or actions that demonstrate positive changes and a commitment to a productive lifestyle. This includes completing rehabilitation programs (like anger management), educational attainment (such as earning a GED or completing vocational training), volunteering or community service work, letters of support from teachers or community leaders, good standing on parole or probation, and participation in peer support programs or leading support groups.
- **Additional Tip:** Collect certifications and ask people that you know for reference letters. Write out a statement about your conviction(s). Having this information ready will ensure that if you receive an inquiry from an employer, you can easily supply this information. See here for additional tips on How to Gather Evidence of Rehabilitation: bit.ly/howtogatherevidence
- **Prepare written statements for both Evidence of Rehabilitation and Mitigating Circumstances.** For example, you can say: “Several years ago, I made some poor decisions that got me into legal trouble. I hurt a lot of the people I really care about, and that caused me to make some major changes in my life. I’ve now been clean and sober for five years.” If you have the opportunity to share your statement with the employer in person, practice it ahead of time so that it sounds natural!

JOB OFFERS AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

If an employer decides to rescind a job offer due to a conviction on your criminal history report, they must follow the “fair chance process” outlined below. This process ensures that employers carefully consider your situation and provide you with multiple chances to explain how your past convictions do not define you or impact your ability to do the job. Be sure to document any interactions with the employer in case they do not follow the law, as this can be helpful if you choose to file a complaint.

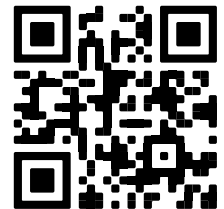
THE FAIR CHANCE PROCESS

- **Employer Informs Candidate of Background Check:** If an employer is going to conduct a background check, they must provide a written note that includes exactly what type of background check the employer is going to conduct.
- **Initial Individualized Assessment:** This is the first written assessment the employer conducts, and this is what determines if a past conviction may negatively affect your ability to perform the job. The employer must consider factors such as the severity of the offense, the time that has passed, whether the job could lead to reoffending, and whether you have shown any positive changes since the conviction. During this step, you can voluntarily provide Evidence of Rehabilitation or Mitigating Circumstances, and the employer must take these into consideration.
- **Preliminary Notice of Adverse Action:** This is the letter that informs you of the employer's intent to rescind the job offer. The employer must send this notice by email and mail, along with the Initial Individualized Assessment and the background check they used. You will have five business days to respond or 10 business days if you request more time. If you don't respond within the first five business days, the employer has the right to rescind the offer.
- **Second Individualized Assessment:** If you responded to the Preliminary Notice of Adverse Action, the employer will conduct the Second Individualized Assessment. This assessment is similar to the Initial Individualized Assessment, but now the employer must consider anything you provided in your first response and reassess whether a criminal conviction will interfere with your ability to perform the job.
- **Final Notice of Adverse Action:** This is the final letter stating that the employer is rescinding the job offer. They must provide you with a copy of the Second Individualized Assessment, a letter stating that they are rescinding the job offer due to a specific conviction, and a notice of your right to file a complaint with the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs.

DON'T GIVE UP!

People with criminal histories get hired every day. Many employers don't focus on past convictions, and some even proudly identify as Fair Chance employers. Remember, you're not alone— it's estimated that 1 in 3 Americans and 1 in 5 Californians have a criminal history, proving that second chances are possible for everyone.

To help improve your job search, watch this video:



HOW TO REPORT EMPLOYER VIOLATIONS

There are additional requirements not mentioned here that employers must follow to remain compliant with the Fair Chance Ordinance. The Department of Consumer and Business Affairs is here to support you and investigate complaints, which can result in fines for the employer. If you need assistance, you can contact the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs directly or reach out to Root & Rebound, and we can work with the Department on your behalf. Unfortunately,

many employers are still unaware of the Fair Chance Ordinance, so this process helps ensure they comply with the law—and that you have a fair opportunity to secure the job.

Department of Consumer and Business Affairs:

Website: dcba.lacounty.gov/fairchance

Email: fairchance@dcba.lacounty.gov

Phone: 800.593.8222

ADDRESSING YOUR PAST WITH CONFIDENCE

The below is adapted from the U.S. Department of Labor publication, “Tips for Finding the Right Job.”

QUICK TIPS:

WHAT IF THE EMPLOYER ASKS ABOUT MY CRIMINAL HISTORY DURING AN INTERVIEW?	“My understanding is that I’m not required to discuss this until after I have received an offer. However, I’d be more than happy to talk about what skills I bring to this position and how I can be a strong asset in your organization/company.”
HOW DO I SPEAK ABOUT MY RECORD WHEN ASKED?	“Even though I may have a past, I have taken responsibility for my actions and learned from my mistakes. I can tell you that I’m grateful for a second chance and can contribute many skills and a strong work ethic to your organization because (speak about skills)...”
WHAT IF THE EMPLOYER ASKS ABOUT A LARGE GAP IN MY EMPLOYMENT HISTORY?	“During that time, I took time off from pursuing a career because of personal obligations. However, I am now able to pursue a career and am excited about the possibility of bringing my skills to your company.”

WORK WHILE INCARCERATED STILL COUNTS AS WORK!

It’s important not to dismiss this type of work—while it may not fit the typical idea of working for a company, it still provides valuable experience and demonstrates the skills required to perform the job. You can present the work you did while incarcerated in a way that highlights its value, depending on how you describe it. The more time you spent doing this work, the more it shows your ability to commit and grow professionally.

For example, the statement “I worked scullery, wiped down tables in the chow hall, and also helped serve trays on the line” can be reframed as: “Line cook experience with strong organizational skills, efficiently serving 200+ individuals under strict timelines, while maintaining cleanliness and order in a fast-paced environment.”

You can even rename the job title and location.

For Example:

Building Porter
Ironwood State Prison
Blythe, CA



Can Be Turned Into:

Custodian
County of Riverside
State of CA

JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGH-GROWTH INDUSTRIES

WORKING IN TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING

The **average annual wage for employees in this sector was \$52,980 in 2020**, slightly higher than the average wage for all industries in the County. In addition, many offer benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans.

There are many different types of jobs available in the transportation industry, from **driving and operating vehicles to logistics, management, and support roles.**

WORKING IN HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The **average annual wage for employees in this sector was \$63,970 in 2020**, significantly higher than the average wage in the County. An increasing older population and the increasing demand for healthcare services has resulted in major growth in this industry, and is expected to continue in the coming years.

WORKING IN THE PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that **employment in these industries will increase by 12.1% between 2020 and 2030.** This is a promising sign for job seekers interested in pursuing careers in this field.

There are many different types of jobs available in the professional and technical services industry, from consulting and engineering to legal, accounting, and information technology services.



GLORIA CABRERA

**Legal Assistant, Yang Law Offices
Home for 6 years**

As a legal assistant at Yang Law Offices, clients often forget that Gloria Cabrera is not an attorney yet and will ask her if she can fight their case for them. Perhaps it's because Gloria draws from her past experiences, bringing understanding and compassion to her work. Her interest in law began at the age of 13 when her older brother was arrested at the age of 15. She remembers studying his case, pouring over documents and going to court hearings and his trial.

After experiencing homelessness at the age of 15 and going in and out of the system in her early 20s, a public defender helped Gloria start on a new path. Gloria started as an intern at Yang Law Offices with no formal experience, and is now a legal assistant with plans to attend law school in the coming years. **Gloria says she is driven by the discipline and stability she's attained throughout her career.** She's also just achieved a major milestone in her life: she bought her first home.

“It’s good to hire someone who’s gone through that challenge in their life because they survived it, and if they’ve learned from it, then they’re a stronger person.”

Elizabeth Yang

Founder, Yang Law Offices
Gloria Cabrera’s Supervisor



WORKING IN SPORTS, ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND RECREATION

According to the California Employment Development Department (EDD), **the industry is expected to grow by 11.6% in LA County between 2019 and 2029, adding approximately 16,400 new jobs.** This growth is driven by the region's successful sports teams, numerous entertainment venues, and a robust film and television production industry.

For those that have a passion for performing, writing, creating, or producing any type of art, this is the perfect industry as you can express yourself creatively with other like-minded individuals. Other types of jobs could include event coordinator, film production technician, audiovisual technician, and so much more.

“You will find that most times, the ones that are serious, that they have this determination—they’re willing to go above and beyond. Especially the ones who are given a second chance and serious about making something new for their lives.”

Sheldon Solin

Recreations Supervisor,
LA County Parks Department
Vanessa Ebenezer's Supervisor

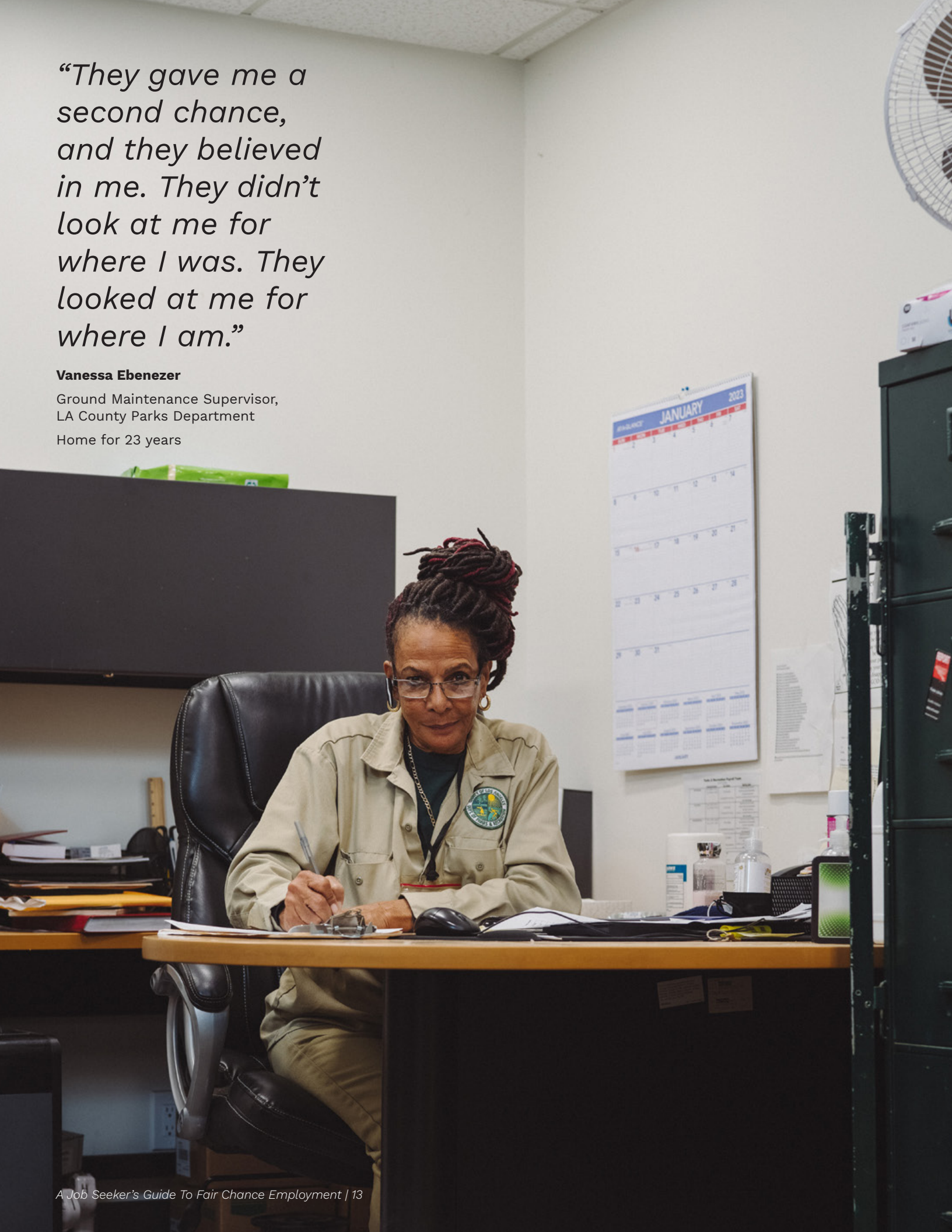


“They gave me a second chance, and they believed in me. They didn’t look at me for where I was. They looked at me for where I am.”

Vanessa Ebenezer

Ground Maintenance Supervisor,
LA County Parks Department

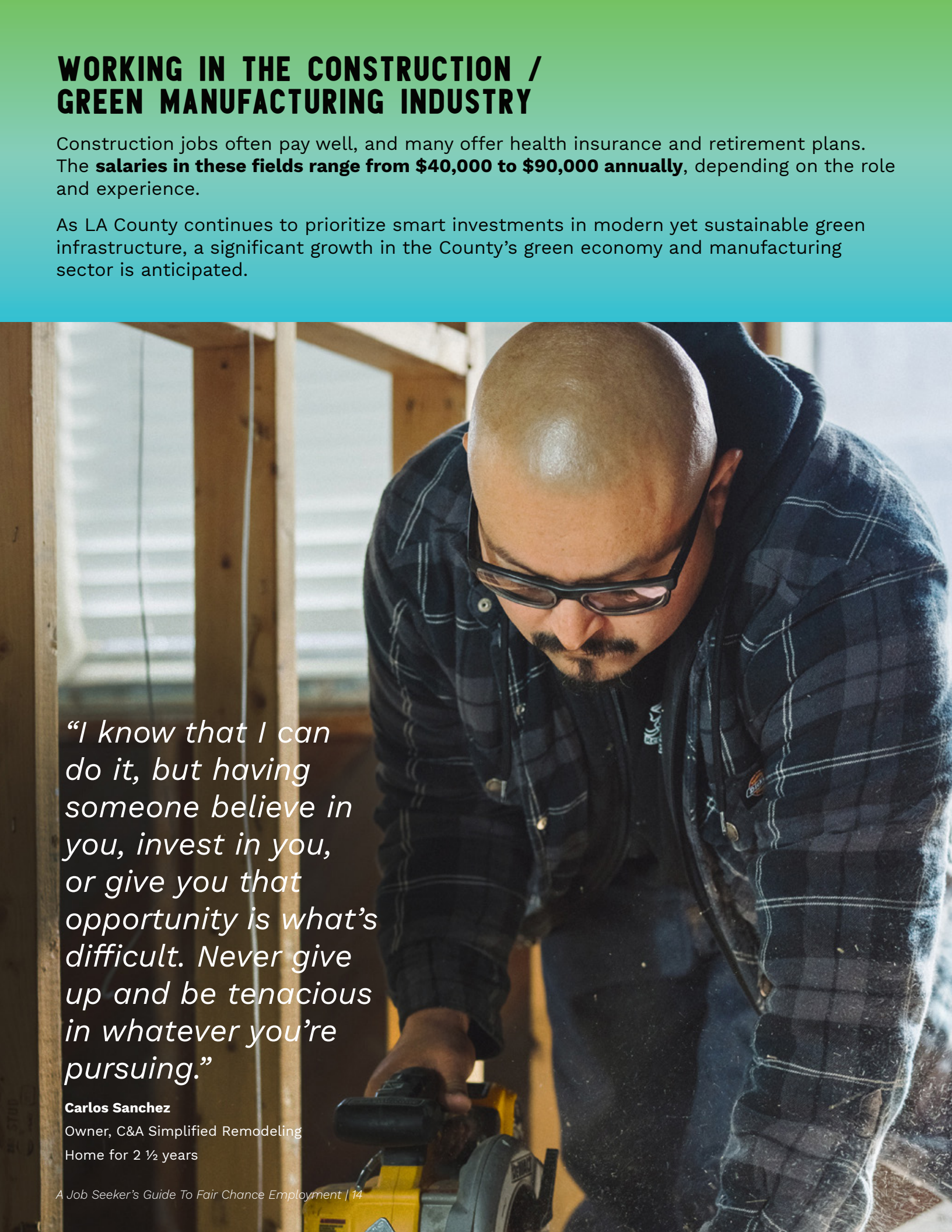
Home for 23 years



WORKING IN THE CONSTRUCTION / GREEN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Construction jobs often pay well, and many offer health insurance and retirement plans. The **salaries in these fields range from \$40,000 to \$90,000 annually**, depending on the role and experience.

As LA County continues to prioritize smart investments in modern yet sustainable green infrastructure, a significant growth in the County's green economy and manufacturing sector is anticipated.

A man with a shaved head and a goatee, wearing safety glasses and a dark plaid shirt, is focused on his work. He is using a yellow and black power tool, likely a circular saw, on a wooden frame. The background shows more of the wooden structure, suggesting a construction or manufacturing setting. The lighting is bright, highlighting the man's concentration and the details of his work.

“I know that I can do it, but having someone believe in you, invest in you, or give you that opportunity is what’s difficult. Never give up and be tenacious in whatever you’re pursuing.”

Carlos Sanchez

Owner, C&A Simplified Remodeling
Home for 2 ½ years

AMERICA'S JOB CENTERS OF CALIFORNIA (AJCC): YOUR PARTNER IN YOUR FAIR CHANCE JOURNEY

AJCC is your one-stop shop for workforce services. AJCCs offer a comprehensive range of no-cost employment and training services for job seekers, including job search assistance, career counseling, resume writing, and interview preparation. The AJCCs can pay for job training for job seekers and workers looking to advance their careers or shift to a new one, including opportunities for both in-class learning and training while you earn wages. Our AJCCs are committed to providing you with a wealth of programs and creative strategies to **help you secure not just a living wage job but one with an upward career pathway.**

Recognizing that employment is but one of many concerns that system-impacted job seekers navigate, the AJCCs are ready to support LA County job seekers with supportive resources such as transportation assistance, work attire and tools, education-related supplies, stipends, housing, and legal aid.

All job seekers who fill out the Fair Chance interest form will be referred to the AJCC's extensive network of trained employment specialists. Your case manager will work with you one-on-one for work readiness assessment, training, and job matching.

Each AJCC is embedded in its community, partnering with numerous public, private, and nonprofit entities to ensure that wherever you are in the County, **your neighborhood AJCC is there to support you.**

With LA County being the nation's largest workforce development area in terms of geographic size and population, **the AJCC is ready to meet the moment** to guarantee that you have the tools and resources to lead you on the path to success.

Take the First Step!

The first step in your Fair Chance journey is to scan this QR code or visit **bit.ly/FCHSII** and fill out the job seekers interest form. You will receive instructions on your AJCC assignment by submitting your interest form.



fairchance

For more information on the Fair Chance hiring program, visit our website and connect with us on social media!

opportunity.lacounty.gov/fairchance

