

# Business Ambassadors Program

## About us

The People First Business Ambassadors initiative is powered by [FWD.us](https://www.fwd.us), an organization committed to criminal justice and immigration reforms that create opportunity and unlock America's potential. As part of these efforts, the [People First campaign](#) aims to honor the humanity of people in the criminal justice system by sharing their stories and driving action that puts people first in our language and policies. Ending mass incarceration is good for our communities, economy, and country. We get there by reminding ourselves that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people are **people** and choosing to put #PeopleFirst.

## The People First Business Ambassadors initiative rests on three pillars:

### EDUCATION

Ensuring your staff are informed about issues and policies that affect them and their families.

### STAFF SUPPORT

Providing attorney reviewed corporate social responsibility practices to build a workplace inclusive of people affected by the criminal justice system.

### PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF SOLIDARITY

Providing messaging guidance, sample social media language, and communications support in talking about people who have been incarcerated.

# Why become a People First Ambassador?

**Entrepreneur. Employee. Customer.** These are some of the words that describe people affected by the criminal justice system. Yet too often we hear words like “felon,” “inmate” and “offender” used to talk about our colleagues and community members. As many as 100 million people in the U.S. have an arrest or conviction record—that’s one in three Americans, as many as have a college degree. And nearly 1-in-2 adults have a family member that has been incarcerated. When people are defined by their criminal record they face many barriers to success including difficulty finding employment and housing. Research has also shown that dehumanizing labels bias decision-makers and the public against reforms to improve our criminal justice system.

The criminal justice system impacts all of us, including your employees, your customers, and the communities your business serves. By becoming a People First Ambassador your company will gain the tools and resources to put people first in your language and policies and become a workplace that supports team members and their families who have been or are currently affected by the criminal justice system. Many businesses have taken important steps to ensure their hiring practices are inclusive of people who have been incarcerated; the People First initiative seeks to support employers in ensuring that these best practices extend throughout your organizational culture and employee experience.

## Things you can do right now

Below is a list of ways corporations and individuals can take action, with support available from the People First national team.

- Use People First language in your internal and external communications and materials.
- Ensure your benefits package supports people who were previously incarcerated and/or have incarcerated family members.
- Create and share social media posts
- Author a blog post or produce video content
- Develop content for press work, such as a Letter to the Editor or Op-Ed
- Sign on to an advocacy letter
- Highlight employees affected by the criminal justice system
- Host a digital day of action on social media

# Become a People First Ambassador

The People First program can support you with any of the following engagement opportunities:

- 1 Start by scheduling a briefing for your core team or staff, led by People First national leaders, covering how to put people first in your language and practices.
- 2 Next, make an internal announcement about joining the effort. This is your chance to acknowledge the presence of people affected by the criminal justice system in your company and customer base, and initiate our partnership publicly.
- 3 Review and update company materials to ensure person-first language is used, with support from the People First national team.
- 4 You can also share social media content celebrating the contributions of people affected by the criminal justice system and showcasing your decision to put people first.

## Benefits to being a People First Ambassador

- Tailored briefings or training to your core team or staff on people first policies and practices and why they matter to your staff and customers.
- Materials guidance, including language guidance, best-in-class benefit packages for staff affected by the criminal justice system, DEI recommendations, connection to partners with expertise in second chance hiring and employee retention, and more.
- Support planning and executing customized events catered to your organization or corporate community on the benefits of people first language, criminal justice reform, and advancing public safety (movie screening, training, panel, etc.).
- Website listing at [www.fwd.us/criminal-justice/people-first](http://www.fwd.us/criminal-justice/people-first).
- Receive a staff People First swag kit to represent the campaign in and out of the office.

## Learn more and join

We can all play a role in building a safer, more successful country simply by choosing to put People First. To become a People First Ambassador, please contact: [peoplefirst@fwd.us](mailto:peoplefirst@fwd.us).

To learn more about the need for people first policies and practices:

- For best practices on hiring people with criminal records, take a look at the [Second Chance Business Coalition resources](#) and the Society for Human Resources "[Getting Talent Back to Work](#)" toolkit.
- Check out research on the [harms of biased language](#), the [consequences of mass incarceration](#) and the [success of community safety solutions](#).

Together we can create an America where we all have a chance to be successful and thrive. We can end mass incarceration. We can put **#PeopleFirst**.