

INVEST HAMILTON COUNTY

WHITE PAPER · APRIL 2026

From Paper to Pathway

*An Evidence-Based Framework for Workforce Re-Entry Among
Justice-Involved and Recovery Populations*

A guide for practitioners, policymakers, and the people doing the work.

INVEST HAMILTON COUNTY

With acknowledgments to Hamilton County Jail, Hamilton County Community Corrections, Aspire Indiana Health, Mental Health America of Hamilton County, Prevail, Trinity Free Clinic, and Good Samaritan Network.

Where Insight Becomes Action

SECTION 1

Executive Summary

Nearly one in three American adults carries a criminal record. Almost twenty-two million are in recovery from a substance use disorder. Together they form a workforce roughly the size of the states of Texas and Florida combined — and the American labor market has not figured out how to let them in.

This white paper makes a practical case, built on twenty-five years of peer-reviewed evidence, that the binding constraint on re-entry employment is not skill, not motivation, and not even employer willingness. It is *narrative*. The people with the most to offer a tight labor market often arrive at the interview without the language to describe who they are and what they have learned. They arrive with a paper record and no pathway.

The evidence is clear on what works. Cognitive-behavioral programming reduces re-conviction by roughly a quarter (Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005). Transitional jobs programs, studied in a randomized trial by MDRC, cut three-year conviction rates by twenty-two percent and return \$1.26 to \$3.85 for every public dollar invested (Redcross et al., 2012; Schaberg & Greenberg, 2020). Motivational interviewing, across 119 studies, improves engagement and sustains recovery (Lundahl et al., 2010). Combined cognitive-behavioral and employment programs outperform either alone (Visher, Winterfield & Coggeshall, 2005). And structured disclosure coaching — teaching a person how to name what happened, take responsibility, and pivot to what they can do — improves interview-to-offer conversion (Ali, Lyons & Ryan, 2017).

Employers are already there. A 2021 SHRM survey found that eighty-one percent of HR professionals and eighty-two percent of managers said workers with records perform at the same level or better than their peers. Fifty-three percent of HR professionals said they are willing to hire from this population, up from thirty-seven percent three years earlier. The Second Chance Business Coalition now includes more than fifty major employers, from JPMorgan Chase to Microsoft to Walmart. The demand side is ready. What is missing is a scalable method for helping each person walk into the room with a credible, dignified, and honest story.

The Three-Part Recommendation

1. Invest in narrative-based re-entry programming. The evidence shows that identity change, not skill training alone, drives desistance and employment. Narrative-based intake — trauma-informed, literacy-accessible, legally bounded — should be a standard element of every re-entry and recovery service.
2. Reauthorize and expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Federal Bonding Program. WOTC sunsets on December 31, 2025. It is one of the most cost-effective hiring incentives in federal law. Federal Bonding, which insures employers at no cost, remains chronically underutilized. Both should be extended, funded, and actively promoted.
3. Create state-level fair-chance hiring standards. Indiana is a preemption state (HEA 1242, 2017) — localities cannot act. Thirty-seven states have moved; Indiana has not. A statewide fair-chance standard, aligned with the EEOC's 2012 individualized-assessment framework, would unlock hundreds of thousands of qualified Hoosiers for work.

Hamilton County, Indiana — the state's fastest-growing county, home to a 2.1 percent unemployment rate and a workforce shortage that every employer feels — is building this method. We are publishing it now, in draft, because the problem is not Hamilton County's alone and the solution should not be either. What follows is the research, the method, and the legal guardrails. We invite peers to use it, improve it, and send it back.

Sources: Prison Policy Initiative (2024); SAMHSA NSDUH (2023); Brennan Center (2020); SHRM / Charles Koch Institute (2021); MDRC CEO evaluation (Redcross et al., 2012); Landenberger & Lipsey (2005); Lundahl et al. (2010).

SECTION 2

The Invisible Workforce

The scale of the population at the intersection of incarceration and recovery is not a statistical footnote. It is a labor force — larger than most American cities, and almost entirely unmeasured in the official unemployment rate.

1.9M

PEOPLE HELD IN
U.S. PRISONS,
JAILS, AND
DETENTION
FACILITIES

PRISON POLICY
INITIATIVE, 2024

5.5M

ADULTS UNDER
CORRECTIONAL
CONTROL,
INCLUDING
PROBATION AND
PAROLE

BJS CORRECTIONAL
POPULATIONS, 2022

~5M

UNIQUE
INDIVIDUALS
CYCLE THROUGH
LOCAL JAILS EACH
YEAR

PRISON POLICY
INITIATIVE, 2024

22.3M

U.S. ADULTS IN
RECOVERY FROM A
DRUG OR
ALCOHOL
PROBLEM

SAMHSA; KELLY ET
AL., 2017

65%

OF THE U.S.
PRISON
POPULATION HAS
AN ACTIVE
SUBSTANCE USE
DISORDER

NIDA / CASA
COLUMBIA

27.3%

UNEMPLOYMENT
RATE FOR
FORMERLY
INCARCERATED
ADULTS — FIVE
TIMES THE
GENERAL RATE

PRISON POLICY
INITIATIVE, 2018

Roughly one in three American adults has a criminal record of some kind. Nineteen million carry a felony conviction (Brennan Center, 2020). And each year, between 550,000 and 600,000 people walk out of state and federal prisons, while another five million move through the country's local jails (BJS, *Prisoners in 2022*; Prison Policy Initiative, 2024).

The recovery population is larger still and harder to see. Forty-eight million Americans met criteria for a substance use disorder in the past year (SAMHSA NSDUH, 2023). Roughly twenty-two million adults self-identify as in recovery — a number comparable to the entire population of Florida. Sixty-five percent of people in prison have an active substance use disorder (NIDA), and the two populations overlap in ways that traditional workforce data never captures.

\$372 billion

Aggregate annual loss in U.S. earnings attributable to conviction histories

Brennan Center for Justice, *Conviction, Imprisonment, and Lost Earnings*, 2020

The per-person math is just as stark. Incarceration cuts annual earnings by roughly fifty-two percent in the years after release (Brookings, Looney & Turner, 2018). Over a lifetime, a person with a felony conviction loses an estimated \$484,400 in wages (Brennan Center, 2020). Only about fifty-five percent of the formerly incarcerated participate in the labor force at all — compared with eighty-three percent of the general adult population.

These are not marginal numbers. They describe a workforce roughly the size of the states of Ohio and Michigan combined — a workforce that, under the current labor-market equilibrium, is systematically held outside the wage economy. The cost is borne first by the individuals and their families, then by the public budgets that absorb recidivism, housing instability, and untreated health conditions, and finally by employers in every sector that cannot fill open roles.

*Sources: Prison Policy Initiative, *Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2024*; BJS, *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2022*; SAMHSA, *2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*; Brennan Center for Justice, *Conviction, Imprisonment, and Lost Earnings*, 2020; Brookings Institution, Looney & Turner, 2018.*

SECTION 3

The Economic Case

Employers, when asked directly, do not describe this population as a risk. They describe it as a resource. The data on retention, performance, and return on investment is uncommonly consistent across sources that rarely agree on anything.

The 2021 SHRM and Charles Koch Institute survey, *Getting Talent Back to Work*, remains the most comprehensive employer-side dataset on second-chance hiring. It is worth quoting in detail.



Employer willingness to hire has risen sharply. In 2018, thirty-seven percent of HR professionals said they were open to hiring someone with a criminal record. By 2021, that figure was fifty-three percent (SHRM, 2021). The Second Chance Business Coalition, launched in 2021, now includes more than fifty major employers with a combined workforce in the millions.

Concrete retention data confirms the survey findings:

- JPMorgan Chase reported that roughly ten percent of new hires in 2022 had a criminal record, with comparable or better retention than the non-record workforce (JPMC PolicyCenter, 2023).
- Nehemiah Manufacturing in Cincinnati reports approximately fifteen percent annual turnover among second-chance hires, against an industry baseline of thirty-five to seventy percent. Eighty percent remain at the one-year mark (Harvard Business School case, 2018).
- Johns Hopkins Hospital has hired more than five hundred people with records since 2000. Their retention rate runs 3.5 percentage points higher than peers without records, tracked over forty months.

- A Northwestern University study of U.S. military data found that enlistees with felony records had *no higher* involuntary turnover and were promoted to sergeant at higher rates than peers (Minor, Persico & Weiss, 2018).

What the ROI Actually Looks Like

When MDRC conducted a randomized controlled trial of the Center for Employment Opportunities transitional-jobs model, they tracked outcomes for five years. Every public dollar invested returned between \$1.26 and \$3.85 in social benefit — from reduced recidivism, reduced incarceration costs, and increased tax receipts. The three-year conviction rate for program participants was twenty-two percent lower than for controls (Redcross et al., 2012; Schaberg & Greenberg, 2020).

These are not marketing numbers. They are peer-reviewed, pre-registered, intent-to-treat estimates from one of the most methodologically rigorous evaluations in the workforce field.

The Federal Incentive Stack

Two federal tools sit at the center of the employer-side economics: the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Federal Bonding Program. Both exist. Both are underused. Both are due for reauthorization and modernization.

The Business Case at a Glance

TOOL	WHAT IT DOES	VALUE TO EMPLOYER	STATUS (APRIL 2026)
Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)	Federal tax credit for hiring from ten target groups, including ex-felons hired within one year of conviction or release	Up to \$2,400 per qualified hire (40% of first \$6,000 in wages)	Authorized through Dec. 31, 2025; reauthorization pending
Federal Bonding Program	No-cost \$5,000 fidelity bond covering first six months of employment; can be increased to \$25,000 in some states	Eliminates the insurance objection; indemnifies employer	Active; administered through state workforce agencies; chronically underutilized
Indiana HIRE (Hoosier Initiative for Re-Entry)	State DWD program connecting employers to candidates with records	Placement support; some wage-reimbursement options	Active through IDWD WorkOne network
Recovery Works	Indiana DMHA program funding SUD treatment for the justice-involved; includes employment component	Reduces off-the-job relapse risk; stabilizes the hire	Active

For a Hamilton County employer hiring ten people with conviction histories, the stack produces up to \$24,000 in tax credits and \$50,000 in fidelity coverage — with no cost of capital and no administrative fee. This is not charity. It is a rational response to a labor market with 2.1 percent unemployment and an estimated 50.3 drag-units per thousand workers from unfilled community-essential roles (Invest Hamilton County, *Quality of Life Drag Index*, January 2026).

The remaining friction is not financial. It is narrative. An employer who has been told seven times in an interview "it wasn't really my fault" learns to screen more conservatively. An employer whose first second-chance hire never mentioned the conviction until a background check surfaced it learns to trust less. The economics of second-chance hiring depend, at the level of the individual interview, on whether the applicant can tell the truth well.

Sources: SHRM / Charles Koch Institute, *Getting Talent Back to Work*, 2021; MDRC, Redcross et al., 2012 and Schaberg & Greenberg, 2020; JPMorgan Chase PolicyCenter, 2023; Harvard Business School Nehemiah case, 2018; Minor, Persico & Weiss, 2018; U.S. DOL WOTC; bonds4jobs.com.

SECTION 4

What the Evidence Tells Us

The workforce re-entry field is not short of evidence. Twenty-five years of randomized trials, meta-analyses, and longitudinal studies converge on a compact set of findings. The question is not what works; it is how to deploy what works at the speed and scale the labor market demands.

The Theoretical Foundation: Redemption Scripts

Shadd Maruna's *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives* (2001) is the foundation text. Drawing on the Liverpool Desistance Study — a matched set of sixty-five life-history interviews with persisting and desisting former offenders — Maruna identified a recurring narrative structure among those who successfully stopped committing crimes. He called it the *redemption script*. Desisters did not tell stories of a broken self being repaired. They told stories of a *true self* that had always been good, temporarily obscured by circumstance, now emerging into purpose — often with a generative "giving back" dimension (the "wounded healer").

Persisters, by contrast, told "condemnation scripts": stories in which the self was fundamentally damaged, agency was denied, and the future was foreclosed. The two populations were matched on criminal history, demographics, and risk factors. The narrative was the variable.

Maruna's findings have been replicated in the UK (Stone, 2016) and extended longitudinally. LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway's ten-year follow-up of the Oxford "Dynamics of Recidivism" Study (2008) found that men with coherent, agentic, redemptive narratives at release were significantly less likely to be reconvicted at the decade mark, controlling for criminal history and demographics.

Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph's *American Journal of Sociology* paper (2002) provides the developmental theory: desistance is best understood as *cognitive transformation*, not behavior management. Openness to change, exposure to "hooks for change" (such as a job), envisioning a conventional replacement self, and reshaping one's view of deviance — these precede and sustain the behavior. Employment, in this framework, is not a substitute for identity change. It is one of the hooks that enables it.

Cognitive-Behavioral Programs: The Strongest Single Intervention

Cognitive-behavioral therapy adapted for justice-involved populations produces the largest and most consistent recidivism reductions of any intervention class. Landenberger and Lipsey's 2005 meta-analysis of fifty-eight studies found an average twenty-five percent reduction in recidivism, with higher-fidelity implementations approaching fifty percent.

The National Institute of Corrections' *Thinking for a Change* (T4C) curriculum — cognitive self-change, social skills, problem-solving — has been evaluated in quasi-experimental studies. Lowenkamp, Hubbard, Makarios and Latessa (2009) found a twenty-three percent re-arrest rate at two years for T4C participants, against thirty-six percent for the comparison group.

~25%

Average recidivism reduction from cognitive-behavioral programming, across 58 studies
Landenberger & Lipsey, *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 2005

Transitional Jobs: Paid Work as the Hook for Change

The Center for Employment Opportunities transitional-jobs model — immediate paid work on a subsidized crew, daily job coaching, permanent placement support — has the single strongest RCT evidence base in the reentry field. MDRC's evaluation (Redcross et al., 2012) enrolled 977 recently released participants across a randomized design. The three-year conviction rate for the treatment group was twenty-two percent lower than for controls. Effects concentrated among those enrolled within three months of release.

Long-term follow-up confirmed durability. Schaberg and Greenberg's 2020 analysis showed persistent recidivism effects at five years and calculated a social return of \$1.26 to \$3.85 per dollar invested. The effects on sustained *unsubsidized* employment were more modest — an important caveat — but the recidivism effect, with all its cascading social benefits, is robust.

Across seven transitional-jobs RCTs synthesized by Bloom (2010) and Redcross et al. (2010), the pattern holds: consistent short-term employment and earnings effects during the subsidy period; consistent recidivism reductions for the justice-involved; weaker effects on long-term unsubsidized work. Transitional jobs work as a bridge, not a destination — which is what the model was designed to be.

Motivational Interviewing: The Engagement Engine

Motivational Interviewing (MI), developed by Miller and Rollnick for substance use treatment, is now one of the most extensively studied counseling approaches in existence. Lundahl et al.'s 2010 meta-analysis of 119 studies reported moderate and durable effects on substance use (effect size $d \approx 0.28$ to 0.77) and on treatment engagement. SAMHSA's Treatment Improvement Protocol 35 (updated 2019) lists MI as an evidence-based practice.

MI applied to probation supervision produced significant outcome gains in Walters et al.'s 2010 cluster RCT of 162 probationers and 20 officers. Applied to vocational counseling, MI-trained counselors produce higher rates of job-search engagement than directive approaches (Larson, 2008). The mechanism is consistent: MI treats ambivalence as normal, honors autonomy, and elicits change talk from the person rather than prescribing it.

Combined CBT + Employment: More Than the Sum

Visher, Winterfield and Coggeshall's 2005 meta-analysis of eight RCTs and quasi-experimental designs found that employment-only programs produced modest recidivism reductions (roughly ten to twenty percent), while programs combining cognitive-behavioral intervention *and* employment produced reductions in the thirty to fifty percent range. The combination outperforms either alone.

Key Finding

No single element of re-entry programming is sufficient on its own. Skills training without identity work produces graduates who cannot hold a job. Identity work without employment produces insight without traction. The interventions that work combine cognitive-behavioral programming, paid work, motivational engagement, and trauma-informed design — delivered with duration, fidelity, and peer involvement.

Trauma-Informed Design

Trauma prevalence in justice-involved populations is extraordinarily high. Wolff and Shi (2012) report that seventy-seven to ninety percent of women in state prisons and roughly fifty percent of men report serious trauma exposure; PTSD prevalence runs four to ten times the general-population rate. Among those in substance use treatment, approximately two-thirds report three or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (Felitti et al., 1998). Trauma exposure roughly doubles the likelihood of a substance use disorder.

SAMHSA's 2014 framework — *Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* — specifies six core principles that should govern any intake or service encounter with this population: (1) Safety; (2) Trustworthiness and Transparency; (3) Peer Support; (4) Collaboration and Mutuality; (5) Empowerment, Voice, and Choice; (6) Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues. Elliott et al. (2005) translate these into intake-design rules: explain why each question is asked, offer choice about what to answer, avoid forced disclosure, and center the client's sense of control.

Section sources: Maruna (2001); LeBel, Burnett, Maruna & Bushway (2008); Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph (2002); Landenberger & Lipsey (2005); Lowenkamp et al. (2009); Redcross et al. (2012); Schaberg & Greenberg (2020); Bloom (2010); Lundahl et al. (2010); SAMHSA TIP 35 (2019); Walters et al. (2010); Visher, Winterfield & Coggeshall (2005); Wolff & Shi (2012); Felitti et al. (1998); SAMHSA (2014); Elliott et al. (2005).

SECTION 5

The Story Gap

Between the evidence base and the labor market sits a gap that the re-entry field has named but rarely solved. The person with a record walks into the interview with the hardest two minutes of their adult life still to describe — and no one has taught them how to describe it.

Devah Pager's 2003 field audit, published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, remains the cleanest measurement of the penalty. Matched testers with and without a criminal record applied for the same entry-level jobs. A criminal record reduced callback rates by approximately fifty percent for white applicants and sixty-four percent for Black applicants. The record was the variable. Everything else was held constant.

Agan and Starr's 2018 *Quarterly Journal of Economics* field experiment extended the finding with a twist. Ban-the-Box policies — which delay the conviction question until after an initial screen — modestly increased callbacks for people with records. But they also *increased* statistical discrimination against young Black men *without* records, as employers substituted race for the missing conviction signal. Structural policy alone does not close the gap. It shifts where the gap falls.

Condemnation Scripts and Redemption Scripts, in the Interview

Harding's 2003 qualitative study in *Deviant Behavior* — "Jean Valjean's Dilemma" — observed that applicants with criminal records who framed their past using a redemption narrative were rated more favorably by employers than those who used denial or minimization. The finding is qualitative and small-n, but the underlying logic is confirmed experimentally.

Ali, Lyons and Ryan's 2017 *Journal of Applied Psychology* study — the most methodologically careful test of disclosure framing to date — combined experimental vignettes with field data. Applicants who proactively disclosed in a cover letter with growth-oriented framing received more favorable interview ratings than those who concealed or disclosed reactively. The mechanism is consistent with the broader literature on stigma management: controlled disclosure preserves agency; ambush disclosure destroys it.

Pager and Quillian's 2005 follow-up ("Walking the Talk?") found that later-stage disclosure — after rapport has been established — outperforms application-stage disclosure. This aligns, non-coincidentally, with the design intent of the Fair Chance to Compete for Jobs Act of 2019 and with state-level Ban-the-Box architectures: move the conversation past the paper record and onto the person.

The Skills-Are-Not-Enough Problem

The re-entry field has invested heavily in credentialing — forklift certifications, OSHA 10, ServSafe, commercial driver's licenses, coding bootcamps. These programs work. Graduates acquire real skills. But graduates without a credible narrative still fail at the interview — not because the skills are absent, but because the interviewer cannot get past the first thirty seconds.

A person with a credential and no story gets a callback, walks into the room, and loses the offer in the conversation. A person with a credential *and* a story — acknowledged, accountable, forward-looking — gets the offer at the same rate as an applicant without a record.

The bottleneck is narrative. Not skill.

Why This Is an Original Contribution

The evidence base has known about redemption scripts for twenty-five years. Practitioners have assembled disclosure-coaching frameworks — Prison Fellowship's "Acknowledge, Accept, Advance," CEO's "Own it, Explain it, Move past it;" the National HIRE Network's "Disclose, Demonstrate, Direct." These converge on the same three-part structure, which we describe in Section 6.

What has been missing is a *scaled, low-cost, literacy-accessible, legally bounded* method for building the story. Most disclosure coaching happens in one-on-one reentry case management, which is expensive, uneven in quality, and unavailable at the moment of highest need — often the intake interview in a jail cell, or the first appointment at a recovery center. The field has excellent coaches and an almost complete absence of tools those coaches can hand a person to work on between sessions.

The remainder of this paper describes a method for closing that gap: a structured intake instrument, deployable in paper or digital form, that helps a person draft a first version of their story — with transparent prompts, trauma-informed design, legal guardrails, and graduated disclosure about what the tool can and cannot do. It is not a substitute for a coach. It is the work a coach would ask a person to do before the first session, scaled to a population that dwarfs the coaching capacity that exists.

Sources: Pager (2003); Agan & Starr (2018); Harding (2003); Ali, Lyons & Ryan (2017); Pager & Quillian (2005); Maruna (2001).

SECTION 6

A Methodology for Story-Building

What follows is the intake framework Invest Hamilton County is building. It is drawn from SAMHSA's six trauma-informed principles, from the convergent three-part disclosure structure used by every credible practitioner in the field, and from the plain-language design standards established for low-literacy populations.

Design Principles

Six principles govern the instrument. They are not negotiable.

1. **Safety.** The physical and psychological environment of the intake must not add trauma. In custodial settings, that means no visible correctional markings on the instrument, confidential handling, and explicit non-disclosure to custody staff.
2. **Trustworthiness and Transparency.** Every prompt includes a visible "Why we ask" note. The person completing the instrument sees how each piece will be used before they decide whether to answer.
3. **Peer Support.** The instrument is designed to be walked through with a peer recovery specialist, a reentry case manager, or a trusted advocate — not completed alone in a waiting room, though either option is supported.
4. **Collaboration and Mutuality.** The output belongs to the person who completed it. Full stop. The instrument produces a guidance sheet they own, edit, carry, and may choose not to share.
5. **Empowerment, Voice, and Choice.** Every prompt is skippable. The instrument should feel like a conversation with a patient coach, not an interrogation.
6. **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues.** Language is tested across gender, race, age, and offense category for unintended framing. The instrument does not use the words *offender*, *felon*, *addict*, or *inmate*. It does not ask for a detailed account of the offense.

Literacy and Accessibility

Greenberg, Dunleavy and Kutner's *Literacy Behind Bars* (NCES 2007-473) reports that the average reading level among incarcerated adults is fourth to sixth grade, and that approximately seventy percent score at or below Level 2 on the NAAL prose literacy assessment. The instrument targets a SMOG reading grade of 6 or below: sentences under fifteen words, active voice, common words, visual chunking, generous white space, sans-serif type at twelve points or larger, checkboxes preferred over open-ended prompts where substance permits.

This is not a stylistic choice. It is a design constraint derived from evidence about the population the instrument serves.

The Three-Part Structure: Acknowledge, Take Responsibility, Pivot

The convergent frame across Prison Fellowship, the Center for Employment Opportunities, the National HIRE Network, Legal Action Center, and Root & Rebound is a three-part answer, delivered in thirty to sixty seconds. Each part has a specific job.

1. Acknowledge

Brief. Factual. No detailed narrative. "Yes, I have a conviction for [offense] in [year]."

The interviewer needs to know the person is not going to be ambushed by the background check. They do not need a courtroom transcript.

2. Take Responsibility

What was learned. What has changed. Without excuses, without blame, without minimizing. "I own what I did. Here is what has been different since."

This is the part that distinguishes a redemption script from a condemnation script. Research consistently identifies this as the pivot point of employer assessment.

3. Pivot

Forward. Skills, certifications, track record, why this job. "I'd like to talk about how what I have built since then fits this role."

The pivot is consent: the applicant returns the conversation to the employer's agenda, which is filling the role.

The prompts in the instrument are structured around this frame. They do not ask the person to write a story from scratch. They ask a series of questions whose answers, when assembled, produce a draft of the three-part structure. This is the difference between "write about yourself" and scaffolded narrative production — a difference the literacy literature has known about for decades.

AI-Assisted Synthesis, with Guardrails

The digital version of the instrument uses AI to synthesize the user's answers into a draft guidance sheet — three to five sample responses calibrated to different interview moments, disclosure-timing tips, and pivot phrases matched to the person's stated job interests. This is the place where bias risk is highest, and the place where design discipline matters most.

What the AI Does Not Do

- No predictive "employability" scoring of the user
- No classification of the user's likelihood of re-offense, relapse, or success
- No comparison of the user's narrative to any training corpus of "good" or "bad" narratives
- No retention of user inputs for model training, ever
- No outputs delivered without human-in-the-loop review before publication of any user-facing template changes

The AI is a drafting assistant for the user, not an evaluator of the user. This distinction is load-bearing and is enforced in the system prompt, the data pipeline, and the product roadmap.

Bias testing is continuous. Bolukbasi et al. (2016), Obermeyer et al. (2019), and Blodgett et al. (2020) have each documented ways that language models produce racialized and dialect-disparate outputs on texts from marginalized populations. The instrument's AI outputs are adversarially tested on a standing panel of narrative inputs that vary by dialect, name, offense category, and gender, and outputs are reviewed for framing drift before any prompt change reaches users.

Output Format

The user receives a printed or digital guidance sheet that includes:

- A short version of the three-part answer (thirty to sixty seconds), in their own words, lightly edited for clarity
- Three to five sample responses calibrated to different moments — the cover letter, the phone screen, the in-person interview, the post-offer disclosure, the colleague-level follow-up
- Disclosure-timing tips specific to federal-contractor, licensed-profession, and Indiana-expungement contexts
- A library of pivot phrases tied to the person's stated skills and job interests
- The composite legal disclaimer reproduced in Section 8 and Appendix B
- A referral list: Indiana Legal Services, Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic, local public-defender reentry programs, the Indiana Second Chance filing process, and (where relevant) 988 and Indiana Child Abuse Hotline numbers

The sheet belongs to the user. The instrument does not retain it beyond the session absent explicit opt-in. Data minimization is a design default, not a policy afterthought.

Sources: SAMHSA (2014); Elliott et al. (2005); Greenberg, Dunleavy & Kutner (NCES 2007-473); CDC Simply Put (2009); Prison Fellowship; Center for Employment Opportunities; National HIRE Network; Legal Action Center; Root & Rebound; Bolukbasi et al. (2016); Obermeyer et al. (2019); Blodgett et al. (2020).

SECTION 7

Three Modalities, One Method

The method is portable. The medium is not. A person in a jail cell, a person on work release, and a person in recovery all need the same narrative structure — but they reach it through very different channels.

Modality 1 - Jail (Custodial)

Format: Paper intake booklet, pencil-friendly, sixteen pages, scan-and-return workflow.

Delivery: Handed to the person by a jail-based reentry navigator, peer support specialist, or program chaplain. Completed alone in cell or in program space. Returned to the navigator, who scans and shreds the original.

Consent protocol: Explicit written consent at first page. Voluntary. Not connected to custody classification. Not shared with custody staff. Aligned with 45 CFR Part 46 Subpart C and PREA standards for research and program participation with incarcerated persons.

Data retention: None. The scan is used to produce the guidance sheet; the file is deleted from the scanning device within seven days. The person retains the printed sheet on release.

Modality 2 - Community Corrections / Work Release

Format: Hybrid. Participant chooses paper or digital tablet. Same content, same prompts, same output.

Delivery: Within existing case-management sessions at Hamilton County Community Corrections, or offered as a self-directed option between sessions.

Consent protocol: Voluntary, with written consent and a plain-language explanation that participation is not a condition of supervision and completion is not reported to the supervising court.

Data retention: Session-only by default; opt-in retention for participants who want to revisit and edit their narrative over time.

Modality 3 · Recovery Populations

Format: Web application, self-guided, mobile-first, accessible to WCAG 2.1 AA, cookieless analytics only.

Delivery: Publicly accessible URL with an optional access code for partner-organization cohorts (Aspire Indiana Health, Mental Health America of Hamilton County, Prevail, Trinity Free Clinic, Good Samaritan Network).

Consent protocol: Click-through consent with a plain-language summary above the line and full disclosure linked below. No required account; optional encrypted account for users who want to save and return.

Data retention: Default-delete after session. Optional account retention at the user's explicit choice, with full deletion available in one click. No sale, no training, no sharing with any third party.

The three modalities share one method. The prompts are the same. The three-part structure is the same. The legal guardrails are the same. The output format is the same guidance sheet. What changes is the delivery: paper in a place where paper is the only medium, hybrid in a place that serves both channels, and web where that reaches the population most efficiently.

This is a deliberate architectural choice. A single code base for three environments would be cheaper to build and nearly useless in the jail. A single paper booklet for the recovery population would be stigmatizing and unscalable. The modality follows the population; the method does not change.

SECTION 8

Legal and Ethical Guardrails

A tool that helps people talk about their criminal record or their recovery is adjacent to the practice of law, adjacent to the practice of medicine, and adjacent to several other bright lines that have sent well-intentioned programs to court. The guardrails below are non-negotiable.

The UPL Line: Legal Information vs. Legal Advice

The unauthorized practice of law is a state-defined offense with three common elements: (1) giving legal advice tailored to a specific person's situation, (2) by someone not licensed to practice in the relevant jurisdiction, (3) where a lay person would reasonably rely on it. In Indiana, the governing provisions are Indiana Admission and Discipline Rule 24 and Indiana Code § 33-43-2-1. ABA Model Rule 5.5 governs lawyer participation in such tools and binds the attorneys who help design them.

The instrument stays on the *legal information* side of the line:

- **Permitted:** general statements of law, procedure, forms, statutory text, categorical descriptions of how courts typically handle a type of issue, references to eligible attorneys and legal-aid providers.
- **Prohibited:** applying law to a person's specific facts, predicting outcomes, recommending a course of action, drafting custom legal documents, or characterizing any individual situation as expungeable, non-expungeable, or likely to succeed.

The architecture the instrument borrows is the one used by Upsolve, LawHelp, and Root & Rebound: information, decision support, and referral — never the application of law to specific facts without a licensed attorney in the loop.

ADA Protections for Recovery

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq., and the 2008 Amendments:

- People in recovery from a substance use disorder — those who have completed or are currently participating in supervised rehabilitation and are no longer using illegally — are a protected class (§ 12114(b)).
- People currently engaging in illegal drug use are not protected (§ 12114(a)).
- Alcohol use disorder is an ADA-protected disability even during current use, though employers may enforce on-the-job performance and sobriety standards.
- The EEOC's 2022 Opioid Guidance establishes that employees on Medication-Assisted Treatment — methadone, buprenorphine, naltrexone — are protected.

- Confidentiality provisions at § 12112(d) restrict employer inquiry into medical or recovery status.

The instrument surfaces these distinctions for the user in plain language. It does not offer legal advice about whether the user's specific situation qualifies under the ADA. That question goes to an attorney.

Custodial Consent

Research with persons confined in correctional facilities is regulated under 45 CFR Part 46 Subpart C, which treats incarcerated people as a protected population with presumptively compromised capacity to give free consent. While the instrument is not research, its design adopts the same protections as a matter of ethics:

- Explicit written consent, separate from any custody-facing paperwork
- Plain-language statement that participation is voluntary and that non-participation has no impact on classification, programming, or release
- No sharing of inputs or outputs with custody or classification staff without a separate, subsequent consent
- Alignment with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (28 CFR Part 115) reporting and privacy standards

Mandatory Reporting — Surfaced Up Front

Indiana mandatory-reporting law requires *any person* — not only professionals — to report suspected child abuse (IC 31-33-5-1). Elder abuse reporting is required under IC 12-10-3. Imminent harm to self or others is context-dependent and may also trigger duties to warn.

The instrument surfaces these obligations before the person begins. The opening page states in plain language that disclosures of active child or elder abuse, or imminent self-harm or harm to others, will be reported — and provides immediate referral numbers (988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, Indiana Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-800-5556, 911). This is both a legal requirement and an ethical one: the trauma-informed principle of trustworthiness requires that the person know the rules before they answer.

Data Minimization and Indiana CDPA

The Indiana Consumer Data Protection Act (IC 24-15) takes effect January 1, 2026, and imposes notice, opt-out, and data-minimization duties on covered controllers. Federal protections under HIPAA may also apply where the instrument operates in partnership with a treatment provider.

Default settings:

- Collect only what is needed for the guidance output
- Delete inputs at session end absent explicit opt-in retention
- No training of any AI model on user data, ever
- No sale, transfer, or sharing of user data with any third party
- One-click deletion for any retained account data

AI Bias Mitigation

Documented risks in the peer-reviewed literature include racialized disparate outputs on names and dialect markers (Bolukbasi et al., 2016, *NeurIPS*), systematic algorithmic under-treatment of Black patients (Obermeyer et al., 2019, *Science*), and de-valuation of nonstandard English (Blodgett et al., 2020, *ACL*). ProPublica's *Machine Bias* series (Angwin et al., 2016) documented how criminal-justice-adjacent training corpora can compound carceral bias.

Mitigation is procedural: human-in-the-loop review of prompt changes, adversarial testing on dialect- and name-diverse narrative panels, no predictive scoring of any user characteristic, and external review of outputs before release of any material change.

The Composite Disclaimer

The full user-facing disclaimer — reproduced below and in Appendix B — is the composite recommended in our legal research memo. It will be adapted to each modality with input from outside counsel before deployment.

[Tool Name] — Disclaimer

[Tool Name] provides general information and coaching support to help you prepare for employment conversations. It is not a lawyer, does not provide legal advice, and does not create an attorney-client relationship. The information provided is based on general patterns and may not apply to your specific situation. Laws vary by state and change over time.

For advice about your specific circumstances — including expungement eligibility, licensing questions, or disclosure obligations in regulated fields — consult a licensed attorney. Free and low-cost options include Indiana Legal Services (indianalegalservices.org), the Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic, and your local public defender's reentry programs.

If your situation involves an active criminal case, ongoing harm to a child or vulnerable adult, or thoughts of harming yourself or others, please seek appropriate help immediately: 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 911, or Indiana Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-800-5556.

Sources: EEOC Enforcement Guidance No. 915.002 (2012); Fair Chance to Compete for Jobs Act of 2019, Pub. L. 116-92; ADA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101-12114; EEOC 2022 Opioid Guidance; ABA Model Rule 5.5; Indiana Admission and Discipline Rule 24; IC 33-43-2-1; 45 CFR Part 46 Subpart C; 28 CFR Part 115 (PREA); IC 31-33-5-1; IC 12-10-3; IC 24-15; Bolukbasi et al. (2016); Obermeyer et al. (2019); Blodgett et al. (2020); Angwin et al. (2016).

SECTION 9

Policy Implications

A good method cannot substitute for policy. The structural terrain that shapes every re-entry interview in Indiana is set by a small number of state and federal rules, and a handful of them are overdue for attention.

Ban-the-Box and State-Level Preemption

Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia have adopted Ban-the-Box or Fair Chance hiring laws. Fifteen apply to private employers. More than 150 cities and counties have local ordinances (National Employment Law Project, 2024).

Indiana Is a Preemption State

Indiana has no statewide private-sector Ban-the-Box law. In 2017, the General Assembly passed HEA 1242 (IC 22-9-11), which prohibits localities from enacting Ban-the-Box ordinances for private employers. Indianapolis had adopted a city-employment Ban-the-Box by executive order in 2014; the state removed the conviction question from state employment applications by executive order in 2017 under Governor Holcomb. Private-sector Indiana remains unregulated at the state level and locked at the local level.

The practical effect: every Hoosier with a record answers the conviction question at the application stage, and employers screen on paper before meeting the person. This is the single largest structural friction in Indiana re-entry employment.

A state-level Fair Chance standard — delaying the conviction question until after a conditional offer, consistent with the federal Fair Chance Act of 2019 and with the EEOC's 2012 individualized-assessment framework — would align Indiana with thirty-seven peer states and unlock a substantial share of the workforce that is currently screened out before the conversation begins.

WOTC Reauthorization

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is authorized through December 31, 2025. At up to \$2,400 per qualified ex-felon hire, WOTC is one of the most cost-effective hiring incentives in the federal code. Reauthorization should be non-controversial and prompt. Expansion — particularly raising the per-hire credit, extending the eligibility window from one year post-release, or layering a recovery-specific credit — would materially improve the economics of second-chance hiring.

Federal Bonding Program Promotion

The Federal Bonding Program provides a \$5,000 fidelity bond, expandable to \$25,000 in some states, at no cost to the employer, for the first six months of employment. It is administered through state workforce agencies. It is chronically underutilized — a 2023 DOL estimate suggests fewer than a few thousand bonds issued annually nationwide against an eligible population in the millions. Utilization is a marketing problem, not a funding problem, and a modest promotional investment at the state level would return significant leverage.

Expungement Access — The One-Petition Rule

Indiana's Second Chance Law (IC 35-38-9) is, on paper, one of the more accessible expungement frameworks in the country: mechanical eligibility, relatively short waiting periods (five years for misdemeanors, eight for most felonies), and a robust post-expungement employment protection (IC 35-38-9-10) that allows the person to answer "no" to questions about expunged records.

But IC 35-38-9-8(i) imposes a one-lifetime-petition rule. A person may file only one expungement petition covering all eligible convictions. Timing and scope are critical; a mistimed or mis-scoped filing forecloses future relief for charges not yet eligible. The result is a statute that rewards legal representation and punishes the self-represented. Navigation support — legal information tools, attorney-referral funding, and plain-language petitioner guides — is the policy lever with the highest marginal return in Indiana's current framework.

EEOC Individualized Assessment

The EEOC's 2012 *Enforcement Guidance on the Consideration of Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions Under Title VII* (No. 915.002) remains the controlling federal framework. It requires employers to consider the three *Green* factors (*Green v. Missouri Pacific Railroad*, 549 F.2d 1158 (8th Cir. 1977)): (1) nature and gravity of the offense, (2) time since offense or completion of sentence, and (3) nature of the job sought. Blanket exclusions risk Title VII disparate-impact liability.

Enforcement resources for this guidance have been inconsistent across administrations. Sustained funding for EEOC investigation and litigation of blanket-exclusion practices is a low-cost, high-leverage federal intervention.

The Collateral-Consequences Problem

The National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction catalogs more than 44,000 state and federal collateral consequences of a conviction. Approximately sixty percent are employment-related (NICCC; Council of State Governments). These range from categorical licensing bars (cosmetology, healthcare aides, commercial driving, firearm-related employment) to discretionary suitability assessments (real estate, insurance, finance).

Licensing reform — shifting from categorical bars to individualized assessments modeled on the EEOC framework — has been enacted in roughly half the states over the last decade. Indiana has made progress in specific fields (cosmetology reform in 2019; some healthcare-aide reforms) but has not adopted a general occupational-licensing fair-chance standard. A comprehensive Indiana licensing-reform package, patterned on the *Model Act on Collateral Consequences* from the Uniform Law Commission, would materially expand the opportunity set for Hoosiers with records.

Sources: National Employment Law Project, Ban the Box Guide, 2024; HEA 1242 (2017), IC 22-9-11; Fair Chance to Compete for Jobs Act of 2019; EEOC Enforcement Guidance No. 915.002 (2012); Green v. Missouri Pacific Railroad, 549 F.2d 1158; IC 35-38-9; U.S. DOL WOTC; bonds4jobs.com; National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction.

SECTION 10

Implementation in Hamilton County

Hamilton County is the fastest-growing county in Indiana, with a 2.1 percent unemployment rate and an estimated 50.3 drag-units per thousand workers from unfilled community-essential roles. The labor-market argument for a functioning re-entry and recovery workforce pipeline is the strongest it has been in decades. What follows is what Invest Hamilton County is building, with whom, and on what timeline.

The Partner Landscape

The method described in this paper does not exist without the practitioners who already do the work in Hamilton County. Our implementation is built on, not in place of, the following partners:

- **Hamilton County Jail.** Approximately 6,000 to 8,000 bookings per year. Primary point of contact for the custodial (paper) modality, through the Sheriff's reentry and programming staff.
- **Hamilton County Community Corrections.** More than 2,000 participants annually across work release, home detention, and day reporting. Primary site for the hybrid (paper or digital) modality.
- **Aspire Indiana Health.** Integrated behavioral health and recovery services; primary partner on the recovery-population (web) modality.
- **Mental Health America of Hamilton County.** Community mental-health advocacy and peer support.
- **Prevail.** Victim-services and family-support partner; consulted on trauma-informed design review.
- **Trinity Free Clinic.** Primary health-care entry point for uninsured and low-income Hamilton County residents; referral partner for MAT and general medical needs.
- **Good Samaritan Network.** Safety-net coordinating body; referral partner for housing, food, and financial assistance.

Target Populations and Estimated Reach

Reach is anchored to authoritative population counts rather than projection. The three modalities map onto measurable populations in Hamilton County and Indiana:

- **Justice-involved (custodial).** The Indiana Department of Correction releases approximately 17,000 to 18,000 adults from state facilities each year (IDOC Annual Reports, 2022–2023), with a three-year recidivism rate of roughly 33 percent (IDOC, *Recidivism Report*, 2024 release for

2020 cohort). The Hamilton County Jail processes approximately 6,000 to 8,000 bookings per year (Hamilton County Sheriff's Office). These figures define the outer envelope for the paper modality; actual uptake depends on programming-staff capacity and scheduling within the jail.

- **Justice-involved (community supervision).** Indiana has approximately 119,000 adults on probation and 10,000 on parole (BJS, *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2022*). Hamilton County Community Corrections serves more than 2,000 participants annually across work release, home detention, and day reporting. The hybrid modality is sized to this latter population.
- **Recovery.** An estimated 720,000 Indiana adults (11.5 percent of the adult population) met criteria for a substance use disorder in the past year (SAMHSA, *NSDUH State Prevalence Estimates, 2021–2022*), extrapolating to an estimated 35,000 to 45,000 Hamilton County adults. Depression prevalence in Hamilton County is 22.9 percent (CDC, *PLACES, 2026 release*). Recovery-population reach through the web modality is governed by referral volume from partner behavioral-health providers rather than by a cap.

These are population anchors, not outcome commitments. The evaluation framework below measures what we actually produce, not what we might reach.

Funding

The work is supported by public funds dedicated to behavioral-health response. Transparency about funding is an ethical requirement, not a policy choice: these dollars are a finite resource, appropriately directed toward infrastructure that reduces the human and fiscal cost of the behavioral-health crisis. A workforce re-entry tool, deployed across justice and recovery populations that overlap by sixty-five percent, aligns squarely with the remedial intent of that funding.

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation design is pre-specified. We publish it here to bind ourselves to it.

MEASURE	DEFINITION	REPORTING CADENCE
Intake completion rate	Share of initiated sessions that produce a completed guidance sheet, by modality	Quarterly
6-month employment outcome	Share of consenting participants in work at six months post-completion, self-report with verification subsample	Semi-annually
12-month retention	Share of consenting participants retained at twelve months with the same or a subsequent employer	Annually
Self-efficacy change	Pre- and post- scores on a validated scale (New General Self-Efficacy Scale, Chen, Gully & Eden 2001)	Annually
User-reported safety and dignity	Brief post-session measure of the trauma-informed design goals (Safety, Voice, Choice)	Continuous
Bias audit outcomes	Adversarial testing results on the AI synthesis layer, by demographic variant	Quarterly

We commit to publishing evaluation findings in full — positive, negative, or null.

Timeline

- 2026, Q2–Q3: Paper instrument pilot in Hamilton County Jail and Hamilton County Community Corrections. Outside counsel review of the full disclaimer library and consent protocols before any participant completes a session.
- 2026, Q3–Q4: Iterative revision based on participant and partner feedback. First bias audit cycle.
- 2027, Q1–Q2: Web application for recovery populations. Accessibility review to WCAG 2.1 AA. Public launch.
- 2027, Q3 onward: Multi-county replication partnerships. Evaluation publications.

Invitation to Peer Organizations

This method was built to be shared. Invest Hamilton County is publishing the instrument, the intake prompts, and the legal-disclaimer library in this white paper and in subsequent releases. Peer organizations are invited to replicate, adapt, and send back what they learn. Contact information is on the final page.

Sources: Hamilton County Sheriff's Office; Hamilton County Community Corrections annual reports; Invest Hamilton County Quality of Life Drag Index, January 2026; BLS LAUS, December 2025; Chen, Gully & Eden (2001).

SECTION 11

A Call to Peers

We did not build this alone and we do not intend to keep it.

The evidence base on workforce re-entry is twenty-five years old. The tools that make it actionable, at the population scale the evidence implies, have not yet been built. Every re-entry program in America — and every recovery organization, and every workforce board, and every employer with an open role — has the same bottleneck: a person who has the capacity to do the work, and no scaffold for telling the story that gets them hired.

The instrument, the web app, the legal-disclaimer library, and the evaluation protocol described in this paper will be released openly as they are completed. If you want the paper booklet, contact us. If you want the web app source, contact us. If you want the three-part coaching framework adapted for your jurisdiction's licensing and expungement laws, we will work with your outside counsel to adapt it.

The case for this work is not regional. Hamilton County's constraints are common. The method should be common too.

Contact: Invest Hamilton County · investhamiltoncounty.com · White paper inquiries: info@investhamiltoncounty.com

APPENDIX A

The Intake Instrument — Draft Preview

What follows is a preview of the paper booklet's core prompts. Every prompt includes a "Why we ask" note, consistent with the SAMHSA trauma-informed principle of transparency. Sequence and formatting in the production booklet reflect accessibility guidelines for low-literacy adults.

Section 1 · About You

1. What name would you like an employer to call you?

Why we ask: Many people use a different first name than the one on their legal record. Employers are fine with that — we just want to know what to put at the top of your answer.

2. What age range fits you? (check one)

Why we ask: Some disclosure tips are different for younger workers. This helps us match the advice to you.

3. Where are you in life right now? (in jail, on work release, on probation, in recovery, a mix, none of these)

Why we ask: Different situations have different rules about what an employer can ask. This changes which tips apply.

Section 2 · Your Experience

4. In one or two sentences, what happened? (Use your own words. No details needed. If you don't want to answer, skip.)

Why we ask: You never have to say more than a sentence or two in an interview either. Practicing a short version here is the single most useful thing this booklet will help you do.

5. When did this happen? (month and year, or just year)

Why we ask: Time matters. The longer it has been, and the more you have done since, the less weight the record carries in an employer's assessment.

6. Is there anything you'd want an employer to understand about the situation — not an excuse, just context? (optional)

Why we ask: Some situations have context a one-line answer can't capture. If yours does, we can help you figure out where that fits — or whether it fits at all.

Section 3 · What You've Learned

7. What have you done since then that you are proud of? (a program, a job, a class, a relationship, a habit — anything)

Why we ask: This is the part of your answer that does the most work. An employer does not need a long apology; they need to know what has changed. Your answer here becomes the middle part of your three-part response.

8. If someone who knows you well described who you are now, what would they say?

Why we ask: Sometimes it is easier to describe yourself through another person's words. This often produces the most honest version.

9. What would you tell a younger version of yourself who was about to make the same choice?

Why we ask: This question often draws out the clearest statement of responsibility — the part that research shows matters most to employers. You do not have to share your answer with anyone; it is for you.

Section 4 · Where You're Going

10. What kinds of work are you interested in?

Why we ask: Your three-part answer should end by pointing forward. Knowing what "forward" looks like for you lets us tailor the pivot phrases in your guidance sheet.

11. What skills, certifications, or training do you already have? What are you working on?

Why we ask: The strongest pivot is a specific one. We'll help you match what you already have to the kinds of jobs you are looking at.

12. If an employer had to remember one thing about you after the interview, what would you want it to be?

Why we ask: This is the line your guidance sheet will help you land. When you walk out of the room, this is what they should be thinking.

A production version of this booklet includes a consent page, mandatory-reporting notice, literacy supports, checkbox alternatives for each open-ended prompt, and the composite disclaimer reproduced in Appendix B.

APPENDIX B

Legal Disclaimer Library

Four disclaimer templates are reproduced below. The first three are drawn from leading legal-information nonprofits and are reprinted here as reference exemplars. The fourth is the composite recommended for the Invest Hamilton County instrument across all three modalities.

Template 1 · Upsolve-Style

"Upsolve is a nonprofit tool. We do not provide legal advice."

Template 2 · Root & Rebound Style (Self-Help Manual)

"This publication is distributed with the understanding that Root & Rebound is not engaged in rendering legal advice or services. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this book, it is not intended as legal advice for any specific case. The information provided is intended as general reference material only, and readers are responsible for determining how the law applies to their individual circumstances. Readers should consult an attorney for advice regarding their specific situations."

Template 3 · LawHelp-Style

"The information on this website is for general informational purposes only. Nothing on this site should be taken as legal advice for any individual case or situation. This information is not intended to create, and receipt or viewing does not constitute, an attorney-client relationship. If you need legal advice, please contact a licensed attorney in your jurisdiction."

Template 4 · Composite Recommended for the IHC Instrument

"[Tool Name] provides general information and coaching support to help you prepare for employment conversations. It is not a lawyer, does not provide legal advice, and does not create an attorney-client relationship. The information provided is based on general patterns and may not apply to your specific situation. Laws vary by state and change over time.

For advice about your specific circumstances — including expungement eligibility, licensing questions, or disclosure obligations in regulated fields — consult a licensed attorney. Free and low-cost options include Indiana Legal Services (indianalegalservices.org), the Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic, and your local public defender's reentry programs.

If your situation involves an active criminal case, ongoing harm to a child or vulnerable adult, or thoughts of harming yourself or others, please seek appropriate help immediately: 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 911, or Indiana Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-800-5556."

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