

WELCOME

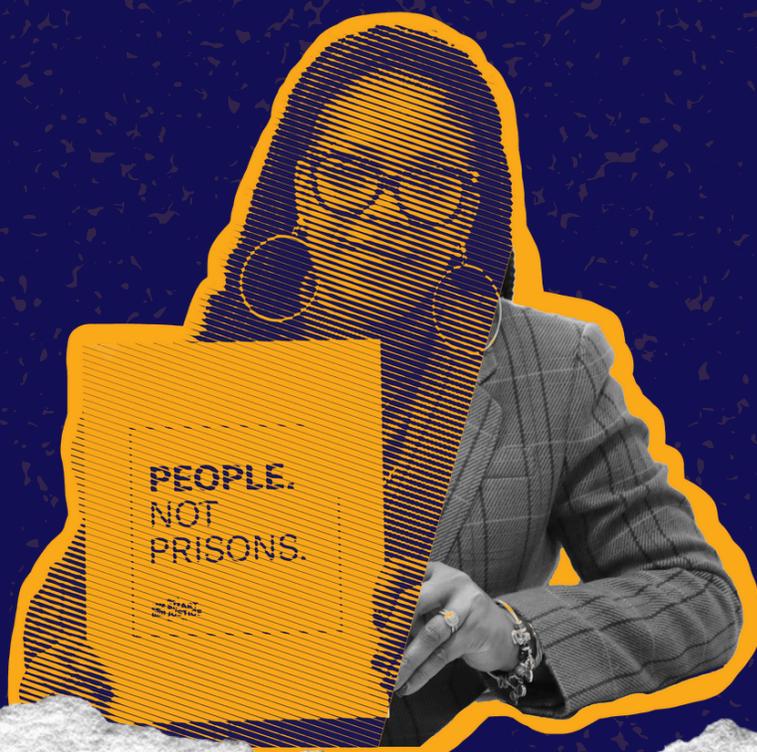
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# SMART JUSTICE ADVOCATES

COMPANION GUIDE 2024-25



# Welcome to the ACLU Smart Justice Advocates



## Who We Are

Smart Justice Advocates (SJAs) are a diverse group of Kentuckians who have either personally experienced incarceration or have friends or family members who have been or are incarcerated. We believe all people deserve dignity and respect, and we know recovery is real and possible.

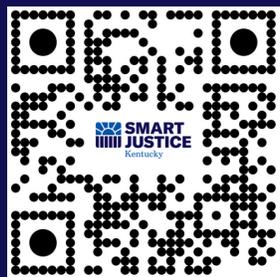
# What We Do

Together, SJAs work to advance the fight for freedom and equality for all those impacted by the criminal legal system, including working on policy solutions to make the criminal legal system more just. Kentuckians affected by the criminal legal system are leading our work and are guided by ACLU of Kentucky organizers.

In addition to working on policy solutions to reform Kentucky's unjust criminal legal system and meeting monthly to build leadership skills and analyze Kentucky's political landscape, we:

- Share our stories directly with legislators in Frankfort,
- Testify in front of legislative committees in Frankfort,
- Present at and attend conferences, convenings, panel discussions, film screenings, and more, and
- Table at community events to share SJAs' work and engage more people.

Learn more and get involved! Scan the QR code below or visit [aclu-ky.org/SJA](http://aclu-ky.org/SJA).



# Mission, Vision, and Values

## Mission: Our Purpose

We are a unified group of diverse individuals that works boldly to inspire change, relying on values of respect, perseverance, and advocacy to advance the fight for freedom and equality for all those impacted by the justice system.

## Vision: Our Hope for the Future

We believe all people deserve dignity and respect. We believe, like Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative, that “Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.” We know recovery is real and possible.

## Values: How We Work Together and in the Community

- ✓ Respect  
We listen to understand and appreciate.
- ✓ Perseverance  
We are not intimidated by obstacles that stand in our way.
- ✓ Advocacy  
We stand up for ourselves and others.

# Smart Justice Areas of Focus

Some of the issues we address together and with partner organizations and legislators include:

- Clean slate initiative/expungement
- Caregiver Consideration
- Criminal law/penal code reform
- Addiction recovery and rehabilitation



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# Definitions

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## Advocate

(Noun) A person who defends and/or works and argues in support of another's cause, especially in court.

(Verb) To speak or write in favor of, to support or urge by argument; to recommend publicly.

## Antisemitism

A form of racism that includes hostility to, prejudice towards, or discrimination against people who are Jewish.

## Bill

The first step toward creating a new law; a written document that can be introduced in either chamber of Congress/General Assembly by a senator or representative who sponsors it. Once a bill is introduced, it is assigned to a committee whose members will research, discuss, and make changes to the bill. The bill is then put before that chamber to be voted on.

## Committee (legislative)

A group of legislators, usually members of the same house/chamber, assigned to consider some issue or question and submit a report on its recommendations for action by the body which created it.

## Committee Hearing

The committee members meet to hear from witnesses representing various viewpoints on the bill or issue being discussed. Each committee makes public the date, place, and subject of any hearing it conducts. Most are televised on Kentucky Educational Television.

# Definitions (cont.)

## Congress

The legislative branch of the U.S. government, which makes our laws; includes the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. Each state has two U.S. Senators and at least one U.S. Representative; the more residents a state has, the more U.S. Representatives it is allowed.

## Constitutional Amendment

A proposal to change the language of a constitution in some manner.

## Diversity

The practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc. [Oxford Learners Dictionary]

## Ethnicity

The quality or fact of belonging to a population group or subgroup made up of people who share a common cultural background or descent.

## Expungement

The legal process where an arrest, charge, or conviction are completely removed from your record.

## Floor (House or Senate)

The area of a legislative chamber which is occupied by the members and staff of the body.

# Definitions (cont.)

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## General Assembly

Kentucky's legislature, which includes the House of Representatives and Senate.

## Hate Crime

An often violent crime—such as assault, murder, arson, vandalism, or threats to commit such crimes—motivated by bias against race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

## Homophobia

A dislike of, hostility to, disdain for, or fear of gay sexual orientation or gay people.

## House of Representatives

In Kentucky, the larger of two parts of the General Assembly (the other being the Senate); its members are elected to represent a certain geographical area in the state legislature. Representatives are elected for two-year terms in November following the regular session of the General Assembly. The entire House is elected at the same time.

## Legislator

A person who is elected to represent a particular geographic area in the creating or changing of laws.

# Definitions (cont.)

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## **LGBTQIA+**

Abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual. The additional “+” stands for all of the other identities not encompassed in the short acronym. It is an umbrella term often used to refer to the community as a whole.

## **Lobby**

To try to influence public officials and especially members of a legislative body.

## **Lobbyist (legislative advocate or agent)**

A person, usually paid, who is engaged in representing a particular interest or group of interests before the legislature.

## **Long-term recovery**

When a person maintains sobriety for an extended period of time.

There is no exact timeframe on what is considered “long term.”

Although someone in long-term recovery has likely completed an addiction treatment program of some kind, long-term recovery looks different for everyone.

## **Marginalized**

The act of treating a person or group as though they are insignificant by isolating and/or disempowering them. The term describes the person or group that is being treated insignificantly, pushed to the margins of society and rendered powerless, as in “marginalized person/people.”

# Definitions (cont.)

## Non-Partisan

Not biased or partisan, especially toward any particular political group.

## Op-ed

A written opinion about an issue that appears in the newspaper, often written by a subject-matter expert, a person with a unique perspective on an issue, or a regular columnist employed by the paper.

## Partisan

A strong supporter, or in strong support, of a political party, cause, or person.

## Penal code

A set of laws concerning crimes and offenses and their punishment.

## PFO

Acronym for persistent felony offender; defendants are eligible for a PFO charge if they have at least one past felony conviction and their full sentence—including prison time, probation or restitution—ended within five years of their current case. One felony conviction in that timeframe means you're eligible for a second-degree persistent felony offender charge. One felony conviction in the timeframe and at least one more at any time makes you eligible for a first-degree persistent felony offender charge.; in Kentucky, the PFO law went into effect in 1974 as part of a complete revision of the criminal code.

# Definitions (cont.)

## Rural

In, relating to, or characteristic of the countryside rather than the town/city.

## Senate

The smaller of the two parts of the General Assembly (the other being the House of Representatives); its members are elected to represent a certain geographical area in the state legislature. In Kentucky, senators are elected for four-year terms, with half the Senate elected every two years. [Legislative Research Commission]

## Social Justice

A strong supporter, or in strong support, of a political party, cause, or person.

## Stakeholder

A person with an interest or concern in something, such as an issue, policy, business, or organization.

## Stereotypes

A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image of or idea about a particular type of person or thing.

## Suburban

Lower populated areas that separate residential and commercial areas from one another.

# Definitions (cont.)

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## Testimony

A formal written or spoken statement, especially given in a court of law or the legislature.

## Text Bank

Sending text messages to a large number of recipients to spread a message.

## Undocumented

All immigrants who reside in the United States without legal status.

## Urban

In, relating to, or characteristic of a town or city.

## Additional Resources:



# SJA Meeting Policy

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## Smart Justice Advocates (SJA) Meeting Policy

Attendance to Smart Justice Advocate Monthly Meetings is limited to members of the Smart Justice Advocates group. A member is defined as a justice-involved Kentuckian who has signed up as a volunteer advocate and is interested in working toward policy change in Kentucky.

Attendees of SJA meetings are entitled to an expectation of privacy when sharing their personal stories and working with ACLU of Kentucky staff to formulate legislative strategies. These are not public meetings. No portion of these meetings should be recorded or live streamed in any way. SJA meetings are only open to the press by invitation from the executive director or a member of the ACLU of Kentucky communications department.

SJA members have all signed non-disclosure agreements per the ACLU of Kentucky's policies.

# Confidentiality Agreement

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I understand that the ACLU often deals with confidential information, including such matters as the names of people seeking our legal help and the facts of their cases, our future plans (such as the fact that we plan to file a lawsuit or the date we plan to release a report), the content of our internal discussions about litigation, lobbying, or public relations strategy, or the names of our members and the size of their financial contributions. I am aware that I am likely to learn such confidential information while working or volunteering at the ACLU.

I understand that the disclosure of such information outside the ACLU may harm the ACLU, its clients, or its members. Even disclosure to my family or friends who have no wish to harm the ACLU may cause harm, because information passed to one person is often passed along to others. The only way to keep a secret is to keep it secret.

Accordingly, and as a condition of the ACLU's willingness to employ me or to give me the opportunity to serve as a volunteer, I agree that I will not disclose outside the ACLU any confidential information that I learn while at the ACLU. I agree that if I am not sure whether a matter is confidential or is public, I will treat it as confidential unless informed otherwise by a regular staff member. I further understand that I may be terminated as an employee, contractor, or volunteer, and that other legal action may be taken against me, should I improperly disclose confidential information outside the ACLU.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Witnessed by:

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