

Language Audit Quick Reference

Effective Communication with Justice-Involved Clients

✗ Phrases to Avoid

"You need to stop using" • "You have a problem" • "You're in denial" • "You have to..."

Start with External Authority

"The court mandates..."

Conveys authority without sounding overly demanding or personal

Encourage Reflection

"Consider this approach..."

Encourages reflection and personal responsibility without imposing direct orders

Suggest Assistance

"It might help if..."

Suggests assistance while leaving room for personal choice and agency

Offer Positive Framing

"You might find it beneficial..."

Gives a positive suggestion without appearing controlling or prescriptive

Clarify Legal Requirements

"The law specifies..."

Clarifies obligations with a clear reference to legal authority

Show Collaborative Partnership

"We recommend..."

Shows partnership and collaborative attitude towards decision-making process

💡 Quick Implementation Tips

- **Audit your session recordings:** Listen for frequency of "you need to" vs. collaborative language
- **Practice transitions:** "The court requires this, so let's figure out how to make it work for you"
- **Acknowledge their reality:** "You're here because the court wants you here" vs. denying their motivation
- **Build on their goals:** Connect court requirements to things they actually want to change
- **Frame setbacks differently:** "What happened?" rather than "Why did you relapse?"