

COMMUNICATORS' GUIDE

An advocacy tool for Clean Slate campaigns to help craft clear and compelling communications that will **raise awareness, build understanding, and inspire action.**



CSI COMMUNICATORS' GUIDE

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Clean Slate 101: Foundational Messaging

This first section of The Clean Slate Initiative’s Communicator’s Guide aims to be a quick and easy reference for foundational messaging. It covers the basics. The sections that follow delve into how to build upon this foundation in ways that reach targeted audiences, persuade people to support campaign efforts and build communications strategies that support your coalition’s goals. So, let’s get started!

What is Clean Slate?

Clean Slate laws help people with old arrest or conviction records move forward in life — opening doors to jobs, housing, and opportunities they might not have otherwise. It’s a policy supported by both sides of the political aisle that uses technology to automate the sealing of records for those who meet certain requirements and have remained crime-free for a period of time.

Let’s dissect this explanation to highlight some key elements, because sometimes, you may need to vary the ways you describe Clean Slate. And that’s okay - as long as you are mindful when doing so.

Clean Slate laws help people with old arrest or conviction records	It’s important to emphasize that Clean Slate seals old records. People need to understand that it is not a ‘get-out-of-jail’ free card and that the second chance is something that people have earned over time.
move forward in life — opening doors to jobs, housing, and opportunities they might not have otherwise.	Rather than focusing on someone’s past, Clean Slate laws are about seeing people for who they are now and what they are capable of achieving in the future. Opening doors isn’t giving someone a handout. It’s about making sure people have a fighting chance to build a better life for themselves.
It’s a policy supported by both sides of the political aisle	Clean Slate has been a bipartisan solution from the beginning. It’s important to make sure people know that this is something both Republicans and Democrats can

	agree on at a time of extreme partisan divisiveness.
that uses technology to automate	Clean Slate is innovative and uses technology to streamline an inefficient process. Often, people also need to know that automation includes some level of human oversight, and research shows automation is easier for people to support than automatic record sealing.
the sealing of records	Research shows that sealing is the best way to describe the process. Depending on your state's laws, you may need to use clearing, expunging, erasure, non-disclosure, or another term. But generally, <i>sealing</i> is best.
for those who meet certain requirements and have remained crime-free for a period of time .	Audiences need to know that people earn their second chance for a Clean Slate. It's not something that is given to anyone. People have done what the court has told them to do and proven to be deserving of a second chance by staying out of trouble for a period of time required by the state.

That's a long and complex way to describe Clean Slate policies, right? Consider using a hook to draw people in for long enough to understand the full concept. Headlines or 'bumper-sticker slogans' can get people's attention. They can be helpful when drafting social media content or making an impactful statement in writing or through speech.

Examples of short hooks that can pull audiences in:

Clean Slate...	is a fair shot at redemption.	unlocks opportunity.	Dignity
	is the power of redemption.	unlocks human potential.	Opportunity
	is a second chance.	builds stronger communities.	Freedom
	is a path forward.	creates safer communities.	Redemption

Clean Slate...	is the freedom to create a better future.	transforms lives and communities.	Hope
	is dignity for working families.	breaks down barriers.	Justice
	is a common-sense solution.	is a better future.	Transformation
	is redemption made accessible.	Accountability	Commonsense
	is stronger families, and stronger communities.	Possibility	Renewal
	Growth	Community	Potential

Core Messages

Most Clean Slate messaging falls into one of three types of statements - values, problem, and solution. The VPSA messaging tool, detailed more in a later section, combines these three core message types with a clear Action/Benefit statement to create coherent and compelling messaging statements. See *Resources > Persuasive Messaging > Values-Based Messaging* for more information.

- Values statement** a concise and impactful declaration that communicates the core principles or ideals that inspire and guide a message, policy, or movement. It connects with universal human emotions, appeals to shared beliefs, and establishes a moral foundation that resonates across diverse audiences, making the case for why an issue matters on a deeper level.
- Problem statement** a clear and focused description of the challenge or issue that needs to be addressed. These statements should position the problem as something that is a threat to a shared value and connect emotionally and logically, helping audiences understand why the issue is important and motivating them to care about finding a solution.
- Solution statement** a compelling explanation of the action or policy needed to address a problem. It focuses on practical, achievable steps, inspires hope, demonstrates opportunity, and aligns with the values of the audience.

Some of the core values often associated with Clean Slate include:

Redemption	Fairness	Dignity	Equity
Opportunity	Safety	Accountability	Providing for Family
Forgiveness	Law & Order	Efficiency	Grace/Mercy

Here are some examples of the different kinds of statements that are foundational in Clean Slate messaging:

<i>Values</i>	People who have served their time and demonstrated change have earned a second chance to rebuild their lives.
<i>Values</i>	Most people want to be able to contribute to their families and communities.
<i>Values</i>	Forgiveness includes acknowledging past mistakes while embracing the potential for growth, healing, and positive change in all of us.
<i>Values</i>	It is important to ensure that people who want to build a better life for themselves have a fighting chance to do so.
<i>Values</i>	Everyone wants to live in a safe community and know that their family is protected.
<i>Values</i>	It's important that our justice system works efficiently and responsibly uses taxpayer resources to carry out justice.
<i>Values</i>	No matter where you live, how much money you make, or the color of your skin, we all deserve to be treated fairly.
<i>Values</i>	Most of us take pride in working hard to provide for our families and those who depend on us.
<i>Values</i>	At some point in our lives, we have all been given a second chance - whether from our parents, friends, or our congregations.
<i>Problem</i>	1 in 3 adults in the United States (70-100 million people) have an arrest or conviction record that limits their ability to work, obtain housing, and engage in civic life.

<i>Problem</i>	94% of employers use background checks when hiring.
<i>Problem</i>	90% of landlords use background checks on prospective tenants.
<i>Problem</i>	72% of colleges and universities use background checks on prospective students.
<i>Problem</i>	More than 42,000 state and federal regulatory restrictions limit the ability of people with records to access meaningful opportunities to build a better life.
<i>Problem</i>	The United States loses an estimated \$78 - \$87 billion in gross domestic product every year by shutting people with records out of the workforce.
<i>Problem</i>	Less than 10% of people get their records sealed within five years of becoming eligible.
<i>Problem</i>	An arrest or conviction record reduces a job seeker's chance of getting a callback or job offer by nearly 50 percent .
<i>Problem</i>	America now has about the same number of people with arrest or conviction records as it does four-year college graduates.
<i>Solution</i>	States across the country have seen bipartisan support for automated record sealing policies that ensure people who have earned a shot at redemption receive it.
<i>Solution</i>	We can harness technology to automate arrest and conviction record sealing for people who have remained crime-free for a specified period of time.
<i>Solution</i>	We should ensure everyone who has met the requirements receives the second chance they have earned.
<i>Solution</i>	Automating the record-sealing process can get the government out of the marketplace and ensure opportunities are based on people's skills and experience.
<i>Solution</i>	Let's make sure people have a chance to reach their potential and build a better life for themselves and their families by removing barriers to employment for those who have earned a second chance.

Solution We can ensure that people can contribute to the economy and their communities by increasing access to meaningful opportunities for everyone who earns it.

Messaging Do's & Don'ts

Do's

1. Lead with Shared Values

- Emphasize fairness, dignity, opportunity, and equity to connect with audiences on a personal and emotional level.
- Example: "Everyone deserves a fair chance to rebuild their lives and provide for their families."

2. Focus on People's Strengths and Potential

- Highlight who people are today and their capacity to grow and contribute to society.
- Example: "Clean Slate helps talented individuals unlock opportunities to thrive and give back to their communities."

3. Use People-First Language

- Frame individuals as people first, not as their past actions.
 - Example: Say "people with records" instead of "criminals" or "offenders."
- For more information about People-First Language, see *Resources > Persuasive Messaging*

4. Be Specific and Solution-Oriented

- Clearly explain the problem and how Clean Slate policies solve it.
- Example: "Automated record-sealing removes unnecessary barriers for people who meet the requirements, allowing them to move forward without the burden of outdated records."

5. Focus on Positive Outcomes

- Emphasize the benefits of Clean Slate policies for individuals, families, communities, and the economy.
- Example: “Clean Slate policies help reduce recidivism, boost local economies, and strengthen families.”

6. Tailor Messages to Your Audience

- Adjust messaging to resonate with specific stakeholders, such as policymakers, employers, or community members.
- Example: For policymakers: “Clean Slate policies save taxpayer dollars while improving public safety.”

7. Use Inclusive and Hopeful Language

- Convey optimism and emphasize the opportunity for growth and progress.
- Example: “Clean Slate is about unlocking potential and creating a better future for everyone.”

Dont's

1. Don't Stigmatize

- Avoid language that perpetuates stereotypes or reinforces shame.
- Avoid: “Ex-criminals need our help.”
- Better: “People with records deserve a fair chance to move forward.”

2. Don't Define People by Deficits or Victimhood

- Avoid framing people solely as victims in need of help, which can reinforce stigmatizing narratives.
- Avoid: “These people need our support because they can't do it themselves.”
- Better: “Clean Slate ensures that skilled and hard-working folks have a fair chance to reach their full potential and build better futures.”

3. Don't Frame Clean Slate as Charity

- Avoid portraying Clean Slate as a handout; emphasize fairness and mutual benefits for individuals and society.
- Avoid: “We're giving people a break.”
- Better: “Clean Slate policies are a commonsense way to remove unnecessary barriers for people who have earned a meaningful second chance.”

4. Don't Overpromise

- Be realistic about what Clean Slate policies can achieve to maintain credibility.
- Avoid: “This will solve all systemic issues.”
- Better: “Clean Slate is a crucial step toward a more just and equitable system.”

5. Don’t Use Overly Technical or Legalistic Language

- Avoid jargon that might confuse or alienate your audience.
- Avoid: “This is a technically feasible policy that poses minimal perceived challenges for implementing agencies.”
- Better: “Because our state started automatically sealing marijuana convictions after it was legalized, it should be straightforward for the state to automate the sealing of old and eligible conviction records.”

Intro: Why Communication is Important for Advancing Clean Slate Campaigns and Advocacy Efforts

Effective communication is the cornerstone of any successful advocacy campaign, and this holds especially true for Clean Slate campaigns. A communications team's success relies heavily on its ability to be clear, compelling, and strategic. By crafting narratives that resonate with targeted audiences, we can raise awareness, foster understanding, and galvanize support for our cause. Effective communication is not just about sharing information; it's about connecting with people on an emotional level and inspiring them to take action.

In the realm of Clean Slate advocacy, clear and consistent communication helps demystify the complexities of the criminal legal system and the barriers it imposes on individuals seeking to build better lives for themselves. Through strategic messaging, we can challenge misconceptions, address stigma, and shift public perception in favor of policies that promote redemption and empowerment.

Effective communication is essential for building and maintaining coalitions with key stakeholders, including policymakers, community organizations, and state agencies. By articulating our shared goals and the benefits of Clean Slate policies, we can forge strong partnerships that amplify our efforts and increase our impact. Whether it's through persuasive storytelling, compelling social media campaigns, or effective media engagement, our communication strategies must be tailored to reach and resonate with unique and specific audiences.

Finally, robust communication efforts can empower advocates by building the skills and providing the tools necessary for effective engagement. By increasing access to practical communication strategies, we can strengthen both individuals and community partners, ensuring they are equipped to share their stories, challenge harmful narratives, and advocate for meaningful change. The Clean Slate Initiative's communicator's guide explores the principles and practices that underpin effective communication, offering advocates tools and skills to help advance Clean Slate campaigns and advocacy efforts.

Overview: Key Elements for Using Communications to Support Strategic Goals and Coalition Efforts

Aligning Messaging with Strategic Goals

Communication efforts should always be purpose-driven and aligned with an overarching goal. An op-ed or letter to the editor can be effective tactics, but only if they help move a target, reach an audience, or otherwise help advance a campaign towards a collective goal.

Start by identifying the specific objectives you aim to achieve—whether influencing policy, raising public awareness, or mobilizing community support. Craft your messaging to clearly and consistently reflect these goals. Consistent and focused messaging reinforces our objectives, making it easier for stakeholders to understand and support our cause.

Tailoring Communications to Different Audiences

Effective communication requires tailoring messages to resonate with different audiences. Policymakers, community leaders, bureaucrats, and reporters will have unique perspectives and concerns, so it's important to be as specific as possible when defining an audience. If the “general public” is your audience, then you don't have an audience.

Sometimes your audience is specific, such as “members of the House Judiciary Committee” or even better the “Chair of the Judiciary Committee and the four members who are likely to oppose a Clean Slate bill.” If you know your audience, you can meet them where they are at and, if successful, lead them where you want them to go.

Leveraging Multiple Communication Channels

Understand the value of different communication channels and leverage them effectively. Social media platforms, newsletters, blogs, webinars, and public speaking engagements each offer unique advantages. Social media is excellent for real-time updates and engaging with a broad audience quickly. Newsletters and blogs allow for more in-depth discussion and can be used to keep stakeholders informed about ongoing efforts and successes. Webinars and public speaking engagements provide opportunities to interact directly with an audience, answer questions, and build a sense of community. A multi-channel approach ensures that your message reaches different segments of your audience in the most effective way possible.

Coalition Communications

A strong coalition is an essential component of a successful Clean Slate campaign, and participating as part of a coalition has many benefits. Partner organizations and allies can expand the campaign's communications impact by adding layers of additional skills, resources, and expertise. Collaboration and clarity in roles can make coalition communications more nimble and effective than when partners work in silos.

Consider forming a **Communications Committee**. Having a group of communicators who meet regularly helps facilitate collaboration and resource sharing. This group can provide a community of practice for those who communicate about Clean Slate efforts. Collaboratively developing communications tactics allows for shared ownership of goals and insight when support is needed. Best practices for a Communications Committee:

Define Clear Goals and Objectives

- Establish the committee's purpose: Are you raising awareness, influencing policy, or mobilizing supporters?
- Align goals with the broader campaign and define measurable objectives (e.g., media coverage, social media engagement, etc.).

Recruit a Diverse Team

- **Skill Sets:** Include members with various communications skills (e.g., media relations, social media, content creation, digital strategy, public speaking).
- **Representation:** Ensure the committee reflects the diversity of the campaign's audience, including different communities, demographics, and perspectives.
- **Advocacy Expertise:** Include individuals with experience in advocacy work to align communications with the campaign's objectives.

Establish Roles and Responsibilities

- **Chair/Coordinator:** Choose someone to coordinate efforts, set agendas, and track tasks. This is a good role for an experienced communicator whose organization may not be the best messenger to reach policymakers or other audiences.
- **Social Media:** Determine whether the campaign will have its own social media presence (Clean Slate Utah, for example) or if partner organizations will disseminate content

through existing social media channels. Determine who will manage accounts, posts, and engagement. Establish norms and protocols for social posts.

- **Content Creators:** Think through what capacities the group has for content drafting, graphic design, and video production to generate campaign materials.
- **Spokespersons:** Create and maintain a list of validators, experts, and organizational spokespeople to serve as authoritative voices for the campaign.

Develop a Comprehensive Communication Plan

- **Key Messaging:** Create clear, consistent messaging that aligns with the campaign's goals and resonates with target audiences.
- **Audience Segmentation:** Tailor communications for different audiences (e.g., supporters, policymakers, media, etc.).
- **Channel Strategy:** Identify the best platforms for reaching different groups, such as social media, traditional media, newsletters, and webinars.
- **Create a Timeline:** Identify key milestones and deadlines so that communications tactics can be planned and executed in a timely manner. Think through key events, including bill filing, committee hearings, legislative crossover deadlines, etc., and identify opportunities to use communications tactics that could help support successful outcomes (*also see the Legislative Communications section*).
- **Opposition and Crisis Communication:** Prepare a plan for responding to unexpected issues, misinformation, or criticism.

Utilize Data and Analytics

- Track engagement, reach, and effectiveness of communications efforts.
- Use data to adjust strategies and improve outcomes over time.

Regular Meetings and Updates

- Hold consistent meetings to discuss progress, refine strategies, and maintain coordination across the committee.
- Share updates with the larger campaign team to ensure everyone is aligned.

Collaborate with Other Committees

- Work closely with other committees (e.g., policy, organizing, etc.) to ensure communications support their efforts and vice versa.
- Ensure unified messaging across all campaign activities.

Engage External Partners and Media

- Build relationships with journalists, influencers, and partners who can amplify the campaign's message.
- Consider enlisting external PR or communications firms for added expertise if necessary.

Training and Development

- Provide media and messaging training for key spokespersons and committee members.
- Coordinate communications training for coalition partners, volunteers, and community advocates to strengthen their skills and enhance future advocacy efforts.

Evaluate and Adjust

- Regularly assess the effectiveness of the committee's efforts against campaign goals.
- Be flexible and willing to adjust strategies based on performance data, changing circumstances, or new opportunities.

The Importance of Storytelling in Advocacy Communications

Storytelling is a powerful tool in advocacy, capable of transcending statistics and data to connect with people on a deeply emotional level. The Clean Slate Initiative uses storytelling to humanize the issues we are addressing, making them more relatable and compelling to audiences. Stories create a lasting impression, making it more likely that our message will resonate and inspire action. While sharing the lived experiences of directly impacted people can illustrate the tangible benefits of Clean Slate policies and foster empathy and understanding, communicators must be cautious not to take advantage of those willing to share their stories or offer their stories for consuming people's trauma.

To maximize the impact of storytelling, it should be integrated into all facets of your communication programs. Use personal stories in social media campaigns, newsletters, public

presentations, and policy briefs to illustrate the real-world impact of Clean Slate policies. Create multimedia content, such as videos and podcasts, to bring these stories to life and reach a wider audience. By embedding storytelling throughout your communication efforts, you can create a cohesive and compelling narrative that drives engagement and support for your cause, and respectfully centering the lived experiences of directly impacted individuals not only strengthens our message but also fosters a more inclusive and empathetic approach to communication and advocacy.

Crafting Compelling Narratives

A compelling narrative is the heart of any advocacy effort. For Clean Slate campaigns, it's important to tell stories that resonate with communities, inspire action, and help shift the way people view people who have records. Here are some elements that can help craft powerful narratives:

- **Center People, Not Policy:** Start with the human stories behind the issue. Highlight personal experiences of individuals impacted by the justice system to make the issue relatable and emotional.
- **Connect to Shared Values:** Frame the story around universal values like supporting families, community safety, redemption, and opportunity. This helps create common ground and broadens the appeal of your message. (see *Resources > Values-Based Messaging* for more information).
- **Keep it Clear and Focused:** Simplify complex policy issues into clear, accessible language. Focus on a single message or outcome, making it easy for your audience to understand the stakes and the solution.
- **Highlight Hope and Change:** People are more likely to act when they feel hopeful. Show how Clean Slate policies can create positive change—whether it's restoring dignity, improving community safety, or unlocking opportunities.

Centering and Respecting Lived Experiences

While storytelling is a powerful tool, it is crucial to center and respect the lived experiences of those directly impacted by the criminal justice system. Their stories are their own, and it is essential to approach them with sensitivity and integrity. Always obtain explicit consent before sharing someone's story and ensure they are comfortable with how their experiences will be

portrayed. Avoid sensationalizing or exploiting their narratives for advocacy gains. Instead, focus on empowering individuals to tell their own stories in their own voices. This approach not only respects their autonomy and dignity but also enhances the authenticity and credibility of your communication efforts.

Integrating Storytelling into Communication Programs

To maximize the impact of storytelling, it should be integrated into all facets of your communication programs. Use personal stories in social media campaigns, newsletters, public presentations, and policy briefs to illustrate the real-world impact of Clean Slate policies. Create multimedia content, such as videos and podcasts, to bring these stories to life and reach a wider audience. By embedding storytelling throughout your communication efforts, you can create a cohesive and compelling narrative that drives engagement and support for your cause, and respectfully centering the lived experiences of directly impacted individuals not only strengthens our message but also fosters a more inclusive and empathetic approach to communication and advocacy.

Foundational Materials: Clean Slate Communications in Practice

Messaging Recommendations

Updated July 2025

The Clean Slate Initiative's narrative change research project is a strategic effort to better understand and shift the public conversation around record sealing and second chances. Using the [Heartwired approach](#), developed as a joint project of Goodwin Simon Strategic Research (GSSR) and Wonder: Strategies for Good. These messaging recommendations are an output of CSI's narrative research project's initial phases, conducted in partnership with GSSR.

CLARIFY PROCESS + GUARDRAILS



Use "Seal" Instead of "Clear"

General audiences resonate more with "seal," which implies that records are not erased but simply hidden from public view.



Provide Reassurance About Guardrails

Emphasize the specific guardrails in place to ensure that serious crimes are not eligible for sealing, reassuring participants about the process's integrity.



Unpack and Demystify the Process

Describe concrete details about the guardrails in place around the automatic process, including highlighting where human oversight is involved to calm fears of the unknown and reduce uncertainty.



Simplify the Automated Record Sealing Process

Talk about the need to make the record sealing process straightforward, cost-effective, and accessible, which appeals to participants' desire for fairness and justice.



Be Clear About Law Enforcement Access

Reassure participants that law enforcement will retain access to sealed records, addressing their concerns about safety and future harm—and maintaining public trust.



Clarify Which Records are Eligible and Ineligible to be Sealed

Provide specific examples of records ineligible or eligible for sealing, ensuring transparency and reducing anxiety about violent crimes being sealed.

SHOW POSITIVE IMPACT



Emphasize Success Stories

Share narratives of individuals successfully navigating life post-record sealing to show that compassion and safety can coexist.



Include the Economic Benefits

Highlight the broader societal and economic benefits of record sealing, such as improved job prospects and reduced recidivism, which resonate well with our audience.



Humanize and Clarify the Issue Through Personal Narratives

Use narratives of individuals directly impacted by record sealing to create an emotional connection, making the issue more relatable and compelling.



Address Cognitive Dissonance

Emphasize that Clean Slate policies protect community safety while supporting rehabilitation, helping to reconcile participants' concerns about safety versus empathy for those with records.

FOCUS ON THE RIGHT DETAILS



Encourage (State-Specific) Policy Exploration

Provide resources and encourage participants to learn more about Clean Slate policies, catering to their increased curiosity and interest and meeting their needs to have agency and control in the face of uncertainty.



Support Emotional Appeals with Data

Support emotional appeals with practical, data-driven solutions to maintain credibility.

EMPHASIZE EFFICIENCY + STREAMLINING



Address Concerns About Automation

Clarify that automation is used to streamline the process but is always supplemented with human oversight, addressing concerns about the nuances of individual cases.



Highlight Rigorous Testing of the Process

Stress that Clean Slate policies undergo rigorous testing and strict vetting, calming fears that such policies might compromise safety.



Stress the Importance of Control

Reassure that human oversight remains a part of the process, meeting the audience's need for control and counteracting resistance to automation.



Address Concerns About Repeat Offenders Directly

Clearly communicate that the system differentiates between repeat offenders and those who are not, ensuring that the former do not benefit unjustly from automatic record sealing.



Recognize Distrust in Government

Build trust by emphasizing transparency, checks and balances, and oversight in the record-sealing process to alleviate fears of government inefficiency or corruption.

LEAN INTO SHARED VALUES + MORAL FOUNDATIONS



Frame Record Sealing as Rehabilitation, Not Erasure

Messaging should clarify that Clean Slate policies are about rehabilitation and responsibility, not erasure of the past, which helps to address concerns about accountability.



Lean Into the Values of Justice and Fairness

Position Clean Slate policies as a means to increase fairness and equality, resonating with participants' deep values of justice and equality.



Utilize the Liberty / Oppression Moral Foundation

Show how Clean Slate policies empower individuals to rebuild their lives, focusing on liberty from past mistakes, appealing to our audience's desire to remain free from oppressive systems.



Balance Accountability with Opportunity

Emphasize that Clean Slate policies strike a balance between holding individuals accountable and providing opportunities for redemption.



Highlight the Value and Emotion of Empathy

Frame record sealing as a compassionate act that aligns with our audience's empathy for people with records.



Promote Community Safety Through Record Sealing

Reassure our audience that public safety is enhanced, not compromised, by record sealing, especially through reducing recidivism and promoting law-abiding lives.



Elevate the Value of Second Chances

Reinforce the idea that everyone can earn a second chance, particularly for minor, non-violent offenses, appealing to the widespread belief in redemption and personal growth.

Audience Profiles

Updated July 2025

As part of CSI's Narrative Research project, we have developed four audience profiles along with defining characteristics and guidance for engaging these audiences.

AUDIENCE PROFILE: EMPATHETIC AMBASSADORS

- Have **lived experiences of having a record** or knowing someone who has a record.
- May have gotten in **trouble as a younger person** or have a **child who has been in trouble**.
- Express **less worry about being a victim** of a crime.
- Prefer **records are fully sealed and inaccessible**, even to law enforcement/prosecutors.
- **Understand the reasons for and benefits of automation**.
- Recognize the **disproportionate impacts** of the criminal legal system.
- **Reject the idea that harsh and perpetual punishment** is the best way to reduce crime.
- Believe that record sealing can be a **powerful motivation to remain crime-free**.
- Feel **hope and optimism** about clean slate legislation.
- Desires to **reduce harm to those with records**; may even see people with records as victims.
- Very **compelled by supporter messaging**.
- Willing to **tell others about or personally vote for Clean Slate**.
- Deeply **value fairness** and want to make sure record sealing is done in a way that does not unfairly advantage one group over others.
- Particularly likely to resonate with messaging evoking the **care/harm** and **liberty/oppression** moral foundations.
- **Recognize the ripple effect of having a record** and record sealing on communities.
- Appreciate that providing second chances can **uplift families and positively impact future generations**.
- **View Clean Slate as an equalizer**, helping to create fairer opportunities for all, particularly those facing systemic economic and racial disadvantages.
- **Stories of personal redemption** and "turning one's life around" connect with their values, and terms like "**compassion**" and "**human spirit**" enhance their emotional engagement.



AUDIENCE PROFILE: **CONFLICTED HARM REDUCERS**

- Deeply **conflicted** and want to **reduce harm on all sides** — including having less crime in communities and less harm to those who have records.
- **Express empathy** for those who have records, while at the same time, express concerns about safety, future harm, and empathy for victims of crimes.
- Switch between support for and opposition to record sealing based on **top-of-mind concerns and reactions to messaging**.
- More likely to take a **colorblind approach** and feel that race does not play a role in the criminal legal system.
- Want **relevant records to be accessible** (e.g., convictions related to child or elder abuse should remain visible for employers hiring people to work with kids or older adults).
- Prefer a **cautious approach** in which the **circumstances of a conviction** are taken into consideration in determining eligibility; record sealing should be case-by-case.
- Need **evidence that someone has changed**, including what the person is currently doing with their life.
- Experience a strong **need for control** over who gets their record sealed.
- Somewhat concerned about the **role of automation**, fearing it may lack appropriate nuance.
- Respond positively to messaging that emphasizes **guardrails in place** to prevent ineligible records from being sealed.
- Want Clean Slate policies to **balance accountability with providing opportunities** for people with records.
- Resonate with messaging that evokes the **care/harm** moral foundation.
- **Data on low recidivism** helps calm their concerns about repeat offenders and future harm to communities.
- **Transparency**, especially in automation and oversight, reassures them about feasibility and accountability.
- **Stories of personal growth** validate their cautious support for Clean Slate's potential impact.
- Open to language around "hope" and "renewal," but prefer these terms when backed by proof of reduced reoffending and strong procedural safeguards.



AUDIENCE PROFILE: FEARFUL PROTECTORS

- Lived experiences with or **heightened concerns** around being the **victim of a crime**, especially violent crime.
- Perceive **danger** in communities.
- Extremely **concerned with personal safety and the safety of loved ones**.
- Strong desire to **protect loved ones from harm**.
- Prefer **records to remain available** to those who need them, including law enforcement, employers, and landlords.
- **No support for an automatic** or automated process.
- **Skeptical** that people with records **will remain crime-free** — believe that a significant portion will stay crime-free for the required time period just to have their records sealed, then **go back to committing crimes**.
- More likely to be concerned about “**career criminals**” and “**repeat offenders**.”
- Resonate with messaging around the **harm that having a record has on children**.
- Unlikely to support record sealing in **cases where there is a victim**.
- May support record sealing in cases where there is **no victim or low-level convictions**.
- Have a heightened **fear of the unknown**, particularly regarding the potential negative outcomes of clean slate policies, driven by a lack of familiarity with how these policies work.
- Require clear, concrete examples of **the specific records eligible for sealing** and reassurance that public safety will not be compromised.
- Are reassured by descriptions of **the process that emphasize human oversight** in the record-sealing process.
- **Want clear assurances** that serious offenses remain visible to protect public safety.
- **Success stories and evidence of low reoffending rates** reduce their fears of negative outcomes.
- **Faith-based language around “forgiveness” is less impactful for them**; they prioritize assurances of public safety and prefer terms like “responsibility” and “oversight” instead.



AUDIENCE PROFILE: TOUGH-ON-CRIME TRADITIONALISTS

- Advocate for the **status quo**, not likely to see automatic record sealing as a solution to the problem.
- **Less empathy** for those with records.
- **Value independence, pulling yourself up by bootstraps**, and fairness.
- Believe that a record is **not an insurmountable barrier** in life.
- More likely to believe in **negative racial stereotypes**.
- Feel that there **should be consequences and accountability for actions**, and adopting a tough-on-crime approach is the best way to ensure both.
- Believe that tough-on-crime approaches are the **best way to reduce crime**.
- Believe that tough sentences and consequences are **deterrents to crime**.
- Want conviction **records to be visible**.
- **Want employers to decide whether or not to hire** people with records, without government interference.
- Largely **reject supporter messaging**.
- Particularly motivated by the **moral foundation of authority/subversion**, and emphasize the importance of upholding the rule of law.
- Resonate with messaging that emphasizes the **legitimacy and competence of authorities** overseeing the record-sealing process to maintain order and trust.
- **Bipartisan support adds legitimacy**, helping them see Clean Slate as principled, not lenient.
- **Personal responsibility** in narratives appeals to their values of accountability.
- **Faith-based language like “redemption”** resonates if tied to personal responsibility and a commitment to change, but terms like “forgiveness” may be perceived as too lenient.



Talking Points

Talking points are the backbone of effective advocacy communication. They provide clear, concise statements that can be used for media interviews, press releases, email blasts, messages to lawmakers, and more. In this section, you'll find some high-level talking points that are rooted in values-based messaging (see *Resources > Values-Based Messaging for more information*).

While a number of factors can influence what messages or talking points would be most effective (political climate, current events, audiences, etc.), talking points are generally useful for maintaining consistency and staying on message.

Communicators should think through the broad issues that could resonate with a target audience, and from there, develop simple statements that can be used by various spokespeople in many settings.

Here are some examples of topline talking points that are crafted from specific messaging frames.

1. Empowering Individuals to Contribute

- Clean Slate policies recognize the talent, skills, and potential of people who have earned a meaningful second chance, ensuring they can continue contributing to their communities and workplaces.
- By sealing their records, people are empowered to fully engage in the workforce, pursue higher education, and achieve financial stability.

2. Strengthening Families and Communities

- When people are able to move forward in their lives with meaningful access to opportunities, they are better positioned to support their families and invest in their communities.
- Clean Slate policies help families gain stability by ensuring parents can fairly compete for better job opportunities, housing, and educational resources for their children.

3. Enhancing Public Safety by Reducing Recidivism

- By sealing eligible records for people who meet the requirements, we can reduce the likelihood of recidivism by ensuring individuals have a clear path to reintegrate into society and the workforce.
- Public safety is strengthened when individuals have a real chance to succeed. This allows them to stay on a positive trajectory and contribute to safer, more resilient communities.
- Employment is among the strongest, evidence-based solutions for public safety. Having a job is critical for breaking the cycle of crime and keeping communities safe.

4. Unlocking Human Potential

- Clean Slate policies help unlock the potential of people who already live in our communities and have proven their commitment to moving forward.
- By removing barriers, we allow individuals to apply their talents, skills, and experiences to jobs and community leadership roles, creating a ripple effect of positive change that benefits society as a whole.

5. Boosting Economic Growth

- Clean Slate policies allow individuals to fully participate in the economy, leading to increased workforce participation and higher earning potential.
- As more people gain access to meaningful employment, local businesses benefit from a broader pool of skilled workers, while the overall economy grows through increased consumer spending and tax contributions.

Evergreen Content

Evergreen content remains relevant and valuable to your audience over time, much like the leaves of an evergreen tree. Unlike timely pieces tied to trends or events, evergreen content addresses topics that are consistently important, providing long-term value. This can include how-to guides, FAQs, tutorials, or foundational knowledge. By creating and maintaining evergreen content, communicators ensure that their messages continue to attract and engage audiences long after publication, driving sustained traffic and reinforcing their authority in the field.

For more resources and CSI-produced evergreen, see Resources > [Social Media Guidance](#).

Media Relations and Outreach

Building Relationships with Reporters

Building and maintaining positive relationships with reporters is fundamental for effective media engagement. Start by identifying journalists who cover topics related to criminal justice reform, education, and social justice. Reach out to introduce yourself and the state's Clean Slate coalition, providing them with background information about the campaign and things to look out for as the campaign progresses.

Establishing a rapport based on trust and mutual respect will increase the likelihood that reporters will cover your stories favorably. That's why it's important to maintain regular contact by sharing updates, story ideas, and exclusive insights that could help them get a leg up on their competition. It's also important to be responsive and reliable, promptly answering inquiries and providing accurate information. Even if you are not prepared to field their questions, let them know that you received their message and that you will follow up soon. If reporters are working on a deadline and you are unavailable, let them know that so they can find another source to help move their reporting forward.

Crafting a Compelling Pitch

When reaching out to reporters, a compelling pitch is essential. Begin with a strong subject line that clearly conveys the significance of your story. Your pitch should be concise, informative, and engaging. Start with a brief overview of the story, emphasizing its relevance and newsworthiness. Include key details, such as who is involved, what is happening, where and when it is taking place, and why it matters. Highlight any unique angles, exclusive information, or human-interest elements that make the story stand out. Provide quotes from directly impacted individuals, experts, or organizational leaders to add depth and credibility. Attach a press release and any relevant multimedia materials to support your pitch.

Preparing for Interviews

Effective preparation is crucial for successful media interviews. Start by researching the reporter and the media outlet to understand their style, audience, and typical questions. Develop clear and concise key messages that align with your strategic goals and practice delivering them confidently. Anticipate potential questions and prepare thoughtful responses. It can be helpful to create a fact sheet with essential information and statistics about the Clean Slate Initiative to reference during the interview. During the interview, stay focused on your key messages, speak clearly, and avoid jargon. Remember to be honest and transparent; if you do not know the answer to a question, it is better to acknowledge it and offer to follow up with more information later.

Following Up and Maintaining Relationships

After engaging with reporters, it is important to follow up and maintain the relationship. Send a thank-you email expressing appreciation for their time and interest in your story. If any inaccuracies appear in the coverage, politely request corrections and provide the correct information. Share the coverage through your organization's communication channels, tagging

the reporter and media outlet to acknowledge their work. Stay in touch by periodically sharing updates, new story ideas, and invitations to events. Building a long-term relationship with reporters can lead to more consistent and favorable coverage, helping to amplify your advocacy efforts over time.

Best Practices for Media Engagement

To ensure successful media engagement, adhere to the following best practices:

1. **Be Proactive:** Regularly reach out to reporters with story ideas and updates, rather than waiting for them to come to you.
2. **Be Clear and Concise:** Keep your communication brief and to the point, focusing on the most compelling aspects of your story.
3. **Be Timely:** Pitch stories that are timely and relevant, and respond quickly to media inquiries to meet reporters' deadlines.
4. **Be Honest and Transparent:** Build trust by providing accurate information and being transparent about your organization's goals and challenges.
5. **Provide Value:** Offer reporters exclusive insights, access to experts, and compelling human-interest stories that add value to their reporting.

By following these guidelines, your coalition can effectively engage with reporters, ensuring accurate and impactful media coverage that advances our advocacy efforts and raises awareness of our mission.

Common Tactics to Support Media Outreach Efforts Include:

Press Release	<p>What it is: A formal announcement distributed to media outlets to share news or updates about an event, legislative milestone, report release, or campaign achievement.</p> <p>Purpose: To generate media coverage, increase public awareness, and shape the narrative by providing clear, factual information directly to journalists.</p>
Media Advisory	<p>What it is: A brief notice that informs the media about an upcoming</p>

	<p>event, such as a press conference, rally, or public hearing. Advisories should be sent to newsrooms a week before the event when possible, and again to journalists two days before the event. Follow-up emails to journalists can increase the likelihood of reporters attending an event or covering a story.</p> <p>Purpose: To encourage media attendance and coverage of the event by highlighting its importance and offering logistical details (time, location, speakers).</p>
Op-ed	<p>What it is: A guest opinion piece written by a member of the organization, advocate, or ally and published in a newspaper or digital media outlet.</p> <p>Purpose: To influence public opinion, advocate for specific policy changes, and provide a personal perspective on an issue related to Clean Slate efforts.</p>
Letter to the Editor (LTE)	<p>What it is: A short letter written in response to a recent article or issue of public interest and submitted to a newspaper's editorial section.</p> <p>Purpose: To amplify your message or offer a corrective viewpoint on misinformation, highlight community impact, or take the conversation to the next level.</p>
Pitch to Journalists	<p>What it is: A targeted email or call to a specific journalist proposing a story or interview that aligns with their beat (topic of interest).</p> <p>Purpose: To build relationships with media outlets and increase the chances of personalized coverage that delves deeper into Clean Slate issues and success stories.</p>
Press Conference	<p>What it is: A live event where organizational spokespeople, policymakers, or other stakeholders make a significant announcement to the media.</p> <p>Purpose: To draw attention to critical moments, such as the introduction of Clean Slate legislation, and allow for direct interaction with journalists for Q&A sessions.</p>
Media Interviews	<p>What it is: A scheduled conversation between a spokesperson and a journalist for TV, radio, podcast, or print media.</p> <p>Purpose: To provide detailed explanations of Clean Slate efforts and</p>

	policy goals while humanizing the initiative through personal stories or expert commentary.
Social Media Campaign	<p>What it is: A coordinated series of posts, hashtags, graphics, or videos shared across platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.</p> <p>Purpose: To increase public engagement, share timely updates, and mobilize grassroots support for Clean Slate legislation by reaching diverse audiences quickly.</p>
Media Partnerships	<p>What it is: Collaborations with specific media outlets, influencers, or advocacy-oriented publications for exclusive content, op-eds, or interviews.</p> <p>Purpose: To strategically align with partners who share similar values, increasing credibility, expanding your audience, and securing more frequent media coverage.</p>
Opinion Polls or Surveys	<p>What it is: Data collection through public polling or surveys to gauge public opinion on issues related to Clean Slate policies.</p> <p>Purpose: To provide statistical evidence that supports advocacy goals, which can be shared with the media to strengthen arguments for policy changes.</p>
Editorial Board Meetings	<p>What it is: In-person or virtual meetings with the editorial board of a newspaper or media outlet to discuss Clean Slate policy issues and provide expert background information.</p> <p>Purpose: To educate key decision-makers at media organizations, encouraging them to endorse Clean Slate initiatives or feature favorable coverage in their editorial sections.</p>
Influencer or Celebrity Endorsements	<p>What it is: Partnering with well-known personalities or influencers to publicly support Clean Slate policies or share personal stories about the impact of record sealing.</p> <p>Purpose: To leverage the influencer's audience for greater visibility, enhance public trust, and mobilize more people to support the initiative.</p>
Issue Toolkits for Journalists	<p>What it is: A prepared set of materials, including fact sheets, talking points, data, and quotes, designed to help journalists accurately</p>

	<p>cover Clean Slate issues.</p> <p>Purpose: To ensure that the media has all the necessary and accurate information to report fairly and comprehensively, increasing the quality and depth of coverage.</p>
Local Community Radio and Podcast Engagement	<p>What it is: Targeting local radio stations and podcasts that have a regional or niche audience for interviews, guest appearances, or content sharing.</p> <p>Purpose: To reach specific, often underrepresented communities, raise awareness about Clean Slate issues, and highlight how the initiative directly impacts people at a local level.</p>
Rapid Response Statements	<p>What it is: Issuing quick statements in response to relevant breaking news, policy announcements, or new data that affect Clean Slate issues.</p> <p>Purpose: To remain relevant in the media cycle, capitalize on newsworthy moments, and ensure that your organization is seen as an expert voice on criminal justice reform.</p>

These tactics together offer a multi-faceted approach to ensuring consistent, effective, and impactful media outreach, supporting your overarching goals for advancing Clean Slate policies at the state level.

The Resources section (see Resources > [Media Outreach](#)) contains additional resources, including *template media outreach materials*.

Event and Material Production

Organizing effective press and advocacy events starts with clear objectives. Define whether the purpose of your event is to raise awareness, engage media, or mobilize community support. Knowing your target audience is crucial, as it allows you to tailor your messaging to resonate with them specifically.

1. **Define Your Goals:** Clearly identify the purpose of your event. Are you aiming to raise awareness, engage media, mobilize community support, or influence lawmakers?

2. **Know Your Audience:** Tailor your messaging to resonate with specific groups, such as policymakers, community members, or people within a specific demographic.
3. **Choose the Right Venue and Timing:** Select a location that is accessible to reporters and your attendees, and schedule the event at a time that is convenient for them and likely to attract media attention. Think about the timing of local newscasts. Scheduling an event during the 12:00 pm or 6:00 pm news could give reporters a live shot to use during their broadcast.
4. **Select Speakers:** Choose individuals who can share compelling, personal stories that demonstrate the need for Clean Slate laws or otherwise highlight the problems that Clean Slate laws can address.
5. **Prepare Press Kits:** Assemble comprehensive press kits that include a press release, fact sheets, bios of speakers, and high-quality images. These materials will help journalists cover your event accurately.
6. **Create Visuals:** Design banners, posters, and infographics to convey key messages visually. Visuals can help engage your audience and make your message memorable.

Legislative Communications 101

Effective legislative communications involve understanding the legislative cycle, identifying key moments for advocacy, and being aware of the power dynamics among lawmakers. Typically, coalition communications following a bill's introduction focus on raising awareness and building initial support. As legislation moves through committees and to the state House and Senate for votes, communicators should collaborate with policy experts within the coalition to understand the strategy for garnering final legislative approval. This collaboration will help determine the primary targets, messaging, and other tactics that can help support the coalition's under-the-dome strategy.

Below is a chart that outlines some of the standard communications tactics state partners and coalitions should consider during different phases of the legislative process.

Before the Legislative Session

Objective: Preparing foundational materials to support upcoming efforts.

Tactics: Establishing a Communications Committee

Developing a collaborative communications plan

Building a press list, sortable by contact type:
newsrooms, beat reporters, capitol reporters, existing relationships, and top-tier targets for coverage.

Creating support materials, including but not limited to:
website, campaign logo, fact sheets, action alert forms, evergreen social media content

Working with CSI's MarComms team to develop a state-level resource guide for journalists.

Setting up editorial board visits with newspapers to encourage their endorsement

Bill Filing

Objective: To demonstrate strong bipartisan support and a pathway to success
Recognize/praise bill sponsors
Uplift coalition partners
Raise awareness among community, stakeholders, and target audiences

Tactics: Sending a [heads-up](#) to capitol and beat reporters

Pitching specific reporters

Holding a press conference or briefing

Posting social media content

Sending a press backgrounder

Sharing a one-pager with coalition partners

Crafting email or action alert content for coalition partners

Committee Hearing (Pre-Hearing)

Objective: Support a favorable report from the committee

Tactics: Sending a [heads-up](#) to capitol and beat reporters

Sending a press backgrounder

Preparing directly impacted community members and coalition partners to offer testimony

Facilitating messages to committee members from their constituents via action alerts, petitions, or phone calls

Sharing content on social media that drives traffic to action alert landing pages

Preparing press communications for favorable and unfavorable outcomes

Committee Hearing (During the Hearing)

Objective: Document the committee's activities

Tactics: Recording and/or live-streaming the committee hearing on social media

Capturing the testimony of community members or coalition partners

Providing real-time updates on social media via Twitter (X)

Committee Hearing (Post-Hearing)

Objective: Demonstrate and build upon momentum for the issue (if favorable outcome)
Provide a vision for a continued path forward (if unfavorable outcome)

Tactics: Issuing a media statement

Posting celebratory social media content

Submitting an op-ed encouraging lawmakers to continue moving forward

Supporting partners/community members in submitting letters to the editor in response to stories covering the hearing

Including updates in coalition partners' newsletters and websites

Changing the language and targets of coalition action alerts to support passage in subsequent committees or by the full chamber

Floor Vote (Pre-Vote)

Objective: Flag the bill's discussion for reporters, preparing them to cover the debate/issue

Tactics: Sharing a state-level resource guide with capitol and beat reporters

Sending a [heads-up](#) to capitol and beat reporters

Sharing content on social media that drives traffic to action alert landing pages

Preparing press communications for favorable and unfavorable outcomes

Drafting and submitting an op-ed encouraging lawmakers to approve the bill

Sending a press backgrounder/factsheet

Develop talking points for partners to share with supportive lawmakers

Preparing directly impacted advocates to speak on the record

Sharing content on social media that drives traffic to action alert landing pages

Preparing press communications for favorable and unfavorable outcomes

Floor Vote (Post-Vote)

Objective: Demonstrate and build upon momentum for the issue (if favorable outcome)
Provide a vision for a continued path forward (if unfavorable outcome)

Issuing a prepared media statement or release


Posting celebratory social media content

Submitting an op-ed encouraging lawmakers in the other chamber to pass the bill

Supporting partners/community members in submitting letters to the editor in response to stories covering the hearing

Including updates in coalition partners' newsletters and websites

Changing the language and targets of coalition action alerts to support passage in the second legislative chamber

 **Repeat tactics for the Second Chamber, appropriately revising framing and context**

Executive Action (Post-Legislative Approval)

Objective: Contribute to a political environment that encourages the Governor to sign the bill

- Tactics:** Updating action alerts to target the Governor with the ask to sign the bill
- Producing encouraging social content aimed at action alert landing page
- Circulating press materials in advance of bill signing deadlines or ceremonies
- Drafting, then distributing, press statements and releases for the Governor's approval or veto
- Preparing press events/stunts as needed to pressure or reward the Governor
- Submitting op-eds that set the stage for why signing the bill should be a priority for the Governor
- Setting up editorial board visits with newspapers to encourage their endorsement
- Preparing and distributing press materials that outline the next steps for proper implementation and notification to Clean Slate beneficiaries
- Holding a press conference or briefing

Tools & Resources

Social Media Guidance

Channels



Instagram and Facebook are beneficial platforms to reach a variety of audiences. It is recommended to utilize both consistently and analyze your insights/analytics to determine your audience demographics and post-performance. You then can choose which platform is more beneficial to your campaign and how to adjust accordingly.



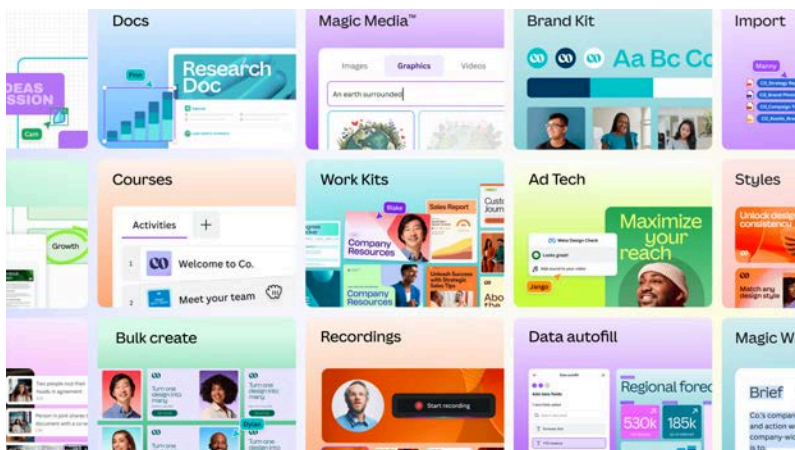
If you can consistently create video content, **TikTok** is the next most beneficial platform. Engagement and studying trends are key for this platform, so it can take more capacity to build and increase a following and engagement on a TikTok page.



LinkedIn is a great way to engage your community and specifically increase your visibility to the business community and other organizations. It is a great platform to share information about your coalition, involved organizations, events, efforts to advance Clean Slate, and updates that could impact surrounding communities and the workforce.

Creating Graphics

[Canva](#) is a great tool (and free for non-profits) to create graphics and even edit video content.



We have prepared some sample templates for you to use [here](#).



When designing a graphic, here are some things to consider:

- **Understand the best dimensions for each platform.** See *chart below*.
- **Start with Canva templates** such as quote posts, event announcements, infographics, etc., and customize them by changing colors and fonts to match your brand.
- Be sure to **use your brand's colors consistently**, choose easy-to-read fonts, and avoid using too many different fonts, as this can make your graphic appear cluttered. Also, ensure the typography on your graphics is large enough and has enough space for people to read. ([See CSI's Branding Guidance for State Campaigns.](#))
- When posting photos be sure to **use high-resolution images** and crop them accordingly.
- **Incorporate calls-to-action** in your posts to encourage actions such as 'sign up for our newsletter', 'visit our website', or 'DM us for more information'.

- Inspiration for posts can include:
 - Quotes from coalition members
 - Content from [CSI's blog](#)
 - Event announcements
 - Infographics of Clean Slate's impact stats can be found [on CSI's website](#).
- **Download your graphics in the appropriate file format (PNG)** and upload the graphics to your scheduling platform or directly to your social platform.

Instagram:	Post (4:5):	1080 x 1350 px
	Story:	1080 x 1920 px
	Reels:	1080 x 1920 px
Facebook:	Post:	1200 x 630 px
	Story:	1080 x 1920 px
Twitter (X):	Post:	1200 x 675 px
LinkedIn	Post:	1200 x 627 px
	Banner Image:	1584 x 396 px
TikTok	Video:	1080 x 1920 px (9:16 aspect ratio)

Content Scheduling

You can now use Canva to help you take control of your social channels. With Canva you can design social media posts and coordinate them across your platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

You can learn more about these Canva features and create an account at <https://www.canva.com/pro/content-planner/>.

We found this tutorial helpful. Check it out > [Video Tutorial on YouTube](#).

When scheduling your content:

1. Set your goals for your content themes, posting cadence, and target audience.
2. Create your content in batches, such as images, infographics, captions, and engagement plans, such as Instagram stories.
3. Study your social media insight reports to determine the best times for posting. Some standard times to use are:

Instagram	9:00 - 11:00 a.m. 1:00 and 3:00 p.m.
Facebook	1:00 - 4:00 p.m. on weekdays
Twitter	12:00- 3:00 p.m. 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. (Twitter's algorithm continues to shift, study your engagement times to determine the best time for your content)
LinkedIn	8:00 - 10:00 a.m. 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. on weekdays
TikTok	6:00 - 10:00 a.m. 7:00 - 11:00 p.m.

Hashtags

Creating effective hashtags for social media posts involves a mix of creativity, research, and understanding your target audience.

Hashtags increase visibility, encourage participation in trending topics, and further support establishing your brand. You can research trending and relevant hashtags by using tools like **Hashtagify** ([iOS](#), [Google Play](#)) and **RiteTag** ([ritetag.com](#)) to help you find trending hashtags for your specific content. Additionally, Instagram will suggest hashtags as you type in the search bar to help generate what is popular and relevant to your content.

When creating hashtags make sure hashtags are short and memorable and avoid spaces and special characters. We recommend using **#CleanSlate** and **#SecondChances** consistently.

Engagement

Keeping consistent engagement is crucial to building your following and engagement. Be sure to respond to comments, reply to direct messages, and use the mentioned feature to engage with coalition members or other key stakeholders for your campaign.

Be interactive! Use interactive questions in your copy or use polls to get feedback or cultivate conversation. Commenting on your followers' posts is the easiest way to increase engagement and visibility.

Go live! You can use live videos on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to host live Q&As, behind-the-scenes videos, or general Clean Slate updates.

Use your stories! Use Instagram's story features to share content, use music, use videos, etc.

Use Insights on Facebook and Instagram

Using social media insights are crucial to developing your content strategy and understanding your audience to improve your performance across your social channels. Each social media platform has an insight feature that allows you to view how your content is performing.

Take note of your engagement, reach, and impression metrics to identify which posts are performing best, which times have peak engagement, and the primary audience your content is reaching.

This information can help you continue to create effective content.

Creating Reels

Creating reels for Instagram and TikTok is an effective way to reach a larger audience.

Choose your content type such as:

- Clean Slate explainer videos
- Behind-the-scene of Clean Slate coalitions work
- Q&A style reel about Clean Slate policies
- Storytelling
- Fun trends!

CSI's storyteller series contains great pieces of content to integrate into your feed. You can learn more about each storyteller on our storytellers' page cleanslateinitiative.org/storytellers. You can also find our pre-created reels [via Google Drive](#).

DOWNLOAD STORYTELLER REELS

Instagram Reels:

- Open Instagram, swipe to the **Reels** tab, or tap the "+" sign and select "Reel."
- You can either:
 - **Record Clips:** Tap the record button to capture a clip, and release to stop. You can repeat this to create a sequence of clips.
 - **Upload Videos:** To upload a pre-recorded video, tap the gallery icon in the lower left.
- **Editing Options:** Instagram offers several editing tools, such as adding effects, adjusting speed, trimming clips, and adding music.
 - Use the **Audio** feature to add songs, or use **original audio** recorded within your video.
 - Experiment with **AR effects** and **filters** to enhance the visuals.

TikTok:

- Open TikTok and tap the "+" icon at the bottom to create a new post.
- TikTok also allows you to record directly in the app or upload pre-recorded footage.
 - **Record Clips:** Press the red record button to capture video. You can record in segments, making use of **time limits** (e.g., 15 seconds, 60 seconds, etc.).
 - **Adjust Speed:** You can speed up or slow down the video during recording to create effects.
 - **Use Filters and Effects:** TikTok has a wide range of filters and visual effects. Use them to make your video more engaging.
 - **Sounds:** Select a sound or song from TikTok's vast library or use a trending audio clip. The music you choose can make a big impact on how your video performs.
 - **Timer:** TikTok has a **countdown timer** feature that allows you to set up hands-free recording (great for solo creators).

Editing:

You can edit your reel within your desired social platform or use Canva (canva.com) or InShot (inshot.com) to edit your reel. Adding trending music or audio to your reel is a great way to increase your reels visibility.

Tips for success:

- Keep your posts consistent
- Jump in on the trends! This can be trending songs, challenges, or topics.
- Keep it short - content under two minutes performs best.

When Filming Reels

- Ensure you are well-lit with a window or light source in front of you. Do not film with your back towards a window or light source to ensure you are not backlit.
- Film with your phone in the portrait orientation.
- Use a Bluetooth microphone if you are in a noisy area.

Creating Copy

Creating intriguing copy for your social media posts requires writing in a way that captures attention, engages your audience, and drives action.

1. Understand your audience and how to effectively communicate with them.
2. Define your goal for your post and be clear about your call-to-action in your copy.
3. Write a compelling opening such as proposing a question or using emojis.
4. Keep it clear and concise with short paragraphs, simple language, and be direct.
5. Use your brand voice!
6. Use call-to-actions.
7. Use appropriate and effective hashtags.
8. Adjust your copy based on what platform you are using.

For example:

- Copy with emojis performs well on **Instagram**.
 - Keep it short and sweet for **Twitter**.
 - Longer captions work well on **Facebook**.
 - Professional tones and well-thought-out content perform best on **LinkedIn**.
 - **TikTok** is best to keep casual and entertaining.
9. Proofread your copy before posting.

There are a growing number of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools that can be used to generate new ideas or sample copy. If using AI tools, it is important to do so mindfully, ethically, and within the bounds of organizational guidelines. One reference source on the ethical use of AI for marketing is this primer from [Sprout Social](#). However, communicators are obligated to continually examine their AI practices and adjust to ensure these tools are used ethically.

Boosting

Boosting is a simple form of advertising on Facebook and Instagram. Boosting posts is simple and effective, but is less customizable than Ads.

Before you start boosting, identify the following:

- Identify a post to boost.
- Identify your target audience.
- Identify your budget.
- Identify the duration for your boosting.
- Identify the placement of your boosting (how you want your boosted post to appear such as on feeds, in stories, etc.).

Learn how to boost posts on Instagram [here](#). Learn how to boost posts on Facebook [here](#).

Creating Ads

In order to run ads on Facebook and Instagram, you will need to ensure your Facebook is set up as a business account. In order to run ads, you will be using [Facebook Ads Manager](#) in [Meta's Business Suite](#).

Before you create an ad, identify the following:

- Identify your campaign objective.
- Identify an action for viewers to take.
- Identify your target audience.
- Identify your budget and schedule.
- Identify your ad placement (where your ad appears - stories, feed, messenger, etc.).

Learn how to create ads on Facebook & Instagram [here](#).

After your ad has been running for a few days, use the Ads Manager analytics tool to evaluate how your ad is performing and adjust accordingly.

Geofencing

Whether you're running local promotions, hosting an event, or want to connect with nearby users, geofencing can be an essential part of your social media strategy. Experiment with different tactics to see what works best for your business and target audience.

You can create Geofenced Ads on Facebook and Instagram in the [Facebook Ads Manager](#).

When creating your Ad you can identify the location you want to reach and set it accordingly.

This can be radius tagging using a point of reference, such as your state's capitol building or the location of your next event, and setting a specific radius around it.

Geotagging

You can Geotag posts on Instagram and Facebook by adding a location to your post or 'checking in'. That way, when users search for that location or follow location-based hashtags, your posts will appear.

Social Media Tools and Resources

- [State Campaign Branding Guidance](#)
- [State Campaign Logo Template](#) (Canva)

Past CSI Social Media Toolkits

- 2024 Second Chance Month Toolkit: cleanslateinitiative.org/scm2024
- 2024 Women's History Month Toolkit: cleanslateinitiative.org/whm2024
- 2024 Black History Month Toolkit: cleanslateinitiative.org/bhm2024
- 2023 National Expungement Week Toolkit: cleanslateinitiative.org/new
- 2022 Holiday Toolkit: cleanslateinitiative.org/toolkit
- 2022 Wealth Inequality Toolkit: cleanslateinitiative.org/wealth-inequality

Press Release Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE¹

date

Media Contact: Name, email, phone number

Headline²

Subheadline³

CITY, St. - Lede sentence.⁴ Rest of first paragraph.

The next few paragraphs.⁵

“Quotes,” said someone.⁶

###

¹ On fonts: Serifed fonts like Libre Baskerville, Georgia, or Times New Roman are recommended.

Headline: 22 point, **bold**; *Sub-headline:* 16 point, *italic*; Everything else: 12 point

² Headlines should announce an action — something that’s happened or is going to happen. You should, whenever possible, write them in the active voice (present or future tense) and keep them as short as possible. Headlines don’t have to give all of the facts about what’s happening — just enough to grab the reader’s attention and keep them reading.

³ A sub-headline is not always necessary, but it can be useful for giving more information or noting an additional angle that couldn’t be fit into the headline. They can also be used to get at why something is important.

⁴ The first sentence — or “lede,” as it is called in newsrooms — expresses what’s happening and its significance in as clear and concise a way as possible. If you get too in-the-weeds of a complicated policy or bill, take a step back and think of how you would explain it to a friend.

The lede should be worded in a broad and high-impact manner, such as, “In a breakthrough for public policy creation, a new data model unveiled by The Clean Slate Initiative (CSI) offers detailed insights into the crisis of arrest and conviction records in America.” The lede doesn’t need to include all of the details, but if there’s a fact that you think will catch people’s attention, then include it. If it’s not a stretch, use words like landmark, major, first, unprecedented, influential, important, and significant.

⁵ Since a busy journalist who receives dozens of releases a day might not read the entire thing, the first few grafs (as journalists often call them) may determine whether they cover the story. While the lede delivers the most important information in a general way, the second graf can explain why people should care and provides context and details. One of the most effective ways to test whether your first three grafs are strong is to read them as if they are the only information someone is getting — ideally, they will clearly tell the reader what happened, why, and what it means.

⁶ Quotes are the emotional core of a press release or statement. They should be written conversationally, not like a policy brief or legislation. You should be able to imagine someone actually speaking the quote. For this reason, never use a semi-colon in a quote — people don’t speak in punctuation marks. You should also be able to imagine the quote being inserted into an article and making sense without needing too much set-up or interpretation. As always, avoid jargon. Strong metaphors can also be effective. Try to avoid quoting two people in a row. If you can’t avoid it, the second quote should begin a new paragraph, preceded by the identification of the speaker, to make it immediately clear that the voice has changed. This is especially useful when you must include a quote from another organization.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 25, 2024

Media Contact: Dustin Chicurel-Bayard, dcb@cleanslateinitiative.org, (321) 754-1380

New Data Model Sheds Light on the Depth of America's Arrest and Conviction Records Crisis

*The Clean Slate Initiative's Data Dashboard Allows Lawmakers
to Scale the Impact of Second Chance Legislation*

ORLANDO, FL - In a breakthrough for public policy creation, a new data model unveiled by The Clean Slate Initiative (CSI) offers detailed insights into the crisis of arrest and conviction records in America. The data model powers The CSI Data Dashboard, which presents data visualizations and population estimates for people in the U.S. impacted by arrest and conviction records, with data further broken down by race, ethnicity, sex, and type of record within each state and over time. The CSI Data Dashboard is available at cleanslateinitiative.org/data.

"In the 30 years since Congress passed the 1994 Crime Bill, millions of people have been caught in the ever-widening net of the criminal legal system," said **Sheena Meade, CEO of The Clean Slate Initiative**. "As a result, one in three adults in our country are held back from reaching their full potential because of some kind of record. The CSI Data Dashboard empowers policymakers to craft impactful automated record sealing legislation, paving the way for data-driven solutions to create transformational change in millions of people's lives and address racial inequities created by decades of overcriminalization."

Since 2018, twelve (12) states have passed legislation that meets [The Clean Slate Initiative's policy minimums](#). These laws replace burdensome and expensive petition-based record sealing processes with a streamlined system that automate the sealing of eligible records after people complete their sentences and remain crime-free

for a specified period of time. Around 14 million people are in line to receive a fully sealing record in the 12 states that have passed Clean Slate laws.

Estimating how many people would benefit from Clean Slate legislation presents multiple challenges for lawmakers, such as incomplete or erroneous administrative data, variances in race and ethnicity, and dynamic factors, including re-arrest, reconviction, and peoples' movement between states.

“It’s essential for public policy to be founded on good data,” said Dr. Laura Chavez, director of research and data at The Clean Slate Initiative. “The CSI Data Dashboard shows how many people will benefit from a second chance if certain types and numbers of records are eligible for sealing under legislative proposals. As a result, lawmakers can appropriately craft policies, ensuring everyone who has earned a second chance can receive it.”

Samuel Sinyangwe, data scientist for The Clean Slate Initiative, led the creation of The CSI Data Dashboard and the data model that powers it. The model’s Methodology Document is [available here](#).

Earlier this year, The Clean Slate Initiative released fact sheets demonstrating proposed legislation's impact in four states - [Kentucky](#), [Illinois](#), [Maryland](#), and [Missouri](#). The fact sheets use CSI’s data model to quantify the impact of the specific legislation put forward to each state’s legislature. The CSI Data Dashboard offers even greater detail about who would benefit from record-sealing policies with varying eligibility criteria.

“Everyone can likely think of someone close to them with some kind of record. It may be a family member, a friend, or a neighbor, but it’s likely someone they care deeply for,” said Sheena Meade. “We want the people we care for to have the opportunity to create a better life for themselves and those who depend on them, not be held back long after having paid their debt to society. We want them to have a fair shot at redemption. We look forward to working with lawmakers throughout the country and using The CSI Data Dashboard to ensure automate record sealing reaches the millions of people who have earned a meaningful second chance.”

###

[The Clean Slate Initiative](#) is a non-profit organization that engages bipartisan support to pass and implement laws that automatically seal eligible records for people who have

completed their sentence and remained crime-free, as well as expand who is eligible for record-sealing. The organization works to build a future where people will no longer be defined by their records and have a fair opportunity to work, get an education, and achieve their full potential.

First - What, Who, Where, When

Get the basic info out of the way and quickly gets to why it matters, what makes this different, and why it's a good story.

I want to give you a heads up about [committee hearing, event, action, speaker, report] the [your organization] expects to [insert verb: file, host, release, etc.] [timing] [location].

Examples:

- I want to give you a heads up a report that the Clean State North Carolina coalition plans to release on Tuesday.
- I want to give you a heads up that we have two directly impacted community members signed up to speak at Tuesday's House Judiciary committee's hearing on the Clean Slate Act.

Second - Why

Why is this a good story, and why do their readers, viewers, or listeners need to know about it? How can you move their reporting forward?

Examples:

- This report highlights the potential benefits of passing The Clean Slate Act, which include:
 - Adding an estimated \$4.2 billion to the state's GDP.
 - Expanding employment opportunities for over 600,000 North Carolinians who have decades-old conviction records eligible to be sealed under current law.
 - Unlocking opportunity for 500,000 North Carolinians who would have a fully clear record once eligible convictions are sealed through an automated process.
- Both speakers will share how single low-level offense from decades ago has continually blocked their ability to build a better life for themselves and their families, and both can be available for a short interview after the hearing if you would like to speak with them.

Third & Fourth - Background information

What does the reporter need to know to be able to get a full picture? What other studies have been done? How has this worked in other states? Why is your story special or different?

Closing - State Your Resourcefulness and Availability

Examples:

- An embargoed copy of the draft report is attached. Please don't post or share until it's released. I will make sure you get the final version and our statement once it's released. Thanks, Please let me know if you have any questions or want to speak to someone on our staff before the release.
- I will make sure you get our statement and lawsuit once we file it tomorrow. It will likely be around noon. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Op-ed and LTE Writing Guide

An op-ed (opinion editorial) is a powerful tool for advocating Clean Slate laws and raising awareness about implementation efforts. Here's a step-by-step guide to writing and submitting an op-ed that has a strong chance of getting placed in a publication.

1. Understand the Basics of an Op-Ed

- **Length:** Typically, an op-ed should be **600-800 words**.
- **Tone:** Keep it **informative, persuasive, and accessible** to the general public.
- **Goal:** Clearly convey your main argument, backed by facts and examples, with a call to action.

2. Choose Your Core Message

- **Focus on one main point:** For example, how Clean Slate laws positively impact communities and reduce barriers to employment.
- **Make it timely:** Link your op-ed to current events or legislation, such as new laws being considered or recently passed Clean Slate laws in other states.

3. Research and Tailor to the Publication

- **Know your audience:** Choose a publication whose readers are interested in the issue (e.g., local or regional newspapers, online outlets, or specialized legal and policy platforms).
- **Follow submission guidelines:** Each publication has its own guidelines. Be sure to adhere to them (word count, format, exclusivity).
- **Check for submission windows:** Many publications prefer op-eds tied to specific, timely news events.

4. Write a Compelling Introduction

- **Grab attention immediately:** Start with a powerful opening sentence, such as a startling fact or a personal story about someone impacted by Clean Slate laws.
- **Hook the reader:** In the first paragraph, clearly state why your topic matters **now**.
Example: “With Clean Slate legislation gaining momentum across the country, now is the time for [state] to enact reforms that will transform lives.”
- **Establish your legitimacy:** Work in a way to demonstrate that you are someone the reader should listen to.
Example: “In my role as [role, organization], I have helped over 200 people file for an expungement in [state] and know how challenging the barriers can be for those looking for a meaningful second chance.”

5. Support Your Argument

- **Use facts and data:** Cite statistics or studies that highlight the impact of Clean Slate laws, such as recidivism rates, employment boosts, or economic benefits.
- **Include real stories:** If possible, share real stories of individuals who have benefited from expungement to make the issue relatable.
- **Appeal to values:** Connect the Clean Slate issue to universal values like fairness, justice, and second chances.

6. Conclude with a Clear Call to Action

- **Be specific:** End with a clear call to action, such as encouraging readers to support Clean Slate legislation or contact their local representatives.
- **Reaffirm urgency:** Reinforce why acting now is essential.

7. Submit Your Op-Ed

- **Follow submission rules:** Double-check the word count and formatting requirements before submitting.
- **Include a short bio:** Most publications ask for a short author bio (1-2 sentences) and contact information. Example: "Octavius Slate is the executive director of [Organization] and an advocate for criminal justice reform."
- **Submit to one publication at a time:** Many publications want exclusivity, so avoid sending your op-ed to multiple outlets simultaneously.

8. Follow Up

- **Be patient:** Most outlets will take **1-2 weeks** to respond.
- **Follow up politely:** If you haven't heard back after a week, send a brief, polite email inquiring about the status of your submission.

Pro Tips for Success

- **Timeliness is key:** Tie your op-ed to a current event, legislative session, or news trend for a higher chance of placement.
- **Be clear and concise:** Every word counts in a short op-ed. Avoid jargon and stay focused on your key message.
- **Amplify after placement:** Once your op-ed is published, share it widely on social media, newsletters, and with partners to maximize its impact.

Sample Structure for Your Op-Ed

1. **Introduction:** Hook the reader with a strong opening sentence.
2. **Argument:** Present your main point and why it matters.
3. **Evidence:** Use data, stories, and examples to support your argument.
4. **Call to Action:** Clearly state what action you want readers or policymakers to take.
5. **Conclusion:** End with a powerful, motivating statement.

Press Conference How-To

1 Define the Purpose and Key Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the reason for the press conference (e.g., introduction of a bill, calling on the Governor to sign legislation). Craft 2-3 core messages that align with your non-profit's goals and will resonate with your target audience.
2 Select the Right Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose relevant speakers, including leadership, subject matter experts, affected individuals, or partners. Brief them in advance with talking points, messaging guidelines, and any Q&A preparation.
3 Pick a Suitable Date, Time, and Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose a time (weekday mornings, 9-11 AM ideal) and avoid conflicting events. Select a location aligned with the message, such as a relevant community site or organization headquarters. Ensure the venue is media-friendly.
4 Prepare the Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up the space to accommodate the media (with branding, a podium, and a media area). Test all audiovisual equipment (microphones, sound system, live stream setup) and ensure lighting is good.
5 Develop and Distribute Press Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send a press advisory 3-5 days prior to the event with key details. Prepare a press kit, including a press release, backgrounder on the issue, speaker bios, fact sheets, and contact details for follow-up inquiries.
6 Invite the Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target local and national media outlets that cover your issue. Send personalized invitations and confirm attendance. Engage local TV and radio stations, ensuring broadcast media have logistical details like parking for satellite trucks.

- 7 Coordinate the Event Day**

 - Arrive early to ensure the venue is ready. Organize materials and make sure speakers are briefed.
 - The event should include a welcome, speaker introductions, remarks from speakers, and a Q&A session. Allocate time for media engagement.
- 8 Facilitate Media Engagement**

 - Assign someone to greet reporters as they arrive, handing them a media packet and answering any logistical questions they may have.
 - Assign a spokesperson for handling inquiries. Prepare for the Q&A with anticipated questions.
 - Guide the Q&A to ensure the right speakers respond.
 - Ensure speakers provide concise, quotable soundbites for media use.
- 9 Record and Amplify the Event**

 - Record video and audio of the event for future use. Live stream on platforms like YouTube or Facebook Live.
 - Post real-time updates, key quotes, and photos to social media using appropriate hashtags to engage a broader audience.
- 10 Follow-Up After the Event**

 - Send out the full press release to all media, especially those unable to attend. Offer access to recordings, photos, and materials.
 - Send thank-you emails to attending reporters and offer additional follow-up information.
- 11 Evaluate and Debrief**

 - Debrief with your team to assess what worked and areas for improvement.
 - Track media coverage, including articles, TV spots, and social media mentions, to measure the press conference's impact and refine future efforts.

Spokesperson Preparation

Spokesperson training equips colleagues, community members, coalition partners, and supporters to be effective messengers and advocates for Clean Slate laws. By sharing compelling and persuasive messages, personal stories, and actionable information, trained spokespeople can build public support, engage policymakers, and strengthen the movement for Clean Slate.

A spokesperson appearing on the news or quoted in an article may be someone's only connection to the Clean Slate campaign. Stakes are often high, and it's a professional communicator's responsibility to ensure advocates are adequately prepared when speaking about a coalition's work. *No pressure, right?*

Here are some of the basics to cover when preparing spokespeople to speak about Clean Slate or on behalf of a state Clean Slate coalition.

Message Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Familiarize participants with Clean Slate's key messages. ■ Focus on themes of redemption, fairness, and opportunity. ■ Train spokespeople to stay on message, avoid jargon, and address common misconceptions.
Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Encourage participants to draw on personal and emotional stories and then use data or facts to demonstrate the real-life impact of having a record. ■ Facilitate trainings on storytelling, teaching frameworks such as the Public Narrative developed by Marshall Ganz - a.k.a. 'Story of Self, Us, and Now' framework: Self (why the issue matters to you), Us (connection to broader community values), and Now (immediate action).
Audience Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Help people think through their audiences and identify core values and messages that will likely resonate with them. ■ Train spokespeople to connect emotionally, listen actively, and address concerns with compassion.
Media Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Practice concise, compelling answers to common questions. ■ Develop memorable quotes encapsulating key points. ■ Equip spokespeople to navigate tough questions or hostile narratives.

**Action-Oriented
Communication**

- Highlight the tangible benefits of Clean Slate laws: increased employment opportunities, reduced recidivism, and stronger communities.
- Provide clear calls to action, such as contacting legislators, signing petitions, or attending events.

Practice and Feedback

- Simulate interviews, public speeches, and one-on-one conversations.
- Provide real-time, supportive feedback to refine delivery and content.

Guidance for Preparing for Media Appearances

How To Dress For Media Appearances

Dress Appropriately for the Medium

- **Television:** Choose solid colors that flatter your skin tone, avoiding patterns, stripes, or overly bright colors that can be distracting or cause visual distortion on camera.
- **Radio/Podcasts:** While the audience won't see you, dressing as if you're presenting helps you feel more professional and confident.
- **In-Person Interviews:** Aim for business casual or attire appropriate for the setting (e.g., community-focused attire if meeting in an informal environment).

Keep It Simple

- Avoid large or noisy jewelry that can distract or interfere with microphones.
- Opt for neat, professional hairstyles and minimal makeup to maintain focus on your message.

Comfort and Confidence

- Wear clothing you're comfortable in to avoid fidgeting or discomfort.
- Closed-toe shoes or polished footwear help complete a professional appearance.

Tips: Preparing For Media Appearances

Understand the Format

- **Television:** Prepare for shorter answers and soundbites; body language matters.
- **Radio/Podcasts:** Focus on clear, engaging speech since tone and delivery carry the message.
- **Print/Journalist Interviews:** Be ready to elaborate and provide context for your answers.

Key Message Preparation

- Identify 2-3 key points you want to communicate and stick to them.
- Anticipate common questions and rehearse concise, memorable answers.

- Understand that you have complex knowledge of the issue, but your audience may not. Think through how to explain things clearly without relying on legal jargon, acronyms, or technical minutia. Make it simple for folks to understand what you are talking about.

Practice Delivery

- Rehearse speaking slowly and clearly, especially for television and radio.
- Record yourself practicing to refine tone, pace, and clarity.

Control the Narrative

- Pivot back to your key messages if a question leads off-topic.
- Use bridging phrases like 'What's important to remember is...!' or 'That's a good question, and it connects to...!'

Engaging with Journalists

- Be respectful and professional. Avoid speculation or sharing unverified information.
- If you don't know an answer, it's okay to say, 'I'll follow up with more details.'
- Everything you say, even off-camera, could be on the record—stay mindful of your words.

During The Interview

Body Language

- Maintain good posture and make natural eye contact with the interviewer or the camera.
- Smile when appropriate to appear approachable and confident.
- Avoid crossing your arms or fidgeting.

Voice and Tone

- Use a warm and steady tone to convey confidence and authority.
- Emphasize key points with variation in tone to maintain listener interest.

Stay Calm Under Pressure

- Pause briefly before answering difficult questions to gather your thoughts.
- Respond with poise, even if faced with challenging or confrontational questions.

Final Preparations

Arrive Early

- Give yourself time to get familiar with the environment, check equipment, and reduce stress.

Check Equipment

- Ensure microphones, cameras, and other tech are functioning properly.

Hydrate and Warm Up

- Drink water to avoid a dry throat and do vocal warm-ups to ensure clear articulation.