Designing Conditions People Can Meet

For legal professionals · Fair Notice

A practical guide to notices, orders, and program requirements that do not depend on the capacities participants may lack.

THE PREMISE

Standard conditions ask for precisely the skills this population lacks. The result is a predictable violation rate that reads, on paper, as non-compliance.

WHAT CONDITIONS REQUIRE	WHY IT BREAKS DOWN
Track and attend multiple appointments	Time blindness and prospective memory failure
Read and act on mailed notices	Unopened mail is the single most common failure point
Self-report changes promptly	Task initiation deficits; avoidance under stress
Understand multi-page written conditions	Dense text with no comprehension check
Ask for help when confused	Masking; fear of appearing non-compliant

COMPLIANCE SCAFFOLDING

Every element below is a scheduling or phrasing change. None requires new authority, new money, or a diagnosis.

Notices	Text and call reminders at 7 days, 2 days, and morning-of, in addition to mail
Appointments	Fixed recurring day and time rather than rotating dates. Same location, same person.
Conditions	Plain-language one-page terms, read aloud, with teach-back confirmation at signing
Missed dates	A 72-hour cure window with outreach before any violation is filed
Navigation	A named point of contact the person can text — not a general office line
Paperwork	Assisted completion. Forms are done with the person, not handed to them.

REWRITING A NOTICE

The most common single improvement available, and it costs one afternoon of drafting.

INSTEAD OF	TRY
Dense paragraph of conditions	One instruction per line, in the order they occur
“Failure to comply may result in…”	“If you miss this, here is exactly what happens.”
A date buried in the third paragraph	The date at the top, in bold, alone on its own line
“Contact the department”	A name and a direct number
Legal citation as the heading	A plain heading: *What you have to do*
No confirmation step	A line at the bottom: *Say this back to me in your own words.*

A ONE-PAGE CONDITIONS TEMPLATE

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

1. _____ by _____
2. _____ by _____
3. _____ by _____

WHO TO CALL IF YOU'RE STUCK

Name: _____ Direct number: _____

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU MISS ONE

_____

NEXT DATE

_____ Same day and time each month: _____

WHAT THE EVIDENCE WOULD SHOW

If your office adopts any of this, the measures worth tracking are failure-to-appear rate, warrants issued, technical violation rate, and program completion — each compared against a matched period or cohort agreed in advance. Fair Notice provides evaluation design and analysis free of charge to any partner.

Free consultation. We will review your existing notices, conditions, and orders and provide plain-language redrafts at no cost. There is no fee, no contract, and no obligation to adopt anything. Email info@fairnotice.org.

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