

CASE STUDY

The People Foundation

Online Community Service Work Program

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<https://thepeoplefoundation.org>

Safeguards in Action – The Case of J.A. Lying About Using A.I. To Cheat

Background:

J.A. enrolled in The People Foundation's online community service program to fulfill 80 hours of court-ordered community service. Over the course of two weeks, his account raised red flags in our system's automated monitoring for improper engagement, including the use of AI-generated answers in his coursework.

What Happened:

Upon detection, we followed our standard process: we reached out to J.A. with a respectful message giving him the opportunity to either admit the use of outside tools and request a second chance, or deny the allegation and request a full manual review.

"Your account has been flagged for using an A.I. tool to do the work for you. You can respond to this message with an honest description and admission of what you were doing incorrectly and ask to be evaluated to start again, or you can deny the allegation and request a full review of your account in case this is in error. Please let us know which route you would like to take."

J.A.'s response was vague and confusing. When prompted again, he firmly denied using AI and claimed his answers were based solely on his knowledge. Based on multiple, clearly flagged examples of AI-generated content and his refusal to take accountability, his account was deactivated, and he was deemed ineligible for a second chance under our policy.

Further Attempts:

After receiving the decision, J.A. contacted our phone support team. During the call, he initially repeated his denial—but eventually admitted to using AI-generated responses instead of completing the work himself; he claimed that he didn't use A.I. for *all* of his answers, only some. Unfortunately, by this point, he had already broken trust and was no longer eligible to continue in the program.

We also declined his offer to pay us money for continued access. Our policy is clear: we do not accept payment in place of accountability.

Outcome:

J.A. was permanently removed from the program. Despite this, our team still attempted to help him by recommending other organizations and alternative programs that may accept him. We take no joy in removing participants, but our credibility depends on the integrity of our program. Certification must be earned through genuine effort.

Why This Matters:

This case reflects why The People Foundation has safeguards in place:

- We review every participant's work for authenticity.
- We give everyone a chance to explain or ask for a second chance.
- We hold our standards to protect the integrity of community service hours.

We remain committed to fair opportunities—but also to accountability.