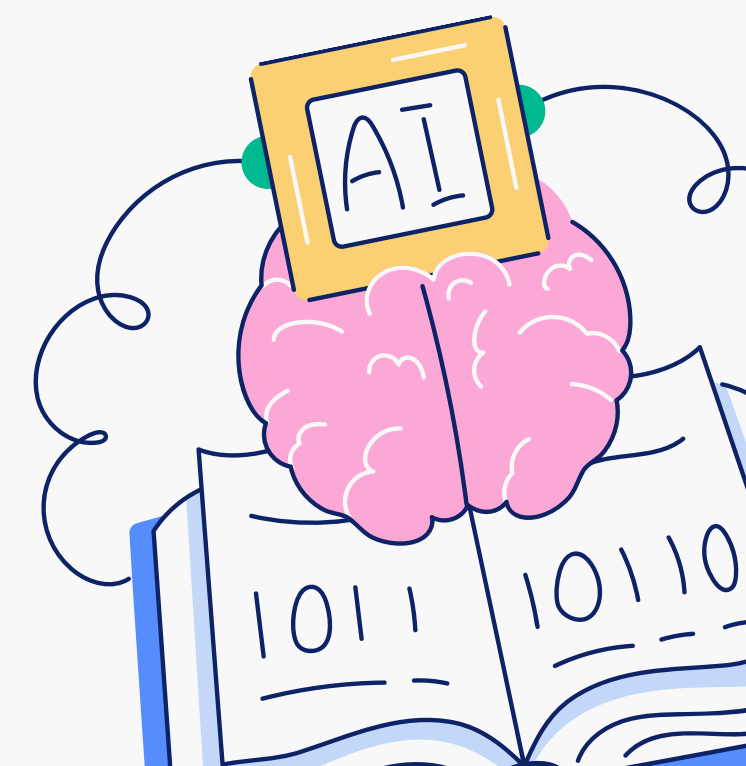
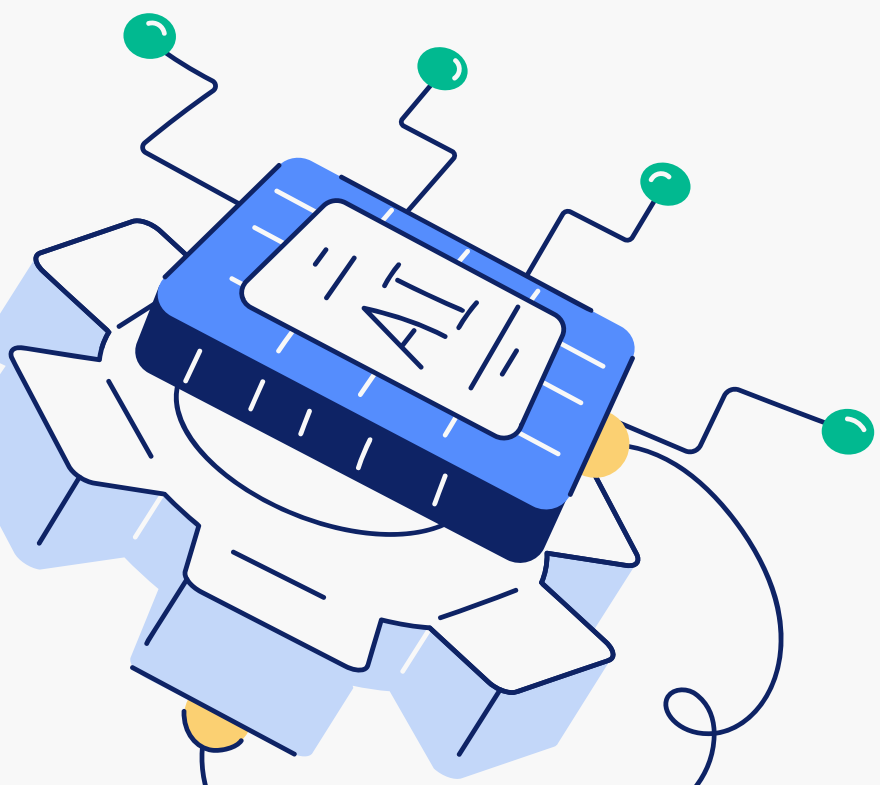


# AI IN HUMAN SERVICES: USING NEW TOOLS RESPONSIBLY AND SAFELY



Dr. Angie Elkins

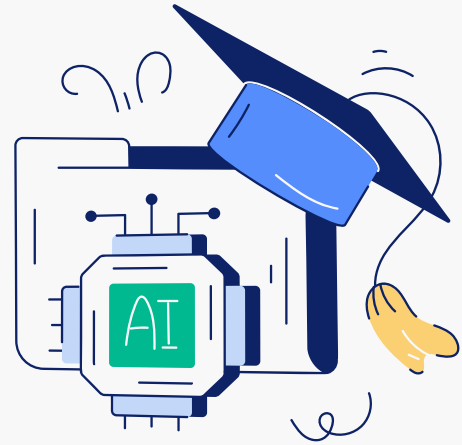
Professor of Sociology & Social Work

Walters State Community College

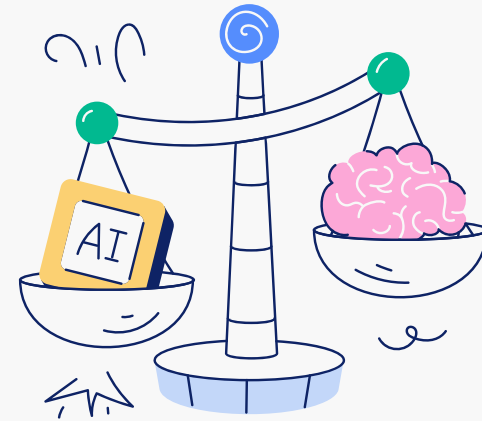
[Angie.Elkins@ws.edu](mailto:Angie.Elkins@ws.edu)

423-585-2649

# LEARNING GOALS



Describe what AI is and identify common tools.



Identify ethical risks of AI use, including bias, hallucinations, and over-reliance.



Apply PII protection practices with using AI in client related work.



Use AI as a support tool - not a decision maker, in alignment with professional ethics and agency policies.

\*Portions of this training were developed using AI as a brainstorming and drafting tool. All content has been reviewed and adapted by the presenter.

# POLL EVERYWHERE



When you hear 'AI in human services,' what's the first word that comes to mind?

Join by Web:

[PollEv.com/angieelkins165](https://PollEv.com/angieelkins165)

Join by Text:

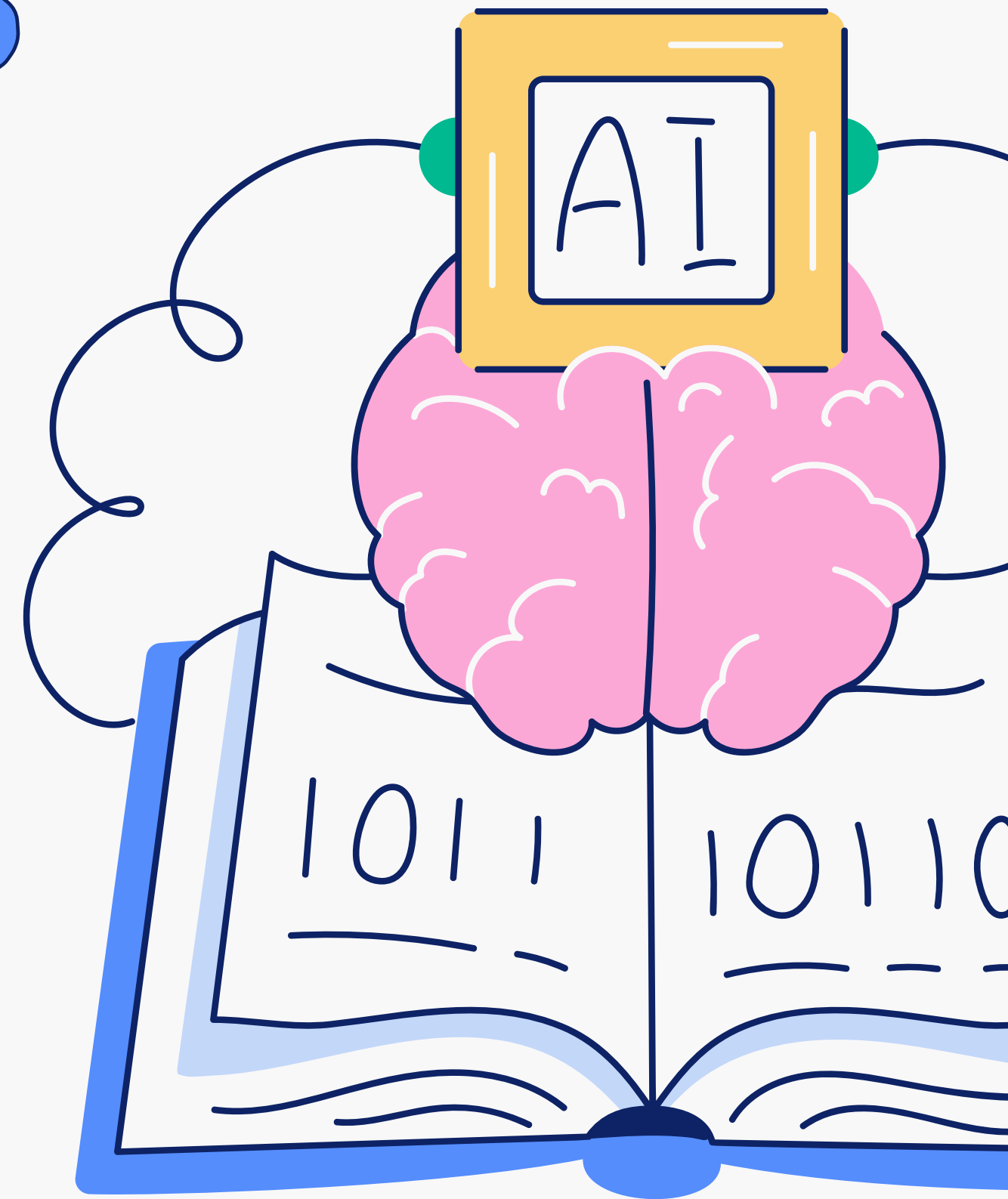
Send **angieelkins165** and your message to **37607**



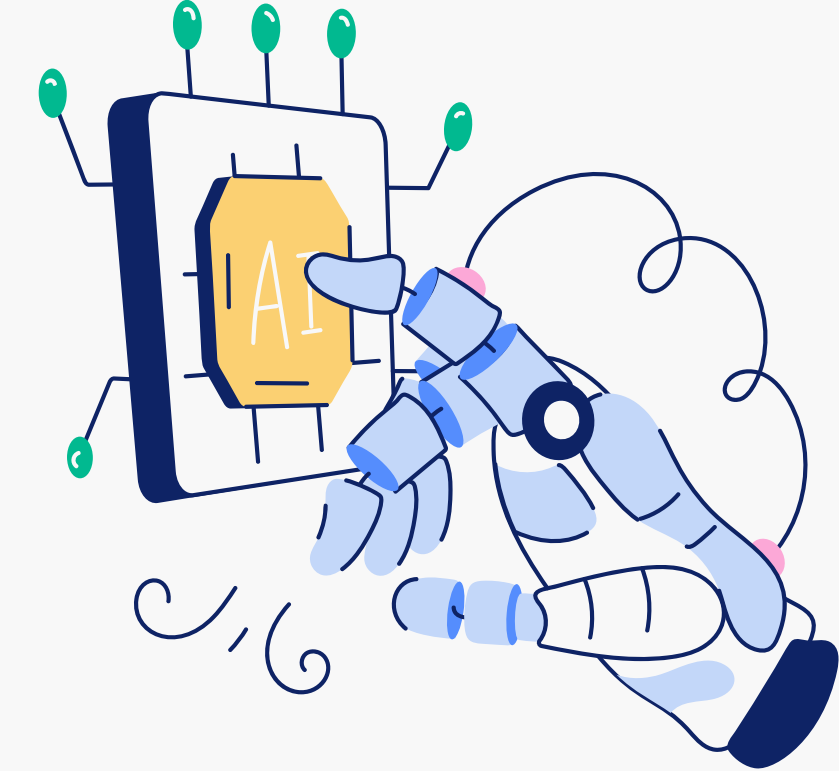
# DESCRIBE WHAT AI IS AND IDENTIFY COMMON TOOLS

- Identify what AI is (and is not).
- AI is not a therapist.
- It's not a supervisor.
- It's not a decision-maker.
- It's a tool.
- And like any tool in Human Services, it can either support or harm depending on how we use it.

## GOAL #1



# COMMON AI TOOLS



## **Text & Chat-Based AI (Large Language Models)**

These tools generate text based on patterns in language.

### **Uses:**

Drafting emails

Brainstorming

Summarizing public information

Creating worksheets

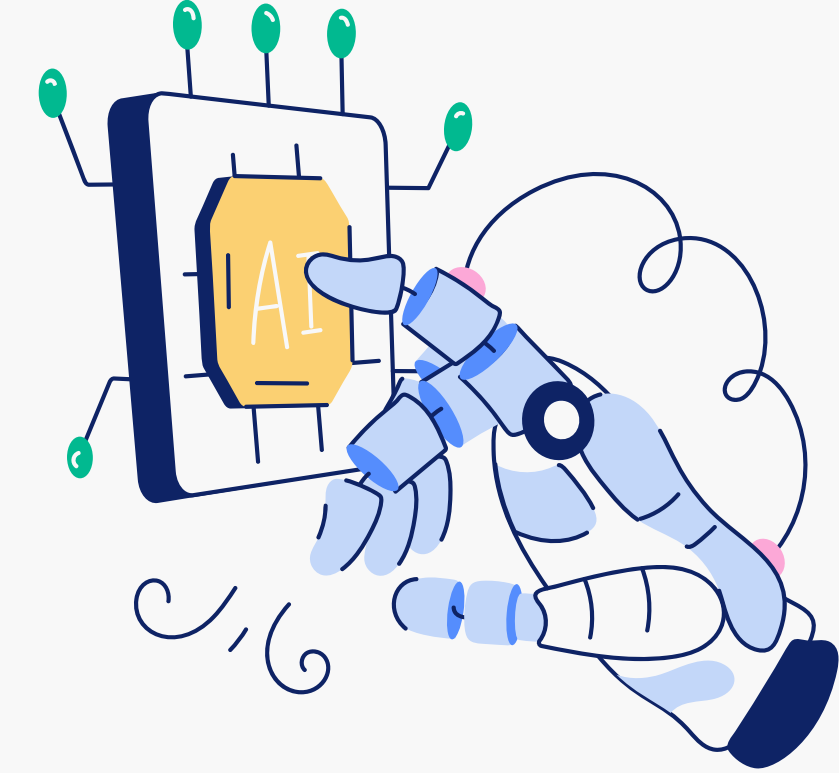
## **EXAMPLES:**

**CHATGPT**

**MICROSOFT COPILOT**

**GOOGLE GEMINI**

# COMMON AI TOOLS, CONT.



## Writing & Editing Assistants

Some use AI features even if they don't call themselves "AI tools."

### Uses:

Grammar suggestions

Rewriting tone

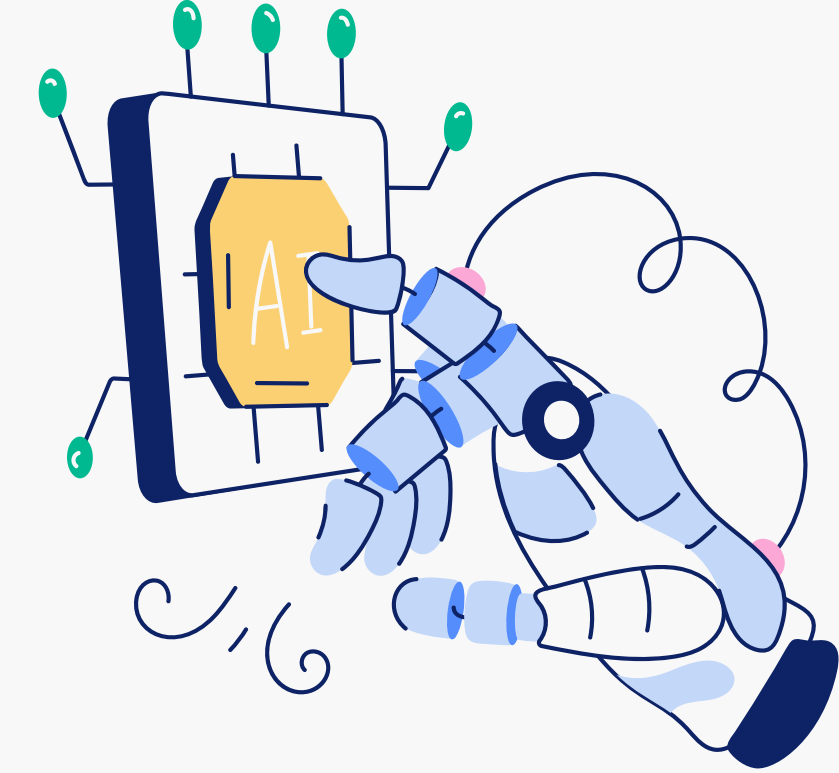
Summarizing documents

## EXAMPLES:

**GRAMMARLY**

**MICROSOFT EDITOR**

# COMMON AI TOOLS, CONT.



## Image & Media Generators

### Uses:

Creating flyers

Training materials

Visual aids

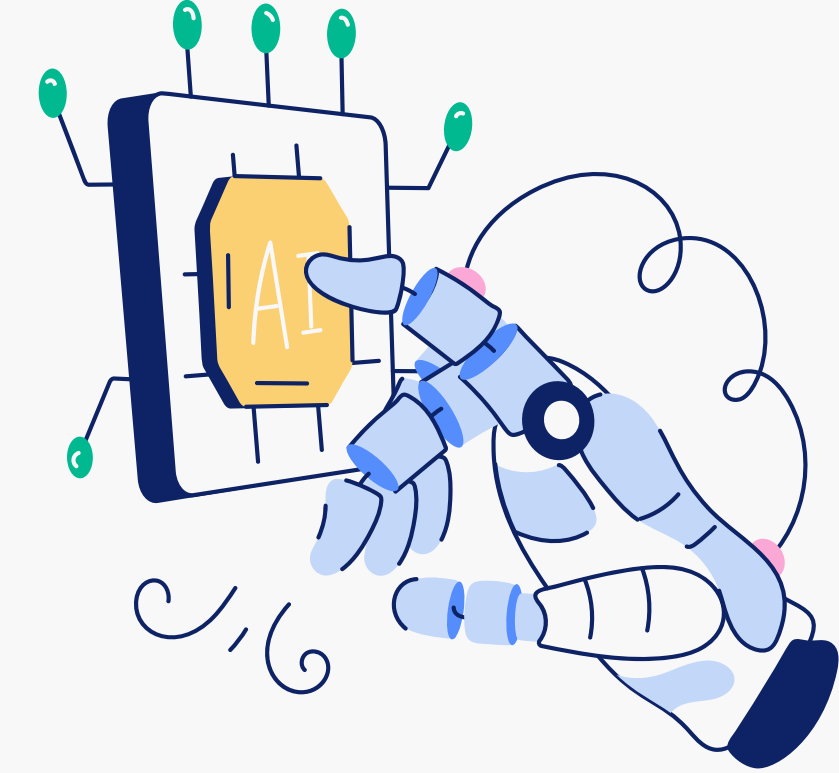
## EXAMPLES:

**CANVA MAGIC DESIGN**

**DALL·E**

**ADOBE FIREFLY**

# COMMON AI TOOLS, CONT.



## AI in Systems & Software

Some AI is embedded in the systems you already use – even if you don't realize it.

### Uses:

Risk scoring

Eligibility screening

Case prioritization

Data analysis

## EXAMPLES:

**EMAIL AUTO-COMPLETE**

**SPELL CHECK**

**PREDICTIVE TEXT**

**RECOMMENDATION SYSTEMS**

# AI TERMINOLOGY

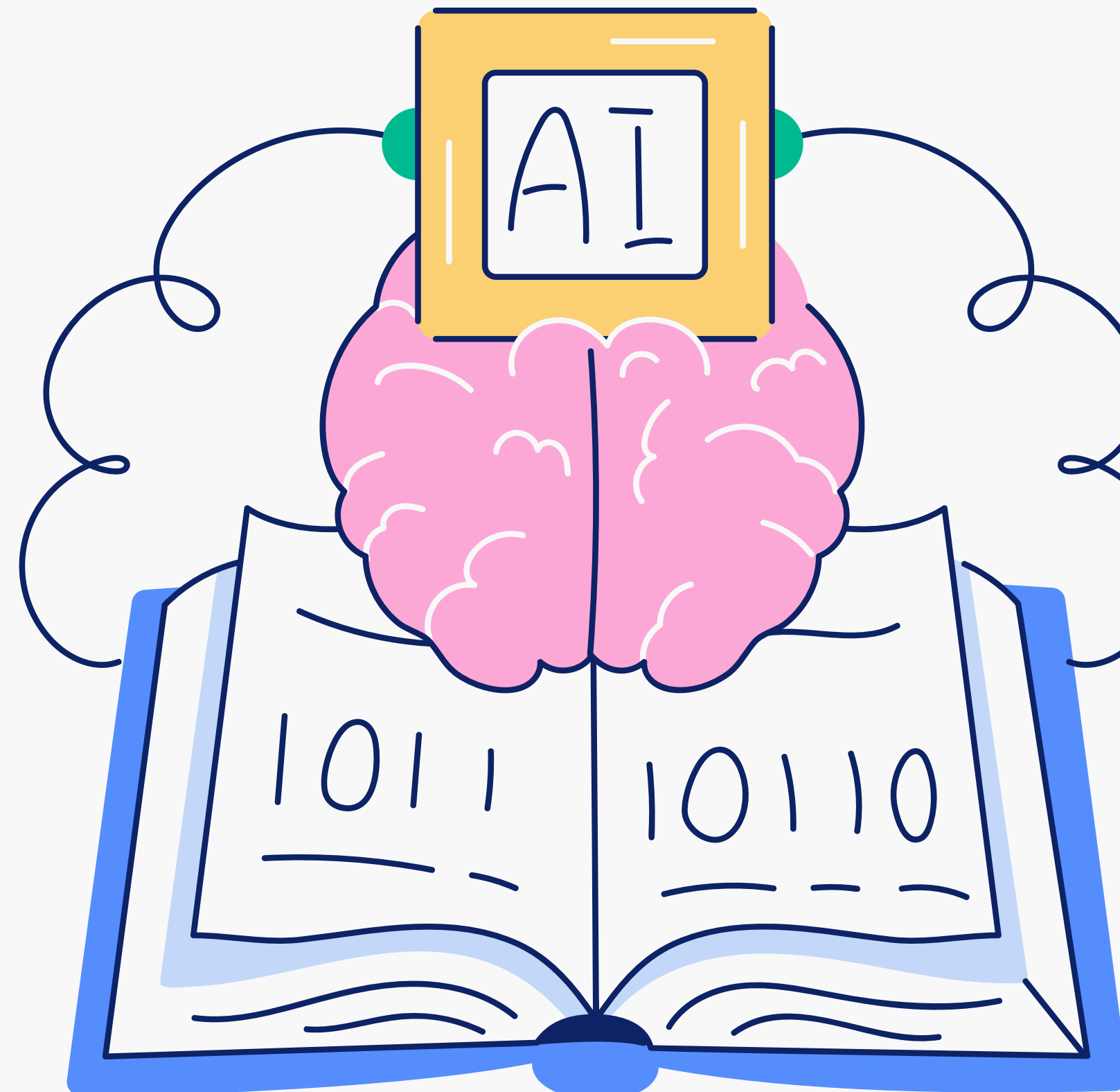
- **Artificial Intelligence** is technology designed to perform tasks that usually require human thinking – like understanding language, recognizing patterns, or making predictions. It includes learning, reasoning, problem solving, perception, etc.
- **Machine Learning (ML)** is a type of AI where computers learn patterns from data instead of being programmed step-by-step. Machine learning is how AI “learns” from examples.
- **Large Language Models (LLMs)** are AI systems trained on massive amounts of text so they can understand and generate human-like language.
- **Generative AI** is AI that creates new content – like text, images, summaries, outlines, or worksheets, based on what it has been trained on.



# IDENTIFY ETHICAL RISKS OF AI USE

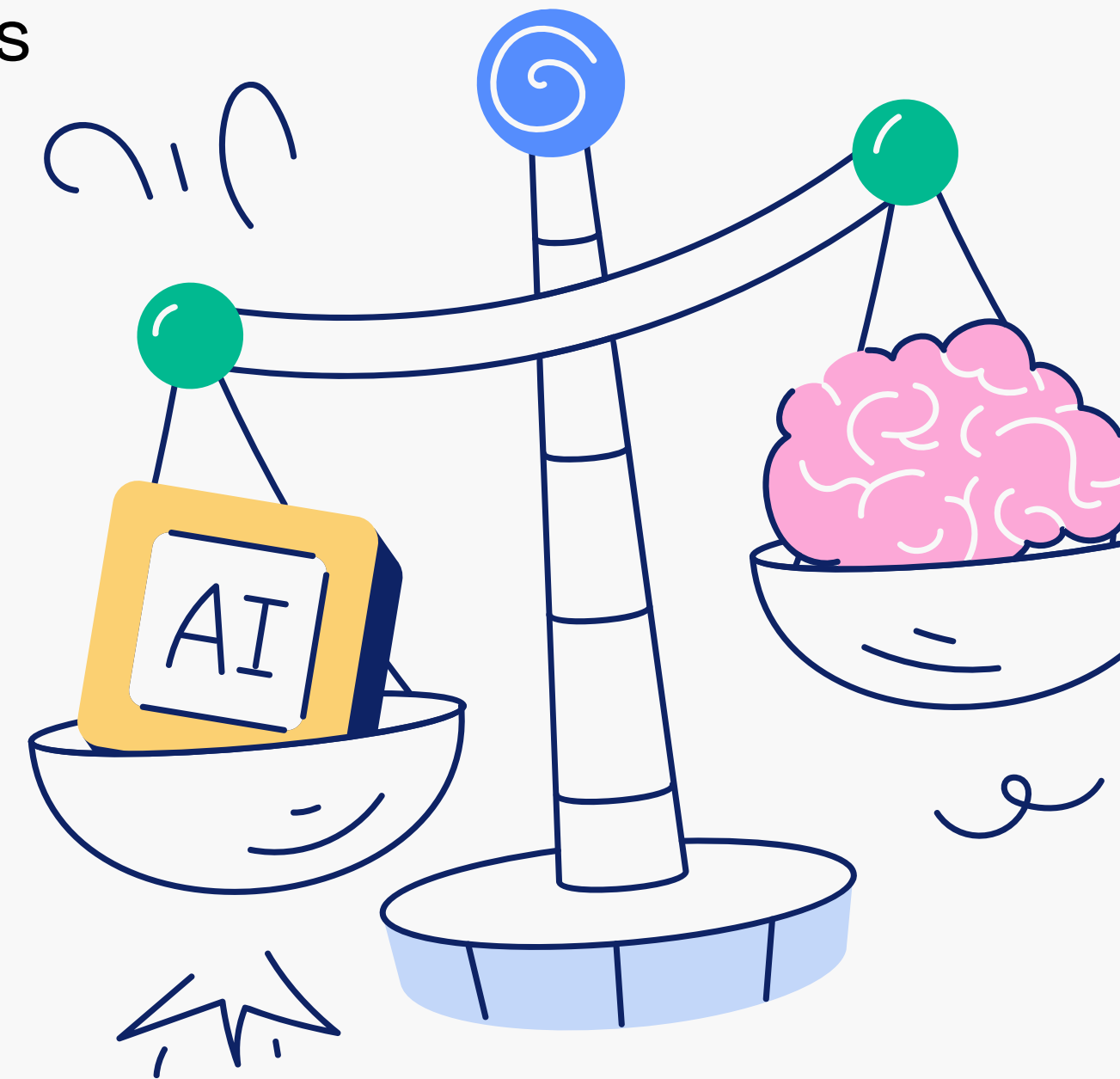
**GOAL #2**

- Ethics
- Bias
- Hallucinations
- Over-Reliance



# ETHICAL CONCERNS: CONFIDENTIALITY, CLIENT WELFARE & DIGNITY

- **Protect privacy and confidentiality**
  - a. Never input identifiable client data into public AI tools
  - b. Be aware of how data may be stored or processed
- Promote client self-determination
- Avoid harm
- Follow agency policies
- If you wouldn't put it in a public training session, don't put it into AI.
- If you wouldn't have a conversation about it in a public space, don't put it into AI.



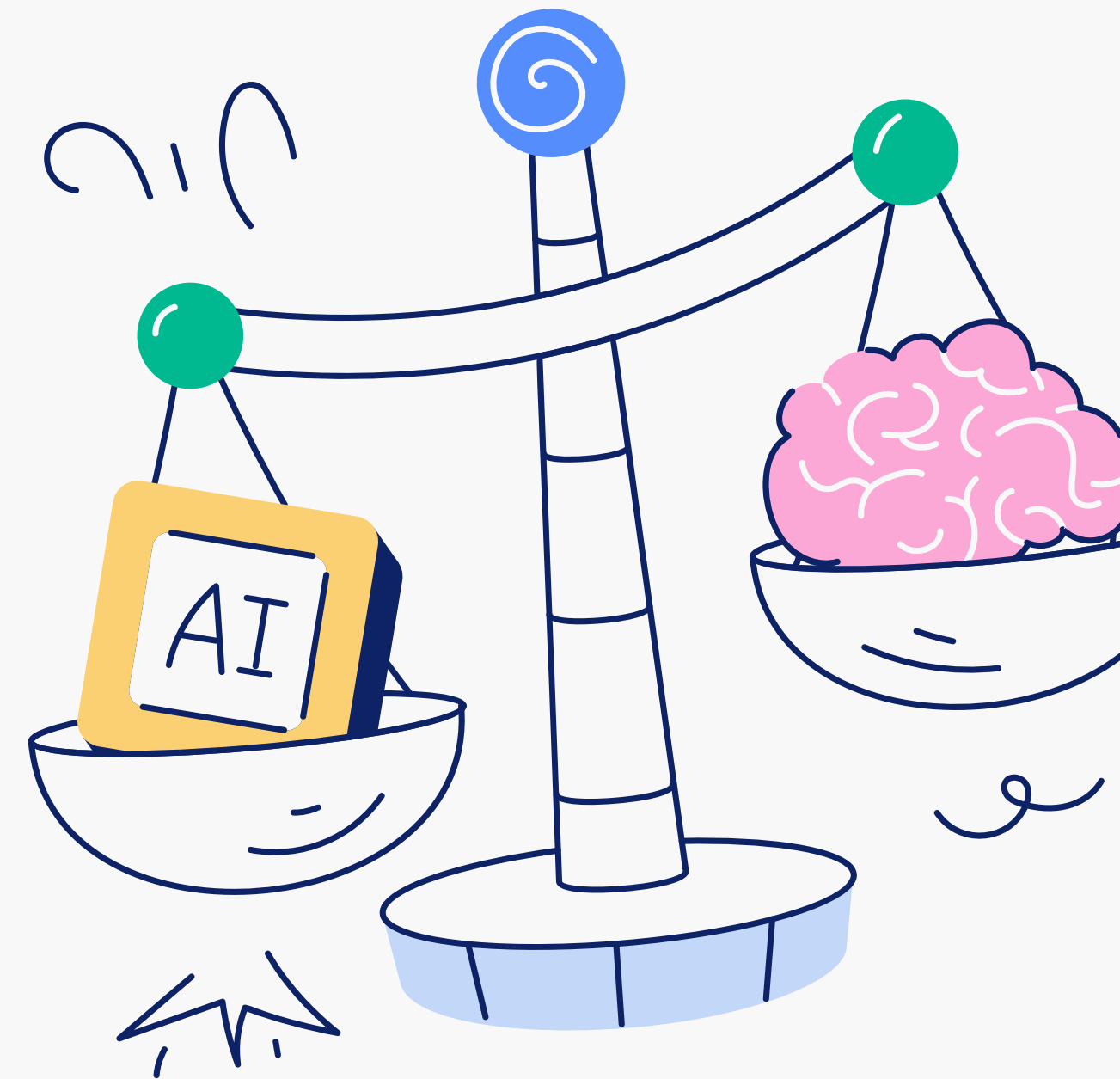
# ETHICAL CONCERNS: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, COMPETENCE & INTEGRITY

**Human services professionals are expected to:**

- Practice within their scope
- Seek supervision when needed
- Maintain competence in emerging practices

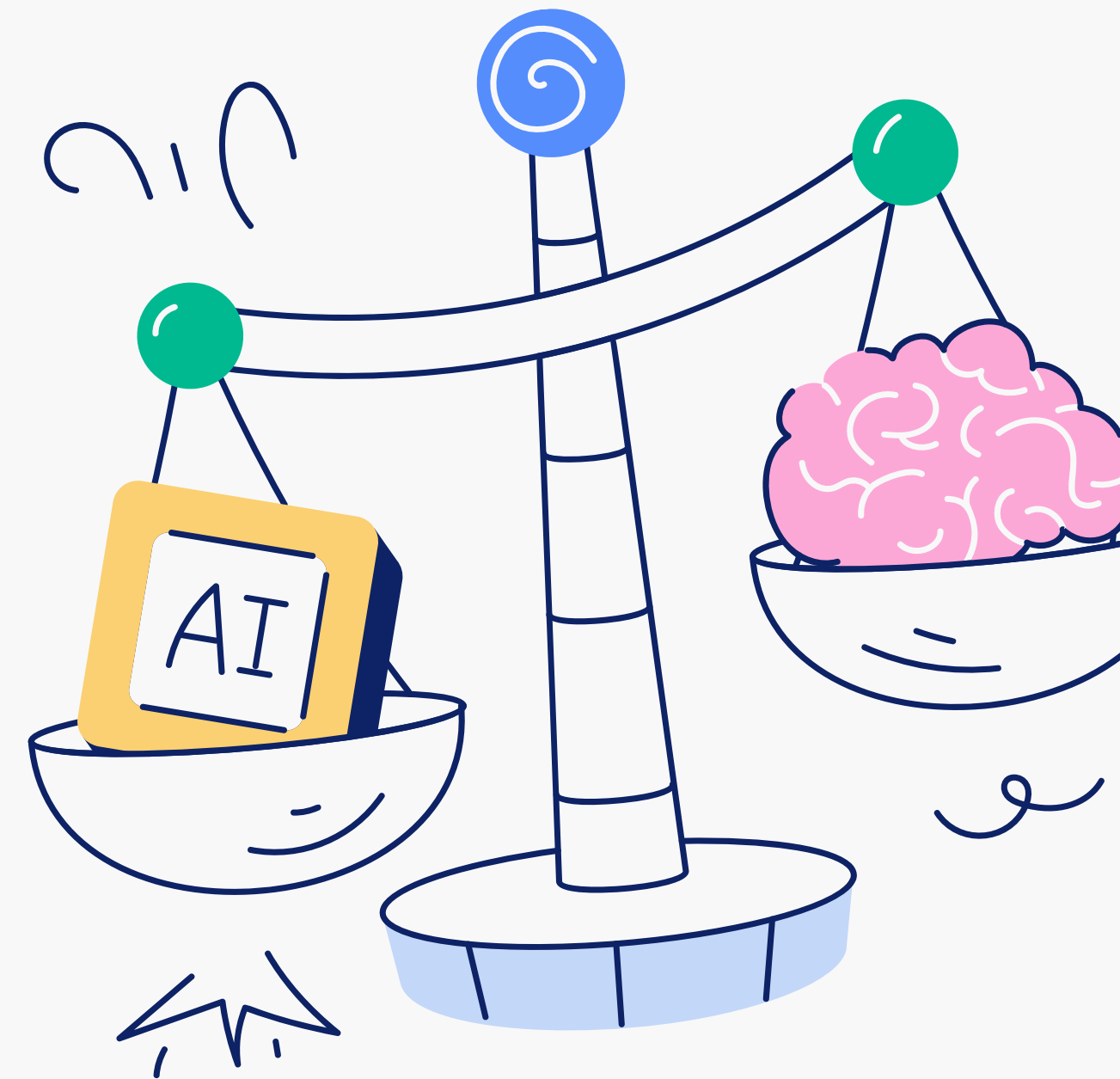
**Remember:**

- Don't let AI replace professional judgment
- Stay informed about risks and limitations
- Use it as a support tool, not a decision-maker



# ETHICS STANDARDS: STRESS HONESTY AND TRANSPARENCY

- Don't present AI-generated materials as evidence-based without verifying
- Avoid fabricated citations
- Be cautious of AI Hallucinations
- Be transparent if AI assists with documentation or materials



# QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE USING AI

- Does this protect client confidentiality?
- Is this within my scope of practice?
- Would I feel comfortable explaining this use to a supervisor?
- Would I defend this decision if reviewed?



# AI BIAS

- Language models may produce stereotypes or deficit-based language.
- AI may misinterpret cultural language patterns.
- AI doesn't create inequality — it can mirror and magnify it.
- AI bias happens when AI systems reflect or amplify existing social inequalities because they learn from historical data.



# AI BIAS, CONT.

- If the past contains inequality or discrimination, AI may reproduce it.
- If past systems under-served certain racial groups, AI trained on that data may reinforce that pattern.
- If documentation historically labeled some communities as “high risk,” AI may predict higher risk for similar profiles.



# POLL EVERYWHERE

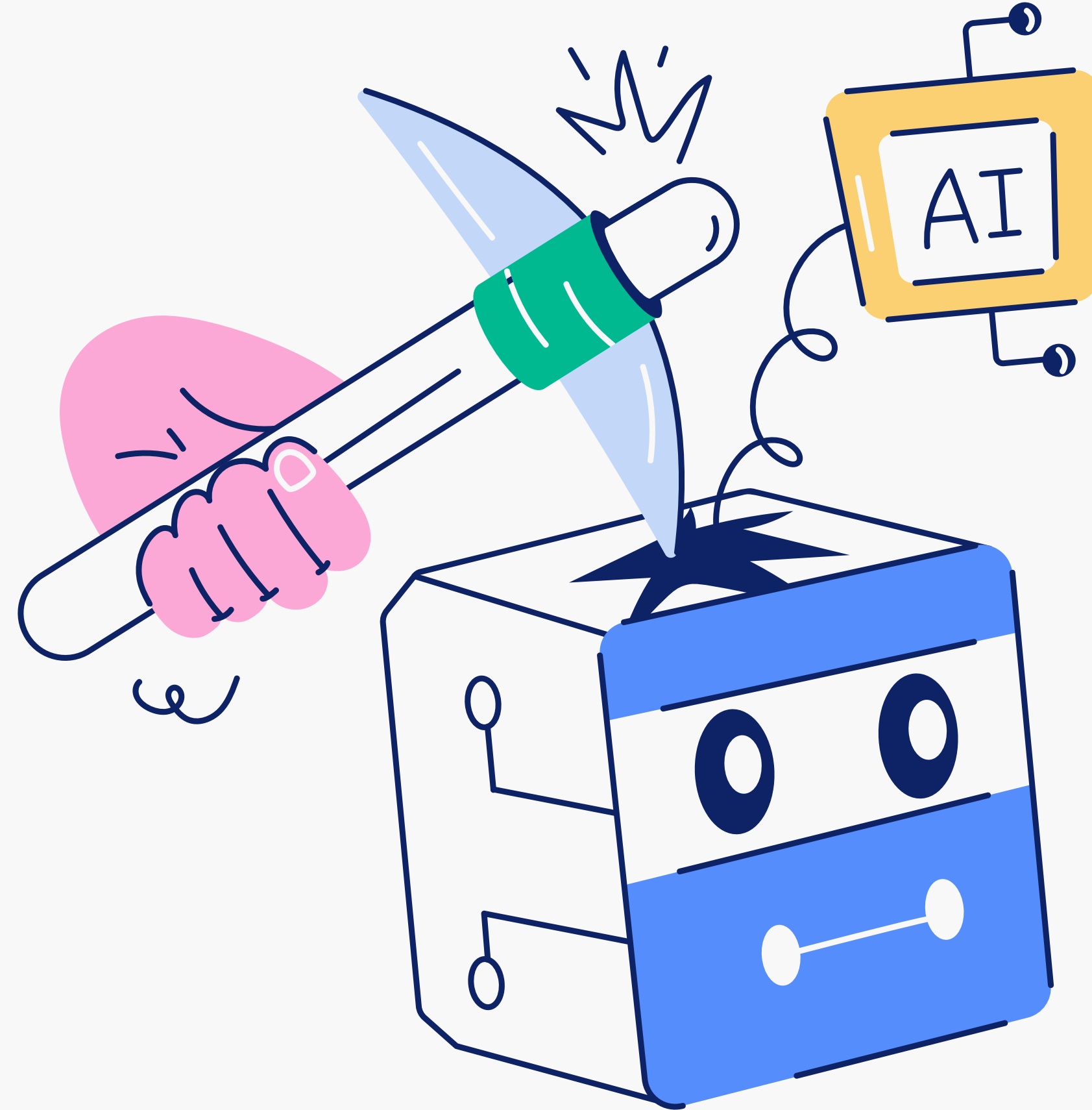


Where do you think AI bias is most likely to show up in human services?

Who could be unintentionally harmed?

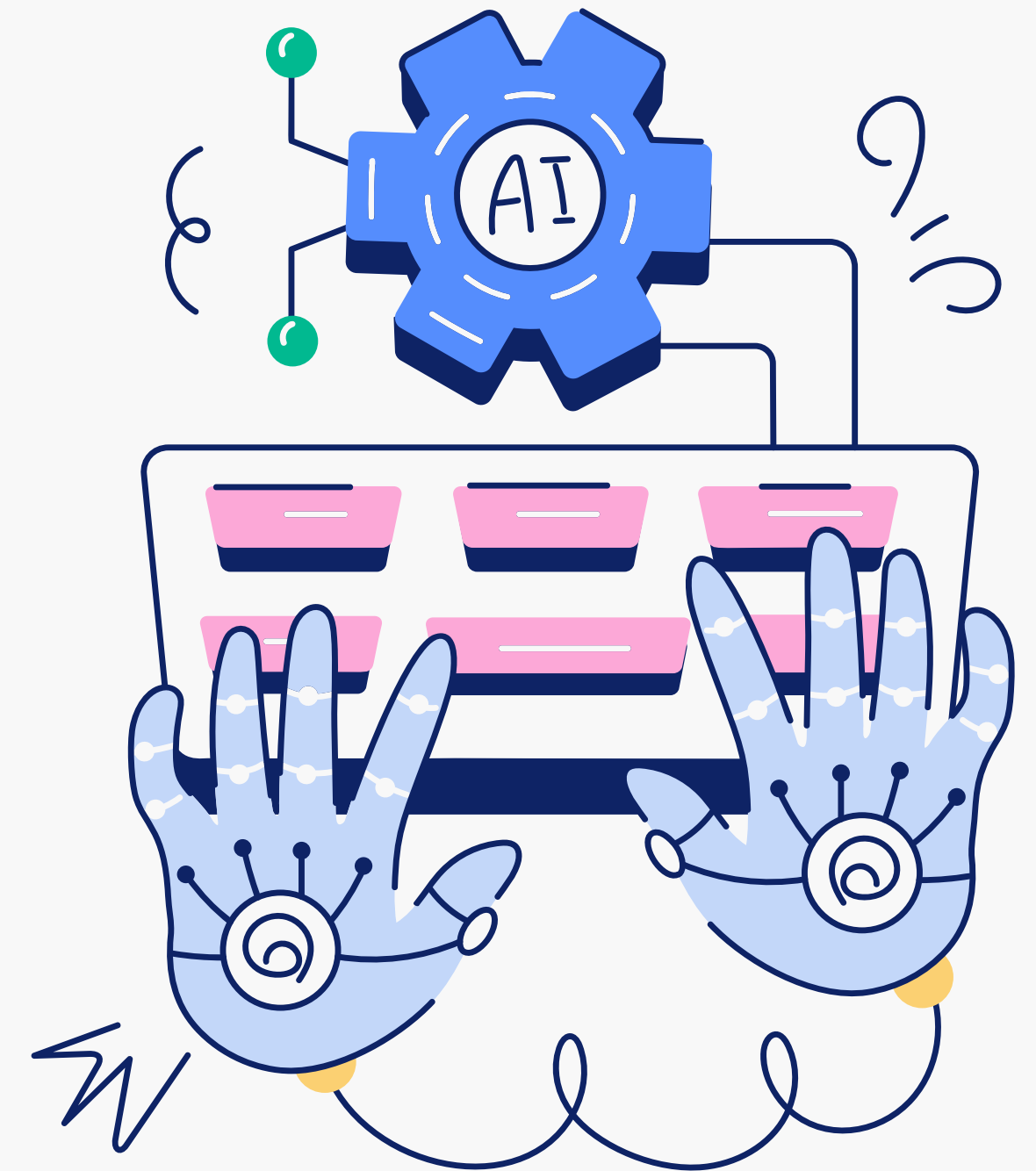
# AI BIAS

- Bias can mirror historical inequality
- Bias can shape eligibility decisions
- Bias can influence how clients are described
- Bias can affect which programs are designed – and for whom
- The most impacted are often already marginalized communities



# REDUCING AI BIAS

- Do not rely solely on AI for eligibility decisions
- Review outputs for stereotypes or deficit framing
- Ask: “Who might be excluded or harmed?”
- Cross-check against agency policies and lived experience
- Maintain human judgment and supervision

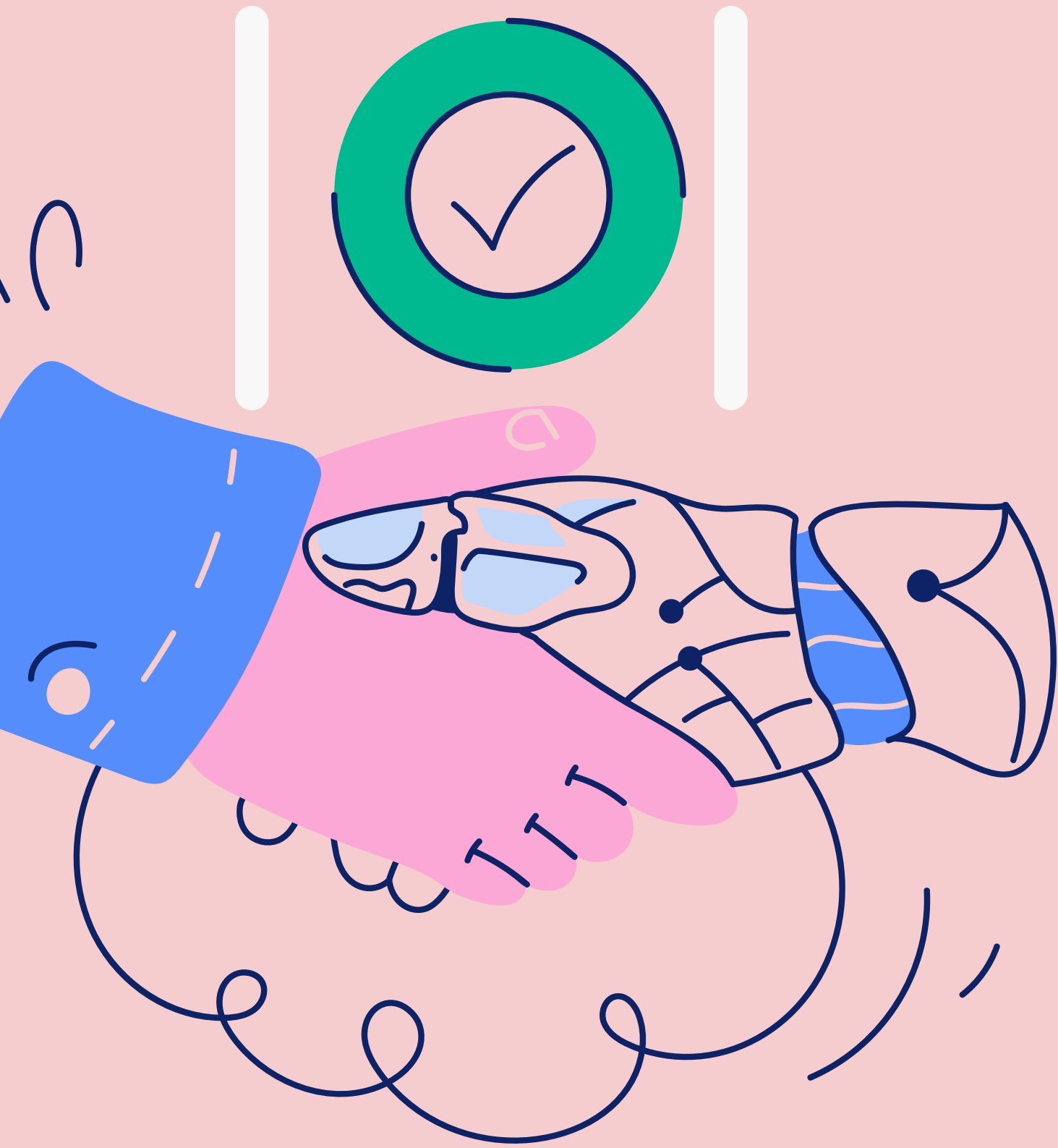


# AI HALLUCINATIONS- AND HOW TO SPOT THEM



AI sounds confident, even when it's wrong.

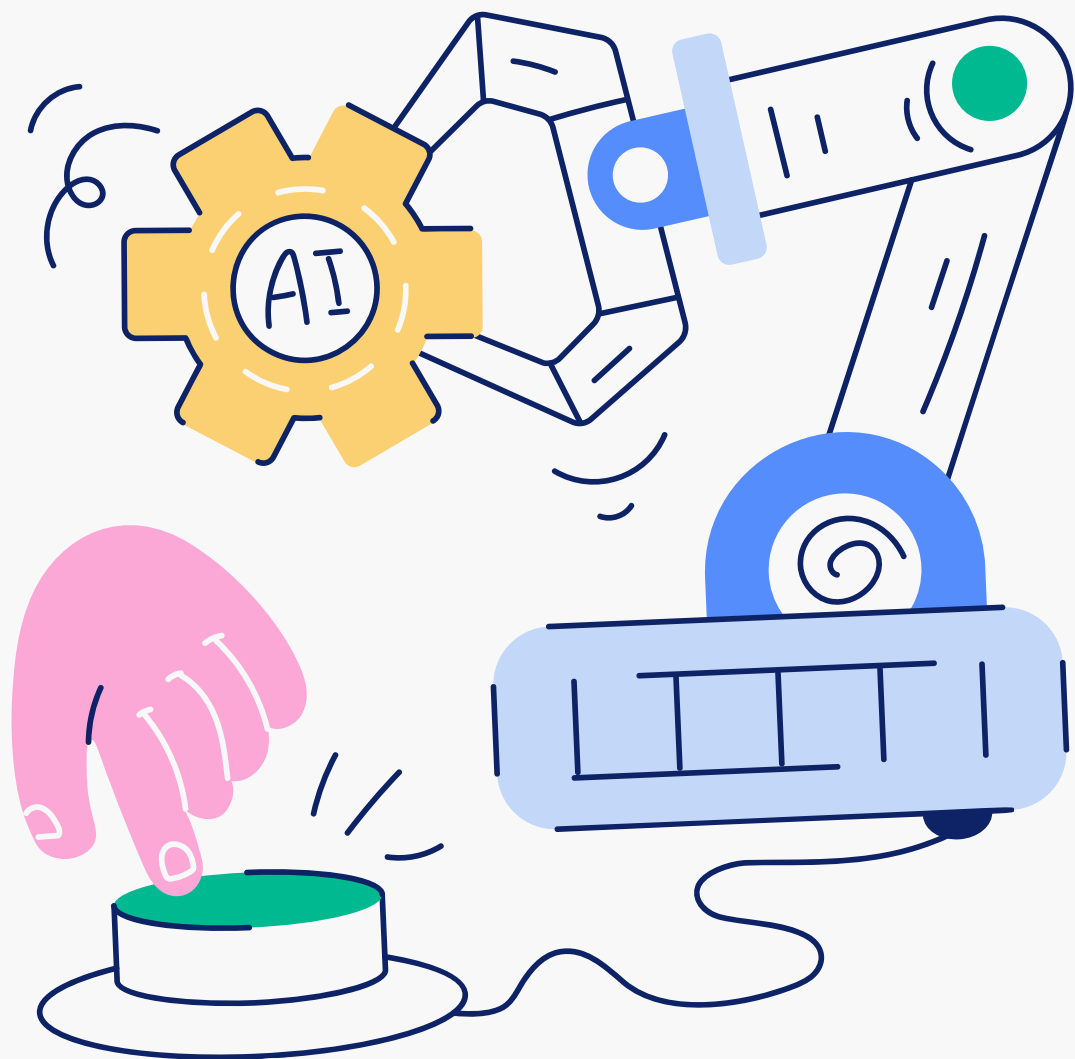
- Verify sources
- Ask AI to show reasoning
- Cross-check policy or law
- Be cautious with statistics
- Watch for fabricated citations
- Cross-check what you entered



# POLL EVERYWHERE

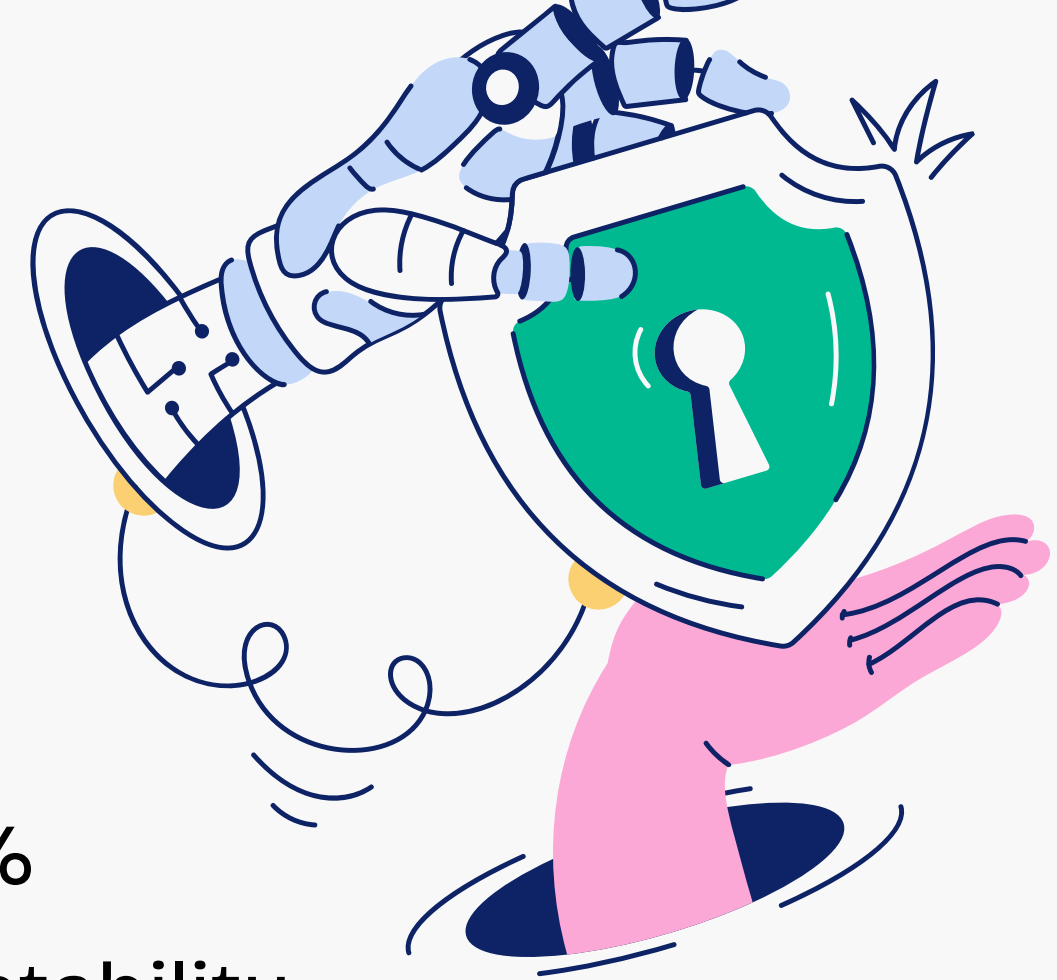
If AI gives a clear, confident answer, how likely are you to double-check it?

# BIAS AND HALLUCINATION EXAMPLE



When some image-generation systems were asked to create historical images (like U.S. Civil War soldiers, Founding Fathers, etc.), they produced racially and gender-diverse results that were historically inaccurate. The systems had been adjusted to avoid generating biased or exclusionary images, and in trying to “correct” bias, they overcorrected – producing diversity where it did not reflect historical reality.

# SPOTTING HALLUCINATIONS



- According to the 2023 Tennessee Maternal Stability Report, 68% of pregnant women in rural counties who experience housing instability also meet criteria for moderate to severe depression (Tennessee Department of Health, 2023).
- Under current Tennessee SNAP policy, pregnant women automatically qualify for expedited benefits if they report housing insecurity. This policy was updated in 2022 to address disparities in maternal health outcomes.
- Given these data, best practice would be to prioritize immediate SNAP enrollment and refer the client for clinical mental health services.

# OVERRELIANCE ON AI

Overreliance happens when professionals begin to depend on AI outputs instead of using their own judgment, supervision, or policy review.

- AI sounds confident – even when uncertain.
- It produces quick answers – which can reduce critical thinking.
- It may feel “objective” – but it reflects training data.
- Time pressure makes shortcuts tempting.

## Remember:

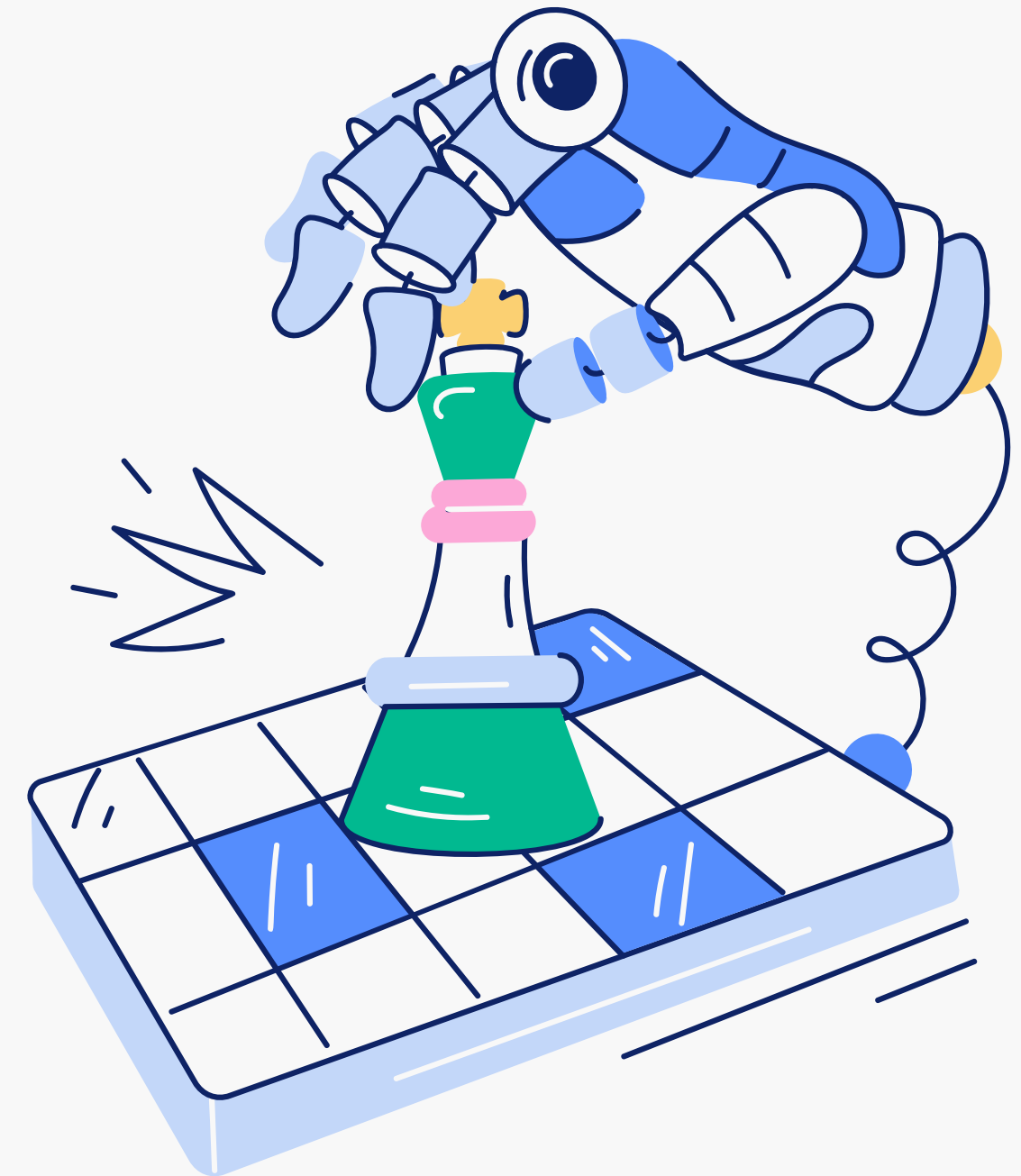
- Efficiency is not the same as accuracy.
- Overreliance can weaken professional judgment and reduce critical review of policy, documentation, and client context.
- In human services, accountability always rests with the professional – not the tool.



# WHERE OVERRELIANCE MIGHT SHOW UP

- Letting AI draft documentation without reviewing carefully
- Using AI summaries instead of reading full case files
- Accepting AI eligibility explanations without checking policy
- Using AI-generated statistics without verifying
- Treating AI suggestions as clinical insight

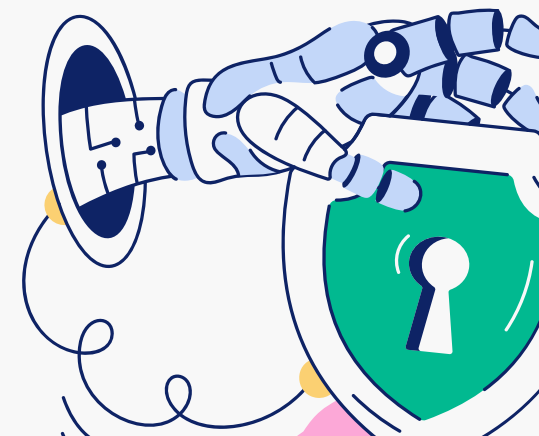
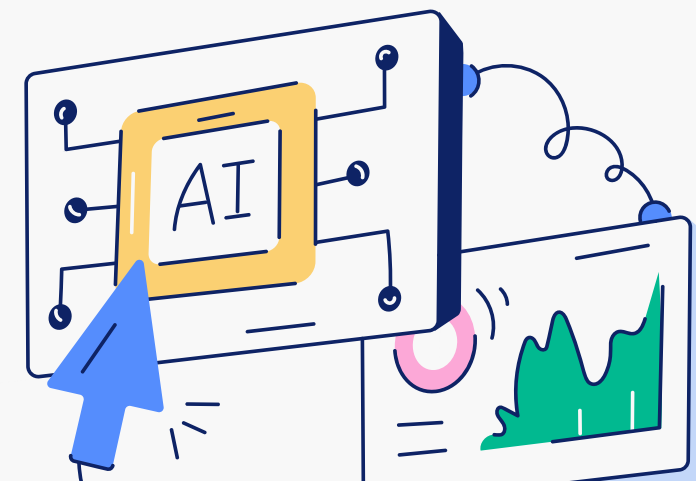
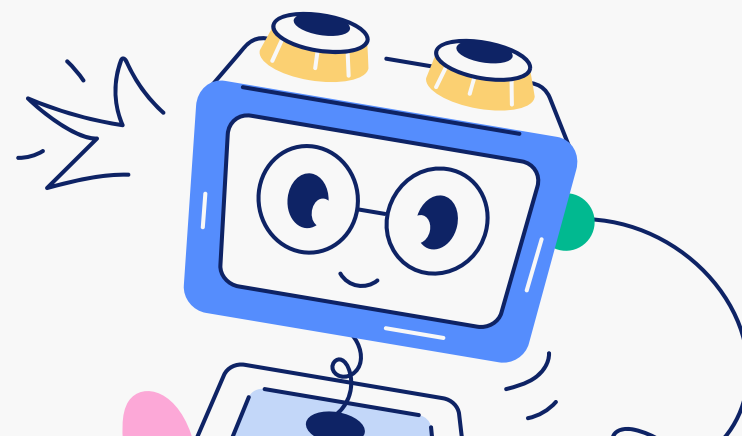
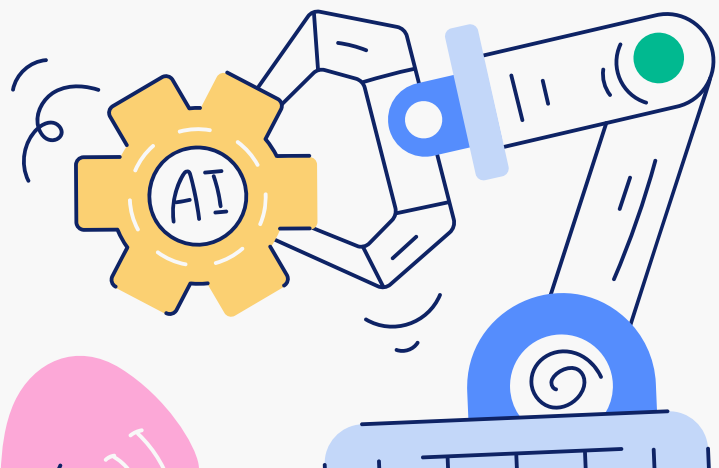
**IF WE OUTSOURCE OUR THINKING, WE ALSO OUTSOURCE ACCOUNTABILITY. AND THAT'S NOT HOW HUMAN SERVICES WORKS.**



# ETHICAL RISKS INTERSECT

- Bias affects fairness
- Hallucinations affect accuracy
- Overreliance affects judgment
- PII risks affect confidentiality

**ALL FOUR INTERSECT IN  
CLIENT RELATED WORK.**



# APPLY PII PROTECTION PRACTICES

## GOAL #3

**Would you put this in an email to someone outside your organization?**

If the answer is no, don't put it in AI.

- Names
- Dates of birth
- Case details
- Location identifiers
- Unique personal circumstances
- HIPAA considerations (if applicable)

**PUBLIC AI TOOLS ARE NOT HIPAA-COMPLIANT DOCUMENTATION SYSTEMS UNLESS SPECIFICALLY CONTRACTED AND APPROVED BY YOUR AGENCY.**



# AI SAFE VS AI UNSAFE ACTIVITY

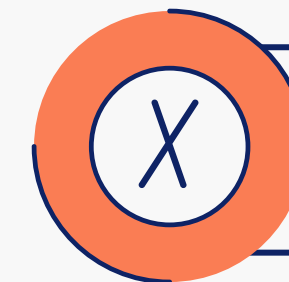
Let's determine what is safe to enter into AI!



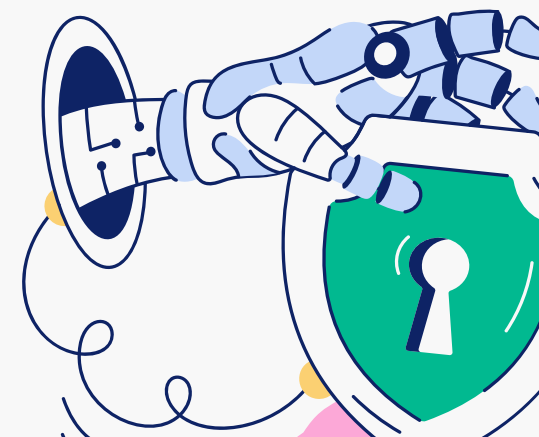
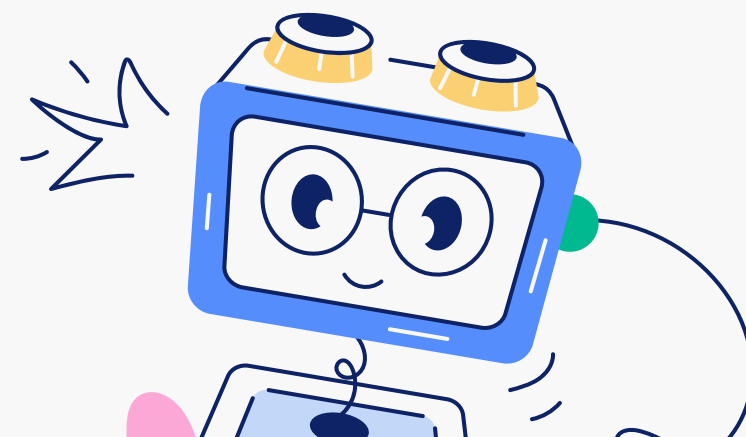
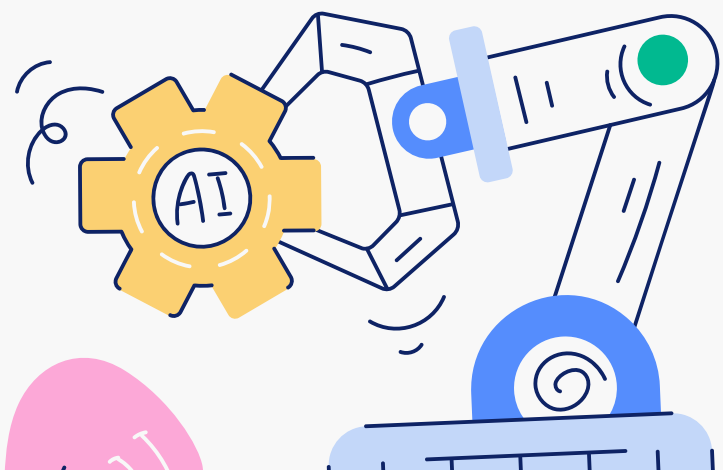
Safe



Possibly Safe

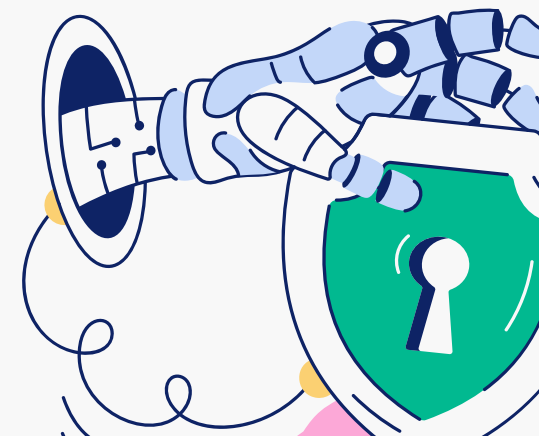
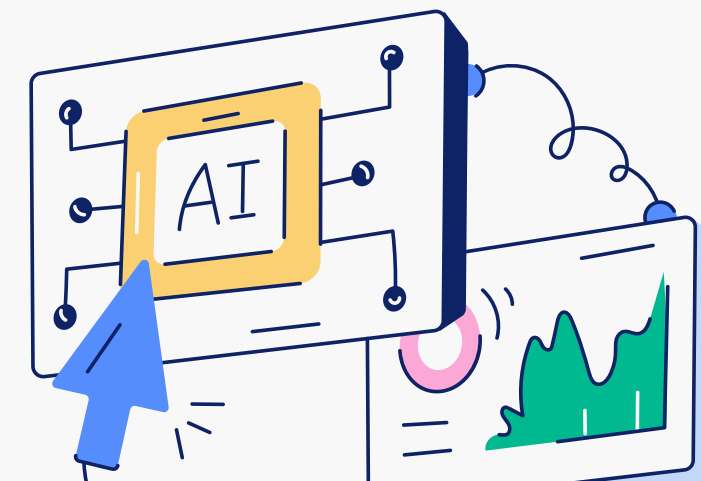
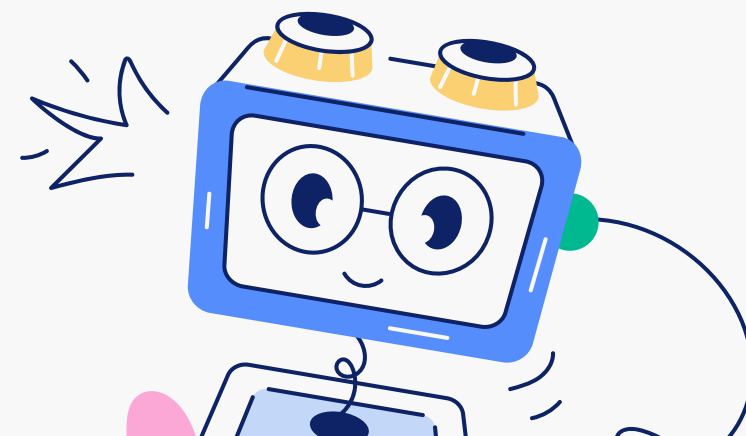
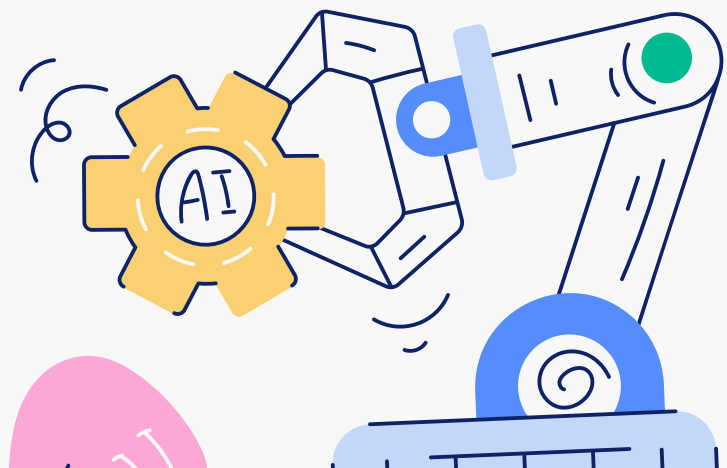
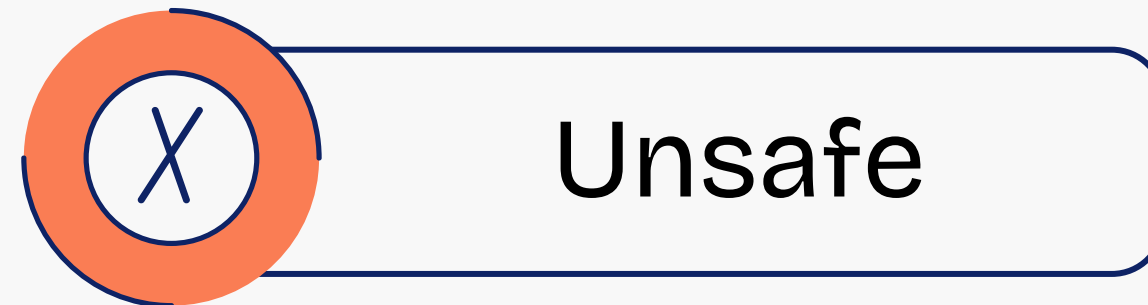


Unsafe



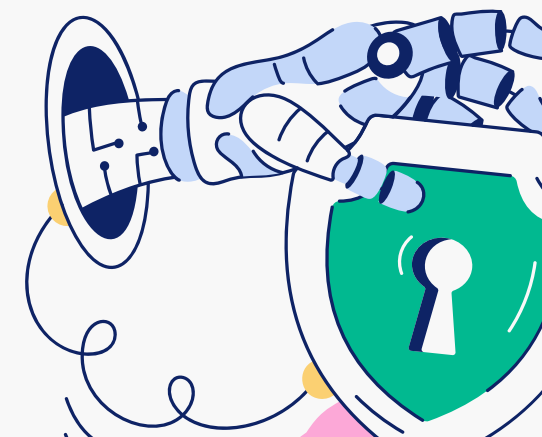
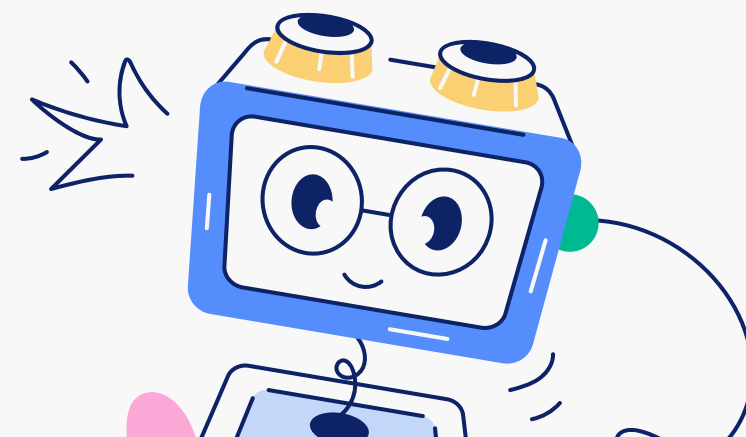
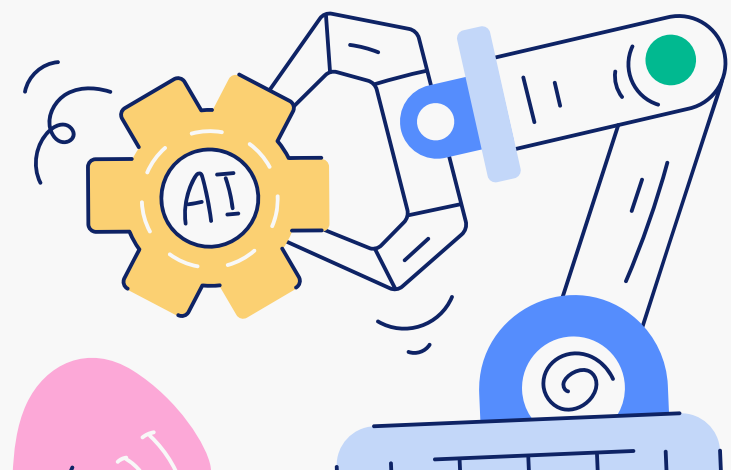
# SCENARIO ONE

“Summarize this case note about my client.”



# SCENARIO TWO

“Generate a worksheet for a parenting class on managing stress.”



# SCENARIO THREE

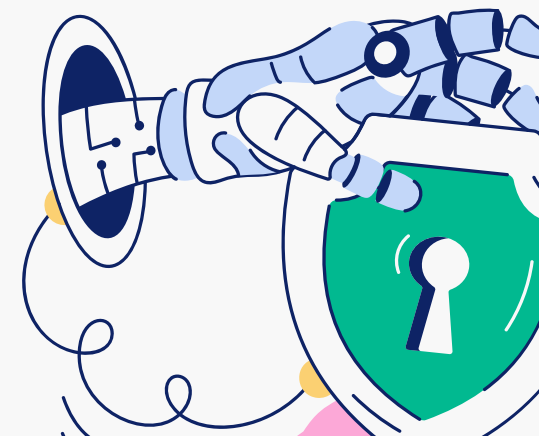
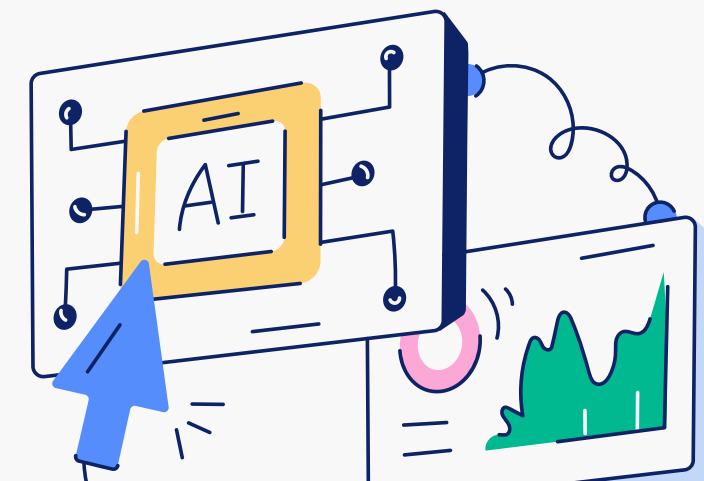
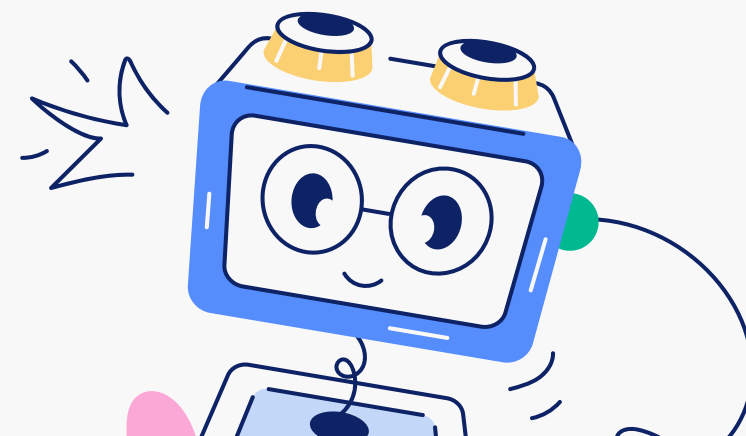
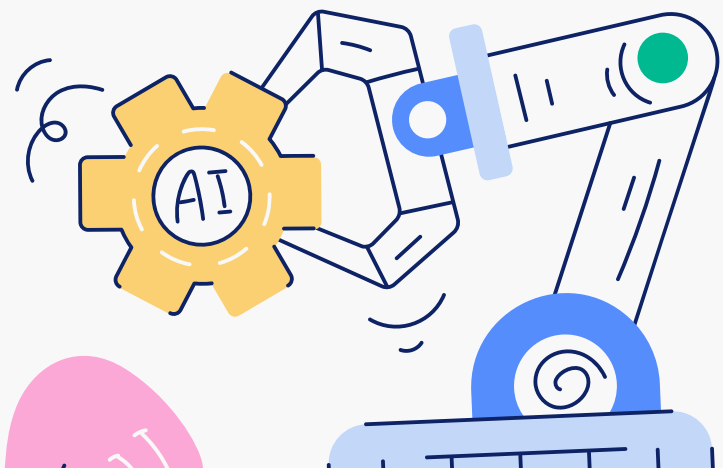
“Rewrite this email to a client about her missed appointment.”



Possibly Safe

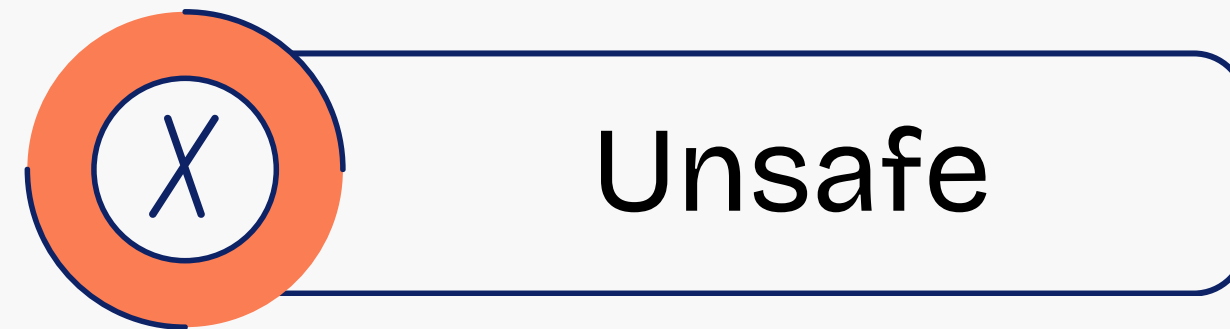
Safer version:

“Create a professional but supportive template email for a missed appointment reminder.”



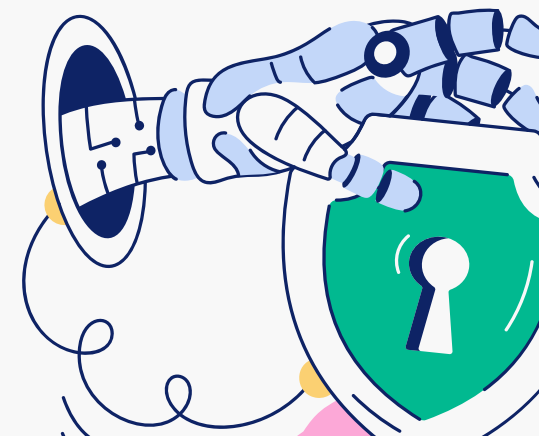
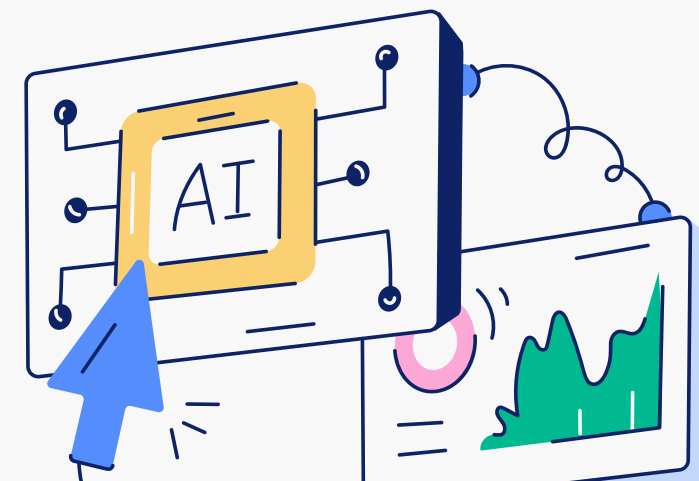
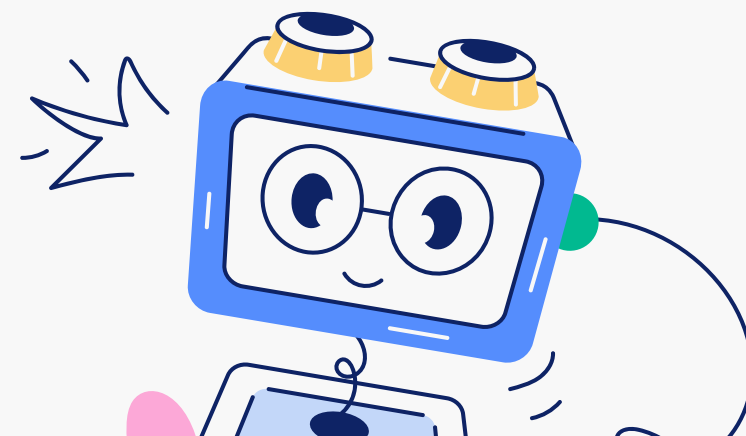
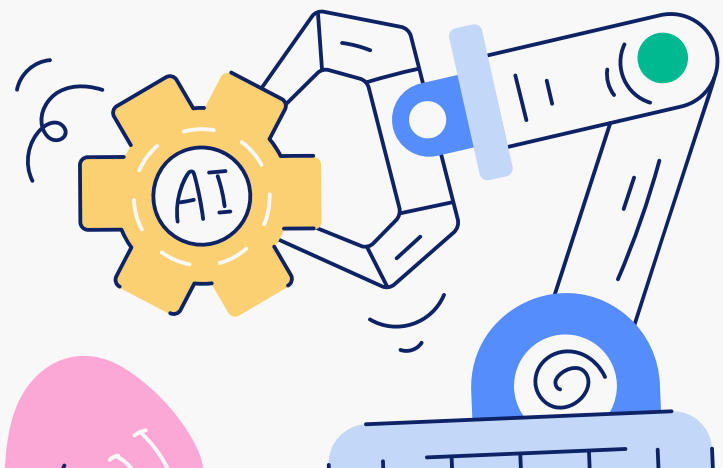
# SCENARIO FOUR

“Help me think through whether this client qualifies for SNAP benefits.”



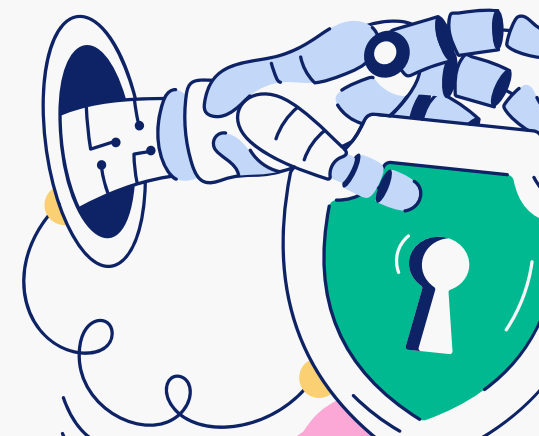
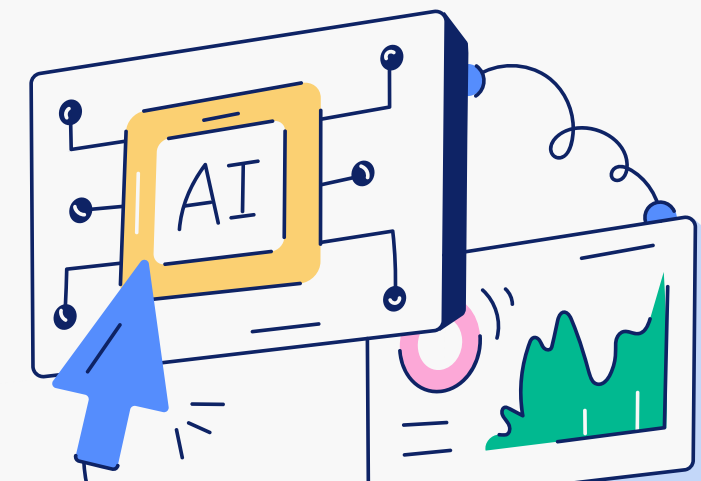
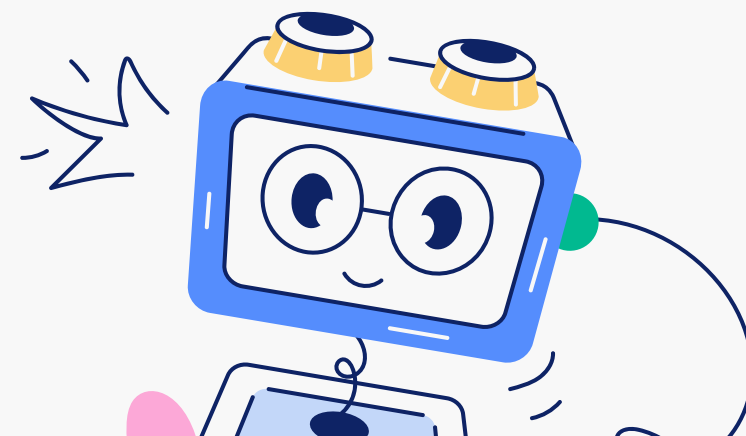
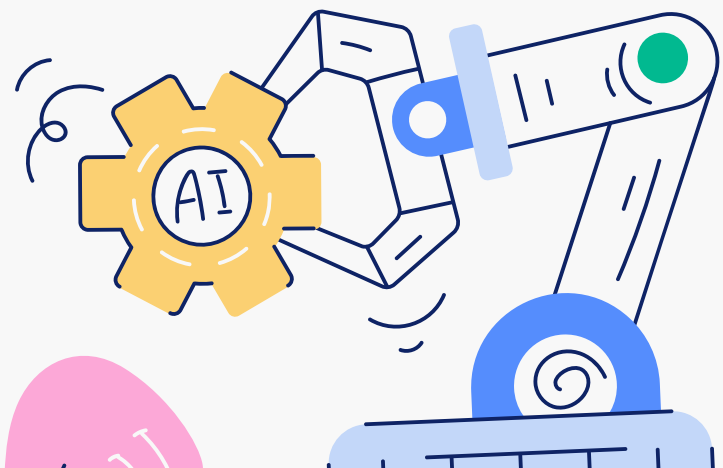
Safer Version:

“What are the general eligibility criteria for SNAP in Tennessee?”



# SCENARIO FIVE

Generate a list of discussion questions for a domestic violence support group.

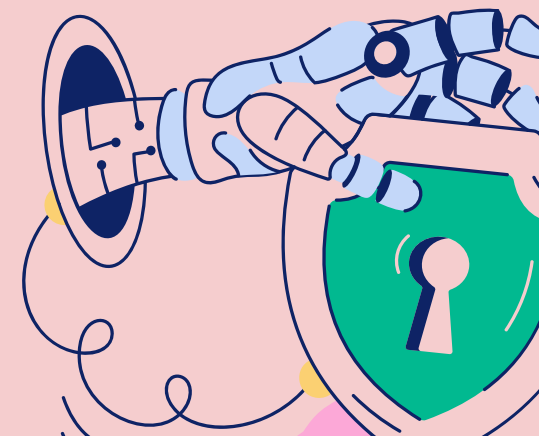
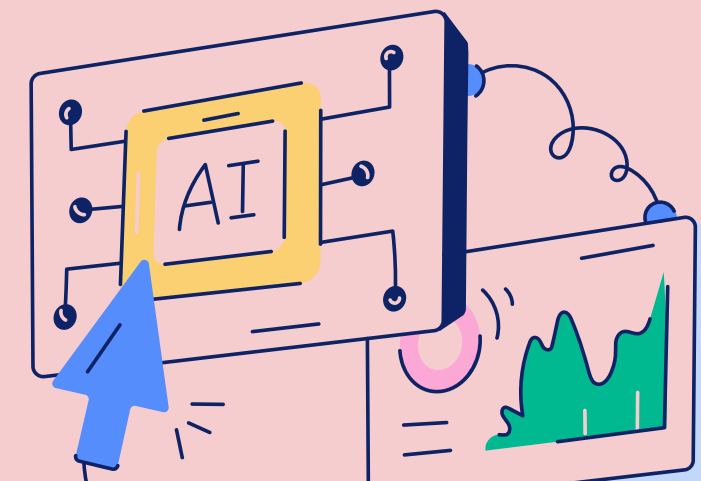
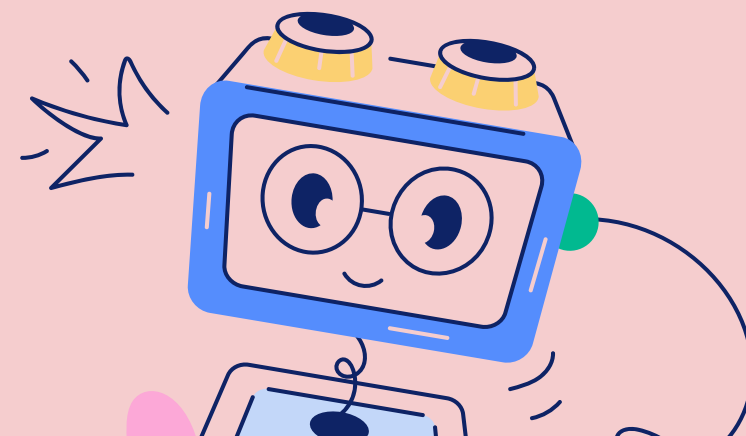
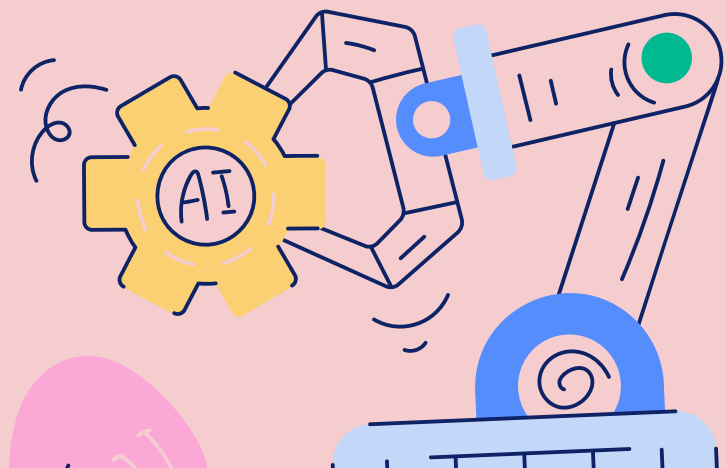


# ACTIVITY DEBRIEF

What makes something unsafe?

What details shift something from safe → unsafe?

Could any of these be rewritten to remove identifiers?

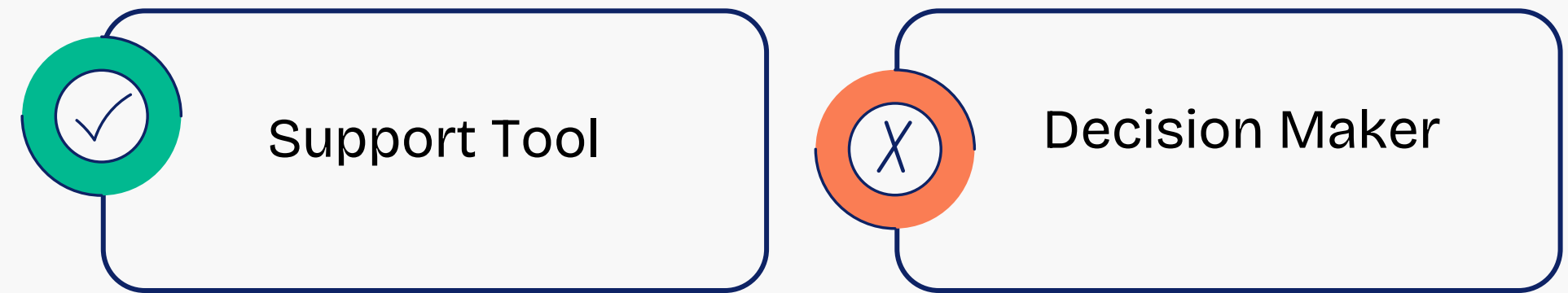


# USE AI AS A SUPPORT TOOL, NOT A DECISION MAKER

## GOAL #4

**AI = Assistant**

**Human = Decision Maker**



### **Examples:**

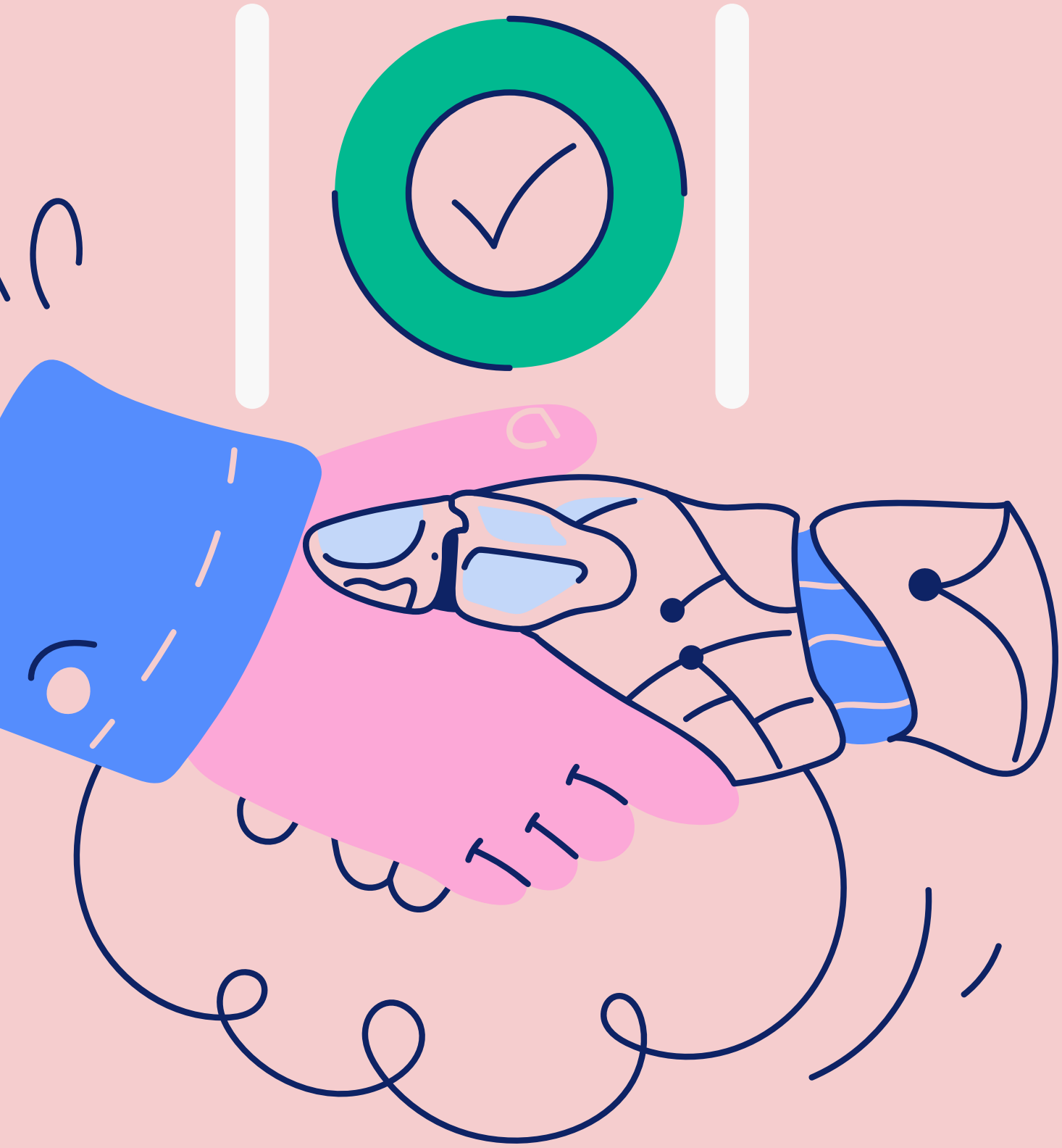
AI can draft a safety plan template

AI cannot determine if a child should be removed

AI can brainstorm group topics

AI cannot diagnose or provide medical advice

The Ada Lovelace Institute (2026) warns that without robust governance and evaluation, the [social work] sector risks embedding tools that prioritise efficiency over accountability, accuracy and public benefit.



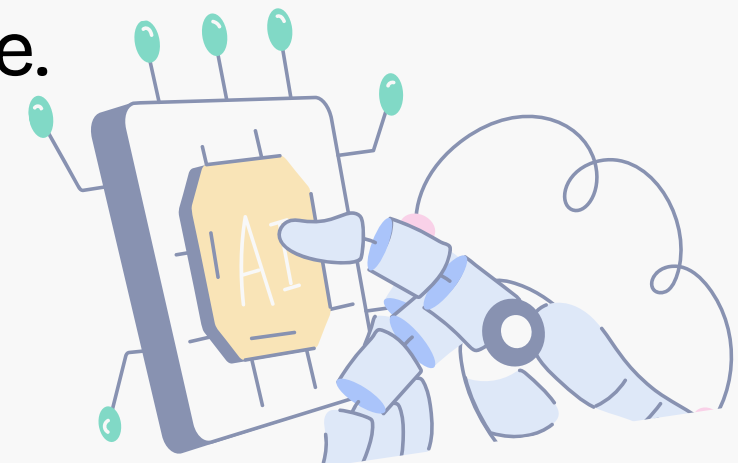
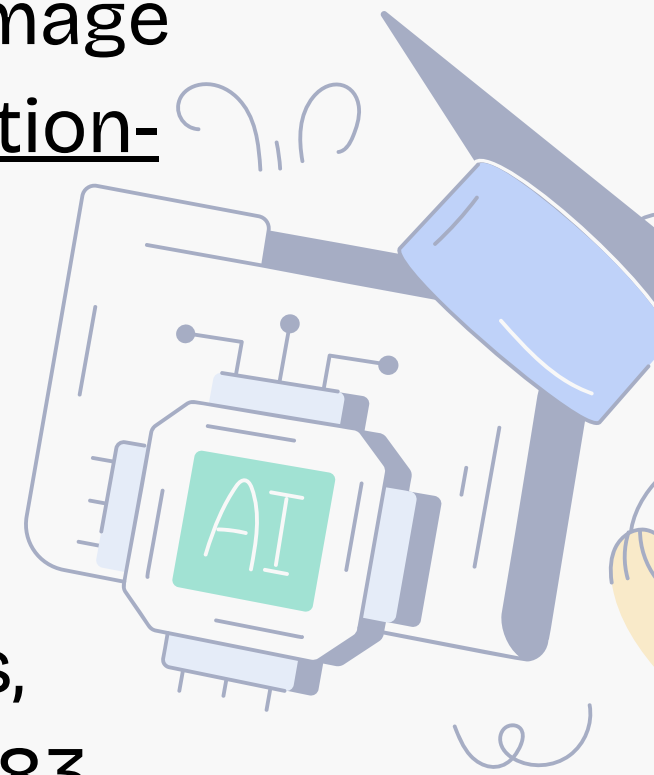
# POLL EVERYWHERE

One guardrail I will use when working with AI  
is...



# REFERENCES

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THANK YOU!