

1 [Adopting and Utilizing Person-First Language When Referring to People With a Criminal
2 Record]

3 **Resolution recognizing the harmful impacts of the institutionalization of the use of**
4 **pejorative language to refer to formerly incarcerated people, and urging the City and**
5 **County of San Francisco to adopt person-first language.**

6
7 WHEREAS, Approximately one in every five California residents has a criminal record;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, People with criminal records endure intense legal and social sanctioning,
10 including segregation, harassment, and harm; and

11 WHEREAS, People with criminal records are part of our communities, schools,
12 workplaces, and places of worship; and

13 WHEREAS, Language shapes the ideas, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and actions of
14 individuals, societies, and governments; and

15 WHEREAS, Language usage that emphasizes or prioritizes a criminal record over the
16 individual undermines, devalues, dehumanizes, demoralizes and dishonors the humanity of
17 that individual; and

18 WHEREAS, Dehumanizing language like “prisoner,” “convict,” “inmate,” or “felon” only
19 serve to obstruct and separate people from society and make the institutionalization of racism
20 and supremacy appear normal; and

21 WHEREAS, Inaccurate information, unfounded assumptions, generalizations, and
22 other negative predispositions associated with justice-involved individuals create societal
23 stigmas, attitudinal barriers, and continued negative stereotypes that affect access to
24 employment, housing, healthcare, professional licensing, travel, support services, and other
25 integral aspects of community life; and

1 WHEREAS, People-first language places the individual before the criminal record by
2 using neutral, objective, and non-pejorative language; and

3 WHEREAS, People-first language promotes positive, sound, and unbiased
4 communication and diminishes categorization and segmentation for people with a criminal
5 record, such that an individual is not defined solely or primarily by a criminal record, arrest, or
6 other contacts with the criminal justice system; and

7 WHEREAS, The District Attorney’s Sentencing Commission, the Reentry Council, and
8 the Youth Commission have all passed resolutions supporting the adoption and utilization of
9 person-first language; now, therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco
11 recognizes that language that is not people-first obstructs the integration, inclusion,
12 participation, and respect of justice involved individuals; and, be it

13 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
14 Francisco urges all agencies and departments, both executive and judiciary, to adopt people-
15 first language with respect to people with criminal records in all its official written, voice,
16 audiovisual, and signed communications; and, be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
18 Francisco urges adoption and utilization of people-first language in all legislation, co-
19 sponsorship memos, reports, policies, and other documents; and, be it

20 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
21 Francisco recognizes that some agencies, including but not limited to Adult Probation,
22 Juvenile Probation, the Police Department, the District Attorney, and the Sheriff, will need
23 training and ongoing support to implement this shift in culture; and, be it

24 FURTHER RESOLVED, Where possible the City and County of San Francisco should
25 provide adequate support to those agencies; and be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the following examples serve as models of the appropriate
2 use of person-first language:

- 3 1) “formerly incarcerated person,” “returning resident,” or “justice involved,” not “felon” or
4 “offender;”
- 5 2) “person on parole” or “person under supervision” not “parolee” or “probationer;”
- 6 3) “currently incarcerated person,” not “convict” or “inmate;”
- 7 4) “person convicted of a drug offense,” not “drug offender”
- 8 5) “a person convicted of a violent/serious offense,” not “violent offender” or “serious
9 offender;”
- 10 6) “person” or “individual” not “returning citizen” or “illegal alien;”
- 11 7) “person with a felony conviction” not “felon;”
- 12 8) “young person with justice system involvement” or “young person impacted by the
13 justice system,” not “juvenile offender” or “juvenile delinquent”
- 14 9) “person with a history of substance use” not “addict,” or “substance abuser”