

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"



City and County of San Francisco

Tails
Resolution

City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

File Number: 190769

Date Passed: July 16, 2019

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

July 16, 2019 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 10 - Brown, Fewer, Haney, Mandelman, Peskin, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, Walton and Yee
Excused: 1 - Mar

File No. 190769

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 7/16/2019 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Handwritten signature of Angela Calvillo
Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

Unsigned
London N. Breed
Mayor

7/26/19
Date Approved

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

Handwritten signature of Angela Calvillo
Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

7/26/19
Date