

Checkr

Empowering Language Guide

Always ask yourself, “Is it necessary to discuss someone’s conviction history in this conversation?”

If the answer is “yes”, because you’re referring to programs and initiatives related to the justice system and you need to identify people who are system-impacted, use empowering language that recognizes that they are people. When you refer to them by an identifier only about criminal activity, you ignore their humanity. These terms are harmful and should never be used.

When referring to your colleagues or friends, avoid labeling them by their conviction history.

Just call them by their name.

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Harmful Terms

- Felon
- Ex-felon
- Ex-con
- Criminal
- Inmate
- Bad person

Humanizing Terms

- Someone’s name
- Fair chance talent
- Candidates
- System-impacted folks
- People with conviction histories / person with a conviction history
- People who are incarcerated / person who is incarcerated
- Previously incarcerated people
- Returning neighbors / returning talent