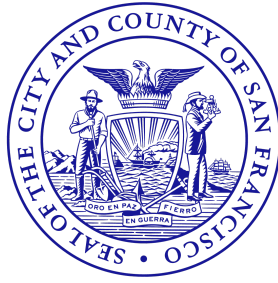


City and County
of San Francisco



Board of Supervisors
Member, District 6

MATT DORSEY

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NEWS RELEASE

‘Read to Recovery’ would make San Francisco the first city to fund universal access to free recovery books

Legislation will permanently establish a successful pilot offering free-to-keep literature from all available recovery traditions and languages, at all 27 branch libraries citywide

SAN FRANCISCO (Feb. 20, 2024) — Supervisor Matt Dorsey today announced legislation to formally establish the “Read to Recovery” program of the San Francisco Public Library. Co-sponsored by Supervisors Rafael Mandelman, Catherine Stefani and Joel Engardio, the program created by the proposed legislation will offer free-to-keep recovery literature and basic texts, in all available languages, from the myriad mutual-help program traditions for individuals seeking recovery from substance use disorders, alcohol use disorders, non-substance-related addictive disorders, and their related co-dependencies. No library card would be required for anyone to benefit from the program’s offerings, which will expand in its first year of operation from the Main Library to all 27 branch libraries citywide.

If adopted, the groundbreaking program would make San Francisco the first major city in the U.S. to launch such an initiative, which will fully fund universal access to free-to-keep literature and basic texts from all recovery traditions in all available languages.

“Drug and alcohol treatment can certainly save lives, but recovery programs are what truly change lives for the better over the long term,” said **Dorsey**, who has publicly acknowledged his own journey in recovery from addiction as a motivating rationale for seeking to join the

Board of Supervisors in 2022. “‘Read to Recovery’ is a groundbreaking program that eliminates barriers to accessing recovery literature for any San Franciscan who seeks it. Moreover, it’s an important step to further enlist the support of the strongest ally we could possibly have to address the record-setting drug crisis we’re facing — and that’s San Francisco’s recovery community itself. I’m incredibly grateful to the San Francisco Public Library for their partnership on this — especially to City Librarian Michael Lambert for his leadership; Branch Manager Doreen Horstin, who first saw the benefits a program like this could offer; and to the San Francisco Library Commissioners who unanimously believed this pilot program worth trying. Given the early success we saw with this as a pilot, it’s clearly time to expand and formalize this as the Read to Recovery program. I’m thankful as well to Supervisors Mandelman, Stefani and Engardio for their co-sponsorship and leadership in helping support and incentivize recovery.”

As a soft-launched pilot since April 2023,¹ the program operated at three locations: the Main Library, the Park Branch Library, and the Mission Bay Branch Library. Even in limited rollout, the pilot demonstrated strong success, distributing more than 2,600 books in support of San Franciscans’ recovery journeys.

“Since joining the Board, Matt Dorsey has been singularly focused on making San Francisco a City that supports recovery,” said Supervisor **Rafael Mandelman**. “I am happy and proud to support his innovative efforts to enlist our libraries in that project.”

“A library’s fundamental mission is to provide life-changing information that is accessible to everyone. That’s why it makes sense for libraries to provide life-saving information for every person seeking recovery from their substance use and addictive disorders,” said Supervisor **Joel Engardio**, who represents the Sunset neighborhoods. “There are a myriad of recovery programs and people need to find what works for them. This program will put life-saving literature in their hands. The minimal cost will offer a tremendous return on investment with every life saved.”

“We believe that making these kinds of recovery-oriented texts freely available to all who could benefit from them is a wholly worthwhile public investment,” said City Librarian **Michael Lambert**. “This is part of our fundamental mission to support education and

¹ “S.F. libraries give these books out for free — and they’re flying off the shelves” by J.D. Morris, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 27, 2023, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/sf-library-addiction-treatment-books-18504656.php>.

individual growth, as well as to better the lives of San Franciscans. I'm grateful to our team at the San Francisco Public Library for recognizing the need for an 'all-hands-on-deck' approach to better support those seeking recovery from addiction, and thankful to our City leaders for working with us to realize it. Your public library is proud to do its part."

As outlined in the detailed Legislative Drafting Request, or LDR, released today, Supervisor Dorsey's proposed amendment to the Administrative Code will formally establish the Read to Recovery by providing for expanded deployment to all 27 public library branches; authorizing further expansion to online, mobile and other service offerings if deemed appropriate and practicable by the City Librarian; facilitating necessary operational changes; and identifying a dedicated funding source.

Mutual-help traditions served by the Read to Recovery initiative will include 12-Step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Crystal Meth Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous and more. Other mutual-help recovery traditions popular in San Francisco that offer alternatives to the 12-Step model will also be served by the program, including: LifeRing Secular Recovery, Recovery Dharma, and SMART Recovery (which stands for "Self-Management and Recovery Training").

In addition to mutual-help traditions serving those with non-substance-related addictive disorders, the Read to Recovery program will also offer literature and basic texts for alcoholism- and addiction-related co-dependencies, including Al-Anon/Alateen, Adult Children of Alcoholics and Co-Dependents Anonymous, or CoDA. Supervisor Dorsey is appointing an ad hoc working group that will serve his office in an advisory capacity about the Read to Recovery program, which will span multiple recovery traditions and local communities.

"There are many pathways to recovery, and this admirable program will help more addicted people find the one that works for them," said **Keith Humphreys**, Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford University and former White House Senior Drug Policy Advisor in the Obama Administration.

Funding for the Read to Recovery program will be facilitated through the Library Preservation Fund, a Charter-mandated budget set-aside that San Francisco voters renewed for another 25 years with their passage of the [Proposition F Charter Amendment](#) in 2022. According to the City Controller's statement on the measure, the fund's baseline total for Fiscal Year 2022-23

was approximately \$112.8 million. The Prop F Charter Amendment, which passed with more than 82 percent voter support in the Nov. 8, 2022 General Election, specifically added authorization for Library Preservation Fund dollars to “acquire books and other materials.”

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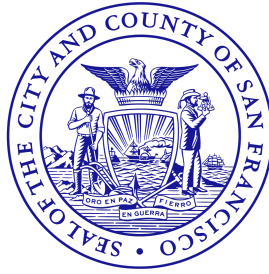
Feb. 20, 2024

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February 20, 2024

The Honorable David Chiu
c/o Deputy City Attorney Anne Pearson
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San Francisco, CA 94102

Transmitted by email to: Anne.Pearson@sfcityatty.org

Legislative Drafting Request: ‘Read to Recovery,’ a program of the S.F. Public Library offering free-to-keep universal access to recovery literature and basic texts

Dear City Attorney Chiu and Deputy City Attorney Pearson,

This Legislative Drafting Request (LDR) seeks your office’s assistance in developing legislation that will formally establish the “Read to Recovery” program of the San Francisco Public Library. If enacted, this program will provide free-to-keep universal access to recovery literature and basic texts, in all available languages, from the myriad mutual-help program traditions for individuals who seek recovery from substance use disorders, alcohol use disorders, non-substance-related addictive disorders, and their related co-dependencies.

As a successfully soft-launched pilot,¹ this program notably showed enormous promise in limited rollout since April 2023, distributing more than 2,600 books from a variety of traditions to support San Franciscans in their recovery journeys.

¹ “S.F. libraries give these books out for free — and they’re flying off the shelves” by J.D. Morris, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 27, 2023, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/sf-library-addiction-treatment-books-18504656.php>.

This request seeks to formalize the Read to Recovery program in the following ways:

- A. To provide for its expanded deployment to all 27 public library branches;
- B. To authorize further expansion to online, mobile and other service offerings if deemed appropriate and practicable by the City Librarian;
- C. To facilitate necessary operational changes;
- D. To identify a dedicated funding source.

Program Outline

- The Read to Recovery program will be administered by the San Francisco Public Library, under the direction of the City Librarian with the oversight and input of the Library Commission.
- The Read to Recovery program will afford no-cost access to recovery literature and basic texts from mutual-help programs for individuals who seek recovery from substance use disorders, alcohol use disorders, non-substance-related addictive disorders, and various co-dependencies for which basic texts or supporting publications are available.
- Books offered by the Read to Recovery program will be free to keep, and no library card will be necessary for individuals to avail themselves of the program's offerings.
- Mutual-help traditions served by the Read to Recovery program shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - Alcoholics Anonymous
 - Cocaine Anonymous
 - Co-Dependents Anonymous
 - Compulsive Eaters Anonymous
 - Crystal Meth Anonymous
 - Gamblers Anonymous
 - Gaming Addicts Anonymous
 - Heroin Anonymous
 - Narcotics Anonymous
 - Overeaters Anonymous

- Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous
 - LifeRing Secular Recovery
 - Recovery Dharma
 - Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART Recovery)
 - Al-Anon/Alateen
 - Adult Children of Alcoholics
- Within one year of the effective date of the proposed ordinance, the Read to Recovery program shall be expanded to all 27 branch libraries, in addition to the Main Library, together with online or mobile service offerings that the City Librarian may deem appropriate and practicable.
- The City Librarian will direct the administration and rollout of the program, including all necessary acquisitions and procurements, and facilitating requests for the inclusion of new mutual-help program traditions should they publish basic texts or supporting literature of interest to San Franciscans seeking recovery.
- The Read to Recovery program will endeavor to procure basic texts and supporting literature in all languages for which they are available.
- If appropriate and practicable within the constraints of available funding, the City Librarian may consider expanding the Read to Recovery program's services to offer bulk acquisitions for recovery meetings that convene within the City and County of San Francisco.

Funding Source

- Acquisitions and administration of the Read to Recovery program shall be funded through the Library Preservation Fund (see S.F. Charter § 16.109), which San Francisco voters renewed through 2048 with their passage of the Proposition F Charter Amendment in November 2022.

Proposed Legislative Findings

- San Francisco's staggering loss of life due to accidental drug overdoses is a public health calamity unseen in our City since the height of the AIDS crisis, with 2023's death

toll of 806 total overdoses marking the deadliest year attributable to illicit drug use in San Francisco history.

- As part of its response to this multi-dimensional crisis, San Francisco must find new and innovative ways both to support and enlist the support of its large, diverse and vibrant recovery community, which has an essential and largely under-leveraged role to play in this crisis to not merely save more lives but change them for the better.
- Although frequently overlooked in the local, state and national contexts of a new and unprecedented fentanyl-driven drug crisis, alcohol-related afflictions among adults and adolescents remain a leading preventable cause of death nationwide as well as in San Francisco, lagging only slightly behind tobacco and illegal drugs.
- Mutual-help recovery programs, including many modeled on the 12-Step approach pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous, are the most numerically successful interventions ever devised for recovery from alcoholism, addictions and non-substance-related addictive disorders. For example, AA's global reach is now estimated to include some 2 million members, in more than 118,000 groups, spanning 180 nations. Narcotics Anonymous currently boasts more than 70,000 weekly meetings in 144 countries, and a multitude of 12-step recovery traditions meet weekly in groups convened throughout San Francisco.
- Peer-reviewed research has found Twelve-Step Facilitation (TSF) to be more effective than many other treatments for increasing abstinence from alcohol and addictive substances, with high-quality evidence suggesting that the approach also realizes substantial healthcare cost-savings among those with alcohol use disorder and SUDs. Outcomes achieved by AA involvement and TSF interventions include higher rates of abstinence, reduced intensity of use, and reduced consequences, according to research. (See: Kelly JF, Humphreys K, Ferri M. Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs for alcohol use disorder. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2020, Issue 3. Art. No.: CD012880. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD012880.pub2).
- Recent years have also witnessed significant growth in successful non-12-step peer-run recovery groups offered in San Francisco. Among others, these include the following: LifeRing Secular Recovery, which offers a weekly meeting in San Francisco City Hall; Recovery Dharma, which is based on traditional Buddhist teachings and encourages meditation practices; and SMART Recovery (an acronym for "Self

Management and Recovery Training”), which is an evidenced-informed recovery method grounded in Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to support individuals with substance dependencies or problem behaviors.

- San Francisco boasts an enormously vibrant and supportive recovery community, with more than 560 weekly AA meetings within the city limits alone, and dozens more meetings — representing in-person, online and hybrids — that span NA, CMA and assorted other 12-step and non-12-step recovery traditions, with many people in recovery benefiting from more than one program. The strength of San Francisco’s recovery community can additionally be found in its longtime support of nonprofit facilities open to a multitude of abstinence-based recovery traditions, which include the Dry Dock on Greenwich Street at Fillmore in Cow Hollow, and the Castro Country Club on 18th Street at Castro.
- Abstinence-based recovery from substance- and alcohol-use disorders holds enduring promise exhibited by few other chronic health conditions, according to one meta-analysis of decades of studies, with a report by the Obama Administration’s U.S. Surgeon General² finding that for individuals who maintain abstinence from addictive substances for 60 months, their “risk of relapse drops below 15 percent, the level of risk that people in the general population have of developing a substance use disorder in their lifetime.”
- Literature and basic texts are a foundational element in most mutual-help recovery traditions, and there is a compelling societal interest in lowering barriers to access to these resources, both in terms of cost and language access. Animated by this societal interest and the imperative of an unprecedented public health crisis, the Read to Recovery program would be a groundbreaking step that makes San Francisco the first major U.S. city to offer free-to-keep universal access to literature and basic texts for programs serving those who seek recovery from Substance Use Disorders, Alcohol Use Disorders, Non-Substance-Related Addictive Disorders, and their related co-dependencies.

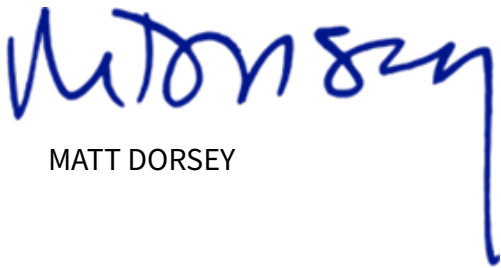
² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016. Page 224.
<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/surgeon-generals-report.pdf>

Conclusion

Thank you for your consideration of this legislative drafting request for this worthy program. Together with my co-sponsors — Supervisors Rafael Mandelman, Catherine Stefani and Joel Engardio — we believe it holds enormous promise to lower barriers to recovery and help change lives for the better. Please know we appreciate your office's legal expertise and partnership, and welcome the opportunity to further collaborate with you on this request. In the event I'm not immediately available, please feel free to contact my legislative aide for drug policy, Mahanaz Ebadi, at mahanaz.ebadi@sfgov.org on this matter.

Thanks so much!

Sincerely,



MATT DORSEY

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RECOVERY



San Francisco Public Library