American Jail Association Resolution
Practice of Strip Searches

WHEREAS jails have a responsibility to maintain a safe, secure, and professionally operated environment for all persons in their custody; and

WHEREAS, a strip search is defined as any search that requires a detained individual to remove or rearrange clothing so that the breasts, buttocks, or genital areas are exposed to view; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has affirmed the authority of correctional agencies to conduct visual searches of detainees when performed in a reasonable, non-abusive manner, including in *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520 (1979), which upheld visual body-cavity searches for institutional security; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court in *Florence v. Board of Chosen Freeholders*, 566 U.S. 318 (2012), further upheld the constitutionality of intake strip searches of individuals entering a jail's general population, even without individualized suspicion, provided the searches are conducted in a professional and nonpunitive manner; and

WHEREAS, national standards and correctional practices emphasize professionalism, privacy protection, and the dignity of all detainees;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the American Jail Association endorses the development and implementation of policies, procedures, training, and supervision in local jails that ensure strip searches are:

- Conducted in the least intrusive and most professional manner possible.
- Performed in a private setting, never in view of other detainees.
- Conducted by staff in a manner that complies with the applicable state and federal laws.
- Conducted only after less intrusive search methods (such as pat-down searches, body scanners, or electronic detection tools) have been considered, when operationally feasible and applicable.
- Performed on individuals who have not yet entered the general population only when reasonable suspicion or other lawful authority exists, consistent with *Bell, Florence*, and applicable state and federal law.
- Documented in accordance with agency policy and subject to supervisory review to ensure compliance with applicable law, training, and professional standards.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the American Jail Association encourages local jails to adopt clear, consistent, and lawful procedures for strip searches of detainees whose circumstances may require special consideration under state law, including:

- How searches will be conducted when state statute mandates specific procedures for certain classifications of detainees.

- Ensuring that all searches, regardless of detainee classification, maintain professionalism, privacy, and dignity

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption and shall remain in full force and effect for a period of five (5) years, after which it shall automatically expire on [Date five years from adoption, e.g., October 2, 2030] unless formally reaffirmed, revised, or amended by the Board of Directors prior to that date.

- Adopted by the American Jail Association Board of Directors on April 26, 2013.
- **Amended** this [Day] day of [Month], 2026.