



# Safer Party Toolkit

## 1. Introduction: Who we are

**The Audre Lorde Project** is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color center for community organizing, focusing on the New York City area. Through mobilization, education and capacity-building, we work for community wellness and progressive racial and economic justice. Committed to struggling across differences, we seek to responsibly reflect, represent and serve our various communities.

**The Safe OUTside the System (SOS) Collective** is an anti-violence program led by and for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans, and Gender Non Conforming people of color. We are devoted to challenging violence targeting LGBTSTGNC POC, specifically hate and police violence, in Central Brooklyn by using community based strategies rather than relying on the police or state systems.

**The Safe Neighborhood Campaign**, an 8-year multi-faceted strategy, generates community led safety strategies in solidarity with local Brooklyn-rooted and POC owned small business, organizations, faith-based spaces, neighbors, and community to respond to and intervene on increased policing, and communal hate violence targeting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans, and Gender Non Conforming People of Color in Central Brooklyn.

## 2. Goals for the Safer Party Toolkit:

- Create a space in which partygoers self determination and safety are prioritized
- Prevent and intervene in violence before it escalates
- Make a community atmosphere where violence isn't acceptable
- Encourage others to intervene/prevent violence from happening
- Support survivors of violence

### Who is this toolkit for?

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- The toolkit is for anyone throwing, attending, or working at a party or community event (i.e. partygoers, party promoters, bouncers, community members).
- It focuses mostly on preventing violence (stopping violence before it happens) and intervening on violence (stopping violence from getting worse).
- This is a condensed and specific version of the Audre Lorde Project's community security protocols. For more information on community security to increase safety and self determination, contact the Safe OUTside the System Collective at [sos@alp.org](mailto:sos@alp.org).

### 3. What types of Violence can happen at a party?

Violence can happen anywhere, but it takes on different forms in different situations. Here are different types of violence that can occur in a party:

#### Between Individuals

- Sexual Assault: unwanted sexual advances, like come-ons or touching; groping in bathroom or door lines; following into a bathroom; being followed; not respecting physical and emotional boundaries
- Physical Attack: pushing, hitting, throwing things/drinks, stabbing, shooting, or other forms of physical violence
- Harassment: direct slurs, insults, or threats
- Intimidation: hostile looks; attempting to frighten; homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist, jokes and statements; isolating someone from community

#### Between Individuals and Law Enforcement

- Sexual assault: groping or inappropriate touching during a frisk; strip search; physical gender checks; rape; sexual harassment; coercion
- Physical abuse: limiting movement; use of excessive force; pepper spray; tazer; shooting
- Harassment: questioning, interrogating, or accusing; asking questions without reasonable suspicion or probable cause; asking for personal information; following; slurs; insults; threats
- Gender/sex policing: gender checks on gender non conforming and trans people, assuming LGBTSTGNC folks are sex workers, questioning gender presentation or legal documentation
- No response: Refusal/failure to respond to homophobic or transphobic violence

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#### 4. Initial Questions to Consider: (what skills do people have?)

- a) What are characteristics of the area that could contribute to making a violent situation? (i.e. gentrifying neighborhood, gang/turf fights, history of homophobic or transphobic violence, increased police presence, openly homophobic business owners or residents)
- b) What is the police presence near your party space, and is it near public transportation? What is the route like (i.e. police watchtowers, cops regularly stopping or harassing people, parked police cars)?
- c) Have there been instances of violence in the past between partygoers? What kind of violence? Did these instances involve weapons?
- d) What types of violence and harassment have you and your friends experienced in your neighborhood (i.e. cat calls, homophobic/racist/transphobic slurs, physical threats or assault)?
- e) What would you do in case of an emergency or crisis? When, if ever, would you deem it necessary to call the police? How would you prevent police violence in that situation?
- f) What are the characteristics of your parties or your communities that impact violence? (i.e. illegal activity escalating police presence, folks with high consequences for being arrested –undocumented and people on parole)

#### 5. Intervention Steps

Intervening on violence can be intimidating for most people however there is a lot one person can do without risking personal safety. We know how to intervene and de-escalate because we've done it before. Often, intervention skills are about naming and sharpening the ways we've done this effectively before.

Because most violent situations escalate from verbal harassment to verbal conflict to physical assault, it's important to intervene BEFORE things turn violent. Here are a few tactics you can try:

#### **Verbal Harassment => Verbal Conflict => Physical Assault**

##### Verbal Harassment

- Avoid sudden movements that may startle or be perceived as an attack.
- Create space between person causing harm and person being harmed.



- Clearly explain your purpose or intention to de-escalate, do not respond with threats or verbal attacks. Explain potential consequences like police arriving, arrest, and other harms.
- Stay calm. Speak slowly, gently, and clearly. Use a firm voice level.

#### Verbal Conflict/Argument

- Clearly state your intention to de-escalate the situation. Do not take sides in the argument.
- Do not verbally insult either person.
- Encourage friends to help separate the two people and create physical space.
- Show that you are listening. Avoid arguing and confrontation before trying to solve the problem.
- Show concern and that you are actively listening through non-verbal and verbal responses.
- Speak calmly and clearly.

#### Physical Assault

- Shout or scream to alert the attacker that someone is watching. Make noise. If outside or in a public space, yell "Fire!" or something to distract those involved and bring attention to the situation.
- Use your camera, cell phone, or digital camera to record the incident. If no camera, write down place, time, and description of attacker.
- Keep both hands visible, use open arms and minimal body contact with the all parties.
- Help all parties get to a safer location. Call ambulance if needed, and with the consent of the injured person, but stay at the scene as ambulance will likely come with police presence. Write down everything police and medics do/say.

## **6. Safety for Party Planners**

If you are planning a party or will be working at a party it's important to have a safety plan. The following are ways you can minimize risk, prevent violence from happening, and be more prepared if it does:

**Build a team!** Create a Safety Team prior to the party, assign roles, and stick to them.

**\*\*Substance Use:** Consider asking all members of the team to refrain from or limit alcohol and other substance use. These can impact

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judgement and if noticeable, can change how police and partygoers interact with you.

**Purpose:** Let the people in your safety team know what the purpose of the team is--to ensure self-determination and a safer party space for everyone. Leave personal biases against individuals at the door.

**Decision Point/Team:** Coordinates the Safety Team and makes emergency decisions

**Who:** Anyone who can make quick decisions, is familiar with the party space and party goers, and has strong communication skills

**De-Escalators:** Willing and able to verbally and physically intervene in harassment, attacks, and other types of violence (If physically attacked de-escalators can and should defend themselves)

**Who:** Anyone who is a strong communicator, has a good relationship with community members, listens to directions, is quick, and can deal with confrontation

**Safe Transporters:** Teams of people willing to drive and/or walk individuals home or to the nearest public transportation

**Who:** Anyone who is familiar with the area, has a cell phone, and is able to move to and from public transportation

**Dispatchers:** Help partygoers connect with Safety Team

**Who:** Anyone who is familiar with the safety team members

**HAVE A PLAN:** The following are a few situations that could come up at a party for each member of your team. Create scenarios of other possible situations with your team and create an action plan prior to the party.

## 7. Potential Situations and Safety Plans

**Situation Inside the Party:** If two people get into a physical altercation at the party...

**De-Escalators:** Create space between the two individuals. Calmly remind them the party is intended to be a safe space and ask them if they wish to keep the party safe. Calmly ask other partygoers to make space so that the situation can be de-escalated. Do not silence or tone police the people involved. Wait for Decision makers.



**Decision Point/Team:** Ensure that individuals have been separated and talk/listen to each separately. Let them know specific ways that their conflict can increase risk to community safety. Determine whether either or both people should be asked to leave party. Offer an opportunity to follow up in the future.

**Safe Transporters:** If either person is asked to leave the party, accompany them to the public transportation they need. Ensure that they are not followed by other partygoers and that they do not re-enter the party. Stay with them until they get on the train or bus, or in a car.

**Dispatchers:** Calmly let other party goers know that the situation is being de-escalated. Focus on the situation, and avoid being pulled into conversation about what is going on, as this could escalate the situation. Be transparent—if asked, let people know what the intervention and de-escalation processes are.

**Situation Outside the Party:** If people get into a physical altercation in front of the party...

**Decision Point/Team:** Ensure that individuals have been separated and talk to each separately. Let them know specific ways that their conflict can increase risk to community safety. Explain potential consequences to the people, “there are a lot of cops in this neighborhood. You could get arrested for this. Let’s figure out what to do that won’t increase yours or anyone else’s risk of arrest or harm.” Show empathy and concern in calm ways. Be aware of who has the highest risk and consequences for an arrest (has a record, is trans or gender non-confirming, undocumented). Determine whether either or both people should be asked to leave the party.

*If the police arrive:* use de-escalators to continue to support the emotional and physical needs of individuals involved. Have one person talk to the police. Do not give police any information that could increase risk of harm or arrest to anyone involved. Response should also be based on the conditions (i.e. is it under control or is it still being intervened on?) when the police arrive. If it’s under control they are more likely to engage in conversation with decision makers. If it’s not, they’re more likely to jump in aggressively and begin arresting, pepper spaying, etc.

If the cops arrive and things are under control, it’s best to ask the officers that arrive to identify the ranking officer on site. Introduce yourself. Once



you know who the ranking officer is you can begin to negotiate with them. If there isn't a ranking officer you can ask that one be called in. In a controlled situation, as soon as the police arrive you should say "it's over. Everything is ok. We had a small incident but de-escalated/solved it, etc." Do not point out who was involved in the fight. If they seem to want to arrest people, calmly ask for the ranking officer on site. When you're speaking to the ranking officer state things like, "Can we handle this another way? This isn't necessary. We're separating them and escorting them separately from the party. Everyone is safe." Tell the cops that everything is under control, and that the situation has been de-escalated. It's useful to say this to the ranking officer while negotiating to appease the cops, minimize or avoid arrests, and try to get community control of the situation again. If one person has a high risk of arrest and there are additional decision makers, consider physically putting yourself between the officer and the potential arrestee to try to prevent the person's arrest.

*If arrests occur:* If decision makers, transporters, de-escalators, and other people attempting to prevent violence are arrested, consider cancelling party, going to the precinct to demand their release and offer jail/court support.

**De-Escalators:** Bring additional folks inside and close and lock the door, if you can. Maintain calm and carefully engage friends and loved ones to support de-escalation until the conflict is over and folks involved are on public transportation. Explain to friends and loved ones, "Can you support us in de-escalating your friend? We're making sure they're as safe as possible. If they're asked to leave would you like to leave as well?"

*If the cops arrive:* remove all illegal 'situations' (open containers and drinks outside, illegal substances etc.) from immediate view. The police use the fact that they saw people drinking outside as a reason to ticket, arrest, and or raid/enter parties. To reduce risk of police violence, party organizers should ensure that partygoers are not drinking or using substances outside or in front of the venue. Find ways to calmly show that the community is monitoring the situation (i.e. turn on lights, open windows, record with cell phones). Stop the party and tell partygoers that you're going to monitor the police at a safe distance to help ensure the safety of our folks. Take pictures and video. It would probably be helpful for the person talking to the cops and all team members to know their rights when dealing with law enforcement so they can name and communicate to partygoers when their rights are being violated in or outside the party.



**Safe Transporters:** Once the fight is over partner safe transporters with the de-escalators that helped de-escalate the fight. The transporter and de-escalator pairs will accompany involved parties to different, but accessible public transportation. Stay with them until they are safely on transportation. If needed, accompany friends to public transportation once the other group has left. Communicate to decisionmaking point that folks are safe and on their way.

*If the police arrest folks:* Escort family and friends to the precinct.

**Dispatchers:** Other folks in attendance should wait to leave until folks involved in the conflict have gotten on public transportation. Ask partygoers where they live or could be going, and support them in figuring out travel and transportation routes. Check in with involved friends and loved ones about their routes as well, and support them in going in a different direction from the other people involved in the conflict.

If the police arrive: take down badge numbers and identifying information about officers. Have police precinct information ready for friends of potential arrestees. Get transporters to send friends to precinct if an arrest occurs.

**Situation outside the party:** If a community member is attacked on the way home from a party while with transporter and de-escalator team...

**Decision Point/Team:** Stay on phone with transporters the entire time. Remain calm and give directions to nearest safe space/transportation if needed. Continue to attempt to separate the individuals. Understand who's doing the attacking? What're the roles of transporters if the attacker is not a party member? Decide whether it makes sense to go to another location, what location? Did anyone experience injury? Does anyone, including the transporters and de-escalators, need medical attention? Are there other decision makers at the party? Could this situation bring police presence to your party? If necessary get people medical attention by taking a cab or calling ambulance, with consent, but be prepared for police presence as well. Consider sending additional de-escalators and transporters to observe, intervene, or de-escalate if necessary. The transporter and de-escalator should consider in advance how they would identify themselves if questioned by police.

**De-Escalators:** If asked go to location of altercation, calmly introduce yourself and state you are there to help de-escalate (see bystander safety





tips). Take note of location, time, and descriptive information about folks involved. Be aware that the de-escalators and their notes can be subpoenaed, and used as evidence in court if arrests take place.

**Safe Transporters:** If en route, call decision point. If multiple transporters are out, decide ahead if they will all call the same decision person or if dispatch will support. Remain on the phone with decision point until safe location is reached. If unable to get to safer space remain calm, get to more populated well-lit area and use best judgment. Wait for instructions from decision point. Return to party or other designated safer space as soon as possible.

**Dispatchers:** Send de-escalators to the location. Create instructions/route for decision team to communicate to de-escalators.

**Situation Inside the party:** If the police attempt to enter the party...

Note: The police do not have the right to enter or search the premises without a warrant. In the case that the police are coming due to a noise complaint or a fight outside of the party they still do not have the right to enter the party. They can enter without a warrant if folks are coming in and out with drugs or if there's an underage party attendee drinking outside.

**Decision Point/Team:** Calmly introduce yourself to the police as the coordinator of the party. You do not have to answer their questions but complete non-responsiveness can escalate the situation. Use a calm yet firm tone with the police. Do not answer unnecessary, homophobic, racist, or transphobic questions about the nature of the party or partygoers. Do not offer any information about partygoers, organizers, etc.

*In the case of a noise complaint:* Offer to lower the noise at the party. You can raise it again once the police have left. (Before 11pm they don't have the right to make you lower the noise. However this also depends on regulations on the lease of the party space.)

*In case of arrest:* Decision point should communicate their contact info to person being arrested

**De-Escalators:** Inform the decision point immediately. Do not engage with the cops but say that the party coordinator is on their way. Avoid

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police entering party by stepping outside and closing front door (make sure your cell phone is on you). If it is necessary have someone get a decision team member. Keep party members calm and make space between the decision point, police, and the crowd.

*In case of arrest:* Try to get the “legal” name and address of the person getting arrested. Note and write down details of the Police Officer's behaviors, physical description, names, badge numbers, rank and other identifying information. Find friends of the arrestee and notify them of the arrest.

**Safe Transporters:** Take friends to the precinct.

**Dispatchers:** Inform friends of the local precinct location.

**Situation with the Police:** If you need to call 911...

Every 911 call goes thru the NYPD and then the medical calls get sent to Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Ones that involve “crimes” send both police and EMS. Calls that involve higher levels of violence are more likely to get police. Police often accompany EMS in heavily policed, rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods.

**Decision Point/Team** Decide if this is a situation where you should call 911 or get someone medical attention through a cab. Remember that individuals in certain medical situations should not be moved. If you still decide to call 911 you have the right to not allow the police inside your space. However if EMS doesn't feel safe for whatever reason they can keep them there and bring them in. EMS can cancel NYPD if they want to.

**De-Escalators:** Clear space for EMS within the party. Support individuals who are upset, clear partygoers from injured person and EMS.

## 8. **Know your Options: Safety Planning**

1. Three people who will be at the party who you would trust to help you and other partygoers get away from a violent situation

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

2. Three people who will not be at the party who you would trust to support you and other partygoers who experience or witness violence

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

3. One easily accessible (i.e. open late or 24 hrs, within walking distance, open to the public) businesses/organization you can go to get away from a violent situation

Name of Business \_\_\_\_\_

Address/Cross Streets \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

3. Two possible routes to and from public transportation

**Route 1**

Take: \_\_\_\_\_ Train/Bus# \_\_\_\_\_

**Route 2**

Take: \_\_\_\_\_ Train/Bus# \_\_\_\_\_

4. Closest public hospital

Name of Hospital \_\_\_\_\_



Address/Cross Streets \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Would be helpful to know where the local precinct/s are, their number, and the quickest way to get there.

Precinct Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address/Cross Streets \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### **9. Supportive Resources**

- Local hospitals
- Sylvia Rivera Law Project
- Audre Lorde Project
- Cop Watch

The Safe Party Toolkit is an ongoing labor of love and necessity, first imagined and implemented in 2007 by members and staff of the Safe OUTside the System Collective.

Many thanks to the members and staff who came before us, imagined a vision, and built safety outside of state systems.

For the most up-to-date Safe Party Toolkit online, visit <http://bit.ly/SafePartyToolkit>.

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