Get in Formation: A Community Safety Toolkit

With Addendum for Navigating Multiple Pandemics

vision
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win

Why We Made this Toolkit

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Welcome to *Get in Formation,* the Vision Change Win Community Safety Toolkit. This toolkit is a collection of security and safety practices we have been building and learning for years from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color movements within the U.S. Our teachers passed this information down to us through oral tradition and through practice in the streets. We built this toolkit in part to honor these generations before who relied on each other for safety, and to ensure this work is passed on to those who come after us.

We believe that these are the skills needed to actualize prison and police abolition, self-determination, and sovereignty. We know that in order to achieve liberatory self-governance, our communities must address these questions and many more:

"How do we effectively defend and protect ourselves against violent and exploitative forces?"
"What strategies and skills must we build to ensure safety outside of law enforcement or militarization?"
"How do we ethically hold each other accountable when we fail to uphold our values and commitments?"

These are bold, sometimes overwhelming questions. We are in deep gratitude to all those with the courage to address them.

In our journey to answer these questions, we created this toolkit. This toolkit includes handouts, tips, and

worksheets to support you in growing or building your community safety practices and/or teams. It is a labor of love and comes from years of safety and security work practiced by community members like you. This toolkit is a catalyst intended to help you and your community better address real threats of violence in the unique contexts where they may arise. Since violence often looks different in different geographic locations and communities, the resources in this toolkit are intended to be adapted to your specific conditions. We also think it's important to name that while some of the writers and contributors have worked on issues of community safety outside of the United States., this information is primarily based on conditions within the U.S., with all its political, social, and historical particularities.

We originally wrote this toolkit in 2019, and planned to release it in 2020. We pushed back the release when the COVID-19 pandemic started, wanting to ensure we adapted this toolkit as movement security needs shifted. We recognize that we're in the midst of multiple pandemics violently targeting Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Queer and Trans, disabled, low-income, immigrant, and so many more communities. We offer you these tools as Black communities are mobilizing to defend our lives from state violence, while at the same time striving to address, confront, and contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recognize that different regions are contending with different local circumstances. If your region is sheltering in place, some sections of this toolkit may be less relevant right now. For example, Organizational Safety Planning was designed for people working in a shared physical office space, and some security formations may not be compatible with physical distancing protocols.

We hope you find this toolkit useful in your work to make a better, safer world for us all.

Ethics in Building a Community Safety Practice
This toolkit was compiled by people who have on the ground experience coordinating and training community safety and/or security projects. It is meant to be a resource for you if you're growing or building your community safety practices and/or teams. However, we recognize that simply reading a toolkit does not necessarily lead to internalizing and implementing effective practices. As part of building a community safety practice, we recommend in-person trainings, when possible, led by people who have trained a team at least five times and, prior to training others, participated in security teams for at least three years. Community Safety is deep work and there are no shortcuts to on the ground experience. Trainers must also be able to answer honestly what they don't know, what they haven't yet practiced, and what is unclear. We recommend that you work with trainers who are able to draw on their own experience to respond to questions from participants with accuracy and nuance. If you need support in finding a trainer, please reach out to us.

> "We are in great gratitude to so many of the unnamed organizers who came before us and who have contributed to this work. We are in great gratitude to so many of the unnamed organizers who came before us and who have contributed to this work."

Acknowledging Lineage

Some of the activities and content in this toolkit have been used for over 30 years and have been passed down through oral tradition for a number of reasons. Due to a lack of resources, some of this information has only recently been written down and made available as curriculum. We have done our best to trace and name the lineage of this work. We are in great gratitude to so many of the unnamed organizers who came before us and who have contributed to this work. At the end of this curriculum, you will find credits citing an ever-expanding list of people and organizations who contributed to this toolkit. As you share this information with your community, we ask that you also acknowledge this lineage and credit people appropriately.

About Vision Change Win

Vision Change Win Consulting is a Black-led team of Queer and Trans People of Color social justice leaders dedicated to supporting organizations in fully manifesting their missions, visions, and values. We support organizations to grow their work by deepening racial justice practices, strengthening community organizing, building organizational development, organizational sustainability, conflict transformation, and restorative and transformative justice practices.

Multiple Pandemics: COVID-19 and State Violence

During these times of uprising against government sponsored and state sanctioned murder of Black people in the context of this global viral pandemic, we have asked "how can we implement practices, structures, and systems that reduce harm and establish a range of safety and risk possibilities for our communities?" We recognize that, for communities highly impacted by the violence of both disease and state violencen, one pandemic cannot be pitted against another, or prioritized at the expense of the other.

Some of this toolkit specifically covers COVID-19 security, safety, and protest considerations. We have also offered special considerations for protest safety during uprisings, as they can require unique adaptations to more traditional safety structures. Further additions are coming later this year.

We recognize this work is urgently needed and always imperfect, and we invite you to co-create safety with us within these ever-shifting conditions. A community cannot be well without safety and health, and we offer these tools with a profound awareness of the threat that both COVID-19 and state violence pose to our communities. Let us rise up from within our homes and on the streets in defense of our peoples.

What is Community Safety?

At Vision Change Win, we believe that Community Safety includes the following: security, office and organizational safety, verbal de-escalation, physical de-escalation, personal safety, transformative justice processes, community safety neighborhood strategies, bystander intervention, and cop watch.

This toolkit will focus specifically on Verbal De-escalation, Office and Organizational Safety, and Security for events and actions, along with specific information tailored to this historical moment of both uprising and viral pandemic.

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1 Resources for Navigating Multiple Pandemics

Organizing and Attending Actions During Uprisings and COVID-19

There are a number of ways to take action during these times. *Coordinated actions that offer different roles and options for participation can be effective in advancing a campaign, amplifying a message, expanding access, and increasing safety for community members at increased risk for complications from the virus.*

In addition to gatherings, demonstrations, rallies, and other types of civil disobedience that require close proximity, other actions to consider include physically distant in-person actions such as:

• Physically-distanced protests or direct actions
• Car formations
• Bike formations
• Physically-distanced street performance and art

- Banner drops
- Decentralized local actions

Also consider actions from home such as:

- Coordinated front yard, stoop, porch, rooftop actions
- Online Twitter storms, and other social media actions
- Neighborhood or block-based actions
- Online site-specific performances

Tips for COVID-19 Safety During an Uprising

~ **Plan ahead**. If possible, don't attend an action that is called for the same day, or one you find out about on the same day, unless a group that you know is coordinating it and has a security team in place. COVID-19 action preparation requires getting PPE[1] and disinfectants, involves an increased risk of arrest, and requires more coordination and planning than pre-pandemic actions and demonstrations. It is likely that many of the supplies you need will also be in short supply. Give yourself at least a couple of days to prepare, secure an emergency contact and jail support, and get a crew together.

~ **Perimeter:** If you're at high risk for COVID-19, stick to the outside perimeter of major actions. In our experience, it is difficult to maintain physical distance during actions, even with the best intentions. Expect that you will be close enough to others that you could contract COVID-19. People who are high risk should either stick to the outside perimeter, or consider doing home-based support or home-based actions.

~ **Multiple Tactics:** Consider organizing a physically distant action, or section of an action. Include roles that people who can not leave home can play, such as tweeting or posting about the action or tweeting, calling, or shutting down phone lines of those targeted by the Action (i.e. Mayor or Governor). You could also be an emergency contact for those on the streets.

~ **Supplies:** Bring water, masks (with extras for others), gloves, food, hand sanitizer, and prescriptions (in their original bottles). Also consider organizing a supply car with backups to trail the action.

~ **Self-Quarantine and Testing:** It's often very difficult to maintain physical distance during an action. People who are protesting should plan to get tested afterwards and should self-quarantine for 14 days. If you're serving as security or going to actions frequently, we suggest that you stick with the people you've been in contact with, and roll with the same group to reduce risk. Get tested after each action. If anyone in your group tests positive for COVID-19, stop attending actions and self-isolate for at least 14 days. This can reduce your risk of catching and spreading COVID-19.

~ **Medics:** Often, the folks who volunteer to be medics for our actions have other medical roles and may be stretched thin during these times. Co-organizing with medics increases the safety of your actions. If medics are present, you will be able to immediately attend to injuries, including those from pepper spray and tear gas. If you can't have medics on site, get advice from them about how to plan your action, what supplies to bring, and how to best support your security team.

~ **Jail and Emergency Support:** Create a robust jail support network and reach out to the National Lawyers Guild for legal observers.[2] Jail and emergency support people should know your legal name, DOB, medical conditions that will be impacted by arrest, prescriptions needed within 24 – 72 hours, who you want called in case of arrest, and who you want called in case of hospitalization. They should be prepared to get support from a bail fund, or you should have money set aside for bail. If you are going out frequently, it can also be

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1   PPE – Personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves, goggles, and face shields
2   To contact the National Lawyers Guild www.nlg.org

useful to develop a support team to do things like feed a pet, cover child care, and email your job or school when appropriate in case of arrest. People are currently being held for days instead of hours, so plan for support to cover a lengthy arrest.

~ **Experienced Police Negotiators:** Work with experienced police negotiators for your actions. You could be interacting with the national guard, aggressive cops, and navigating curfews, so now is not the time for someone to engage in this role for the first time. Expect actions to be unstructured, and that the formations you put in place may need to shift frequently based on the conditions. Bring folks with deep experience who will not get shaken under these circumstances.

~ **Care Teams:** Consider care teams for protesters and especially for protest security teams. We believe that protestors, legal observers, medics, and security are also essential workers. If people will need to self-quarantine, coordinate with mutual aid groups or self-organize food delivery. Consider creating a network of places to stay, for quarantine, if there are people with space in their apartments.

~ **Shorter shifts, Replacement Teams:** Consider multiple shifts and shorter durations of security shifts, recognizing the intense conditions. Also consider replacement teams, in case your folks all get injured or pepper sprayed at the same time. It can be useful to have multiple layers of security in order to replace folks if needed.

~ **Time of Day:** You should protest when you want, though it is important to know that conditions are generally safer in daylight. The cops become more violent as it gets later, and when there are fewer people to see and document their behavior. If there is a curfew in place, know that you don't have a legal right to protest under a curfew, therefore your risk of injury and arrest is much higher at night when one is in place.

Dual Protections from COVID-19 and Rebellion Control Agents (RCA)

The following information is suggested to protect your security team against chemical agents as well as COVID-19. We encourage you to use what you have available, and talk to other teams in your city about sanitizing and sharing equipment when possible.

~ **Goggles:** Safety goggles provide a protective seal around the eyes, preventing infectious COVID-19 droplets and chemical agents from getting in. Being able to see can be very useful in getting away from an area contaminated by tear gas. Ballistic-rated safety goggles offer the best protection from dangerous projectiles such as rubber bullets and also provide a defense against tear gas.

~ **Masks:** Wearing a mask can offer a reduced risk of harm from surveillance, tear gas, and COVID-19. Wearing a cloth mask or bandana is better than wearing no mask at all during the pandemic, especially when facing tear gas. However, the protection afforded by these types of homemade cloth masks is limited, especially if the cloth mask becomes wet. Public health experts recommend physical distancing — maintaining a distance of at least six feet — even while wearing a cloth mask, to decrease the spread of COVID-19. These masks do not protect against non-particle chemicals in tear gas.

~ **N95 or KN95** masks filter approximately 95% of particles and significantly decrease the risk of contracting COVID-19. These masks do not protect against non-particle chemicals released in tear gas. The most effective mask in decreasing the impact of RCAs and COVID-19 are tightly-fitting rubber respirator masks with a canister and filter, also known as gas masks. Half respirator masks are best paired with safety goggles. Full face masks create greater protection of the face from tear gas. While full face masks often obscure one's facial identity, police may target or scrutinize individuals wearing these masks.

- **Gloves:** Latex and nitrile gloves can protect the hands from exposure to tear gas and to a lesser extent, the transmission of COVID-19. The virus that causes COVID-19 can remain on some surfaces for up to 72 hours and perhaps longer, (depending on the type of surface and the conditions). Latex or nitrile gloves can decrease the transmission of COVID-19 as long as cross-contamination from gloves to the face is prevented. Cross contamination commonly occurs when touching a phone and bringing it to the face or touching your face with your gloves. Carry extra gloves in a sealed bag so that you can remove and replace gloves if they become contaminated.

  - Heat-resistant gloves, in combination with a gas mask and safety goggles, reduce the risk of significant injury when picking up tear gas canisters that are emitting gas. After exploding, the canister will be very hot and should not be handled with bare hands or non-heat resistant gloves. Do not pick up an unexploded canister, as it can cause injury.

- **Clothing/Skin covering:** If managed properly, wearing clothing or material that can cover all your skin, such as saran wrap, increases protection from chemical exposure and COVID-19 transmission. Covering skin in warm weather conditions is especially useful because liquid activates tear gas, and sweating can worsen its impact substantially .

- **Shoes:** Comfortable protective shoes are very important to able to move quickly, and navigate unpredictable conditions.

- **Tissues:** You will need to blow your nose to clear nasal passages after exposure to irritants like tear gas. Spitting out mucus or saliva that has been exposed to chemical agents is also useful. Practice good cough hygiene: move away from other people, blow your nose, cough, sneeze, or spit into a tissue to protect others from COVID-19. Remember that you can feel perfectly healthy and still unknowingly spread the virus to others.

Navigating Tear Gas, Pepper Spray, and Other RCAs

During Uprisings, it is common for police to use chemical weapons, also known as RCAs (Rebellion Containment Agents[3]) as a form of control and repression. The next section discusses some common forms of RCAs and how to address them should your team come into contact with any. It should be noted that in recent times, it can be difficult to predict when and how cops will use RCAs and we recommend that your team prepare for their potential use at any action during an uprising.

What are RCAs?

- We define RCAs as Rebellion Containment Agents, though they are referred to by the police as Riot Control Agents. They include tear gas, pepper spray, flash bangs, other chemical agents, and nerve agents.
- Tear gases, counter-intuitively, are not actually gases, but solid particles dispersed through the air via aerosol. They are nerve agents that can contain various chemicals that specifically activate pain-sensing neurons. Pepper spray, also known as OC spray, is an oil-based derivative of capsaicin, the active ingredient in chili peppers.
- For some people, the effects of RCAs are temporary. for others, the effects can be long-lasting and life-threatening.
- Despite being used by law enforcement, border patrol agents and correctional officers within US prisons, tear gas and other RCAs are chemical weapons outlawed for use during wartime.
- Within the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, RCAs such as tear gas, pepper spray and other chemical

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3   Cops refer to these as Riot Containment Agents. We've re-imagined the language, recognizing the racist and anti-Black usage of the term "riots".

agents increase the spread of COVID-19 by causing people to cough and causing inflammation in the airways.

How to Respond to RCA Attacks

- **Do not panic**: Rapid breathing and increased heart rate can quicken the reaction and increase the pain of tear gas exposure.

- **Protect your airways and lungs**: If you do not have a respirator mask, protestors have used an acidified cloth to temporarily (meaning a matter of minutes) mitigate the effects of chemical weapons. Carry a bandana or mask soaked with cider vinegar or lemon juice in a ziplock bag. As soon as there is indication that tear gas will be fired, cover your mouth with the soaked material. If you have no protection, cover your mouth and nose with a cloth or some clothing – but keep in mind the outside of your clothes might be contaminated with chemical irritants and/or infectious droplets. Hold your breath if possible. Moderate your breath, breathe slowly, avoid deep inhalations, and focus on longer & stronger exhalations. Some people are able to breathe through the acidified cloth for several minutes, which can buy you some time to get to an area with no chemical exposure. While acidified cloth may temporarily mitigate the effects of RCAs, it will not filter or prevent against dioxins, cyanide, and some other chemicals found in tear gas.

- **Move with clarity**: Do not run before assessing which direction is the safest for you to move. Tear gas is a chemical weapon used to disperse crowds and cause chaos. If security is present, follow their directions. Running without clarity causes falls, collisions, and trampling.

- **Assess direction**: Tear gas is often discharged in the form of a grenade, fitted on the end of a gas gun and fired with a blank shotgun cartridge. When you hear the shot, try to identify the direction of the grenade and get out of its path. Assess the direction of the wind and move upwind so the chemical agent is blowing away from you.

- **Do not crouch**: Try getting to higher ground – most tear gases are heavier than air, so the highest concentrations tend to sit nearer to the ground. If the route is known ahead of time, it is helpful to identify areas of higher ground.

- **Redirecting a canister**: After the grenade explodes, it delivers a metal canister that emits the chemical agent(s). The canister will become very hot. If a canister lands near you, kick it away from you (assuming you are wearing sturdy footwear), and kick it away from other people. Do not pick up an unexploded canister as it may cause serious injury. Only pick up a canister emitting chemical agents if you are wearing thick, heat resistant gloves and safety goggles. If you are wearing heat-resistant gloves, you can pick up the canister and move it away from where protesters are gathered.

- **Do not touch or rub your eyes or face**: This will reactivate crystals and cause more irritation.

- **Do not touch exposed clothing**: Chemicals will infuse clothing for many months. Flapping outstretched arms and legs will help some CS gas to come off your clothing. Carefully shake out your hair. Any clothing that may have been contaminated should be discarded. Carry an extra set of clothes (loose, like sweats), so that clothes that were contaminated can be removed and discarded. If you must keep your clothes, wash them several times in cold water, separate from any other clothes. Run the empty washer a few times afterwards, as the chemicals can remain in the washer.

Chemical Exposure Aftercare

- There are different kinds of tear gas and pepper spray, with different chemical properties, concentrations, and reactions. Some RCAs use a combination of chemicals. For example, Clearout is a brand of aerosol grenade containing chemicals that are in both tear gas and pepper spray.

- Different kinds of chemical weapons require different treatments. For example, flushing eyes and skin with large amounts of water can help with decontamination after CS tear gas exposure. On the other hand, water can exacerbate the irritation caused by CR tear gas and some other types of chemical agents.

- People react differently to various remedies and as a result there's a range of sometimes conflicting information. You may have heard about using milk and diluted baby shampoo. Some people report that this helps, but studies show it is no better than water alone. Which remedy should you use? It can be difficult to know, so pay attention to each person's needs, responses and reactions in the moment.
- When possible, and if necessary, seek medical support after an exposure. Look for medic stations at protests and try to locate them ahead of time.

The following are remedies, treatments and tips that have been used in various movements to address RCA exposure. In addition to these guidelines, we recommend you talk to your medic team for their advice.

- Blow your nose, rinse your mouth, cough, and spit. Try not to swallow. When coughing, contain infectious droplets by coughing into a tissue, and move away from others. If a tissue isn't available, cough into your elbow or the inside of your shirt to minimize transmission of COVID-19.
- Fan and blow onto eyes and face before rinsing or flushing eyes. Carry a battery-operated portable hand fan if possible. Carefully shake one's head and hair. Tear gases are composed of solid particles, many of which can be blown or shaken away when dry.
- Stretch out and wave limbs after RCA exposure, before rinsing or wiping skin.
- Use large amounts of water. Many of these chemical agents come in the form of crystals, which react with water. Using small amounts of water (such as a wet towel or shirt) immediately after exposure to CS gas is likely to reactivate these crystals and may prolong the effects. In response to a CS exposure, skin should be washed with soap and *large* amounts of water. Shower first in water that is as cold as possible (to keep pores closed), and then in warm water. Do not take a bath.
- Always irrigate from the inside corner of the eye towards the outside, with head tilted back and slightly towards the side being rinsed.
- Do not wear contacts if you are at risk of being exposed to chemical weapons. Contact lenses have been known to trap the chemicals against your eyes, which could damage the cornea. You must remove the lenses or get someone to remove them for you, with CLEAN, uncontaminated fingers. Destroy the lenses after exposure.
- When using an inhaler after an exposure, do not contaminate the inhaler. Carry an inhaler in a ziplock plastic bag to minimize possible contamination and use it with a clean uncontaminated hand.

Additional Solutions and RCA Remedies

- **Antacid Solution:** Protestors commonly recommend solutions with 50% water and 50% aluminum hydroxide or magnesium hydroxide based antacids, such as Maalox, for immediate relief to chemical exposure. People have used it to rinse their eyes, their skin, their mouths.The solution must be spit out after rinsing one's mouth.
- **Saline:** Other people have found it very helpful to flush their eyes with large amounts of saline.
- **Canola Oil:** Some protestors recommend using canola oil and a cloth to vigorously wipe chemical agents off of exposed skin. After wiping with canola oil, wipe skin off again with rubbing alcohol.
- **Milk and Cola:** Milk and cola is a remedy that some protestors have used to rinse eyes and soothe skin. However, milk can spoil when unrefrigerated. Both milk and cola can contain sugar and preservatives and can be irritants for some people's eyes and skin.

COVID-19 Security Formations

Formations

M= Marshall C= Captain
R= Runner S= Security

Perimeter

Marshalls face outward, Captains & Runners roam interior

Detail

Security surrounds potential targets of violence, visible security near threats, and less visible security roaming

Target   Threat

Formations can shift as needed or as directed by tactical

Roaming

Marshalls, Captains and runners assigned to sections and can roam internally and outside perimeter, runners scan external perimeter

1   2   3   4

Staggered

Marshalls, Captains and Runners face inward and outward near potential threats

THREAT   THREAT   THREAT   THREAT

The following are formations most often used in security. Some formations are more adaptable to an uprising, such as Mobile Units and Detail, while others like Perimeter are useful for a more traditional march and rally. *If you are new to developing formations or have only used variations of Perimeter, consider trying Mobile Units during the day or in lower-risk environments, as it is a more advanced formation.* As with all security skills, formations are most useful when they are practiced regularly.

~ **Mobile Unit**: Recognizing that many protests are spontaneous, this is our primary recommendation for attending a spontaneous action and needing to secure attendees. This formation is most useful when the protest is spread out, unpredictable, without a planned route, or without a clear shape. Mobile units can be small groups ranging from 4-7 people. Each unit should have a Captain and optionally can also have a camera person, scout, tail, and medic. The Unit moves as a team, with the scout slightly ahead of the team and the tail slightly behind the team. Mobile Units can be used to create a perimeter around a small group of people at highest risk of harm or can also help people to escape dangerous situations, such as tear gas or stampeding.

~ **Perimeter Formation**: This formation is used most commonly for traditional marches and rallies where there is a planned route and a fixed destination for your march. As part of Perimeter, Marshalls face outward towards potential threats in fixed positions, surrounding the outer edges of the action. Captains and Runners roam the interior.

~ **Staggered Formation:** This formation is most commonly used when there is a smaller security team or when

there is potential for multiple threats advancing from multiple directions. In Staggered Formation, Marshalls, Captains, and Runners face outward and inward, staggered in a line, generally in the very front or back of the direct action near the site of potential threats. Staggered Formation is a variation of Perimeter.

~ **Roaming Formation:** This formation is most commonly used for larger festivals or spread-out rallies. In Roaming Formation, Marshalls, Captains, and Runners are assigned various sections of the action to roam internally and outside the perimeter. Runners routinely scan the external perimeter for police presence and other potential threats.

~ **Security Detail:** This formation differs from the previous ones because it focuses security attention on potential targets of violence instead of potential threats. Security details usually consist of visible security positioned next to targets and invisible security roaming at a greater distance to survey the perimeter.

~ **Car Formations:** When doing a car protest, security should be stationed at the front and tail of the car trail to address angry drivers, police, etc. If the car protest is planning to stop or impede traffic, it can be useful to have a double layer of security at the back of the protest, with the first layer used to slow traffic and the second to de-escalate as needed.

Formation Spotlight: Snake Formation

This snake formation was developed in 2004 during a wave of RNC protests in NYC. This formation is a useful option for security teams looking to increase safety during COVID-19 and uprisings. In 2004, a coalition of BIPOC orgs with strong community security protocols developed this strategy to support members during actions with high risk of arrest, and in a time when spontaneous civil disobedience was called for by primarily white-led activist groups. This formation was developed so BIPOC folks, undocumented immigrants, trans and queer folks, and other community members who faced escalated violence and risk at the hands of the state could participate with minimized chances of escalation and arrest. The formation allowed members who would have otherwise stayed home to be able to participate in multiple actions around the city, and leave quickly when needed. Please note that due to COVID-19, some aspects of the snake formation are high risk, including being close together and holding hands. Still, we wanted to offer this formation as a starting point for all of us to collaboratively adapt in this moment.

Purpose:
- To move members quickly in and out of protests where there is a significant risk of arrest
- To provide an avenue of escape for community members who cannot risk arrest and/or have a high risk of state violence during arrest, including BIPOC folks, undocumented immigrants, trans and queer people
- As a way for community security teams and people willing to risk arrest to help insulate community members with high risks

Notes:
- Works best with a mix of people with some level of trust and experience working together
- Requires quick communication and decisions
- Requires physical touch and proximity
- Structured for people who can move fast and run if needed

Formation:
- Small groups - 6 to 8 people, ideally even numbers for buddy system
- Train community security at head and tail of the snake
- Security captain generally at the head of the snake to assess direction and risk

- Head can switch if there is a need to reverse course quickly
- Buddies within the group - people are paired up to look out for each other and help make sure nobody gets separated or left behind
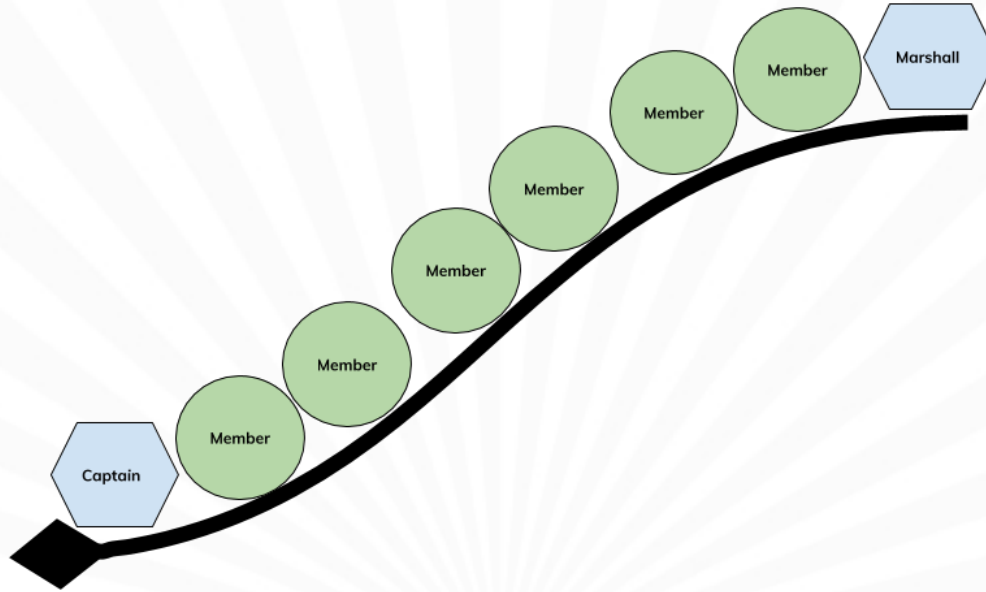
Before the actions

Teams:
- Take some time to get to know everyone in the group and make sure everyone recognizes and looks out for each other
- Share communications protocol and contact information
- Provide legal support numbers and write on arms with sharpie
- Prepare supplies, including water, snacks, first aid and tear gas protection

Organizers:
- Get a sense of other planned actions, groups, and activities
- Do researchcon on locations, routes, safe meet-up points and conditions
- Get a sense of planned police state reactions and tactics
- Ensure legal support is set up

During Actions:
- When in a crowd, keep hands on each other's shoulders or hold hands to ensure nobody gets separated from the group
- Move in a line together to quickly weave in and out of crowded spaces

- Security in each snake is keeping an eye out for:
  ◦ Potential escalation between protesters and the state
  ◦ Exit routes - if it looks like cops are starting to block exits, it's a good time to leave
- Security role
  ◦ Always keep our people safe and able to be militant and express themselves
  ◦ De-escalate conflict that could impact safety and integrity of the team
  ◦ Avoid and leave situations that could expose members to state violence or risk of arrest
- Scenarios: What happens if there is an escalation that requires security to de-escalate the police?
  ◦ This is different from a larger protest where Security's role is to de-escalate conflict for the whole of the action. Security's responsibility is to the small team of members
  ◦ The first and best move should be to leave, if possible
  ◦ If police require engagement, one security member should engage while the other gets members away from the scene
    - If this happens, Tactical should be notified and the team should go to a predesignated safe meet-up spot
    - If possible, get badge numbers and clear location markers and communicate that info to the Tactical Team
    - If the security member who stayed behind is free to go, they should communicate to Tactical and meet up with their team at the predesignated safe spot

What happens if there is an arrest?

It's important to have a plan for what happens if someone does get arrested:

- Goal in this scenario is always to de-escalate and minimize risk and arrests
- Priority is to keep members safe

If a security team member is arrested:
- The other security member should get the rest of the team away quickly
- Communicate immediately to Tactical for support
- Tactical police negotiator and legal support go to scene
- If possible, before leaving:
  ◦ Try to get badge numbers
  ◦ Identify clear markers to describe location

If a member is arrested:
- One security person stay with member
- The other security people get the rest of the members away from the scene
- Communicate immediately to Tactical for support
- Tactical police negotiator and legal support go to scene

General:
- Tactical should ideally have someone trained in police negotiation on the team
- Have legal support in case of arrests and ideally at least one on-the-ground roving legal observer who can respond in case of escalated situations and arrests
- Have a plan for how Security and members will be supported in case of arrest

2 Security and Safety Resources for These Times and Beyond

Verbal De-escalation Tips

Most people, at some point in their lives, have de-escalated violence verbally. These tips build upon life skills, de-escalation experiences, and trainings we have received from people in a wide range of roles. Verbal de-escalation skills are the foundation for community safety work, whether we're trying to increase safety at events, demonstrations, within our offices, or when witnessing violence in public (i.e. bystander intervention), and from law enforcement. Verbal de-escalation has some core principles but also varies widely depending on the situation, people involved, relationships between those people, and how everyone is being perceived. This document is a guide for your principles and practice. Not every tip will work every time or work the same way each time. Instead of relying on a one-size-fits-all approach, use these tips to sharpen your instincts and skills so you know how to respond to a variety of situations and incidents.

What is Verbal De-escalation?

Verbal De-escalation uses communication and physical positioning to prevent a potentially dangerous situation from escalating into verbal abuse, physical confrontation, or injury. Verbal De-escalation is what we use during a potentially dangerous or threatening situation in an attempt to prevent a person from causing harm to us, themselves, or others.

The relationship between Verbal & Physical De-escalation

- When possible, we should always attempt verbal de-escalation
- Verbal de-escalation is always a part of physical de-escalation.
- Physical intervention is used as a last resort to prevent injury to yourself or to another person.
- Use of physical de-escalation or intervention often increases the chance that someone (possibly you) will get hurt.

Choosing to Intervene

It's important to thoroughly assess the situation before you decide whether or how to intervene.
Here are some considerations:

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- **Assess:** the risk to your personal safety.
- **Consider:** your relationships to the people involved and how you may be perceived by the people involved.
- **Consent:** How do you know it's ok to intervene?
- **Impact:** What are the costs or benefits of intervening in the situation? How will you attempt to not make things worse?

Verbal De-escalation Tactics

~ **Prevent:** Most conflicts have indicators – tension, individuals with a history of conflict, voices raising, or a crowd growing around people. Use all of your senses and previous experience to anticipate conflicts or violence, to separate people, reassure them, or create conditions for increased safety.

~ **Active listening:** When people are in conflict or being aggressive towards others, they often do not feel seen or heard. Use your body and facial expressions to fully take in and listen to the person or people. Reflect back to the person what you're hearing, i.e. "I hear that you feel ignored", etc.

~ **Empathize:** When a person feels validated, it can reduce tension and increase their ability to follow directions, receive accountability, or negotiate a situation. Focus on speaking to the person from their perspective. Use phrases like, "I understand how that is hard", "I agree with you…", "You're right, that is a problem."

~ **Evade/Escape:** Sometimes the best way to de-escalate a situation is to evade or escape it, or to help a person who is being targeted to get away. Evading can include moving yourself and other affected people away from the incident to a safer space. Or if you're witnessing harassment or violence directed at a stranger, one way you can help someone escape is by pretending to know them. You might say, "hey it's so good to see you!" in order to start a conversation with the person and begin to see what sort of support they could use. Use additional tactics like distraction or gathering people to assist you in being able to move yourself or targeted individuals away from harm.

~ **Distraction/Refocus:** Distraction can be a way to de-escalate a situation without having to be in close proximity. Loud noises from a distance, flickering lights on or off from a nearby building, can be ways of de-escalating from afar. Distraction up close can be about refocusing the person or conversation, asking them to take a walk with you, or proposing an alternative plan or idea.

~ **Gather People:** People act differently when there are others observing. If you're de-escalating a situation in an area where there are more people than the primary people involved, you can bring others towards the situation. You can also mention the incident. "Do you see what's happening over there? This isn't ok. That person looks like they need help."

~ **Giving Space:** Sometimes, people observing, commenting, staring at a person, or blocking a person's exit can contribute to escalating a situation. Asking a crowd to give a person space or asking witnesses to support in other ways can prevent further escalation. Use your best judgement about when to give space or gather people.

~ **Use Humor:** Humor can lighten a situation and make people feel more connected and compassionate towards each other. This is especially true if you can get the person who is acting aggressively or causing harm to laugh. However, as a note of caution, remember that using humor to condescend or belittle can escalate a situation.

~ **Give Choices:** When people are in the midst of causing harm or harassing others, they can be very sensitive to power dynamics, and can sometimes feel like they have limited choices. You can give people choices that allow them to operate within conditions that create more safety for everyone. You can make statements like, "I need to ask you to either stop yelling, or move into the other room."

～ **Use Your Voice**: Your vocal tone, the pace at which you're speaking, and volume can all be used to convey calm, respect, or power as needed. When a person is agitated, it can help to speak slightly slower or quieter than them while focusing your body language on them. This will encourage them to work to listen, which may make them more present and able to listen to your directions or the boundaries of others.

Body Language

In addition to your voice, posture, eye contact, and body language can also convey messages to another person. Having open arms and ensuring your hands are visible can de-escalate a situation. Slower movements can also work. In some instances, conveying authority by making yourself taller, speaking louder, putting your shoulders back, and pushing your chest up can be helpful. For other situations, a less powerful and more acquiescent stance can increase a person's sense of safety. This can include lowering shoulders, having a concave chest, and maintaining eye contact that is focused on the nose as opposed to the eyes. Use your instincts and your previous experiences to know which to use. Sometimes you will use several different stances within one situation.

speak loudly

open arms ensuring your hands are visible

slower movements

acquiescent stance

lowered shoulders, concave chest eye contact focused on nose.
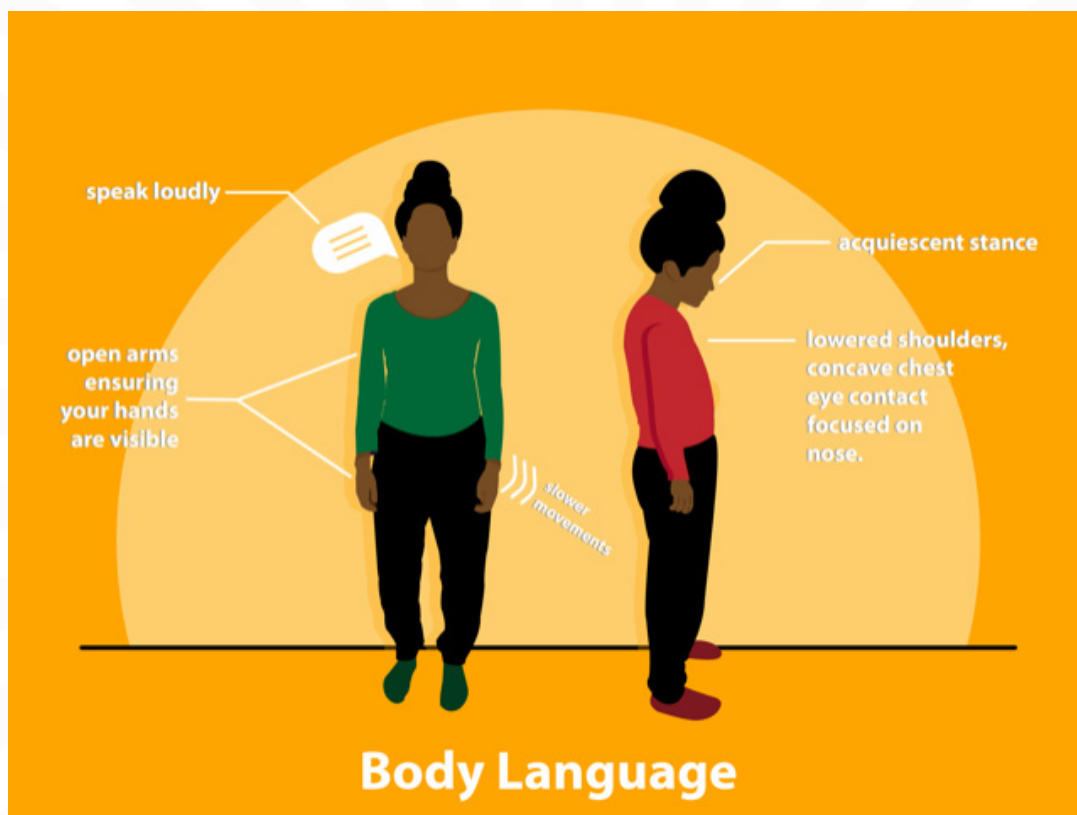
Body Language

Escalators

Part of the work of de-escalation is recognizing and avoiding things that can escalate a situation. Below are actions that can escalate situations:

- Verbal threats and threatening body language
- Not listening
- Criticizing
- Name calling
- Engaging in power struggles
- Ordering
- Minimizing
- Arguing
- Invading personal space
- Assuming Identity/Categorizing People
- Blocking someone's exit
- Shouting
- Interrupting
- Photographing/Filming

Security Teams For Actions, Demonstrations, and Events

A Security team is created to keep everyone feeling relatively safe. The team's role is to be there to help handle conflict when it comes up. Security teams don't replicate the culture, norms, or role of law enforcement. They are buffers between the people and the police. Specifically, the Security team members are people who:

- are not directly participating in the action, demonstration, or event
- are entrusted to keep people safe
- ensure the action or event gets carried out successfully
- aim to prevent/reduce arrests and harassment
- serve as a buffer between attendees and counter protesters and/or police

Conducting Research For Your Security Plan

Essential to a good security plan is researching what will impact the event and understanding the history of the event. Below are questions to consider when developing your security plan.

- **Event Space:** Visit the space you will be using at least twice during the time of day you will be having your event.
  ◦ Where are possible entrances and exits?
  ◦ Can your event/demonstration be seen from multiple vantage points?

- Where are there surveillance devices (i.e. cameras, listening devices, etc) or where could they be set up?
- Will there be a staging area? Where will it be?
- Does the space have an official or unofficial closing time (i.e. public parks)?
- Is there space for the security team to gather privately or semi-privately to brief and debrief? Can the security team leave their belongings there (i.e. backpacks, purses, etc)?

- **Relevant Law**
  - What are local laws regarding protests, materials, sound, permits?
  - Does the location or space legally require a sound or event permit? Even if you decide to not obtain a permit for political reasons, it can be helpful to know what is required legally.
  - Is the space public or private property?

- **Surrounding area**
  - Where are the police precincts and hospitals along the march route or nearest to the event?
  - Who are the local community affairs officers from nearby precincts?
  - Have there been encounters with these cops before?
  - Who are your neighbors? Are they supportive of your cause?

- **Conditions**
  - What is the weather forecast for that day?
  - Does your event/demonstration fall on a holiday?
  - Is the event in an area where there can be increased traffic, or traffic jams?

- **Marches**
  - Have you walked the route at least once in real time? For example, If your event/demonstration is on a Monday at 12, it can be useful to walk the route the previous Monday at 12 to get a sense of the route because traffic, police presence, and congestion can all impact a march.
  - How long is the route?

- **Civil Disobedience**
  - What is the potential legal liability for event goers (i.e. will event goers be trespassing)? For the security team or hosting organization?
  - If arrests are intended or anticipated, what are the expected legal charges?

- **Event/Demonstration History**
  - Has this event or demonstration happened before? What is the history of security at this event or demonstration? What will community members expect?
  - Are there other events or demonstrations similar to this that have happened in this space?
  - Will other events or demonstrations be happening on the same day?

- **Transportation**
  - Where are the closest trains or buses? Parking? Where will most people be entering and exiting?
  - Are there elevators and escalators at transportation hubs?

- **Participants**
  - Who do you expect to be there? Are there other events happening on the same day that might bring onlookers?

- **Access needs**
  - Have you asked community members their access needs?
  - Is there seating?
  - Do you have an agreement about fragrances?
  - Will there be interpreters?
  - Is the space or march wheelchair accessible?
  - For marches: is there a section for people who move at a slower pace?

Handout: Planning Your Event Action Grid

Take the information gathered from your research and input it in the grid below

History	Assumptions	Event Logistics	Research
What is the history of the event?	What is the risk of police presence?	Background and goals of the event/action.	Laws regarding protests, materials, sound, permits.
What is the history of the space? What do you know about the people who live or work there?	What is the risk of counter protesters?	How many people do you expect?	Map it: police precincts nearby, transportation, hospitals, churches, schools
What should security know to make the event safe?	What is the risk of agitated community?	What time does the event happen? When will the most people be there?	Space entrances and exits

Have there been arrests or raids in this space recently?	What are the environmental risks [i.e. weather, violence in the area, etc.]?	If the event is a march, what is the route?	What is the police presence like in that area? On the day of the week and time of your event?
Protocols: for each potential risk, how does security respond?	Considerations: Which security roles can physically de-escalate? In which instances will someone be asked to leave the event? When, if ever, do you call 911? When, if ever, does the event stop?		

Security Roles

- **Tactical Team:** This team consists of the Security Coordinator, Program Point, and Police Negotiator. The tactical team decides on security protocols and usually makes major decisions on the day of the action.
- **Legal Support:** A lawyer who is on-call (and off-site) to advocate for the release of anyone who is arrested during the action.
- **Legal Observers:** A team (generally one for every 15 participants) who records all police activity and DOES NOT intervene in physical or verbal incidents. Usually wears different clothing to distinguish from the security team.
- **Security Coordinator:** The point person of the security team, makes decisions on formation changes, de-escalation tactics, and participates in tactical team decisions. Sometimes trains the team before the action or event.
- **Police Negotiator:** The designated person to interact with police, show permits (if needed), and communicate between tactical and police. Generally, this role is used to 'buy time', support the action or event to meet the goal, and anticipate and reduce potential arrests.
- **Captains:** A security team larger than 10 people should have captains in order to relay information quickly and maintain discipline and coordination. Captains are responsible for relaying information to a group of as few as three to as many as eight marshalls.
- **Runner:** Two to four people who run the perimeter of the action to relay information and communication from one end of the action to the other. Runners can also be used to scout potential concerns such as oncoming traffic or police presence.

- **Marshall:** These are the eyes and ears of a security team. There is usually one marshall for every 20 participants, depending on the level of risk. Marshalls hold the perimeter for the action and act as a buffer between the police and participants. Some marshalls may be trained in physical de-escalation.
- **De-escalators:** These are generally highly skilled folks whose role is to intervene in physical violence. They can be officially a part of security or roaming the crowd, depending on conditions.
- **Program Point:** This is a non-security role. This person generally coordinates speakers, performances, and any other elements of the program. Program Point is an important part of the Tactical Team because this person knows the run of the day and can help to shift or end the program depending on security needs.

Worksheet: Security Team Roles		
Security Coordinator	Police Negotiator	Legal support
Marshalls	Captains	Runners
Home Base	Legal Observers	Medics/wellness crew

How Do You Choose Your Security Team?

~ **Know Your Folks. No strangers and no cops**: Security is not a role for people who have just joined an organization. While it's useful for new people to learn security and de-escalation tactics, people who are new should not know your organization's internal safety protocols. People serving on your organization's security team should have at least a year of active involvement. These people should: have demonstrated responsibility, shown the ability to follow direction, be good listeners, and have an understanding of their own power and privilege.

~ **Low Ego**: High ego and security don't go well together. While confidence is critical, so is humility. Take notice if someone always needs to get credit, gets jealous of other people in the group, creates unnecessary dissention within the organization, has difficulty taking accountability, is resistant to collaborating, etc. When people choose to do security, they are committing to put their body on the line for someone else. This requires both discipline and self sacrifice, so take note of people who will not do well within these circumstances.

~ **Self Reflective**: People who participate in security learn new skills in three primary places: training, debrief, and shadowing. It's critical that people are self-reflective within these contexts, can accept feedback, can incorporate feedback, and are committed to their growth. Notice when you see these skills in other arenas.

~ **Flags**: Be wary of new people who ask sensitive questions about the organization, or who immediately volunteer for sensitive roles (security team, board of directors, finance committee, etc). Be careful with people who have a need for power within the organization early on. These people are not a good fit for security and may pose a threat to the organization as a whole.

~ **Well-rounded Team**: Not everyone has to have the same skills, temperament, or experience in order to make a great team. Some folks are excellent at particular security roles, and are less strong in others. Aim to train everyone in many roles but allow for people to specialize according to their strengths.

~ **Check Your Assumptions**: *We believe in security for all bodies and all genders. Security has a history of being associated with masculine, able-bodied, aggressive people.* Think through typical security stereotypes and make sure that they are not influencing your recruitment practices. Push your assumptions, especially around identity and ability. Think through the roles people can play, whether it's about incorporating disabled folks across the team, ensuring that some people in security leadership identify as femmes, and challenging notions of "weakness" and "strength" -- these usually reflect gendered, racial, sizeist, and ableist assumptions. Instead, consider a security framework that replaces these ideas and focuses on people who are consistent, rigorous, accountable, and dependable.

Vetting Security Teams

Vetting is a process through which you select and examine your organization's security folks. You can vet folks in a host of ways. Vetting is always important when developing a safety team. During an uprising, this becomes even more crucial because of the increased chance that the state will use the influx of new protestors to attempt to infiltrate groups. It is important that you maintain a heightened sense of vigilance regarding who is in your safety team. Groups should always have a process for vetting new members, vetting security team members, and consistently maintaining internal security protocols. Now is not the time to be lax on these requirements, for the safety of your team and the protestors you are there to protect. Here are some potential vetting options.[4]

~ **Informal background check**: It's important to verify whether people are who they say they are. Some organizations do formal background checks (not to review about a person's criminal record but for verifying

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[4]   For more information on security and infiltration please check out (list M4BL resource here)

a person's identity), others use more informal methods of verifying a person. Ask around about this person, especially to other organizers and organizations that you trust. Take notice of what people say. If no one knows the person, then they should not be on your security team. If people name behaviors that do not adhere to the values and practices that you find important within security, then they shouldn't be on your team. If they have recently moved, ask people that you know from the city that they lived in before. It's important to keep in mind that we all make mistakes sometimes, and vetting should take that into account. You can have "flags" about a person and decide to observe them within your organization in ways that limit potential harm. It's important with doing research on folks that you bring up the concerns directly with them. A lot of harm can happen internally when there are unconfirmed rumors that someone is unsafe, and organizations need a process to address this. We also recognize that formal background checks get tricky for folks who've had name changes, or who have information about themselves that they'd like to keep private. It's also up to you to decide whether or not you want to tell the person that they're being vetted. This depends on the circumstance, organization, and nature of the security team.

〜 **Formal conversation:** Ask this person why they want to join Security. Do their answers represent values that align with yours? Do their answers also represent how you've observed them behave in your organization? It is said that "how a person does one thing, is how they do everything," therefore use this conversation and your observations to offer feedback, and see their response.

〜 **Use your gut:** Gut instincts or intuition are used frequently in security. Is this person asking unnecessary questions? Is this person obsessed with getting access to sensitive projects and information? Is this person trying to advance quickly throughout the organization? There should be an internal process to prevent new people from getting access to sensitive information. And when these things happen often your gut will tell you. *Sometimes your gut instinct is showing you inconsistencies about a person that are hard to put into words. Sometimes your gut is the way you are noticing someone showing up within the values that you have for your security team. If your gut says yes or no, and you are well practiced at using your intuition, listen to what it's telling you.*

〜 **Check the internet:** See if their story checks out. If you Google someone and you can find no information about them, that's an issue. Also, if you Google them and you find information that seems wildly contradictory to what this person has said about themselves, ask them about the inconsistencies.

〜 **Challenge assumptions:** We're in the midst of frightening times, and during frightening times, oppressive assumptions can show up. Don't use this political moment to fall into the trap of believing that masculine, tall, able-bodied, cis, straight, or aggressive people are the best security people. Sometimes aggressive folks don't listen or don't take direction well. Remember that we can co-create safety outside of these assumptions. Look for those with experience, who listen well, can move swiftly within a group, and can take direction.

〜 **No new folks:** An uprising is not the time to add new people to your security team or to have an open security training. We know that most groups have limited security capacity, and we encourage you to form teams with coalition and organizational partners. But we can't have new folks on our teams. We must assume that the government has increased its surveillance and disruptions of our formations. Vetting needs to increase, not decrease. These are the times, amidst fear and chaos, when infiltration and disruption thrives.[5]

〜 **Give people roles outside of security:** While newer folks shouldn't have security roles, you can involve them in outreach, mutual aid, attending actions, and use that time to see how they show up in those spaces. Dedicated commitment to your organization should be a requirement for security.

〜 **Observation:** You can assess a person's ability to uphold organizational principles and be accountable to security culture by observing how they do other things. Do they fulfill their commitments? Do they receive

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[5]   For more on security culture, infiltration, and vetting check out this document from the Movement for Black Lives.

and internalize feedback well? Are they insightful and observant? Do they maintain confidentiality? How do they navigate conflict? Do they gossip? Are they frequently in conflict?

~ **Taking direction:** Security is inherently about taking and giving direction. To ensure that your team is functional, you must ensure that people can take direction, listen to, and internalize feedback. Also, notice if people know when to bring things up, and whether they always want to be in charge. It's important that people can move within a hierarchical structure while in their security role. If this is difficult for someone, then they should find a non-security role to support the organization.

~ **Periodic Vetting:** Trusted and vetted members of an organization can be turned into informants. One tactic of law enforcement is to turn a person who has already gained trust. People have broken accountability for a wide range of reasons -- from disillusionment, threats to safety, and financial need. Build the practice of periodically vetting all your security team members.

How Do You Choose Your Tactical Team?

~ **Experience:** Tactical Team members make quick decisions on how to change an action or event while it is underway. Tactical Teams should include at least one person who is very experienced in security (i.e. at least five years of experience) and have demonstrated familiarity with de-escalation, consent, and chain of command. Tactical Team members should be comfortable making quick decisions, and okay with making unpopular decisions. Team members must also be able to get arrested, although security will work to ensure that tactical team members are unlikely to get arrested.

~ **Accountability:** Tactical Team members must agree to and hold the mission, principles, and values of the organization, while communicating clearly and making decisions. Tactical Team members must demonstrate high levels of accountability and organizational trust as compared to other folks within the security team. They must understand the community well in order to play this leadership role.

~ **Demeanor:** Tactical Team members need to be able to remain both flexible and firm during high pressure encounters. Choose people who have demonstrated this within your organization. This team also needs to work well with others and know how to give and take direction quickly. Understand and talk about everyone's intentions in being on the tactical team, and ensure that they understand and agree to shared commitments.

~ **Confidentiality:** Tactical Team members may hold sensitive information about the security team and community as a whole. This team may know about issues of intra-community violence, inter-organizational conflict, and other sensitive information. Ensure that you've seen demonstrated capacity for confidentiality.

~ **Most Impacted:** Tactical Team ensures accountability to most impacted communities and strives to be led by the most impacted folks within your organization. Sometimes this is a work in progress, but if relevant, continue to ask yourself why the Tactical Team is not led by the most impacted people and what your leadership development plan is to achieve this.

~ **Committing to a Temporary Hierarchical Structure:** Tactical Teams lead security within a hierarchical decision-making structure, which is also called the "chain of command." Security teams use hierarchy to make quick decisions under pressure, and ensure that the people making those decisions have the most information and experience to make the best decisions. Ensure that Tactical Team members are both comfortable with having this power and leadership, and are using it to support the security team, and the overall community. People who are interested in being on a tactical team for social capital or a sense of "importance" are not a good fit.

Organizational Safety Planning

For organizations whose members or clients are part of targeted or heavily criminalized communities, it's essential to create and maintain safe organizational environments without reliance on or involvement of law enforcement. When we refer to targeted and heavily criminalized communities, we're thinking of those who experience oppression from the government, law enforcement, and others based on their identity. These oppressed communities include but aren't limited to: BIPOC, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, queer, gender non-conforming and non-binary communities, people engaged in street economies (i.e. sex work or drug sales), immigrants, religious minorities including Muslim and Jewish people, people with disabilities, low-income communities, people living with HIV/AIDS, unhoused communities, formerly incarcerated people, etc.

Each organization will have its own unique set of conditions that impact safety planning. This tip sheet is a starting point for organizations to think about how to create organizational safety protocols that do not rely upon law enforcement.

~ **Conduct an inventory:** There may be people in your organization with experience in verbal or physical de-escalation, self-defense, safety planning, know your rights trainings, copwatch, first aid, bystander response, mediation, and many other skills that are directly relevant to creating organizational safety. Conduct an inventory of your staff's skills to learn about their experience and also their comfort with navigating incidents of harassment and violence that could occur at your organization.

~ **Create safety guidelines and values:** Create and publicly share your guidelines and values around safety in your space. For example, what's your position on banning people from your organization or office? Are staff expected to de-escalate and intervene in violence? What is your organization's position and/or protocol on calling law enforcement to respond to violence? Do you have community guidelines about violence within your space? How do you want to address suicidal staff or community members within your office space? What information do you keep in your office that could be used to target or create risk? What data/information do you collect and who has access to it?

• **Create safety protocols:** Based upon your organization's skills inventory, guidelines, and values, create some protocols for addressing violence in your space. Protocols should consider the following:
  ◦ Types of harm and violence that the organization will intervene in, including violence between members of the group, law enforcement visits, etc.
  ◦ Supporters, organizations, and allies that the organization can rely upon for additional help.
  ◦ Point people in charge of making decisions during an incident, based on scenarios.
  ◦ Communication protocol for notifying people in the space about an incident (i.e. a code word, email that goes to all staff, or an announcement).
  ◦ Other organizations or individuals that are impacted by the safety plan -- or who could have different safety protocols/responses (i.e. calling the police). This might include office subletters, regular space rentals, building security, building owner, other organizations in the building.
  ◦ Common scenarios that have occurred with sample responses.
  ◦ Identify gaps in skill sets among staff that might be needed based on the scenario. For example, if a scenario requires dealing with a community member who is suicidal, then a suicide intervention training may be a helpful tool.
  ◦ What can impact staff, board, volunteers, or members' ability to carry out the plan? For example, being a mandated reporter, accessibility, being on parole, immigration status, etc.
  ◦ Determine exit strategies for scenarios that require getting folks in and out of the office.
  ◦ If your office uses intercoms or any video equipment to identify people as they come in and out of the space, consider any benefits/challenges to protocols this may offer.
  ◦ Consider disposing of sensitive material (i.e. shredding documents, deleting files, etc).

Implementing safety protocols

Once your protocol has been created, regular training and scenario practice should occur (at least 2x per year) so that staff can get experience in implementing it. Consider using structures like safety or de-escalation meetings for staff to discuss potential threats or develop a standing Community Safety or Accountability Team whose role it is to respond to issues of violence, harm, and law enforcement. The protocol should be reviewed with new staff as a part of any new staff orientation process, and should be reviewed annually. Organizations can consider including the protocol in their policies and protocols manual.

Worksheet: Organizational Safety Sample Inventory

To determine organizational safety protocols and procedures, it is important to conduct an inventory of existing skills within your organization. This is a sample inventory that can be adapted to each organization's needs.

1. **Do you have self defense or martial arts experience?**

____No   ____Beginner ____Intermediate _____Expert _____Trainer

Explain: _____

2. **Do you have verbal de-escalation or bystander intervention experience?**

____No   ____Beginner ____Intermediate _____Expert _____Trainer

Explain: _____

3. **Do you have experience with physical de-escalation?**

____No   ____Beginner ____Intermediate _____Expert _____Trainer

Explain: _____

4. **Do you have experience with counseling or safety planning?**

____No   ____Beginner ____Intermediate _____Expert _____Trainer

Explain: _____

5. **Do you have experience with police negotiation, copwatch, or know your rights training?**

____No   ____Beginner ____Intermediate _____Expert _____Trainer

Explain: _____

6. **Do you have experience assessing people for suicide or homicide risk?**

____No   ____Beginner ____Intermediate _____Expert _____Trainer

Explain: _____

7. **Do you have experience with first aid, CPR, or other emergency medical support?**

____No   ____Beginner ____Intermediate _____Expert _____Trainer

Explain: _____

Beginner: less than 1 year, learning basic concepts
Intermediate: 2 to 3 years, comfortable with basic concepts
Expert: 5+ years, comfortable with basic, intermediate, and advanced concepts
Trainer: I have intermediate to expert experience and substantial experience developing curriculum and giving training on this subject

Handout: Organizational Safety Know Your Rights

This information is designed to be as general as possible. It is important to review local laws for your organization and city or town in order to come up with the most appropriate plan for your needs.

- **Law Enforcement Visits:** Whether it's random, connected to the communities that you organize, or connected to political backlash, all organizations should have a plan in place to address law enforcement visits. There are various types of law enforcement visits, including visits to investigate your organization or a member of your organization, general inquiries, emergency response, and visits to "support." Protocols can differ based on the type of visit.

Here are some general tips to guide you:[6]

- **Physical Space:** It can make a huge difference to have an office space with a door that closes, and a staff member trained in de-escalating violence and navigating law enforcement near that door. When available, a peephole and/or video doorbell can make it easier to see who is outside. Creating a clear separation between public and private space, such as a lobby from private office space, can also provide an added layer of legal protection. This can be done with room dividers, signs, or furniture. When possible, consider spaces that make this possible.

- **Search Warrant:** Do not consent to any searches. Always state "I do not consent to a search." You do not need to let law enforcement in without a search warrant. An arrest warrant or an administrative warrant of removal is not enough to come inside. Make sure that the search warrant is signed by a judge, for the correct organization, with the correct address. Do not open the door or let an officer inside until you have seen the search warrant. If needed, ask them to pass the warrant under the door before you open it. However, you do need to let officers inside if they come with paramedics or other emergency services. Warrants do not mean that you have to answer questions.

- **Deportation Removal Warrant:** Do not consent to a search of the premises. Do not physically block ICE agents. from entering, but clearly state, "I do not consent to this search" and inform the agent that you wish to speak with a lawyer. Many removal warrants do not require a hearing before a judge and are a direct order to detain and deport a person. All removal warrants must be signed by a judge, NOT a DHS or ICE agent and must include an accurate address, name, and picture or description of the person who the warrant is for. If these are not present on the warrant, then it is not valid. Do not sign a removal warrant as sometimes this can be construed by courts to mean consent for voluntary self-removal. A removal warrant does not mean you need to answer any questions from ICE or reveal the location of the person on the warrant if they are not at the listed address.

- **Probable Cause:** Law enforcement can enter your space if they have reasonable suspicion of illegal activity happening inside. Keep this in mind as you craft your safety and de-escalation protocols.

- **Point Person:** There should be an organizational point person to navigate law enforcement encounters. This person should be well aware of their legal rights and should be less vulnerable to arrest than other staff or community members, if possible. Vulnerability to arrest can include many factors including but not limited to: open cases, immigration status, having a criminal record, identifying as a person of color, and/ or trans and/or gender non-conforming. If that person is not in the building, send a representative from the organization to speak to them, taking into account vulnerability to arrest and violence, along with power

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6   These are general tips to support your organizational plan for local law enforcement, ICE agents, or DHS. If your office has an encounter with the FBI, it is important to remain silent and ask to speak with a lawyer. Never lie to an FBI agent, as this is a federal offense. For additional information on visits from FBI, we encourage you to visit Asian Americans Advancing Justice: Know Your Rights Guide for encounters with the FBI

within the organization (i.e role within the organization, citizenship status, legal record, language ability, race, gender, etc). Organizations should make concrete decisions about the order in which to send staffers/ members to speak with law enforcement, should agree upon that order, and stick to it when an incident arises. This list should be refreshed when staffing/membership changes happen that impact the order. It may be useful to send two people, even if the staff attorney is present and is one of those people.

- **Careful about what you say:** Say as little as possible when dealing with law enforcement. Everything that you say can be used in court. It's helpful to have talking points for various scenarios that you can stick to, as this will minimize sharing information that could be used against you later. Ask who they are and what their business is. If they are inquiring about a member, ask why they are asking about a member. Do not react in any way or indicate if you know the person or not. If a staff attorney is not present, tell the cops that you are going to remain silent until an attorney can be present. Talk through creating talking points that connect to your values and train people on these points.

- **Videotaping the encounter:** Consider having someone film the encounter. The person or people filming should not be the same as the point person. Know that cameras can sometimes escalate law enforcement but can also deter illegal and violent behavior on behalf of law enforcement and help to support a future legal case.

- **Seek support if needed:** If and when possible, notify your legal support (if you have it), a close organizational ally, or others in the case you need further support or want someone to check in with later. Speak to members, the board of directors, or similar organizational leaders and update them on the visit. Be sure to tell them it is urgent.

- **Get the officer's information:** Police officers are legally supposed to give you their names and badge numbers when asked. Ask for their business cards. If they don't offer their info freely, try to capture what you can remember, including what precinct they are coming from and what they look like.

- **Documentation:** Take notes on the interaction with the cops. Make sure to document details about what they say they want, who they are looking for, etc. If it seems like taking notes in front of the cops would make you vulnerable, pay close attention to the conversation and document it as soon as you're able. After the police leave, be sure to write down anything that was said or occurred. If there were several folks in the space when they were there, ask them to write down their account of what happened as well. Write up an incident report for internal use.

- **What is your document retention policy and how well are you following it? What information is necessary to keep about your programs and members**? How long is it necessary to keep that information? Documents that contain legal information and/or advice about your organization's members and staff may be protected by privilege. These documents should be labelled as "Legal" and/or "Confidential". This could help make the case for these documents being privileged. Organizations should also consider placing sensitive files in locked cabinets and shredding material that's no longer needed.

Worksheet: Organizational Safety Planning Grid

At any organization, verbal conflict, physical fights, threats, or law enforcement violence or harassment can occur. This worksheet is a starting point for organizations to create organizational safety protocols. Please be advised that you may be inserting sensitive information in this worksheet that you might not want particular individuals to see. Therefore, it's important to think through what you want to have a verbal discussion about, and what information is safe to have written down.

What are your organization's values and how do they inform these safety protocols? *What's your position on banning people from your organization in the office? Are staff expected to de-escalate and intervene in violence? What is your organization's position on calling law enforcement for violence? How do you want to address suicide attempts, or suicidal thoughts within your office space? What information do you keep in your office that could be used against the organization or members?*	What skills do staff currently have that can be used to navigate and address incidents around safety? What gaps exist and how will you address them? *See inventory assessment worksheet above.*
What are factors that might make creating and implementing safety protocols challenging? *For example: my office is isolated, there is no security in the building, we are renting a space, etc.*	What types of harm are you most concerned about that require developing a safety protocol? *Please see office safety tips handout for guidance.*

Creating Safety Protocols		
	Example	Your Scenario
What is the situation?	There is an individual who keeps threatening to come to the office and harass our organization because they don't agree with the work we do. We know their name and we found a picture of them on their FB page. We have an open office space and no security in our building.	
What are warning signs that this situation is about to occur? *Long term, short term.*	The harassing emails and phone calls have increased from a few times a year to almost weekly. They've gotten more specific recently about what they are planning to do once they arrive at the office.	
Who is the point person/ people responsible for engaging in the situation?	In this order: Josephina, Director Maria, Communication Coordinator Joseph, Social Media Coordinator	
How are point people notified that they are needed?	When the person who has threatened harm arrives (we'll know because we have a pic), the first staff person that sees them will say loudly, "The water delivery from Poland Spring is set to arrive tomorrow."	

How will they engage in the situation? What strategies will they use? What strategies will you avoid?	The first available point person will engage the person by actively listening to them, and allowing them to vent so long as it doesn't cause harm. If a solution is possible, the point will negotiate. If not, the point person will team up with another point person and attempt to get the harasser to leave.	
What are the desired outcomes of these intervention strategies?	To have the harasser leave the office feeling heard and seen and not needing to harass or complain anymore. That the staff in the office remain safe and that law enforcement is not called in.	
While the point person(s) is intervening, what are other staff doing? What should the remaining staff do?	Remaining staff are in the office and not engaging with this person. They are being cautious and observant and ready to call in further support if needed. If a client is in the office, they are helping them to exit safely.	
If these interventions are not successful what should happen? *Call for support? Trigger an alarm? Call emergency services? Be sure to define how you know an intervention is not successful.*	In the case an intervention is not successful, we will call for x organization to come to the office to support with further intervention strategies. The goal will be to get the harasser out of the office. We know they are needed when the point person says "Please call x and let them know I'm going to be late for my meeting."	

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Is an exit plan required? If so, what is the plan? Who will support the implementation of the exit strategy? After folks exit, how will they check in? Where will folks convene to check in?	If the harasser refuses to leave and/or is escalating violence, then 2 point people should remain and the 3rd point person should gather remaining folks in the office to exit quietly and wait in the parking lot. The 3rd person should post themselves outside the office door to wait for further support.	
Support: Who should be notified of what's happening? What are/is their role and contact info?	These three people should be notified if this scenario occurs: board chair, two outside support people. We are letting the board chair know what's happening, and asking the support people to be on standby in case we need them to physically show up.	
If you decide to call upon law enforcement: what determining factors will initiate involving them? Who will be the point person to engage with them? What is the plan to reduce potential harm when engaging with law enforcement?	We will only call law enforcement in the case that physical violence occurs or if we are being threatened with a weapon. Joseph will interact with the police should we call them. To reduce harm, we will ask our support team to be physically present and release the rest of the staff to go home and wait for further instructions.	
Documents/other materials/ information to consider having, along with this plan: name of legal support, management contact info, building floor plans, staff emergency contact info, etc.	Support team contact info, point people cell phone numbers, board chair cell phone numbers, information on the harasser that we gathered from social media.	

Conclusion

Thank you for committing to keeping your communities safer. We envision a world where our communities have access to the skills, resources, and practices needed to keep us safe and secure. We dream, fight, and build the skills and political power needed for a world free of exploitation, war, violence, and oppression. Please remember: if you are at the beginning of your safety and security journey, in-person trainings facilitated by experienced security practitioners are critical for implementing effective security strategies. For those of you who have already been practicing security and safety, we hope that this toolkit will enhance and strengthen the powerful work you are doing. It is our humblest hope that by documenting the security traditions that trained us, this toolkit contributes to making our vision of increased safety and liberation a reality.

Credits

This toolkit is part of Vision Change Win's Community Safety project directed and created by Ejeris Dixon. This toolkit is the amalgamation of safety practices developed by over 20 organizations and individuals spanning from the late 1960's to the present. We celebrate the legacy of community safety, some of which has been written down in toolkits like this one and much of which exists through oral history in our organizations and groups.

The original drafts of this toolkit were written and compiled by Ejeris Dixon. The information in this toolkit was written by Ejeris Dixon, Che Johnson-Long, Krystal Portalatin, Ang Hadwin, and YaliniDream with contributions by Lindsey Charles. Thank you to Celiné Justice and Chrystal Stone for coordinating this project.

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- Audre Lorde Project
- ACLU's "Know Your Rights: Stops and Arrests – What to do When Encountering Law Enforcement"
- Get Yer Rights Network
- Communities United for Police Reform
- Arab Resource and Organizing Center's Developing Alternatives to Policing in Arab and Muslim Communities
- Mijente "In Defense of Organizing: Federal Investigations and Prosecutions Definitions and Organizing Best Practices."
- Communities Against Police Brutality (Justice Committee, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities, Audre Lorde Project)
- Sista II Sista
- Youth Force
- National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights
- War Resisters League

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- Watani Tyehimba
- And many more security comrades than we can name

Resources

There are many resources on protesting, safety, and security during COVID-19 times. Here are a few that we've found especially useful:

- Movement for Black Lives Legal Resources
- Coronavirus Risk Reduction during Protests and Rallies, compiled by Alison Kopit (she/her) and Elizabeth Harrison (they/them)
- Safety Tips for Street Actions and Protests by Communities United for Police Reform