



INTRODUCTION

The CDSS Community Culture and Safety Task Group (CCSTG) aims to support local communities in their efforts to provide a safe environment for music, song, and dance events. We are working to provide advice and resources that will help organizers develop the policies, procedures, and supporting documents needed to understand and facilitate safety in their communities.

CDSS is not prescriptive in regard to what your community ‘should be doing.’ We recognize and value the range of living traditions practiced by our communities.

As such, we are working to develop a **toolkit** of resources.

Toolkit

- **Structure** – Building blocks to help community organizers facilitate a safe environment.
- **Clearinghouse** – Existing examples of the building blocks.
- **Document Creation Frameworks (Template)** – Synthesized ideas and language options for each element of the structure, to get you started and make pulling your resources together easier.
- **Addressing Controversial Topics** – Summaries of talking points on various issues, culled from the Shared Weight listservs and other discussions, to save re-inventing the wheel. This will help local organizers frame a town-hall meeting or local online discussion to address a number of difficult issues which a community will need to discuss and agree upon in order to formulate their policies and etiquette recommendations.
- **Additional Literature** – More in-depth literature on conflict resolution, positive communication, dealing with bullies, how to stage an intervention, dance technique, etc.

We hope that you will pull out and adapt the language and policies that work for your community.

Structure

Building a safe and welcoming event space includes providing for everyone's physical, mental, and emotional well-being and sexual safety. This can include addressing a range of problems, from feelings of discomfort to perceived discrimination to actual bodily harm. Organizers can develop procedures to handle problems along this spectrum.

Communities should consider having the following set of documents to facilitate safety in its many nuances:

Part I: Statement of Community Values—Forthcoming TBD

This is where you describe the environment you strive to create.

- Your values are the justification for policies and actions that uphold them.
- This is in addition to mission and vision statements, as part of your organizing documents.

Part II: Code of Conduct—Forthcoming TBD

This document codifies behavioral expectations, specifies what behavior will not be tolerated, and outlines what the consequences will be for infractions.

- This is a policy document (not by-laws), based on community values.

Part III: Courtesy and Etiquette Guidelines—Completed October 2020

Tips and guidance (preferably in DO rather than “don’t” language) that help prevent offenses from occurring. This could be a family of pieces:

- General tips
- Nuances on elitism vs. self-protection (making the dance welcoming and safe); booking ahead; when it's OK to say no
- Requesting, giving, and receiving feedback to/from others

Part IV: Complaint Procedures—Forthcoming TBD

These outline the ways and means of handling complaints and infractions.

- Whom to complain to; who follows up; how complaints are handled; timeliness of response; confidentiality; due process; documentation; legal concerns; levels of severity; pathways for improvement and pathways for ultimate removal.

Part V: Physical Space: The Venue—Forthcoming TBD

This serves as a checklist of things to consider and manage, such as trip hazards, first aid, emergency medical procedures, ADA accessibility, decibel levels, etc.

Bonus Guides:

In addition to the above guides for developing governing documents, this Toolkit will include a series of guides for controversial topics. These are pressing issues that are difficult to approach. We aim to assist local leaders in addressing these topics in positive and productive ways by developing a facilitation guide for each one. Each guide will consist of analysis of all sides of the issue, representing as many perspectives as we can identify, with the goal of saving local leaders from reinventing the wheel. The series will also include a recommended process for community discussion and decision-making for controversial topics, and tips for facilitating such.

The goal is to help communities address a given topic in such a way that (to the greatest extent realistically possible) everyone in the community who wishes has an opportunity to express their views, feels respected and heard, feels that their view was duly considered, feels that the process was fair and transparent, and can accept the final decision without lingering resentments or other ill feelings, i.e. to help communities address tough issues without damage to the community in the long run.

Topics will include:

- Gender-neutral terminology
- When it's OK to say no (decline a dance and then dance with someone else)—an issue of inclusion
- Gypsy or alternate terminology
- Giving feedback to the caller
- Gender-balancing events
- Chemical sensitivities

And more.

Working Definitions

As we worked, we realized that we needed some working definitions for the concepts we were grappling with.

Safety	Freedom from physical, mental, emotional, or sexual harm, or fear of such harm, in one's immediate environment.
Respect	Due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, needs, boundaries, or traditions of others.
Inclusion	Welcoming all individuals regardless of any personal characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, body shape, financial means, education, or political views.
Courtesy	<p>Behavior and manners that demonstrate consideration and respect for others, such as saying “please,” “excuse me,” asking for consent, etc.</p> <p>Courtesy includes sensitivity to and accommodation of individual and cultural differences. It is a (hoped for) constant in general society, as in the Platinum Rule.</p>
Etiquette	<p>The set of rules and behavioral expectations specific to a particular group. These are expectations that go beyond simple courtesy, e.g., joining a line of dancers at the bottom of the set, or norms for finding a partner.</p> <p>Safety is the ultimate goal. Respect and Inclusion are the underlying “what” that help people feel emotionally safe. Courtesy and Etiquette are the “how”—how to convey respect and inclusion.</p>
