KEEPING EVENTS SAFE

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This resource kit is a short, easily accessible summary of some best practices that may be useful when you are organizing an event.

It is not intended to be a definitive resource, but should provide advice and guidance when handling safety issues at events.

This booklet's content is available on Meta-Wiki: https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Keeping_events_safe

This resource kit was developed by the **Support and Safety** team, in collaboration with the **Community Resources**, **Technical Collaboration**, and **Learning and Evaluation** teams, at the Wikimedia Foundation.

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FRIENDLY SPACE POLICIES

A Friendly Space Policy is a policy put in place at events, and enforced by the event organizers. It specifies a set of guidelines that attendees must follow to promote harassment-free experiences at the event.

Generally, the policy prohibits the harassment of participants, as well as other inappropriate behavior at Wikimedia events. What constitutes harassment is defined in the policy, as are the steps to take should someone go against the policy at a Wikimedia event. For technical spaces and events, the Technical Code of Conduct also applies.

A Friendly Space Policy for Wikimedia events is available at https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Friendly_space_policies. Groups can use it as it is, or adapt it for their own purposes. The final version should be shared with attendees.

Why is a Friendly Space Policy necessary?

One of the Wikimedia movement's core principles is openness and inclusion. This can only be achieved if those taking part in movement activities feel safe. The Friendly Space Policy is designed to explicitly define what constitutes inappropriate behavior, and in turn to allow event organizers to take action to prevent or stop behavior that makes others feel unsafe or unwelcome.

What does the policy define as harassment?

Harassment includes but is not limited to offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, physical appearance, age, race, ethnicity, political affiliation, national origin, or religion. Harassment also includes sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, unwelcome following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.

## Who should violations be reported to?

If an attendee witnesses something they believe goes against the Friendly Space Policy, there are a few courses of action they might take. These are covered in detail in the "Taking action" section of this kit. This information should be clearly explained to attendees when they arrive (for example, in the opening presentation and on posters around the venue).

If attendees feel safe doing so, telling a person to stop their behavior immediately can be the best action in non-violent situations.

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PREPARING FOR A SAFE EVENT

This page supplies a checklist to prepare your event safety procedures. This list can't cover everything—it covers only the essentials.
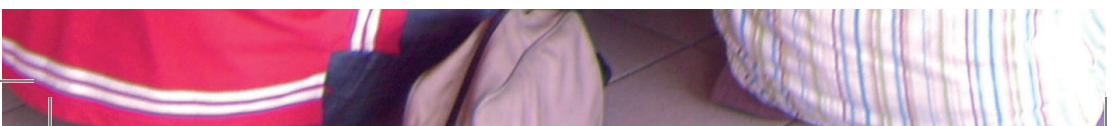
Well before the event

☐ Publish the event's Friendly Space Policy **on the event web page before the event begins**. Link to it in **all event communications**, such as during the online registration process.

☐ It is a good idea to **print posters** summarizing the policy and to display them around the venue.

Just before the event

☐ Designate **at least two people** to respond to Friendly Space violations. The points of contact **must** know how to contact local emergency services, Wikimedia Foundation officials, or other authorities as necessary. Brief them on the guidelines. For small events, this may need to be you.

☐ Make sure those designated to respond to incidents are **easy to recognize**, for example through special badges or shirts, so that they can be easily located.

☐ **Collect important contact numbers** such as local medical services, hotels, and taxi companies. Publicize them as needed at the event.

☐ **Check in with the event venue** so that you know their on-site team and security procedures and so that they know your plans.

☐ **Be prepared to explain** why the Friendly Space Policy (and, if applicable, the Code of Conduct) is important.

At the event

☐ During the opening of the event, **remind participants of the Friendly Space Policy** and their commitment to adhere to the policy. Point out the event organizers who will respond to Friendly Space complaints, as well as any relevant posters or wiki pages.

DEALING WITH AN INCIDENT

This is a checklist for steps to take if someone brings an incident to your attention. It is meant as a guide—feel free to adapt it to your needs.
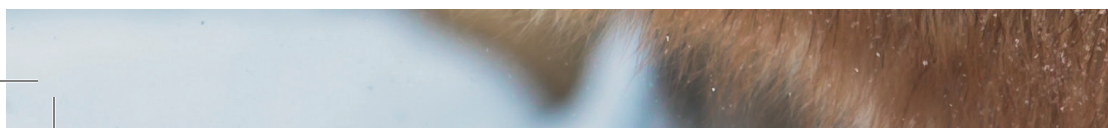
First actions

☐ If there is a threat to safety, **call security or police immediately**.

☐ **Help the person making the report feel safe.** Find a comfortable, quiet, and at least semi-private place to speak with them.

    ☐ Ask the person if they would like a friend or trusted colleague present during your conversation.

☐ **Listen actively.** Follow the advice in the "Taking the Report" section for best practices in speaking with those involved.

☐ **Take notes.** This provides a record for future actions should they be taken. Important things to record include:

    ☐ Time and place of the incident(s)

    ☐ Names of people immediately affected

    ☐ Names of potential witnesses

    ☐ Details of what happened

☐ **Consult with the person making the report** on actions they would like taken. Be cautious about making promises before you finish your review of the situation.

After the report is taken

☐ **Determine** what action needs to be taken, and **inform** the reporter what you are doing. (See the "Taking Action" section for more information on how to do this.)

☐ **Follow up.** See "Following up" for more details on what to do after you receive a Friendly Spaces report.

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

Level of severity	Description	Examples
Low	Comments made that do not directly target a specific person or persons but cause offense. Offense appears to be unintended or perhaps not even understood by the speaker.	An audience particip disgruntled commen A participant enters making them uncom
Medium	Comments made that are intended to offend or attack fellow attendees. Behavior that is considered antisocial or unwarranted, or which has already been warned against in the past.	A participant aggres attendee about their after being told to st A participant continu of people without cons
High	Behavior is targeted and has a high chance of resulting in physical or mental harm to the person targeted. Behavior violates applicable laws, or is an repeated pattern of Friendly Space concerns that have resulted in prior warnings.	A participant repeate participant inapprop A banned person att

	What should organizers do when an incident is reported?
participant makes a series of comments at a presentation. enters others' physical spaces, uncomfortable.	Remind those involved of the Friendly Space Policy. Explain why certain actions or words might make others uncomfortable. This interaction should be respectful, with an assumption that the offense was not intended.
aggressively confronts another out their editing and continues old to stop. continues to take photographs nout consent after being told to stop.	Individuals who violate the Friendly Space Policy on multiple occasions may be politely yet explicitly told to leave. If the person refuses or becomes aggressive, contact venue security or the police.
repeatedly touches another nappropriately. rson attempts to enter the venue.	Participant must be asked firmly to leave the event. If they refuse, contact venue security or law enforcement—**do not put yourself in danger**. If a report is made, it **must** be escalated to Wikimedia Foundation staff and, if applicable, to local law enforcement.

TAKING THE REPORT

While taking a report, your job is not to determine the validity of the incident being reported. Clearly document the situation as the person describes it. Be a non-judgmental listener—people with a strong empathetic listening presence are best suited for taking reports. Take notes while you listen, or write the details down as soon as possible.

Before taking the report, confirm that the person understands the reporting process.

Review the actions that will be taken if the person makes a report.

"I want to make sure you know who will have access to a report if you make one."

"You will be consulted before further actions are taken."

Clarify that illegal activity will be reported to authorities. Set reasonable expectations about what kind of protection and support the person will receive after making the report.

Summarize the information, repeat it back, and ask clarifying questions to make sure you are understanding the story.

"The incident happened as soon as you entered the room. Did I get that right?"

"Do you remember anything else that was said?"

Avoid making interpretive comments like:

"This doesn't make sense to me", "Are you sure they said that?", "That seems out of character for that person."

Have the person review what you have written for accuracy before you finalize the report.

Acknowledge their emotions and offer support.

"I know that this experience was upsetting and stressful."

"It looks like you are having a hard time. Is there anyone that you would like to be present while you make this report?"

Assure the participant that you have heard their complaint and will take action.

Give a time frame for next steps. You do not need to commit to what action will be taken. See "Taking action" for examples of what you can do depending on the situation.

"Thank you for reporting this. We will use it to take the appropriate actions as soon as we can."

Image: Calum MacAulay, CC-0

TAKING
ACTION

Having a Friendly Space Policy is a great first step towards keeping an event safe. To be fully effective, however, it requires organizers to know how to handle threats to event safety.

Exercise civility.

Treat others with kindness and respect. Sensitive topics that are more prone to causing offense (i.e. religion, politics, nationality, etc.) should be treated with extra diplomacy and care.

Be considerate of physical boundaries.

Boundaries vary from person to person and from culture to culture. Use extra sensitivity in relation to others' physical spaces. Ask permission rather than assuming that others are comfortable with touch, including well-intentioned hugs, kisses on cheeks, and so on.

Be an ally.

If you experience or witness a hurtful comment, remind the person about the Friendly Space Policy and ask them, kindly but firmly, to stop. Keep in mind that in some cases people may not realize that their actions and words are hurtful.

Inform event organizers.

Inform event staff as soon as possible after you witness an incident so they can take appropriate action promptly. Early intervention may prevent escalation of behavior.

FOLLOWING UP

If an incident occurs at your event, it is valuable after the event for everyone involved to do a short review of how it was handled. Here are some suggestions for how to follow up.

Evaluate how any incidents were handled.

Depending on the size of your user group or chapter, you should write up an incident report containing information like:

☐ What happened   ☐ What action was taken

☐ Who was involved   ☐ What the outcome was

Learn from the experience.

Set up a time for those who dealt with the incidents to discuss what happened, or just take notes for your own evaluation.

☐ What went well?

☐ What could have been done better?

☐ Were there any tools or resources you think would have helped?

    ☐ Do these exist and can you arrange to have them next time?

    ☐ Do you need to suggest they be created?

☐ If you are not feeling confident about organizing more events—what do you need to gain back that confidence?

Share the report.

If the incident resulted in a report, please pass it on to your Grants Program Officer or to your Wikimedia Foundation contact. If you don't have one, you can email the Support and Safety team at ca@wikimedia.org. Providing this information to the Wikimedia Foundation will help them design better practices and resources for event organizers.

If the incident took place at a technical event, such as a hackathon, refer your report to the Technical Code of Conduct Committee: https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Code_of_Conduct/Committee

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SPACE FOR NOTES

**For an online version of this booklet, visit
meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Keeping_events_safe**

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