

# Guidelines for a Welcoming and Accessible Gathering

Every element of a gathering is considered through the lenses of safety and accessibility, striving to create all materials to be accessible to welcome a wide range of people. The use of pictures, explanations, definitions, and clear formatting are all part of that effort.

Actively designing gathering space to allow for maximum space and access. Tables and chairs are set for maximum aisle-ways. Pushing chairs back under the table when leaving the room helps to maintain the highest degree of access in gathering spaces.

Gatherings may have both staff from disability organizations and staff of anti-violence against women organizations. Many participants are brought to this work out of personal experiences with violence and are therefore cautious about having personal photos and contact information circulated without their knowledge; it is important that permission is asked and given before taking photographs and sharing contact information.

Below are suggestions for ensuring the highest degree of accessibility and safety at gatherings. Thank you for helping create and maintain an accessible and safe space.



- Please be chemical/fragrance free. Do not wear scented products, such as lotions, shampoos, fabric softeners, perfumes, etc.



- Please turn cell phones off to maintain an electromagnetic-free environment.



- Please ask for and receive permission prior to taking any pictures or sharing contact information.



- When speaking in a large room or to a large group of people, please always use a microphone.



- State your name before speaking.



- Pace the group dialogue to allow time for the interpreting process, which may lag a few seconds behind spoken discussion.



- Please maintain the meeting room set-up. It has been set-up specifically to allow for access.



- Please remember to push your chair into the table.



- Please avoid using acronyms. If you use one, be sure to explain it.



- Use people first language (i.e., “people with disabilities” and not “disabled people”) and avoid violent expressions (i.e., “take a stab at it”, etc.)



- Remember and be respectful of the fact that each of us come from different experiences.



- Help create a safe place for people to learn. If there is conflict, use it as a learning opportunity.

Adapted from VERA Institute of Justice  
[www.vera.org](http://www.vera.org)



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