

# Enforcing Your Code of Conduct

effective incident response

Audrey Eschright - Open Source and Feelings 2015

# Content Warning

- general discussion of harassment and its effects
- types of harassment and other code of conduct violations that occur

a Code of Conduct  
is a tool for creating  
inclusive spaces

# As an event organizer...

- you've been asked to add a code of conduct for your event
- you agree to do it, but...
- you really hope no one ever has to report a problem because you're not prepared—yet!

# A Code of Conduct

Seattle VISICALC User Group is dedicated to providing a harassment-free conference experience for everyone regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age or religion. We do not tolerate harassment of conference participants in any form. Sexual language and imagery is not appropriate for any conference venue, including talks. Conference participants violating these rules may be sanctioned or expelled from the conference without a refund at the discretion of the conference organizers.

Harassment includes verbal comments that reinforce social structures of domination related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, religion; sexual images in public spaces; deliberate intimidation; stalking; following; harassing photography or recording; sustained disruption of talks or other events; inappropriate physical contact; and unwelcome sexual attention. Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately.

How do we use it  
effectively?

# Start with your values

- education
- friendliness
- communication
- the ability to participate and learn
- diversity of perspectives

# We value an environment free from harassment

*“Open Source & Feelings is dedicated to providing  
a safe, inclusive, welcoming, harassment-free  
conference experience for everyone”*



# Specify what behaviors are inappropriate

*“Harassment includes verbal comments that reinforce social structures of domination related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, religion; sexual images in public spaces; deliberate intimidation; stalking; following; harassing photography or recording; sustained disruption of talks or other events; inappropriate physical contact; and unwelcome sexual attention.”*

# Actions we may choose to take

*“If a participant engages in harassing behavior, the conference organizers may take any action they deem appropriate, including warning the offender or expulsion from the conference with no refund.”*

# Behaviors that are appropriate

*“Participate in an authentic and active way. In doing so, you contribute to the health and longevity of this community.”*

*“Be mindful of your surroundings and of your fellow participants.”*

# The scope of the policy

*“We expect all community participants (guests, sponsors, and contributors, paid or otherwise) to abide by this Code of Conduct in all community venues, online and in-person, as well as in all one-on-one communications pertaining to community business.”*

# Who to contact

*“If you are subject to or witness unacceptable behavior, or have any other concerns, please notify a community organizer as soon as possible at [conduct@osfeels.com](mailto:conduct@osfeels.com).”*

# Reporting guidelines

- contact info for the reporter
- names of all people involved, if known
- when and where it happened
- what happened
- additional context
- is it ongoing?

# Use an existing Code of Conduct

- Geek Feminism anti-harassment policy
- Citizen Code of Conduct
- Contributor Covenant

# Tell your community what this is for

- why we have a code of conduct
- what we expect from participants
- who to contact



# The response team

- at least two people
- keep each other accountable
- trade off duties when needed

# Represent the people you're trying to include

- will people feel comfortable reporting problems to you?
- work to build trust through representation (as well as your actions)
- don't ask the one woman in your group to help just because of her gender

# Covering big events

- figure out who's on duty
- make sure you cover after-hours and offsite events
- check in at least daily
- plan for record-keeping needs
- assign someone to cover social media

# Types of incidents (a small sample)

- sexist, racist, or homophobic remarks or jokes
- in-person harassment
- non-consensual physical contact
- physical or sexual assault
- online harassment through social media or email
- stalking

# Responding to reports

- gather information
- assess the impact and risk of further harm
- determine what resources are needed
- address the problem
- follow up with the people affected
- record the full details and resolution
- follow up within your organization

# An example report

- reported by: Mike
- who: Chris G (@creepius, creepius@example.com)
- when: October 2015 meeting
- what happened: Chris made an offensive joke about Muslims after a speaker with an Arabic name presented. The speaker was not present, but Mike overheard it and brought it to our attention.
- additional context: n/a
- ongoing? no

# Responding to the report

- state that you received a report of a code of conduct issue
- when and where it happened
- a general description of what happened (don't name the reporter)
- what the consequences are
- what you expect from the person now

# You control who participates

- “Oh no! I can’t believe I said that.  
I am so sorry.”
- “What are you talking about?  
I didn’t do anything.”



# When you receive a report

- focus on recording the details, not your judgement
- record what you're hearing from the person affected
- write it down
- assume reports are credible

# Privacy is important

- out in the hallway or another room
- off the mailing list, in private email
- not where bystanders will overhear or read

# Safety First

- quiet
- rest
- water
- medical assistance
- trusted friends

# Trauma and triggers

- code of conduct violations can be traumatic
- traumatic events can cause certain reactions
- when someone is reminded of past trauma in a way that causes these reactions, we call that a “trigger”
- fatigue, disorientation, memory loss, and inability to focus are all normal responses

# Impact assessment

- how many people are affected?
- in public? in private?
- spill-over effects

# Analyzing risk

- medical or legal requirements
- repeat offenders
- how dangerous is it for this to happen again?

# Risk + impact

	low risk	high risk
low impact	inappropriate jokes made in private	attendee with previous arrest or assault
high impact	inappropriate jokes	persistent coordinated harassment

# Using risk + impact to determine a response

	low risk	high risk
low impact	verbal warning	take notes, follow-up later
high impact	public apology, remove person from event	coordinated whole-team response



# Gather resources

- other members of your organizing team
- past incident logs
- organizers of other events who have been similarly affected
- people with specialized expertise
- crisis line
- 911
- online safety resources like Crash Override

# Resolve the situation

- choose a fair and proportionate response
- stay true to your values
- you're responsible to the direct victim(s) and to the community as a whole

Make the decision you need right now

—

Decide on the  
long-term penalties later

# Follow up with the people who were affected

- did you find a code of conduct violation?
- how you responded (i.e. reprimand, asking the person to not participate)
- anything further you need to discuss



# Waging Love for the World in Which We Want to Live

## Addressing three incidents from AMC2015

The 2015 Allied Media Conference (AMC) was full of beauty and power. From the overwhelming outpouring of love and joyful celebration of Black life on stage at the opening ceremony on Friday night, to honoring Charity Hicks in the #WageLove Detroit Action Space, to the closing ceremony lifting up the life and legacy of Grace Lee Boggs, and in a thousand other moments, many of us felt a sense of shared brilliance and strength together in Detroit.

Next to and interwoven with this beauty, many of us also saw and experienced more painful and challenging moments than at any previous AMC. Our truest, deepest hope is that these painful moments can contribute to a collective process of ongoing learning, transformation and, ultimately, liberation.

In this post, we specifically want to address three incidents from AMC2015:

1. The harassment, violence, anti-Black racism, transmisogyny, sexism, and homophobia that people experienced at the Old Miami dance party;
2. How AMP makes decisions about nighttime programming, especially with regard to artists who have played The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival
3. Transformative justice and survivor safety at the AMC.

We at AMP offer these brief reflections in an effort to take responsibility for what happened in the space that we convened, and to share some things we learned this weekend. These reflections are not at all complete. They are not a re-cap of events and do not describe all perspectives involved. They are written specifically for people who attended the conference and for those who experienced harm at this year's AMC.

# Reduce the threat of retaliation

- be very cautious about sharing information that can be used to identify people
- retaliation will tend to target the people seen as most vulnerable
- retaliation can target individuals or groups

# Following up with the reporter from our event

- we found a code of conduct violation
- we chose the reprimand the person
- he will be asked to leave if it happens again
- we're here in case you need more support or anything else happens

# Time to regroup

- how did it go?
- what did we learn?
- do we need anything for next time?
- is there anything we haven't resolved?



# You did it!

- this is hard work!
- it is so important to your community that you do it well
- be kind to yourselves

# How to use this template

- write an incident response plan for your event, project, or community space
- do training with the people responsible for taking and responding to reports

# Thank you!

- email me: [audrey@lifeofaudrey.com](mailto:audrey@lifeofaudrey.com)
- my site: [lifeofaudrey.com](http://lifeofaudrey.com)
- my work: [recompilermag.com](http://recompilermag.com)
- more resources: [safetyfirstpdx.org](http://safetyfirstpdx.org)  
(a work in progress—you can help!)