Pre-work for Running Safe(r) Events

This document provides a list of actions event organizers may want to take before their event in order to ensure the safety of their participants, and ensure that participants feel comfortable reporting any Code of Conduct incidents.

No event can be completely safe, and incidents will happen. This document provides tips for decreasing the chances of incidents occurring.

While this document references some actions to take for your event to be more inclusive, it is not a complete event inclusivity guide. Please see the AdaCamp Toolkit for examples of additional ways to make your conference more inclusive.

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Summary of Actions

1. When you assess the venue:
    - Look for the location of a quiet room for incident responders to take a report
    - Assess the entrances to look for locations where attendees can enter without going through registration
    - Ask the venue whether they provide venue security, whether they have cameras at the venue, and who to contact should you need to review video footage
    - Gather information about gender-neutral bathrooms, accessibility options, and other requirements for inclusive events
    - Research state and city laws around trespassing and concealed carry
2. Before you schedule evening events:
    - Determine which evening events the Code of Conduct applies to
    - Determine how many incident responders will be required to staff all evening events
    - Ensure that all evening events covered by the Code of Conduct requires attendee badges
3. Before you open ticket sales:
    - Review your Code of Conduct
    - Make all attendees agree to the Code of Conduct before buying a ticket
4. When you're scheduling volunteers:
    - Create a shift schedule for trained incident responders
    - Gather incident responders and other lead volunteer contact information and put them in the volunteer incident response guide
    - Train all volunteers (especially registration volunteers) on how to seek out an incident responder and the location of the quiet room, as well as how to handle unwanted attendees and weapons policy violations
5. 1-2 months before your event:
    - Decide on a secure way to store digital incident reports
    - Assign a team member to digitally document all incident reports
    - Buy any bright t-shirts or high visibility vests for your trained incident responders
6. 1 week before your event:
    - Print out physical copies of the volunteer incident response guide,
    - Create an on-site binder for lead incident responder to store incident reports, keys, map of venue, etc.
    - Remind your speakers to send in their slides
7. During your event:
    - Introduce your Code of Conduct
    - Introduce your trained incident responders
8. After your event:

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- Hold a debriefing for all trained incident responders
- Archive any paper incident reports into the digital document storage, and decide who needs to have access to each report
- Assess whether additional actions need to be taken

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Code of Conduct

It's important to have a Code of Conduct in place before your conference. At the bare minimum, your CoC should cover:

- Microaggressions
  - Microaggressions are statements that reinforce the status quo, and may make minorities in tech feel uncomfortable, alone, or unsupported.
  - The Code of Conduct should make people comfortable reporting even small microaggressions, which are the most common form of CoC incident.
  - Example CoC language that addresses microaggressions:
    toot.cat: "We are committed to making participation in this instance an oppression-free experience for everyone, regardless of level of experience, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, personal appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, age, religion, or nationality. We define oppression as any language or action that expresses, reinforces, upholds or sympathizes with any form of systemic social domination."
- Examples of inappropriate behavior
- Weapons policy
- A clearly marked separate section should include examples of attendee behavior the organizers want to encourage
- Consequences of inappropriate behavior
- Contact information for reporting an incident

A separate reporting guideline should cover:

- Who will receive information about the incident (e.g. trained incident responders, ORG board)
- How an incident report will handled at the event
- Timeframe for responding to an incident report
- What kind of follow up to expect from the trained responders and event organizers (including the fact that you may only receive an email saying the incident was reviewed without details about the actions taken)
- Details on retention of incident reports and steps taken to ensure the privacy and security of people making reports (see Documentation section below)
- Who has the authority to decide the official response to an incident report
- How you will handle conflicts of interest

Resources: http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Code_of_conduct_evaluations
Pycon US 2018 Code of Conduct and reporting guidelines (updated by Otter Tech):
https://us.pycon.org/2018/about/code-of-conduct/
https://us.pycon.org/2018/about/code-of-conduct/attendee-procedure/
https://us.pycon.org/2018/about/code-of-conduct/staff-procedure/

Enforcement Team

Your enforcement team size will vary based on your event or community size. The minimum recommended enforcement team size is three people, and you may need to designate an additional person to pull into decisions on how to handle a report, should two out of the three enforcement team members have a conflict of interest. Ideally, you would have one additional enforcement team member per 500 attendees or community members. For example, an event with 500 attendees should have at least 3 enforcement team members, and an event with 3,000 attendees should have at least 8 enforcement team members.

When putting together an enforcement team for an international community, it's important to have representation from different countries and timezones. The enforcement team members should have a variety of employers (in case of a conflict of interest with a co-worker). You may want to recruit enforcement team members who are outside your community or from a related community, since community leaders tend to know many community members and may often have a conflict of interest.

Ideally, the enforcement team would include people who come from the different demographics and backgrounds mentioned in the Code of Conduct's protected classes statement (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic background, etc). This allows the enforcement team to have a more balanced perspective when evaluating reports. However, it's important to note that people from groups under-represented in tech are often asked to do the emotional labor of improving the community when they only want to focus on contributing to the community instead. Keep that in mind when you decide who to ask.

When asking people to join the enforcement team, it's important to communicate the types of reports you expect the team might handle, the approximate time commitment per week or month, and emphasize the short amount of time required to respond to a report which is documented in your Code of Conduct reporting guidelines.

Designate a subset of enforcement team members who have the authority to decide a response to a report. If the entire team will vote on the response, require a majority vote of the people who attend the meeting about the incident, rather than a unanimous vote. If only a subset of the enforcement team has the responsibility of deciding the response to a report, the rest of the team will be taking incident reports and providing any additional information, but not following up with reported people.

Trained Responder Shifts

It’s often useful to have trained responders work out shifts to be “on duty”. This is especially important if trained responders are also conference organizers who have duties throughout the conference. There should never be a time when organizers look “too busy” to take a code of conduct report. Work out the trained responder shifts before the conference.

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It may be useful for on-duty trained responders to wear a bright t-shirt or high-visibility vest on their shift, and make rounds of the venue. This allows attendees to quickly identify trained responders. Trained responders should be briefed on all areas of the venue to patrol, including which rooms are off limits (e.g. a room for attendees of color), which rooms need special handling (e.g. open the door to the quiet room slowly), and which areas need specific attention (e.g. watch for issues on the party floor or in the hacker lounge where alcohol is served).

Documentation

Your incident response team needs a plan for how they will document Code of Conduct reports and the responses to those report. This usually includes two ways of documenting incidents, one to be used during the event, and another to be used after the event.

During the event: Use a physical binder or shared online document to create incident reports. A physical binder is useful for carrying around a copy of Incident Response documentation, phone numbers, and a small first aid kit.

When an incident occurs, note the date, time, location, and write down all information gathered during the report. Each trained responder should receive a briefing on incidents that occurred during the conference.

Keep track of the team's ongoing and resolved incidents in a shared spreadsheet, so that you can hold yourselves accountable to the response time frame documented in your Code of Conduct reporting guidelines. Keep resolutions and notes vague enough that enforcement team members with a conflict of interest don't know the details of the incident. Use gender neutral language when describing the reporter and reported person. Suggested format:

Safety Risk?	Risk of repeating behavior?	Status	Initials of reporter & reported person	Date & time of incident	Actions needed and when	Status or resolution
Yes	Yes	Ongoing	J.D. & F.J.	07/07/2018 8:30am 07/08/2018 12:30pm	Team on the look out for reported person - ASAP	Will be removed when they return

After the event: Put details from event reports into a document repository that is shared among trained responders, and (when necessary) the ORG board members. Review all incidents.

Decide future improvements for incident handling. Note any patterns in current or past incidents, and decide whether to act on a pattern of inappropriate behavior.

If using Google Docs, DO NOT TURN LINK SHARING ON. Only share the document directly with a person's email address. Be aware that the document's complete revision history will be available to any new person you share the document with. If using a git repository to track incident reports, be aware that the commit messages, revision timestamps, and committer may provide additional information to new people who receive access.

When using Google Docs, you can share a particular incident with only the enforcement team members who do not have a conflict of interest. Remember that if the folder is shared with the enforcement team, people with a conflict of interest can still see the title of the document. Use initials or code words in the title to protect reporter and reported people's confidentiality.

Key Volunteers

As well as having trained incident responders, you may need to gather the contact information of a few key volunteers. Those volunteers include:

- **Volunteer Coordinator**: The lead person who is coordinating efforts and shifts for event volunteers.
- **Escorts**: People who are willing to provide escort services. This may include providing escorts to people who are feeling unsafe, or people who are intoxicated. Having a mix of people with different physical appearances is good.
- **Accessibility champions**: People who are aware of accessibility of the venue.
- **Food experts**: People who can give advice on which local restaurants can meet attendees dietary needs, or who can provide ingredient lists for conference provided food.

While incident responders should not be responsible for handling all issues that arise, they are often asked to solve simple issues that other volunteers should handle.

Registration System

Your event ticketing system should have a "click-through" agreement that requires attendees to read the entire Code of Conduct and agree to it before they can buy tickets. All attendees, even those that reigster on-site, should be required to readn and agree to the Code of Conduct.

Train registration volunteers to raise issues

In order to track attendees who may have had a potential CoC violation in the past (or in another community), all attendees should be required to fill out a registration form. The form should require attendees to agree to the Code of Conduct. Registration staff should be instructed to seek out trained responders if a person does not want to agree to the Code of Conduct, or the organizers want to be notified if a specific person shows up at the conference.

Please note that the legality of banning a person from attending an event varies based on location, depending on harassment, discrimination, and trespassing laws. Please consult with a legal advisor and your venue's security team for more information.

Each volunteer should receive a copy of the event's safety information. On taking over as a volunteer, each volunteer should be briefed on the safety information, the phone numbers for trained responders, and the location of the quiet room to take reporters to while they wait for a trained incident responder to arrive.

Identifying CoC responders - Bright, visible clothing

It's important for event attendees to be able to recognize people who are trained to respond to a Code of Conduct violation (trained responders). Newcomers to a conference will not be able to remember faces, so it's important to provide a bright, visible, item of clothing for trained responders to wear. It could be a colorful Staff conference t-shirt, a high-visibility vest, or even a hawaiian shirt.

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Venue Questions

Gather information about the venue including:

- Venue security phone number
- Whether the venue has security camera and who to contact for video footage
- Location of a quiet, private room (or curtained area) where volunteers can take CoC incident reporters before a trained responder can arrive.
- Accessibility options
- Venue policy on providing ramps (how much set-up time is necessary, etc)
- Venue facilities contacts for questions about accessibility, wifi, food, etc.
- Location of elevators to reach all rooms
- Location of gender-neutral restrooms

Evening Events and Alcohol

If your event includes alcohol, please refer to the AdaCamp Toolkit for tips on how to increase the safety of the event for attendees.

Additionally, it’s also useful to provide more than one non-alcoholic beverage that doesn’t include caffeine, to support people who cannot drink caffeine for various reasons including religion or medical conditions.

Speaker Slides

Ask all speakers to submit their slides at least three days before the conference. Most speakers won’t, but it provides conference organizers an additional chance to review for inappropriate content. Require all keynoters to submit their slides at 10pm the night before their keynote, since inappropriate content in a keynote will cause a large audience to be exposed.

Introducing Your Code of Conduct

It's important for organizers to introduce the Code of Conduct during the opening keynote. If you expect attendees to skip the opening day, you may need to introduce the Code of Conduct during each keynote.

It's important to not make disparaging remarks or reduce the power of your code of conduct. Phrases like "we're all adults here, I'm sure we won't need to enforce this," signals to people from groups under-represented in tech that you won't take reports of microaggressions (which often happen daily to them) seriously. These phrases also signal to people who tend to "push boundaries" that you will be less likely to enforce the Code of Conduct.

Most conference organizers just read the introductory paragraph of their Code of Conduct, which typically contains the list of protected classes. They may additionally read the list of behaviors they want to encourage in attendees, and the list of unacceptable behaviors. Some conference organizers even read the entire Code of Conduct, which often takes less time than you think!

When you are introducing the Code of Conduct, make sure a majority of the trained incident responders are in the room. Ask them to stand up after you introduce the Code of Conduct, and allow a longer moment for attendees to look around the room to identify incident responders.