



## Safety off the Streets Workgroup Minutes

**DATE:** Tuesday, October 10, 2017

**TIME:** 1:30 PM – 4:00 PM

**LOCATION:** Bud Clark Commons  
Multipurpose Room  
650 NW Irving Street  
Portland, OR 97209

**ATTENDEES:** Chris Aiosa, Courtney Amundson, Janet Arellano, Brittany Arnett, Tony Bernal, Maggie Black, Jessica Chinn, Avi Deol, Kaitlyn Dey, Katie Dineen, Kaytee Evans, Brianna Fay, Emilie Friedman, Shelley Gilmore, Gissel Gonzalez, Erika Guynes, Carlyne Haycraft, Jaidra Hennessey, Hillary Houck, Sara Johnson, Tiffany Kingery, Katie Mays, Ian McAnnis-Entenman, Mike McGowe, Karissa Moden, Amanda Moles, DiJonnnette Montgomery-Thompson, Lily Padilla, Luisa Padilla, Michael Ryan, Neal Sand, Hannah Sams, Kira Schmaljohn, Dawn Shafer, Leanne Sliva, Sanjay Soman, Doris Talbert, Yulia Tsareuko-Carey, Alexanne Taylor, Emily Volpert, Lauren Wertz.

### MEETING DISCUSSION

- Welcome and Introductions
  - Tony Bernal, Transition Projects, opened the meeting and welcomed guests
  - Tiffany Kingery, Joint Office of Homeless Services, led the group through introductions and a check-in question
- De-Escalation Strategies Panel
  - DiJonnnette Montgomery-Thompson, Director of Day Space Services at JOIN, Carlyne Haycraft, Co-Founder and Executive Director at EMERJ Safe Now, Sara Johnson, Director of WomenStrength, Emilie Freidman, Volunteer and Donations Coordinator at Human Solutions, Karissa Moden, Systemic Change Director at Sisters of the Road.
  - Katie Mays, JOIN, and Karissa Moden served as moderators on the panel.
  - How do you see power and identity playing a role in de-escalation?
    - DiJonnnette Montgomery-Thompson spoke on the importance of expectations for behavior, what happens in a situation, and what should happen next time. She believes in providing choice to individuals so that they can consider the options in a situation. They have a zero-tolerance policy on –isms, including sexism, racism, etc. and they discuss those issues when they arise.
    - Emilie Freidman spoke about how your personal identity plays a role in de-escalation.
    - Karissa Moden mentioned the need to be able to center ourselves, but also how our instincts are informed by society. We need to be careful about our understanding of certain situations, questioning our instincts if necessary. In a position of power, reflection is necessary in order to understand how our power or identity are impacting our behavior.
    - Carlyne Haycraft spoke about white supremacist culture in de-escalation and the importance of holding ourselves accountable. She spoke about the significance of titles (i.e. educator, trainer, etc.). How does our privilege ebb and flow? How does it change based on context? Carlyne suggested that using a lens of privilege and understanding can help make individuals feel more comfortable.

- Emilie Freidman mentioned that powers and privileges are tools for de-escalation. Some aspects of your identity can aid certain situations, and we should take advantage of those opportunities.
- Karissa Modem said: do not do what others can do for themselves. She provided an example of a fight in the café, and how community members want to stop the situation and step in. How can we honor shared spaces and perspectives of intervention from the community?
- The panelists provided examples of situations when they de-escalated a situation.
- De-escalation strategies include...
  - Connecting to a person.
  - Using their name.
  - Looking people in their eyes.
  - Stay at a neutral tone in your conversation/responses.
  - Remain calm in the situation.
  - Take the conversation to a private area in order to preserve dignity.
  - Let them tell the story (narrative therapy).
  - Stand at a safe distance—making both parties comfortable.
  - Stay aware of body language.
  - Think about what it would be like to be in the other person’s shoes.
  - Offering them food.
  - When de-escalation is not working, consider how the anger can switch to you. Deflect that through an imaginary visual glass wall—you can hear everything someone is saying, but you do not take it in. You are not attempting to distance yourself, but to maintain self-care.
  - Team approach—ensure you have someone work through the situation with you. This way, you can reflect on what went well and what was difficult in the particular de-escalation.
  - When you’re intimidated or afraid in de-escalation, think about reframing what violence is. Emilie Friedman believes that in some cases, violence manifests itself in lack of help or assistance when you have the skills to do so.
  - Ground yourself before you jump into a crisis—take the time to consider the skills and tools you may have.
  - Center yourself, Listen to the person, Affirm the person, Respond to the situation, Add more information/give more context to the situation.
  - De-escalation is not just for people who are in shelter, it is also necessary for community members.
  - De-escalation is not pretty and it is not perfect—ride the waves and respond to both of the individuals involved.
  - Go for a walk to get fresh air or change the scenery.
  - Watch how you might be escalated yourself.
  - Define behavioral limits—“You are swearing at me right now and I cannot talk to you when you are using that type of language.”
  - Be as simple as possible in your responses with individuals you are trying to de-escalate.
  - Check-in with your colleagues when you are working with de-escalation to ensure self-care and group-care. Maintain accountability, and give yourself the opportunity to mess up. Ask for feedback and make adjustments on your technique as you learn more skills.

- Be compassionate; try to make the person understand that you care.
- How do you prevent yourself from becoming escalated when you are trying to de-escalate a situation?
  - ◆ The higher they get, the calmer you get.
  - ◆ Voice tone should be low, firm, slow, and even.
  - ◆ Engage in deep breathing.
  - ◆ Don't take things personally
  - ◆ Remember that you have the skills to de-escalate, and you can utilize those skills
  - ◆ It is all about practice; you will improve in your de-escalation skills the more you use them.
  - ◆ Instead of getting police involved, try human-to-human contact.
  - ◆ Use your intuition.
  - ◆ Meet people where they are.
- When you do not know someone, how do you try to get to a personal level?
  - ◆ Listen.
  - ◆ Use humor.
  - ◆ Offer comforts/to help meet basic needs (water, privacy, snack, restroom, etc.).
  - ◆ Remember your personal safety.
  - ◆ Be yourself.
  - ◆ Recognize fatigue in having to explain the situation multiple times.
- When is it a smart idea to stop someone who is explaining their situation so long that they are de-escalating themselves again?
  - ◆ Use a different technique. Offer different ideas, change locations for the conversation, keep a neutral tone, work slowly.
  - ◆ Re-direct the question. Reaffirm what they have shared, but move towards the positive; i.e. "It sounds like you're struggling with \_\_\_\_\_, what do you think would be a good choice moving forward?"
  - ◆ Active listening to ensure direct and accurate communication/understanding.
  - ◆ Distraction.
  - ◆ Be honest and real; "I really want to help you, if we sit here a while longer and keep talking, will that help or be too intense for you?"
- How do you deal with intoxication or mental health crisis?
  - ◆ If someone is in an altered state and escalated, the prefrontal cortex does not come back down. Strategies about connecting or restructuring will not work. Try repeating yourself, using directives, and getting support if you can.
  - ◆ Do not assume that people are using—recognize that not getting a night of sleep can cause reactionary behavior as well.
- How do you respond when you feel that a de-escalation situation is becoming unsafe?
  - ◆ Knowing where your exits are.
  - ◆ Where are your allies?
  - ◆ How can you connect with them?
  - ◆ Keep your distance.
  - ◆ Utilize panic button/bell if available.
  - ◆ Call 911 and notify everyone in the space that the police are being called.
  - ◆ Do not get physically involved.
  - ◆ Stop engaging in the situation.

- ◆ Get behind a barrier (table/chair).
- ◆ Consider the space that you are in and where conversations can safely occur.
- ◆ Have trust in your process (if applicable) and in your coworkers.
- ◆ Engage in role-play and practice in advance of de-escalation situations.
- ◆ Be aware of the situations that make you feel uncomfortable in advance.
- ◆ Recognize that it is not always safe or smart to call the police.
- ◆ Make sure another fight does not escalate due to the escalation
- Panelists introduced themselves and spoke about what de-escalation means to them.
  - De-escalation can emerge through relationship building.
- Chronic Homelessness Planning Update
  - Marc Jolin, Joint Office of Homeless Services, asked the group for participation in a Strategic Planning Survey.

## NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, November 14, 2017

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

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650 NW Irving Street

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