Overview

Key Principles

1. Planning ahead makes your job easier in the moment
2. Emphasize positive, shared values and expectations
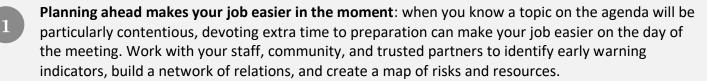3. Be prepared to enforce the rules consistently and fairly, follow up after

De-Escalation Toolkit

1. Draw on CLARA to stay calm in the moment (Center, Listen, Acknowledge/Affirm, Respond, Add)
2. Appeal to shared values and/or trusted voices in the room
3. Rehumanize, Defuse, and Create Space

Safety and Security Toolkit

1. Monitor any specific threats before, during, and after the meeting
2. Consider ways to keep groups physically separate within the meeting space
3. Clearly post community agreements, including process for public comment
4. Familiarize yourself with state laws on open carry and self-described militias
5. Debrief after the event, including specifically on the security situation

Key Principles

1   **Planning ahead makes your job easier in the moment**: when you know a topic on the agenda will be particularly contentious, devoting extra time to preparation can make your job easier on the day of the meeting. Work with your staff, community, and trusted partners to identify early warning indicators, build a network of relations, and create a map of risks and resources.

    a. **Monitor social media and the press, etc.** for de-humanizing language, statements, or plans for destructive conflict or violence.

    b. **Reach out to key leaders** of any groups you know may be in attendance, especially to solicit any concerns or potential points of tension ahead of the meeting. Ask for their commitment and partnership in maintaining space for respectful dialogue.

    c. **Discuss de-escalation and safety plans** with community leaders and local law enforcement -- if appropriate for your community, consider planning for civilian monitors instead of law enforcement. Generate clear protocols.

    d. **Think of and reach out to any other trusted messengers** in your community -- if you aren't the best person to reach a certain group, is there another person(s) you can enlist to either reach out early or attend on the day of the meeting to help de-escalate.

    e. **Map a list of risks and resources**. If appropriate to the issue, risks might include the groups that are coming, insignia/clothing or how to identify a particular group; who is most at risk; where in the space and when might the flash points occur, etc. Resources might include who has de-escalation training, key leaders, trusted messengers, medics, nearest hospital, etc. (see below for resources on 1) de-escalation and 2) safety and security planning).

2 **Emphasize positive, shared values and expectations**, for example, how your community values public debate and the first amendment. Use in-group language, i.e., "We've seen what can happen elsewhere. We acknowledge the dignity of all people, and that conflict can be constructive. We are determined to protect constructive, respectful discussion in our town and make sure everyone feels safe making their voice heard."

a. **Communicate clear rules and norms to the whole community:** emphasizing specific rules for <u>everyone</u> before, during, and after the meeting helps reinforce a sense of fairness and shared responsibility in abiding by the agreed norms you want to emphasize.
b. **Post or repost rules/norms before the meeting** to your website, Facebook, local newspaper, or other venue. Consider emphasizing a set amount of time to speak and including a sign-up list for speaker order.

3 **Be prepared to enforce the rules consistently and fairly, follow up after:** think through any scenario that could arise. Use the <u>de-escalation toolkit below</u> to help you personally demonstrate commitment to the rules and norms you set ahead of time in the moment.

a. **Reach out after the meeting** to any groups or individuals who may have felt threatened or shouted down. Ask what steps would help ensure they feel safe participating again in the future. Ask if they received any threats or intimidation outside of the meeting that may need to be addressed separately by other credible organizations or community leaders (civic groups, government, law enforcement, etc).

De-Escalation Toolkit

Even if you plan ahead, the meeting may still become heated. The following guidelines and links describe skills you and your colleagues, as individuals, can still build on and draw from to help reduce the temperature:

1. **Draw on [CLARA](#) or other individual practices to stay calm in the moment**. If you have time, join a [de-escalation or bystander intervention training offered online](#) or with a local group.

<p align="center">Center Yourself → Listen → Acknowledge/Affirm → Respond → Add</p>

2. **Appeal to shared values and/or trusted voices in the room.** Draw on individuals you connected with before, remind everyone at the meeting of the shared rules, norms, and values.
3. **Rehumanize, Defuse, and Create Space** for all parties involved, remembering your goal is to protect and show your commitment to space for civic discourse in your community, keeping everyone safe.

Safety and Security Best Practices

- **Track and record any specific threats before, during, and after the meeting**, designating a specific staff member to liaise with law enforcement or other appropriate groups during the meeting itself.
- **Consider ways to keep groups physically separate within the meeting space**, if you know there will be large groups with a high likelihood or potential for physical altercations
- **Clearly post community agreements, including standardized and consistent process for public comment** as a way to promote security via "rules" of participation that all must follow.
- **Familiarize yourself with state laws on open carry and self-described militias**, especially those known to attend meetings in your area. [Georgetown ICAP summarizes Georgia law on unlawful militias here](#).
- **Debrief after the event specifically on the security situation** and discuss ways to incorporate lessons into any planning for future meetings.