



PORTLAND DSA

INTERNAL CHAPTER POLICY

Community Conduct Policy

Approved by membership January 12, 2020

PREAMBLE:

We are democratic socialists working to build a world free from capitalism and other forms of oppression. Having been socialized in a patriarchal, white supremacist, capitalist society, we recognize the need to learn positive, peaceful, and constructive ways of communicating with one another. We also recognize the importance of holding one another accountable to our organization's democratic and cooperative values as expressed in the Community Guidelines below, and in national and local DSA documents, along with our democratically determined policies and political strategies. Accordingly, for the purpose of maximizing our effectiveness as a chapter of a national democratic socialist organization, all members of Portland DSA pledge to abide by the following Policy for interpersonal conduct with one another and with others in our community. This Policy will inform our interactions.

Section I. Scope

- A. The scope of this policy extends to all members of Portland DSA. Chapter leaders—including those elected at Working Group, Committee, Caucus and Steering Committee levels—are expected to make an extra effort to uphold the expectations of this policy. The entirety of this policy applies to:
 1. members within Portland DSA events and spaces;
 2. members at events and spaces affiliated with or endorsed by Portland DSA;
 3. members at events and spaces affiliated with DSA Portland coalition partners; and
 4. members interacting with other members online.
- B. The application of this policy will be adapted as appropriate for these situations:

1. misconduct between members and non-members within Portland DSA events and spaces;
 2. misconduct between members and non-members outside of Portland DSA events or events affiliated or endorsed by Portland DSA or Portland DSA coalition partners.
- C. This policy overlaps with the chapter's Grievance Policy. It is intended to be used in lieu of the Grievance Policy when appropriate (i.e., in cases not involving harassment or abuse. See Section IV.).

Section II. Community Guidelines

The following Community Guidelines shall be used to inform our Code of Conduct:

- A. We should feel Supported to Assemble.
 1. We need to be able to feel physically and emotionally safe to be present with other people. We will work from the principle that individuals have the ultimate right to decide how others interact with their bodies. Consent is everything.
 2. Intersectionality is important.¹ The way we relate to each other, especially in greatly diverse communities, is often complex and complicated. This means that often, conflicts between people who belong to oppressed or marginalized groups require consideration and sensitivity in responding to potentially offensive interactions. Conflict is easier to manage when we are aware of those complex relationships.
- B. We should have the Ability to Assemble.
 1. We will cultivate spaces and events that as many people are able to participate in as possible.
- C. We should feel Supported to Communicate.
 1. We will work to ensure that all voices are included, heard, and respected. People will be more likely to engage if they think they will be treated respectfully and their ideas will be valued
 2. Rigorous debate is one of the hallmarks of any socialist organization. Such debate elicits the fullest political commitment and input from each member in order to develop solidarity. We will expect debates to be conducted with civility and respect, as comrades are committed to the same struggle.
- D. We should feel Supported to Dissent.
 1. Dissent is valuable. We will encourage one another to speak up when we think we're heading in the wrong direction.
 2. All of us, and especially those in leadership or who are perceived as leaders, will invite feedback and actively listen to criticism, which provides opportunities to learn and widen our horizons.

¹ Taken from <https://wealljs.org/enforcement>

3. One aim in supporting debate and dissent is to make disagreement less emotionally fraught and reduce the kind of defensiveness that induces rigidity and difficulty in listening and hearing.
- E. We should support one another in cultivating self-awareness of our experiences with oppression and privilege.
1. We will recognize that nearly all of us have by varying degrees been socialized under, and have therefore internalized, systems of class oppression, white supremacy, sexism, neoliberalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, ableism, ageism, and other forms of oppression.
 2. We will remain aware of our privileges. If we're coming from a privileged background (socio-economic, cultural, immigration status, and so on), we will recognize it along with our position, social standing and social capital, and consider how they may affect our way of thinking and being. Being seen as a leader also provides someone with an immense amount of power.
 3. We will recognize that living under interlocking systems of oppression creates trauma, and that for many of us our brain responds in such a way that makes conflict resolution hard. When a conflict starts, we often enter fight-or-flight mode, which reduces our ability to look at what's in front of us with a kind lens or assume good faith in ambiguous situations.²

Section III. Code of Conduct

Based on the above Community Guidelines, we spell out more clearly in this section the conduct that will bring us to the realization of our Guidelines:

A. Supported to Assemble

1. We will ask before touching other comrades. We will not engage in non-consensual physical contact. We will keep in mind that consent can be withdrawn at any time.
2. We will respect members' personal boundaries. Unwanted contact or stalking (i.e., pursuing contact with a person after learning that this contact is unwelcome) outside of the normal course of DSA spaces, events, and organizing work is prohibited.
3. We will recognize every person's right to safety, sexual autonomy, and sexual freedom. We will not engage in sexual violence, sexual harassment, or other non-consensual sexual behavior or attention.
4. We will recognize every person's right to safety, bodily autonomy, and personal physical freedom. We will not initiate physical

² Ibid.

violence or intimidation through threats of violence. When faced with the threat of violence to self or others, we will prioritize de-escalating methods, such as, walking away, trying to talk with the person or seeking advice from a trusted comrade.

5. We will exercise due care in choosing when to use explicit violent or sexual imagery. If our purpose in doing so is not obvious, we will help others understand. We will include content warnings to the best of our abilities.
6. We will ask before photographing or recording comrades. If an event is going to be photographed, recorded, or broadcast, appropriate notice must be posted, both before and during the event.
 - a) At protests or other events in public outdoor spaces, filming and photography are expected and consent is not normally required by law and could occur without posting.
7. We will respect one another's confidentiality, and will avoid sharing private personal information (including, but not limited to: email addresses, phone numbers, physical addresses or locations, places of employment, dead names, participation in direct action or workplace organizing, etc.) without consent.
 - a) It is best to consider whatever is communicated is to be private, unless specified otherwise. Members may share matters that are personal and delicate in our meeting spaces, so it's important to commit to maintaining confidentiality.
 - b) When communicating with non-members about DSA discussions, the Chatham House Rule will apply to our meetings, unless consent is given to the contrary:

"Participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."

8. We will refrain from knowingly spreading false information either verbally or in written form about members. We will exercise care and caution in discussing information about which we do not have firsthand knowledge. We will reflect on the purpose of sharing information and attempt to do so in a spirit of comradeship.
9. We will not pressure anyone into taking mind altering substances, including alcohol.

B. Ability to Assemble

1. We will accommodate physical differences. When choosing a mode of communication or a venue for an event, we will take time

to imagine how people of varying physical ability might interact with it.

2. We will consider technological familiarity, and whether the platforms we're choosing to use are within the technical capacity of those who wish to participate. If they are not, we will find ways to bring them in, or reassess.
3. When presenting, we will speak slowly, describe the content of slides, and refrain from using flashing/blinking videos or animations.
4. If a conversation is being facilitated by a sign language interpreter or translator, we will maintain focus on the individual, not their interpreter.
5. We will have compassion for unexpected emotional responses and erratic behavior if they aren't overly disruptive.
6. We will prioritize using child-friendly event and meeting locations, and actively recruit chapter volunteers to provide child watch during chapter events.
7. We will engage in inclusionary practices, including but not limited to accepting requests for accommodation and recognizing that not all disabilities are visible.
8. Unless prohibited by an existing chapter policy for reasons such as confidentiality or conduct, leaders and organizers will make resources accessible to all members
9. We will not touch people's mobility devices, assistive equipment, or service animals without their consent.
10. We will avoid blocking direct sight of our lips while speaking, as many people read lips to aid in their comprehension.

C. Supported to Communicate

1. We will respect individuals' identities. We will use the names and pronouns people ask us to use, and will share the names and pronouns we wish to be referred by on name tags, digital profiles, and during introductions at meetings (unless we do not want such information to be known).
2. We will refrain from challenging a marginalized person's race, sexuality, disability, etc.
3. We will refrain from demanding, discriminatory, or harassing behavior and speech.
4. We will criticize ideas, not people. We will refrain from ad hominem attacks.
5. We will refrain from **intentional** verbal intimidation such as screaming; insults; threats or blackmail of any kind.

D. Supported to Dissent

1. We will make space for dissent. We will specifically ask for criticism.
 - a) We will work to overcome a culture of isolation, competition, and fear.
 - b) We will try to understand the sources of dissent, even if we disagree.
 - c) We will practice and promote active listening, i.e. we will state what we think the person is saying if we are uncertain, and will ask questions for clarification that express genuine interest in hearing the answer.
 - d) We will not assume that we know why someone holds an opinion even if it has common associations in public discourse. We will not assume our reasons for holding our own view are or ought to be obvious.
2. We will approach one another on assumptions of good faith:
 - a) We will work to build relationships based on common ground and solidarity, and will strive to solve problems through direct face-to-face dialogue.
 - b) We will avoid negative assumptions, accusations, blaming, gossiping, put-downs, dishonesty, personal attacks, and aggressive behavior.
3. We will recognize that we are permitted to express emotion or anger at our opposition, so long as doing so does not violate this code.
 - a) We will seek to respond to the content of what others communicate, not their tone.
 - b) We will recognize that both “the heat of the moment,” and emotion begets emotion.
 - c) We will recognize the interplay of these considerations with structures of inequality and privilege.
4. We will engage with dissent and in dissent without reducing someone to their political or philosophical stances.
5. We will avoid treating political disagreements as personal attacks, and avoid using personal attacks as political weapons.
6. We will respect one another's differences and work to find points of solidarity and opportunities for collaboration and movement-building.
 - a) We will recognize that as an organization, we have come to certain conclusions in which we no longer invite discussion, while at the same time there are points of difference that remain productive to the development of democratic socialist politics and our multi-tendency organization.

7. We will seek to overcome misinformation and divisiveness, and ground political ideas, discussions, and arguments in facts and evidence.
 8. When discussing our personal experiences, perceptions, and feelings, we will avoid generalizations and use first-person “I statements” to make clear that we are speaking as individuals and not on behalf of others.
- E. Awareness of Oppression and Privilege
1. We will practice the concept of “MOVE UP, MOVE UP!”³
 - a) If we are someone who tends to not speak a lot, we will try to move up into a role of speaking more. If we tend to speak a lot, we will move up into a role of listening more.
 - b) We will be aware that some people might be more or less impacted by an issue, and move up in listening or speaking accordingly.
 - c) At the very least, we will prioritize the input of those who have not yet spoken on an agenda item.
 - d) We will also recognize that no one has an obligation to share.
 - e) We will recognize the need to allow for silence and reflection.
 2. We will point out when a facilitator or stack-taker are giving any individual too much attention or not paying enough attention to a group member.
 3. We will clarify specialized jargon, acronyms, and short-hands. We will check in to be sure that people understand your terminology.
 4. We will refrain from oppressive language and recognize that using terms such as “crazy” or “narcissistic” are labels that are oppressive to people who actually suffer from emotional conditions. We will stay with the behavior rather than such labels.

Section IV. Policy Procedures

- A. If misconduct involves harassment or abuse as defined by National DSA’s Harassment Policy, members are requested to contact the Grievance Committee per the chapter’s Harassment Grievance Policy.

³ This is a twist on the more commonly heard “step up, step back.” The “up/up” confirms that in both experiences, growth is happening. (You don’t go “back” by learning to be a better listener. In fact, listening is a frequently feminized skill that is often seen as a lack of something. On the contrary, choosing to learn how to listen moves both you and the group up.) Saying “move” instead of “step” recognizes that not everyone can take steps, while we can all move in body or spirit. (From AORTA’s “Anti-Oppression Facilitation for Democratic Process)

- B. We all are responsible for the safety of our community. We encourage members, if they feel safe and comfortable doing so, to make an effort to intervene if they witness infractions of this code, in a way that respects the agency/autonomy of those who have been affected.
- C. If a member notices someone breaking the code of conduct (or a community agreement) and feel comfortable doing so, they are encouraged to remind the person of the agreement:
 - 1. Call In; If you are able to respond to someone breaking the code of conduct with compassion for where they're coming from, try to have an intentional conversation with them. Let them know how their behavior can be harmful, and make an effort to stay with them as they work toward more respectful conduct. Calling someone in shows respect and an assumption of good faith. It requires a commitment to continuing to work together.
 - 2. Call Out; sometimes, especially if a person is perpetuating a traumatizing societal norm, it is more appropriate to stop them than to commit to continuing to work with them. Calling someone out means pointing out the harm they are causing. It is good practice in self care when someone who is being harmed by another calls them out.
- D. Wherever possible, personal conflicts should be resolved on an individual basis or with the help of meeting facilitators or group leaders. Given that the aim of building a socialist organization includes building a shared sense of solidarity, resolutions should be handled with the aim of changing a member's improper behavior, rather than resorting to formal disciplinary procedures.
- E. Upon ratification of this policy, the chapter will create a Conflict Resolution Working Group to develop a policy around conflict resolution, to be inserted here.
- F. If the chapter does not have conflict resolution services available, outside mediation should be sought out, or a consultation made with a member of the grievance committee.
- G. While addressing misconduct can be uncomfortable, members should feel empowered to resolve matters on their own without undergoing a formal process. However, there may be certain matters that necessitate the involvement of the Grievance Committee. If the situation comes to it, please contact them.

Section V. Policy Adoption

- A. This policy was adopted by the Portland chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America on Sunday, January 12th, 2020.

Section VI. Attribution

- A. This policy was developed through meetings held by the Portland DSA Code of Conduct Subcommittee of the Internal Organizing Committee
- B. Some language from this policy has been adapted or directly taken from:
 - 1. Metro Atlanta DSA Code of Conduct
 - 2. Boston DSA Code of Conduct
 - 3. Whatcom DSA Community Guidelines
 - 4. St. Louis DSA Code of Conduct
 - 5. Politics and Care's article entitled Safer Spaces
 - 6. National Forum on Labor Practices for Grant-Funded Digital Positions' "Code of Conduct and Community Agreement"
 - 7. Los Angeles DSA Misconduct Policy
 - 8. [WeAllJS Code of Conduct Enforcement Policy](#)