

Chicagoland Food Sovereignty Coalition Community Agreements and Principles

I. Mission Statement: We are a grassroots coalition of autonomous mutual aid groups who are cultivating food sovereignty, equity, autonomy and radical love for all people in all communities, using mutual aid practices. This is an autonomous mutual aid network, not a state-based charity effort. We are here to share as equals in the rich experience of mutual aid. We are here to honor each other with consistent service, care, and collaboration. We are ultimately our leadership, and our primary purpose is to build support systems of our own determination for all to use at will. We are prioritizing and building momentum with folks who are sick, disabled, houseless, quarantined without income, economically disadvantaged, elderly, undocumented, incarcerated, detained, queer, Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color, or who have families in need. The Chicagoland Food Sovereignty Coalition (CFSC) is committed to providing a friendly, safe and welcoming environment regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and religion (or lack thereof). CFSC is strictly abolitionist, antiracist & anti fascist.

II. Principles: Outside of this agreement, groups should be empowered in their expertise, but these agreements represent the baseline principles we all agree to.

Mutual aid: We believe in voluntary cooperation to provide collective defense and support. We reject saviorism and practice solidarity not charity. We feel these values are reflected in this document and invite others to read it:

<http://bigdoorbrigade.com/what-is-mutual-aid/>

Abolition: We support the abolition of all forms of incarceration and detention that are used to harm and oppress targeted communities. We support the decriminalization of migration and liberation of all persons.

Horizontality: We seek to build a world without any form of hierarchy and therefore organize ourselves accordingly. We also oppose all systems that create hierarchical relationships such as capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the state.

Autonomy: While we do accept the sharing of outside resources, we must be careful of whom we lend our name, labor, affiliation, or endorsement. We would rather be entirely

self-supporting than risk the common welfare of the group. There is no room for personal gain in mutual aid, and it should forever remain non professional.

We believe in fostering autonomous mutual aid networks. The "autonomous" part indicates three shared commitments/tactics: 1) a focus on decentralized, local efforts forming a web of lasting community bonds without need of politicians, corporation, or non-profit groups for mediation; 2) a resistance to hierarchical structures and organizing; and 3) a commitment to the idea that we build joy and power in forming bonds of solidarity with one another and organizing our lives in common while respecting personal autonomy.

We do not provide volunteer or aid request information to politicians or political parties or the nonprofit-industrial complex. We may choose consensual and careful collaboration that does not threaten to co-opt our autonomy or release information of others.

Direct action: We believe in building individual and collective power from below by achieving our goals without relying on governmental representatives, appealing to authorities, or cooperating with police.

Diversity of tactics: We believe individuals and groups should be able to determine actions that are appropriate for their context and will not condemn those who use tactics that are different from ours.

III. Explicitly banned from membership in slack networks or text threads:

- No current or former law enforcement officials, ICE agents, and/or correctional or intelligence officers
- Elected officials
- Any member or former member of a white nationalist or Neo-Nazi organization.
- Landlords known to retaliate against tenants or maintain unsafe living conditions.

While we recognize that some former members of these groups may be rehabilitated over time, we do not have the resources to ensure safe rehabilitation and prioritize the safety of our collaborators and comrades in this effort.

IV. Media agreement: No one person or neighborhood will put out media (including any public communication in written, verbal, or recorded form) that speaks for the entire network. Any neighborhood media should be run through area spokes to be run through city channels to ensure language is in line with our goals and commitments.

V. Land Acknowledgement: We sit on the ancestral homeland of Anishinaabeg, Niswi-Mishkodewin (Council of the Three Fires): Ojibwe, Odawa & the Potawatami and dozens of other tribes who molded and cultivated this land.

VI. Consent, Transparency and Toxic Behaviors

Consent and transparency are the foundations of our work and must be incorporated at every level. We must respect the boundaries of our network members and any ally or community member with whom we interact. We also owe it to each other to be open and honest in our communications with one another.

VII. Behaviors that work against these principles include:

- Using authoritarian, non-consensual decision-making strategies rather than using transparent dialogue to reach consensus
- Bullying and personally-attacking others
- Using any kind of discriminatory language, images, and/or actions
- Working over others without communication and cooperation in ways that reduce collective power
- Sharing any personally identifying information with anyone without explicit consent
- Failing to be transparent with information that affects others
- Violating clearly stated boundaries and expressions of nonconsent
- Expressing cynicism, negativity, and critique without purpose or otherwise decreasing momentum built from efforts of others
- Pronouncing judgments regarding bad motives of others before a discovery process or conversation with the accused

- communicating dismissively or in a chastising manner that attacks persons rather than ideas
- Expecting positive practices of others but not of oneself, manipulating others or acting in bad faith
- Being inflexible and/or unable to take others' concerns and critiques into consideration when working on collective projects

VIII. Other behaviors that work toward these principles include

- Empathy and patience with others and oneself
- Creating and using transparent decision-making processes that seek consensus
- Prioritizing accessibility and needs of all persons in communication
- Acting and communicating in good faith
- Self and community care
- Restorative, transformative justice, conflict resolution, and setting time aside to fix problems
- Working to create social harmony and considering this key part of mutual aid, even when it is difficult
- Slowing down to go at the pace of community without causing anyone to feel guilt
- Mindful honesty
- Transparency
- Understanding that there are as many cultures as there are individuals and that miscommunication happens at every moment, especially when new people begin working together. Many types of awareness, cognition, socialization, synchronicity, and understanding are privileges that some take for granted as if everyone else has them in equal measure. People will make mistakes, even as they become aware of their behaviors and try to change them with the best intentions and still fail. Character transformation should be a collective process, something quite lost in communities that hold people to impossible standards of perfection. It takes lots of time and patience to build harmonious relationships and create for ourselves, together, the culture, awareness, and sensibilities we are systemically prevented from having.

IX. Relationship of "Point Persons" or "Spokes" to the Mutual Aid Community

- Point persons are not "leaders", "commanding officers," or anything of the sort. We exist to share information and resources, and to facilitate unleashing

the constructive capacities of our communities to their own self-determination. In addition to facilitating connections, we propose and make recommendations, but we do not impose, order, or command. Every neighborhood and individual decides for themselves what they want and must do through their internal equitable, inclusive, and direct decision-making processes based on free will and voluntarism.

- For more on horizontal organizing, see the spokes council system, which clarifies roles for communication:

<https://seedsforchange.org.uk/spokescouncil>