AAF's **HOPE** AGAINST HATE Campaign presents

Stay Safe, Stay Engaged:
Essential Tips for Electoral Safety Planning

Background

Elections are vital to democracy but can also create heightened tensions and challenges, particularly for organizations involved in voter outreach and civic engagement. This toolkit offers practical steps and resources for developing a comprehensive electoral safety plan, factoring in potential risks like harassment or hostile environments, to empower the safety and positive engagement of staff, volunteers, and community members.

Framing Safety

SAFETY FIRST

Safety comes from the grassroots, where community members are collectively responsible for ensuring spaces are safe for everyone. It's supported by individuals who take an active role in safeguarding their personal well-being and that of their community. True safety isn't just about responding to threats after they occur—it starts from within, with a mindset of preparedness and empowerment. For those involved in civic engagement work, creating a safety plan is a key part of this proactive approach.

What is a safety plan?

- A strategic document that outlines potential risks and threats.
- A tool for planning and coordinating responses to incidents.
- A framework for determining available resources and capacities.
- A proactive approach to ensure safety for individuals or groups.
- A flexible plan, adaptable for various contexts and environments.
- A method to foster collaboration, resilience, and preparedness.

What is NOT a safety plan?

- Reactive response to a crisis or threat without prior preparation.
- One-size-fits-all solution; it must be tailored to specific contexts.
- Rigid or unchangeable set of rules.
- Guarantee of complete safety or risk elimination.
- Substitute for training or skill-building in safety protocols.
- Informal or verbal-only set of ideas or instructions.

Resources

- This Google Drive folder contains reading materials, safety plan templates, and resource mapping templates for your input.
- Click here: https://bit.ly/AAF-SafetyPlan-Tools or scan the QR code:

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How to Build a Safety Plan

You're ready to build your safety plan—hooray! By preparing for your work with safety in mind, you are empowering yourself and your team. Below is a list of steps to help you get started.

1 Risk Assessment

To build your safety plan, you first must consider the risks ahead of you. We propose a four-step evaluation process for each potential risk:

1. Identify Potential Risks and Hazards (e.g. misinformation)
2. Assess the Likelihood of Each Risk (e.g. ease of spreading misinformation on social media)
3. Evaluate the Impact of Each Risk (e.g. voter apathy)
4. Prioritize Risks (use a Risk Assessment Matrix to categorize these risks)

2 Envisioning Your Safety Plan

Based on the risks you identified in Step 1, start envisioning the practical tools, resources, and strategies you'll need to address those risks effectively. Think of this as creating a toolkit—both physical and mental—that equips you and your team to respond when challenges arise. For example, assess your emergency contacts, communication channels, first-aid items, and safety training skills. Refer to the Safety Plan Template available in the folder above to start noting these resources and strategies.

3 Resource Building

Once you've identified your risks and created your safety plan, it's time to map out the resources needed to implement it effectively. A pod map can be a valuable tool for visualizing and organizing the network of people, services, and resources available to support your plan. It's essential to maintain some of these resources regularly by checking in with members of your network to ensure they remain up-to-date on your work and are ready to respond effectively when necessary.

4 Practice & Implementation

Once your safety plan is established, it's crucial to put it into practice and ensure everyone is familiar with how to implement it. Regular training and drills allow your team to understand their roles, refine their skills, and build confidence. Simulating various scenarios based on the identified risks—such as evacuations, de-escalation, or emergency communications—helps solidify the plan. Continuous practice ensures that when a real situation occurs, your team is empowered to respond effectively.

5 Safety Plan Evaluation

Evaluating your safety plan is crucial for ensuring its effectiveness and adaptability over time. After each significant event or drill, conduct a thorough debrief with your team to discuss what worked well and identify areas for improvement. Regularly assess the plan's strengths and areas for improvement by reviewing past incidents, gathering feedback from staff, and analyzing how well the plan addresses emerging risks.

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