



Midwest Anti-Violence Solidarity Circle Group Agreements

General Agreement:

Through the Midwest Anti-Violence Solidarity Circle (MAVSC), frontline advocates (survivors themselves) set out to disrupt how gender-based violence is addressed in their communities by co-creating spaces where survivors actively define what justice looks like **for them** & where communities work alongside advocates to end violence.

MAVSC is a mutual aid group. We affirm that MAVSC is a community-based effort committed to providing non-carceral, anti-capitalist resource alternatives. We also internally commit to challenging carceral and capitalist behaviors (e.g. forcing folks to work past their capacities, surveilling inputs and outputs). In order for mutual aid to be a tool toward liberation, we must see each other as whole, rather than the parts of us that we can offer.

(We borrowed much of this content from the Cleveland Pandemic Response (CLE CPR).

We are committed to revisiting these group agreements every three months.

Group Agreements:

- We acknowledge that we are all flawed and that harm will occur. We will work to repair that harm - supporting both the person who was harmed and the person who has harmed.
- We invite one another to share their lived experiences, emotions, and needs without fear of judgment or exploitation. We bring our whole authentic, vulnerable selves.
- We commit to maintaining the confidentiality of our space. We will ask permission before sharing anything that was disclosed in our group.
- Perfectionism is a tenet of cis-heteropatriarchal, white supremacist, ableist society, and is wholly antithetical to our values and mission. We recognize our different cultural contexts and understandings. By “saying it messy,” we can learn and grow together.

- Beyond mere inclusion or accommodation, we aspire to '[access intimacy](#)': pre-empting access needs before an accommodation request is made. In doing so, we promote interdependence, and recognize we are better together. We may not always get access "right," but we will work together to provide support for all members.
- We are responsible for [mapping our own pods and resources](#). We see this as a proactive way to ensure that you have a supportive network within our group. We also recognize that the support needed may look different when you have caused harm vs. you have experienced harm.

Steps when conflict arises:

note: We acknowledge that this is not always linear- we all have differing processes for conflict resolution, these steps are intersecting, and we can engage these steps in whichever order feels right and revisit steps as needed

- Reach out to your "pod people."
- Allow time for all parties to process their thoughts and emotions.
- Approach conversation from a place of curiosity and trauma-informed intention (allowing time and space for grounding).
- Create opportunities to understand multiple perspectives and situations as a whole.
- Focus on the issue / conflict rather than a person's character or identity.
- The person who has harmed must be willing to take responsibility and own their impact.

Accountability in our group can look like:

- Sitting with the discomfort of conflict
- Recognizing that any harm is a collective harm
- As each situation will be different, we will be thoughtful around the kind of conflict resolution frameworks we employ. Examples include To come back to for building out conflict resolution models: [Turning Towards Each Other: A Conflict Workbook](#), [Creative Interventions Toolkit](#), [Transform Harm Resources](#) and [So You're Ready to Choose Love](#)

Membership:

AVSC is open to advocates, social workers, community organizers, educators, changemakers, and survivors. The group encourages new members to join us anytime.

- Currently, AVSC is specific to the Midwest region which includes MI, WI, IL, IN, KY, OH, MN, NE, MO and, IA).
- New members can join AVSC in the following ways:
 - Interest Application: Open on website and by invitation. New members must fill out the application before attending an AVSC session

- Current members can invite new members by sharing the interests application. In that case, the current member provides foundational information about the group and project progress to the new member.
- Members can choose their level of involvement. We understand that capitalist mindsets can put expectations on equality over equity. The notion that people put 50/50 in at all times otherwise they're in failing the group is unhelpful and breeds a sort of martyrdom - truly sustainable, loving relationships require fluidity, empathy, and accountability
- Organizations who would like to partner and engage with the MAVSC will sign an MOU outlining their commitment and participation. Members will vote to approve the organization joining our effort.

MAVSC process to support a new project:

- We will follow this simple decision-making process
- When a MAVSC member has a project they would like our group to support they will submit a brief overview using this [form](#).
- Present the project to entire group
- If relevant, few group members who share the projects or interested in expanding regional effort may create subgroups or committees.
- Members will use consensus decision making and will use this decision poll (we're borrowing from the amazing work of the KWT Mutual Aid Group):
 - 1= I'm totally on board
 - 2= I have some hesitations, but will go along
 - 3= I don't like this idea, but will go with it
 - 4= I really don't like this proposal, but I'll go
 - 5= I can't live with this proposal
- **Then the proposal will be shared with the community** by email, voted on at the following MAVSC meeting (with an option to vote through Google form for people who can't make it to the meeting). This gives everyone a chance to reflect and contribute outside of the Zoom meeting. We will solicit support "number" (1-5) as well as pros and cons, concerns, suggestions for improvement, etc.
- Our group will hash out a proposal and work with it until it becomes something most can agree on;
- Call for a consensus check to see if there are any **stand asides** (members who want to show that they disagree, but don't want to block the proposal), or any **blocks** (members who feel the proposal cannot be passed without modification).
- **If there are majorly deviating responses to a proposal** (some voting 1 and some voting 5), that we return to our group agreements to ground ourselves in our shared understanding of the group's foundation/purpose. "It is the responsibility of every person in the group to uphold these agreements." -- we may have to

engage in conflict resolution for those who may be straying away from our agreements.

Consensus Decision-Making Process:

Consensus decision making gives room for *all* members' concerns to be addressed. A **majority-rules system** can breed competition over ideas, whereas consensus decision-making systems can foster a new sense of participation where we learn to value and desire other people's ideas. Dean Spade outlines this process in [Chart 5](#)

- When we need to make time-based decisions, we will send an email to the members to vote. $\frac{2}{3}$ positive votes will be count as viable.
- We will rotate information coordinators every 3 months

Simple statement about accepting and pursuing funding:

MAVSC envisions practices and projects rooted in equity in which communities are empowered to lead the work to enable safety by and for their community. MAVSC pursues resources that align with our vision of liberation in solidarity with the community, sharing power through economic justice rather than exerting power over the process and the project through pursestrings. MAVSC will not accept funding that requires connection to carceral systems, because partnering with oppressive systems is a central means to shore up the status quo.