



# Rally/Demonstration Event Planning Guide

April 4, 2019

## Summary

This memo is intended to provide a unified approach to planning and executing rally or demonstration-style events hosted by NCTE. Through research and consultation with other organizations, this document should be used as a general guide. Additionally, the information below should be used in conjunction with more specifically-targeted documents such as the [ADA National Networks Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities](#) and NCTE and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project's ["Participating In Direct Actions: A Guide For Transgender People."](#)

## Roles and Responsibilities

There are many roles necessary to facilitating a safe and effective rally/demonstration. Below are some of the most crucial ones; however, these are still just guidelines and different events/circumstances may necessitate the addition or subtraction of certain roles.

**Manager(s):** Responsible for general oversight of the rest of the team and ensuring cohesion in organization and communication. They also should be the point of contact with relevant law enforcement organizations and obtain the necessary permits.

**Communications:** Responsible for facilitating and managing intra-team communications. Additionally, communications team members should lead promotional efforts and the development of branding and presentation.

**Marshals:** Responsible for helping participants get to and from where they need to go (both attendees and speakers) and maintaining and implementing safety and risk management strategies

**Police Liaisons:** Responsible for using their discretion in managing participant/law enforcement interactions and facilitating the minimal amount of law enforcement involvement necessary. They are tasked with diffusing conflict and facilitate effective and safe interactions with law enforcement.

**Press:** Responsible for intra-organizational filming/photography of the event and publication to NCTE social media forums. They also serve as the spokesperson/people to outside media groups.

**Accessibility Coordinator:** Responsible for ensuring adherence to ADA regulations and recommendations. Should consider bringing in accessibility consultants/advisors as needed.

**Street Medics:** Responsible for addressing the varying medical concerns (dehydration, scrapes/blisters, temperature-related illness, etc) possible at the event. Should include people with varied degrees of medical training.

**Solicitors:** Responsible for distributing materials to attendees and gathering their contact information for further outreach.

**NOTE:**

The main roles (manager, communications, marshals, police liaisons, press, accessibility coordinator) should be pre-established within NCTE per rally based on availability. Street Medics and Solicitors will likely come more from supporter/volunteer sources.

## Equipment Checklist

### Communications

Intra-team:

- Walkie-talkies
- Group app (such as Slack, GroupMe, etc)

**NOTE:** Ensure that whatever method of communication is selected is understood and accessible for entire team

Sound Projection:

- PA System (Loudspeakers, Amplifier, Microphone)
- Megaphones (w/ extra batteries)
- Accessibility equipment
  - Assistive listening devices (min. Number should be based on seating capacity)
  - Script/text availability
  - Audio descriptions
  - Text display
  - Interpreters
- Generator (if needed for PA system)

### Safety

- Food/water to address dehydration and other health issues
- First Aid supplies
- Temperature-controlled area (If temperatures are 50> or 80< degrees Fahrenheit)
  - Could include:
    - Tented/tarped area
    - Area in nearby building

- Fans/Heaters
- Barriers
- Toilet facilities - consider accessibility

### **Printed Materials**

Signage:

- Banners/posters for the event itself
- Accessibility/directorial signs
- Easily identifiable name tags for staff/volunteers
- Sheets for solicitors

### **Stage/platform (if needed)**

- Ramps
- Barriers

**NOTE:** The Washington Peace Center provides equipment rentals for activist organizations and individuals for suggested donations. More information can be found here:

<https://washingtonpeacecenter.net/eventequipment/>

## **Accessibility**

These considerations have been pulled directly from the [ADA National Network's resource for creating accessible temporary events](#). Keep in mind that it is required that the ADA (particularly Titles I, II, and III), The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and any state and/or local codes are considered when planning events of this nature.

In the context of temporary events, there are generally four categorizations of disabilities used when considering event accessibility: mobility disabilities (including wheelchair users and ambulatory mobility disabilities), visual disabilities, hearing disabilities, and cognitive or other hidden disabilities. Each of these warrant different considerations in order to create an accessible event.

There are four principles of implementation of accessibility measures recommended by the ADA: non-discrimination considerations, modifying policies and practices, effective communication, and accessible design. These come into play in both the planning stage, such as choosing a space or designing signage, and the implementation stage, such as toilet facility placement or sound projection considerations.

Another important category of accessibility is language considerations. Consider the intended audience and the resources available to determine what measures are most appropriate. For example, does it make more sense to hire an interpreter or is translation/transcription equipment a more feasible option?

Some important physical accessibility considerations include the speed of the rally (if it will be moving or marching), whether the event will take place indoors, outdoors, or both, and the

space participants will be expected to move around in, accessibility for performers (is there a stage and, if so, is it reasonably accessible to everyone who needs it), toilet facilities, and availability of drinking water and shelter as necessary.

It is very important to note that this is not at all a comprehensive list of considerations. If possible, accessibility advisors/consultants (people with different disabilities who help implement appropriate accessibility standards) should be utilized. Additionally, for detailed guidelines, reference [“A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities”](#) by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) National Network.

## Transportation/Housing

Depending on the scale of the event, different considerations regarding participant transportation and housing must be taken into account. If it's generally a local event, is it metro accessible and/or is there parking nearby? Will NCTE as an organization be providing any type of transportation options/resources? If it is a larger scale event, will NCTE be giving recommendations and/or working with local establishments on providing options for parking and housing? The primary objective should be to make the event easily accessible to as many people as possible.

## Counter-Protestors

Counter-protesters often make their presence known at rally and demonstration-type events. It is important to note that they have the right to demonstrate just as much as everyone else does. However, there are some policies and practices that can be utilized to reduce the chance of escalation. The best approach is not to interact in order to avoid instigating additional conflict. If interaction does occur, consider recording it in case law enforcement becomes involved and evidence might be needed later. To create an enforceable boundary, apply to obtain a permit for the event space. Additionally, have a plan in place with your security team, whomever that may be (event marshals, local law enforcement, private security, etc) in case things do escalate and intervention becomes necessary.

## Law Enforcement

Navigating interactions with law enforcement agencies can be daunting, especially in the context of demonstration, but nevertheless, it is important to communicate with these agencies to create safe events for all involved. There are a few preemptive measures that can be taken to facilitate a smoother relationship with relevant agencies for an event, such as having a plan to protect participants who are more vulnerable to arrest and/or significant consequences from arrest, obtaining a permit, and contacting liaisons.

### **Planning for Arrests**

(from NCTE and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project's [Direct Action Guide](#))

If there is a relatively strong likelihood of arrests occurring at the event, consider coordinating a plan amongst participants to protect those who are at higher risk for arrest and abuse. This can

include placing people with lower risk (white/white-passing, citizen, non-LGBT, etc.) in higher-visibility roles to serve as a buffer between law enforcement and participants at a higher risk for arrest, who are more vulnerable abuse, and/or who might receive more severe sanctions. The marshals and police liaisons will play a large part in coordinating and executing this type of plan. There are also solidarity tactics including “refusing to cooperate with police during arrest (a high-risk tactic); refusing to provide your name or identification; refusing to cooperate during booking, such as by remaining silent or going limp; refusing to promise to appear for court; and creating nonviolent disruptions in jail, such as by chanting or singing.” These tactics can be used to advocate for the needs and rights of vulnerable individuals if they are arrested. These types of tactics are most effective with careful advanced planning and prior coordination with legal support.

### **Permit**

As mentioned above, obtaining a permit for the event can be beneficial as it creates an enforceable perimeter that can mitigate conflicts with both counter-protesters and law enforcement officials. Depending on where you plan on holding the protest, different agencies will have jurisdiction. For example, if there was a protest on the National Mall, that would be under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service but if there was to be a protest outside the Capitol Building, it would be under the Capitol Police. Metropolitan Police would be the relevant agency for a march or any rally outside of a park. A note about MPD and marches: because of a 2002 court case, you must be allowed to protest without a permit as long as it stays to one lane. It is noted by the Washington Peace Center that MPD can still be difficult when it comes to protests and has been known to give protestors a hard time even when obeying protesting laws and regulations, so keep this in mind when deciding whether or not to apply for a permit (having the paperwork to back it up could prove useful in the case of challenges or police harassment). For more detailed information, check out the Washington Peace Center’s extensive page on the DC Permit Process:

<https://washingtonpeacecenter.org/permitprocess>

### **Contacts**

To facilitate a safe and peaceful event, coordinating with law enforcement in advance is often crucial. Here are some contacts to use:

#### Metropolitan Police Department

Brett Parsons | [brett.parson@dc.gov](mailto:brett.parson@dc.gov) | [applications](#)

#### National Park Service:

Permits Division | (202) 245-4715 | [more info](#)

#### Capitol Police:

Capitol Police Special Events Unit | (202) 224-8891 | [more info](#)

## **Additional Resources**

[Washington Peace Center](#)

- A great resource for all things DC protest, including: equipment rentals, permit information, a mass housing resource, legal support information, a guide on how to effectively cooperate with local DC organizers, and more

[ADA National Network “A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities”](#)

- An in-depth guide on creating accessible temporary events

[Tools For Change](#)

- A Canadian-based activist development group that lays out a step-by-step resource on how to organize a rally, including a very helpful zine called “Organizing Rallies and Marches: Your How-To Guide On Mobilizing, Organizing, and Resisting”

[Participating in Direct Actions: A Guide for Transgender People](#)

- A resource developed by NCTE and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project on the considerations for transgender people and their allies when it comes to being a part of direct action

[Amnesty International “How to Organize a Peaceful Protest or Vigil”](#)

- Amnesty International’s guide to peaceful demonstration. Although it written in the context of their #NoBanNoWall campaign, the principles are still generally applicable.