



Preparing for Higher Risk Street Actions

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Welcome Gratitude Introductions

- Name/Pronouns
- Where do you call home?
- Organization/Affiliation

We invite you to tend to your well-being.

My Background

- Longtime activist and organizer
- Sovietologist
- Social change educator focused on systems thinking and social justice
- Marshal, de-escalator, and lead safety coordinator

I am not a medical professional.

Community Agreements

- 1) Be present.
- 2) Be kind.
- 3) Be aware of others' lived experience and the limits of our own.
- 4) Be curious. We're all learning.
- 5) Be generous with resources and opportunities.

We will remove anyone who is making inappropriate comments or harassing others.

Agenda

- Community Safety Values & Practices
- Personal Risk Assessment
- Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Situational Awareness
- De-escalation Skills
- Break
- Preparing for and Treating Chemical Weapons Injuries

Acknowledging Legacies of Harm

We remember that the United States has a long history of oppression and violence against Indigenous people, Black people, other people of color, and immigrants.

We acknowledge that what we are experiencing in the US today is not new, only newly or more blatantly visible to some of us.

We recommit to being in solidarity with the Black, Indigenous, and immigrant organizations leading the movements for our collective liberation.

Acknowledging Where We Are

Massachusetts has already had multiple ICE surges.

We have ample evidence from Minneapolis, DC, and other blue cities that Massachusetts could experience more widespread ICE occupation with state-sponsored violence and chemical weapons.

Holding Space for the Reality of Being Here

We're here to learn about the use of violence and chemical weapons against people exercising their constitutional rights in the U.S.

This means we're attuned to the violence and murder that is happening across the U.S.

And it means we're imagining being in situations where that could happen to us.

Let's take a moment to take a deep breath together and soak in the solidarity and power of being in this space together.

Let's send some love in the chat!

Muscle Building in Real Time

The skills we're covering tonight are best learned in person and practiced with experienced people.

Please look for additional opportunities to build your skills and readiness based on your current level of experience.

We anticipate sharing fact sheets and additional training opportunities to people who registered for this training.

Commitment

This workshop approaches the work of resisting authoritarianism with a commitment to nonviolence and community safety.

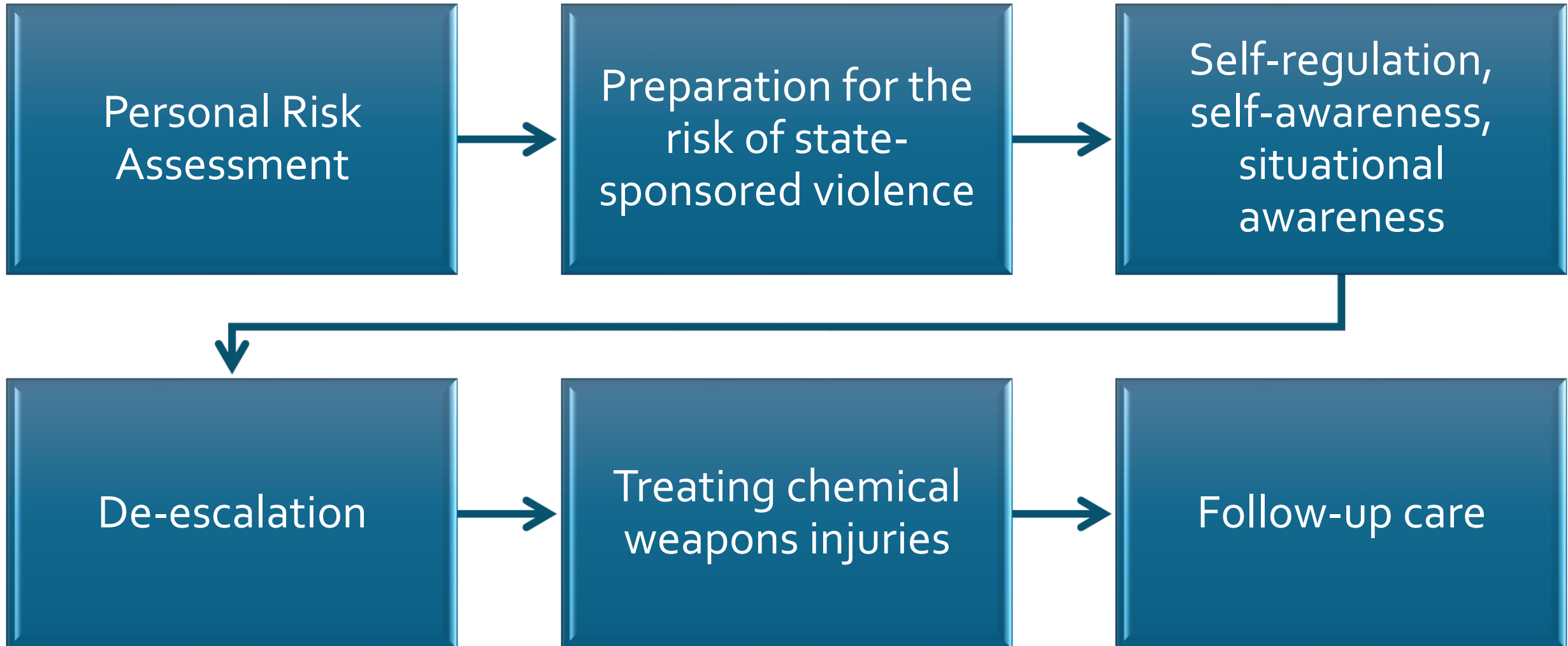
Community Safety is not just a set of skills and protocols. It is a way to put our values into action by tending to our collective care and well-being ourselves as we resist authoritarianism and build a democracy that works for everyone.

Things to Remember

- Your personal experience with police is not universal.
- Within our diverse communities, people's relationship with the police, federal agents, and state-sponsored violence varies based on their identities and experiences.
- As we grow our community safety muscles, we should consciously avoid replicating structures and dynamics of dominant public safety and military structures and avoid “enforcing nonviolence” and “peace policing.”

Many of us already know that Community Safety is a critical component for rallies, marches, protests, and standouts.

The times call for a higher level of preparedness.



The Continuum of Risk

There is **always** risk in street actions, no matter where they are or how well they are organized.

Our goal as organizers and participants is to anticipate and mitigate them.

Some circumstances make it more challenging to do that.

Variables Influencing Risk

- Familiarity with space
- Crowd size, familiarity with participants
- Level of organization and structure
- Safety plan and team
- Likelihood of counter-protesters
- Local, state police
- Federal agents (e.g. ICE)

Large, spontaneous events with more variables and potentially violent actors entail increased risk.

Your risk tolerance is personal, fluid, and not subject to others' judgment or pressure.
Reflect on what's right for you every time you consider attending an action.

Who am I
responsible to?

What
consequences
might there be?

Am I prepared
to be injured?

Do I have
serious health
conditions?

Am I willing to
be arrested?

Who can I go
with?

What can I do to
be better
prepared?

Everyone's risk profile is different, so you may have additional considerations.

We cannot de-escalate every situation.

The de-escalation skills we're covering are not intended to stop federal agents whose job or intention is to initiate violence or cause harm to peaceful protesters. Use good judgment about when it's time for you to step away from a situation or leave the action.

Remember that depending on the circumstances, inserting yourself into a situation involving ICE could have negative consequences for the targeted individual and other protester. We strongly encourage people to get trained by LUCE. Visit www.lucemass.org.

Consider de-escalating civilian counter-protesters when harm is happening AND you think you could successfully diffuse the situation. Ignoring them or walking away is often the best solution.

Consider de-escalating fellow protesters who you know when they are causing harm to others or increasing the risk of a violent response from federal agents.

Self-awareness and **self-regulation** can help you maintain **situational awareness** and stay safe.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness can help you understand your response to the environment and inform how you act.

- What is your purpose? What is motivating you?
- What role do your and other people's identities and power play in this situation? How does that affect you?
- What are your triggers?
- How do your mind and body respond to noise, anger, fear, uniforms, etc.?

What else might potentially disrupt someone's equilibrium at an action?

Self-regulation

Self-regulation involves:

- Being aware of your physical, intellectual, emotional, and mental state.
- Noticing when something is “off” or changing.
- Identifying the source of your agitation or discomfort.
- Changing or removing yourself from the environment.
- OR managing your response to the environment.

**What’s the quickest, easiest thing
we can do to self-regulate?**

Situational Awareness

Situational awareness keeps you attuned to your surroundings so you can recognize and respond to risks and others in need.

- Know where you are and how to leave that area quickly.
- Stay alert to what's happening around you.
- Avoid distractions or getting lost in your own thoughts.
- Notice changes in noise and energy level and intensity, crowd movement, arrival of police or federal agents, etc.
- Be ready to make good decisions if/when something unanticipated or (potentially) unsafe happens.

What helps you maintain situational awareness?

When you see a
person of concern,
lead with humanity.

These are frightening times but we
still need to avoid hyper-vigilance.

When you encounter someone who
seems agitated or disoriented, don't
profile them, behave in a
threatening manner, or trigger
unnecessary alarm. The individual
may be passing through or just need
support and care.

The ABC's of De-Escalation



Assess the scene. Identify the conflict. Risks can come from anyone, but be alert to situational indicators of higher risk.

Breathe. Stay focused and calm. Count to 10. Ground yourself. Remember why you are there.

Choose: Am I the right one for this? If I get involved, how will I engage? What is my goal?

De-escalate: What does this person feel, need or want? How is this action/context affecting the person? How can I bring the temperature down?

The 6 Ds of De-escalation

DELAY

DIRECT

DISTRACT

DISTANCE

DOCUMENT

DELEGATE

**Content adapted by AFSC from Abbey Fox, Thought Catalogue, Jes Skolnik, Hollaback, the People's Response Team and Beautiful Trouble.*

Delay



Stay calm and provide a time frame for when the cause of the individual's agitation will be resolved. This can delay or prevent them from escalating.



“We’ll be away from this soon. It’s just a five-minute walk to the T.”

Example for a driver stuck by a march: “The’ll pass by in 5 minutes.”

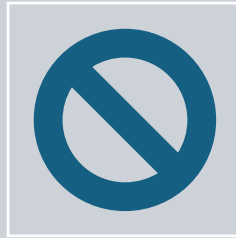


Suggest an alternative activity: “Things are heating up here. Why don’t we grab a coffee and check back later?”

Direct



Intervene by directly naming inappropriate behavior.



Make a clear request for the person to change their behavior.



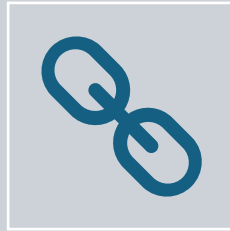
“You’re agitating people. Please remember why we’re committed to nonviolence.”

“You’re grabbing my arm. Let go of my arm.”

Distract



Redirect the person's attention to something unrelated to the action or conflict.



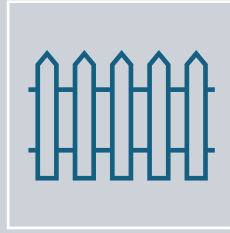
Works best when something about the distraction is authentic and makes a personal connection.



“It’s freezing! Let’s get coffee after. Where should we go?”

“Great Celtics jacket. Can you believe the season they’re having?”

Distance



Separate the escalated person from the context. Either move them or move the context that is creating the problem.



Walking while talking can get them to move without realizing your intention.



“I want to hear what you’re saying but it’s too loud. Can we go over there?”

“This wind! Let’s go over a block.”

Document



Film what's happening.

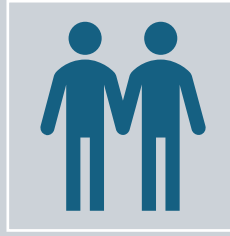


Take detailed notes.

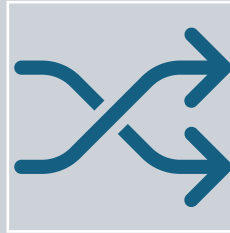


Inform the antagonist that you are documenting the incident or that someone in the crowd could be. Just the risk of being on social media can be enough.

Delegate



You don't have to do this alone.
Find someone else to help.



Works when you have a role you
can't leave, don't know the person,
or don't feel prepared for the
situation.



Also works when multiple people
are needed for different roles, e.g.
one to de-escalate a friend, the
other to lead your group away from
the crowd.

Understanding and Preparing for State- Sponsored Violence in the U.S.

ICE is known to use pepper spray, tear gas (also called CS), rubber bullets, and guns against nonviolent protesters. Reports from Minneapolis suggest they may also be using zinc chloride.

The Geneva Convention prohibits use of such weapons against civilians, but they are legal for police and federal agents to use in the U.S.

We can take steps to lower the risk of harm from these weapons, but there is no way to be fully safe in their presence.

Being informed and trained means we can better protect ourselves and each other.

Preparing yourself for possible exposure to chemical weapons

- Reflect on your purpose. Why are you attending this action?
- Check in with yourself. Are you emotionally, physically and otherwise prepared for a possibly risky situation? (It's okay to choose not to go.)
- Eat, hydrate, and use the bathroom before you go.

Plan to go with others

- Make a plan to go with people you know and trust. (Three or more people.)
- Exchange phone numbers and information about medications, allergies, etc.
- Check in with each other about expectations, risk tolerance, health or emotional support needs, etc.
- Discuss personal boundaries. Is touching to provide first aid okay?
- Know your route there and back. Have an exit plan.
- Choose a designated meeting spot if you get separated.
- Review and practice safety steps for chemical exposure.
- Make sure someone not attending knows your plan.

Lowering Our Physical Risk

This guidance applies to pepper spray and tear gas, but tear gas has been the most problematic chemical weapon used in Minneapolis.

Eyewear

- **Do not wear contact lenses.** Chemical weapons exposure while wearing contact lenses can lead to permanent vision loss.

Clothing

- Dress for the weather. Wear layers to protect from cold and provide as much skin cover as possible.
- Do not wear cotton close to the skin because it is absorbent. Lycra may provide some protection against chemicals and is a good wicking layer.
- Do not wear jewelry, scarves, or other accessories that can be used to choke you.
- *Tip:* Don't wear your favorite clothes in case they're exposed to chemical weapons. They can be washed, but it's better to dispose of them if possible.

Asthma

- Carry an inhaler and let your group members know where it is and how to help you use it.

Personal Hygiene

- It's okay to use tampons but be extremely careful to wash your hands thoroughly before removing it if you have been exposed to chemical weapons.

Wearing a gas mask or goggles to protect against chemicals and rubber bullets

Cautions

- Poorly fitted gas masks, respirators, and goggles can trap particles on your skin and eyes.
- Low-quality devices can shatter and damage eyes.

Recommendations

- These devices should only be worn if they seal tightly to your face and highly durable, which typically means they are more expensive.
- If possible, ask a medical professional or a lifeguard about your fit.
- Consider organizing fitting clinics in your community with qualified people.

Considerations

- Some BLM activists noted that wearing or putting on these devices was used as an excuse by municipal and state agents to use violence against nonviolent protesters.
- Consider carrying them in your bag and waiting to put them on based on your assessment of the situation.

How do chemical weapons affect people?

Both pepper gas and tear gas can be sprayed directly at people or released via canisters.

Most people will experience extreme but survivable pain if they are exposed to chemical weapons outdoors.

Chemical weapons are far more harmful indoors where there is no ventilation.

Exposed skin will have a mild chemical burn similar to sunburn.

Among people wearing contact lenses, eyes are prone to long-term damage.

Who is at higher risk?

Children up to 3 years old and older individuals, especially in their late 70s and beyond

Anyone who is or suspects they may be pregnant

People with compromised respiratory systems due to:

- asthma
- long COVID
- history of bronchitis
- congestive heart failure
- multiple bouts of pneumonia
- emphysema
- history of smoking

How to rinse tear gas out of someone's eyes

Summary: Quickly and thoroughly rinse the person's eyes with water to remove contaminated particles using a **sport-top water bottle** with a nozzle that has not been used for drinking.

Steps:

1. Put on nitrile gloves.
2. Ask for permission: May I touch you? May I tip your head?
3. Explain: I'm tipping your head to the side to rinse your eye with water. This will flush out the chemicals and give you some relief.
4. Position their head to their side (ear to shoulder) and hold it steady so contaminated rinse water does not run down onto other parts of their body and cause more harm. (Someone can help support their head.)
5. Begin with the eye closest to the ground so contaminated rinse water does not run into the other eye.
6. Beginning at the bridge of their nose and following the curvature of the eye outward, squeeze the sport-top water bottle to create a forceful stream of water.
7. Repeat this motion until the person feels relief. (Imagine turning a lightbulb or waving like a queen.)
8. Tip their head to the other side and repeat the process.

NOTE: The person will not feel 100% relief because their eyes have been burned. Explain that you're trying to get from a 10 (maximum pain) to a 3 (bearable pain.)

How to treat skins that has been exposed to tear gas

Summary: Apply decontaminant (Sudecon) to burned skin to provide relief. Boxes of individually wrapped Sudecon wipes are available online.

Steps:

1. Put on nitrile gloves.
2. Ask for permission: May I touch you? May I put something on your skin to soothe it?
3. Explain: I am going to rub a chemical decontaminant called Sudecon on your skin.
4. Cover the affected area with Sudecon.

Alternative to Sudecon:

Four Thieves Vinegar anarchist collective has a recipe online for a DIY treatment for chemical burns on skin. Note that it is not shelf stable and should be stored in the freezer. You can soak paper towels in the solution and carry them in a resealable plastic bag.

NOTE: The person will not feel 100% relief because their skin has been burned. Explain that you're trying to get from a 10 (maximum pain) to a 3 (bearable pain.)

Emergency care if you were wearing contact lenses and get tear gas in your eyes

Remove your contacts immediately and proceed with the flushing process described previously. (Contacts cannot be reused after they have been exposed to chemical weapons.)

In Boston, get to Mass Eye and Ear immediately for emergency care.

Outside Boston, go to a local ER for stabilization, then get to Mass Eye & Ear as soon as possible – hours, not days.

Getting home after exposure to chemical weapons

- If possible, travel with a companion.
- If you're driving:
 - cover the seat with a blanket to avoid contamination if possible.
 - keep the windows down.
 - make sure no one in the car has asthma.
- If possible, remove all clothing before entering to avoid contaminating your living space.
- Place all affected clothing in doubled-up garbage bags. (It's best to dispose of them, but if you wash them, run them through the washing machine twice, then run the washing machine empty with vinegar.)
- **DO NOT SHOWER.** This can spread contaminants to other parts of your body. Spot clean the affected area with a gentle soap or baby shampoo using a cloth and cool (not freezing) water.

Chemical weapons follow-up care

Experiencing chemical weapons is painful and traumatizing. People's reaction and treatment can vary based on the chemical they experienced.

All Chemical Weapons

- Supportive care from a loved one
- Rest (Chocolate and favorite movies!)
- If you experience complications (respiratory, uncharacteristic behavior/stress response, gynecological) seek medical care as quickly as possible.
- If you don't experience complications, consider seeing a medical professional within a few days to identify any lingering effects/concerns and create a paper trail.

Tear Gas

- Tear gas disrupts the endocrine system and can affect victims' involuntary fight/flight/freeze/fawn response for a few days. A trusted person should monitor for any behavior that is out of character and seek emergency care if it persists.
- May cause heavy, painful, and dysregulated periods.
- Pregnant people should seek medical care immediately if exposed to tear gas.
- There is no data available on whether tear gas affects hormonal birth control.

Zinc Chloride

This chemical weapon is not widely used, but there are reports that ICE may be using it in Minneapolis.

Zinc chloride irritates lung tissue. Some people experience immediate symptoms. It can also contribute to breathing problems later in life.

Anyone experiencing upper respiratory symptoms after attending an action where chemical agents were used should see a doctor and report possible exposure.

Rubber Bullets

Rubber bullets are being used in Minneapolis.

They usually do not penetrate the skin but can cause internal damage to bones and organs that cannot be seen or diagnosed without medical imaging equipment.

They can damage eyes and blind people.

Anyone struck by a rubber bullet should seek immediate medical attention.

Breaking News!
Long-Range
Acoustic
Devices (LRADs)

Our medics are developing sound guidance on LRADs in real time.

We'll inform people doing safety work in Greater Boston ASAP.

If you're not in our area, please seek out reliable resources on this.

Consent

Do not call 911 on anyone's behalf without their consent, especially in a location occupied by ICE.

Try asking:

- Can we call 911?
- Can someone drive you to the emergency room?
- How can we get you help?
- Alert the crowd that 911 has been called so anyone who wants to avoid contact with the police or other law enforcement agencies has time to leave.

If someone is unconscious and clearly in need of emergency assistance, the concept of “implied consent” applies and you should call 911.

What to bring

- Water bottle for hydration
- Squeezable sports water bottle with nozzle for treating eyes exposed to chemical weapons.
- Snacks (Check with your group about allergies.)
- Hand and foot warmers
- Nitrile gloves for treating chemical weapons
- Medications
- Change of clothing in case of chemical weapons
- Fully charged phone, external battery
- ID (Consider what to carry or not carry.)
- Hand sanitizer, regular mask (flu and COVID protection)
- Goggles, gas mask, respirator (if you choose)
- Basic first aid kit
- Cash
- National Lawyer's Guild number on your body with a Sharpie: 617-433-8353.

What not to bring

- Weapons, pyrotechnics, blades drugs. If it can't get through TSA, leave it home.
- Anything that can be used against you as a weapon.

Holistic Preparedness for Nonviolent Actions

Tending to yourself before, during, and after an action can help you:



Participate more intentionally and lead with your values.



Be a reliable pod/affinity group member.



Contribute to the movement's success.

PIES: A Holistic Approach to Building Resilience & Readiness



PHYSICAL

Our physical body, and surroundings. What we can experience with our senses.



INTELLECTUAL

Our thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and ideologies. Our “head space.”



EMOTIONAL

Our feelings, moods, and intuition. Our “heart space.”



SPIRITUAL

Our purpose, deep motivations, drives, and ambitions. Our “gut space.”

What helps you be ready and resilient **BEFORE**, **DURING** and **AFTER** a street action?

	Before	During	After
PHYSICALLY			
INTELLECTUALLY			
EMOTIONALLY			
SPIRITUALLY			



Thank you so much for joining us in the fight to stop ICE and build a democracy that works for everyone.

What feelings would you like to share in the chat before we go?