

# KEEP YOUR EVENTS SAFE IN A CHARGED CLIMATE

Every store needs to make their own decision about how controversial they allow their events to be. It is a matter of your store's location, resources, owner comfort, staff comfort, and community support. If you do decide to host events you think might provoke resistance, **here are some tips to keep your staff, event participants, and community safe:**

## 1. Identify events likely to prompt disruption.

This will depend on your location and the nature of your events. Events about LGBTQ+ issues and racial justice issues are most likely to warrant extra consideration (but that does not mean you should stop holding them!).

## 2. Consider whether the event itself is harmful.

An event itself may be harmful if it spreads misinformation about or incites violence against a group of people. BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities are especially under attack. As a best practice, consider whether events are in line with your DEI policy when scheduling. If it is, but employees are uncomfortable, consider letting them opt out of working an event. Better yet, survey your staff anonymously to gauge comfort with an event before scheduling it.

## 3. Contact other stores in the area.

What other booksellers in the area have held similar events? Find out how it went for them and if they have any recommendations.

## 4. Publicize events mindfully.

Advertisements in your store or sent to opt-in followers of your newsletter or social media will only reach your customers. Flyers or online advertisements and social media with a broader reach are more likely to attract negative attention.

- Physical advertisements: keep in-store, by word of mouth, or in friendly local stores with similar missions.

- Online advertisements: advertise on opt-in newsletters; set [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) advertisements to only reach your "Close Friends" list. (This list can be set to include all your followers, hiding it from anyone who doesn't follow you.)

## 5. In case of a bomb threat:

The US Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has [resources and suggestions](#) to help you deal with bomb threats. Check out their [video trainings](#) and [checklist](#).

## 6. Have a plan with assigned roles.

Do not leave it up to quick thinking in the moment. Write out a plan and assign specific roles to everyone working the event. Consider:

- When does the plan go into effect? When someone starts shouting? If people enter from outside to disrupt the event? Does the owner or manager give a particular signal?
- Who cuts the mic?
- Who engages the disruptors, and how? ([Check out CISA's De-escalation Series](#) and consider de-escalation training if occurrences are frequent.)
- Is there any need to shield children or other guests from offensive behavior? Consider adopting the tactics of [The Parasol Patrol](#).
- Where are the exits?
- If necessary, who ushers guests out, what is the best way to do so safely, and what is the signal to begin doing so?

- When do you call the authorities and whom do you call? Do you want police presence in your store? Do you need to call the police for insurance liability? What is your alternative last-resort if things get out of hand? **Keep in mind:** be aware when contacting police that police presence may introduce a perceived or actual threat to your staff members, customers, or community. If you must contact the police, consider going to the department in person to make your report. Check [outdontcallthepolice.com](https://www.outdontcallthepolice.com) for some options.
- [Check out CISA's guidelines](#) for more advice.

## In case of disruptive protesters:

*Note: The First Amendment protects everyone's right to assemble and express their views through protest. We support that right while condemning any action that promotes hate and bigotry. Further, protests may not block access to sidewalks or buildings, nor can they threaten harm.*

- **Do not escalate.** Avoid direct eye contact, shouting, advancing on protestors, or any other behavior that could be construed as hostile.
- **Stop your supporters from escalating.** Nip any escalating behavior in the bud by firmly saying "No. We're not doing that."
- **Shield children or other guests from offensive behavior.** Consider adopting the tactics of The Parasol Patrol.
- **Maintain distance between protesters and counter-protesters.** Physical distance will allow you to control your supporters and prevent scuffles from breaking out.



- **Check permits ahead of time.** Depending on the specific layout of your store and laws in your area, there may be certain areas permits needed to protest on public property. Know these regulations, call to see if the protesters have obtained a permit, and use this to your advantage if applicable.
- **Counter hate with joy.** Instead of yelling back at protesters, start a dance party. Take the wind out of your opponents' sails by showing them you can't be intimidated.

## 8. Keep your supporters in the loop.

In the aftermath of a disruptive event, tell your customers and supporters what happened, what you did about it, and what you are doing going forward. Be prompt and do what you can to reassure people of the safety of your space and events. Consider issuing an immediate

statement or post saying what happened and outlining any immediate effects to buy time for a more considered response in the coming days.

## 9. Debrief with your team.

Hold a meeting with your whole team to go over what happened, what worked and didn't work in the response, and how to put better structures in place for next time if applicable.

## 10. Contact ABA.

You can [reach out to us](#) before an event you're concerned about for advice. We can help you think about PR after the fact, refine your response plan for future events, or just offer a sounding board.