



Community Relations Service

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Planning for Safe Marches and Demonstrations

GENERAL INFORMATION

Planning for a safe march or demonstration can be a daunting process and should begin as early as possible. The Community Relations Service (CRS) has more than 40 years of experience in helping individuals and groups with special events. CRS can facilitate meetings with law enforcement, city officials, and demonstration organizers to ensure information is shared and plans are in place for a safe march or demonstration. These meetings may review requirements such as permits, routes, demonstration marshals, equipment, water, toilet facilities, medical assistance, counter demonstrators, and contingency planning. The following guidelines can help plan your march or demonstration.

PERMITS

Communication with law enforcement and city officials is critical and can determine whether factors such as safety, sanitation, and traffic control require a permit to carry out the planned march or demonstration. The need for permits and fees varies depending on the jurisdiction or jurisdictions.

ROUTES

Early planning of the route will help with decisions, including: involvement of all law enforcement jurisdictions; parking for participants; shuttle bus service; final staging areas; location of first-aid stations, restroom facilities, and water; consideration of distance and terrain; and map distribution for those assisting in conducting the march. A map should clearly mark the parking, route, emergency facilities, toilets, and water.

DEMONSTRATION MARSHALS

The use of demonstration marshals is similar to creating your own "volunteer self-police force" for your event. Selection of marshals should take place at least a month prior to your event so adequate training and instruction can be given. Demonstration marshals assist in the safe conduct of the participants in the planned activity. At times they may also prevent counter demonstrators or people who may seek to disrupt your event from being able to mix with legitimate participants. Demonstration marshals will be knowledgeable of timing; routes; location of first aid stations, water, and toilets; and are trained to know what to do if trouble occurs. Demonstration marshals should be easily identified by special identification. For more information on demonstration marshals, please contact the nearest CRS Regional Office for a copy of our brochure, "So You're a Demonstration Marshal."

EQUIPMENT

When planning your demonstration or march, consider the staging area and ending point of the event. If you schedule speakers or plan a ceremony, you may need a stage or loudspeaker system. Each jurisdiction has its own regulations on public use of loudspeaker systems. Issue special identification to be carried or worn by those who have access to the stage. Make sure that security personnel have access to the stage.

WEATHER

A major consideration when planning your demonstration is how the weather will affect the participants. For example, warm weather and/or a long march would require plenty of water to avoid dehydration of the participants. In cold weather, shorten the time of the demonstration to avoid dangerous exposure to the elements.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Based on CRS' experience in public disorders, spontaneous civil disobedience may escalate tensions between local law enforcement and the participants. If law enforcement is not prepared, lack of personnel may lead to overreactions or loss of control by law enforcement and demonstration organizers. The result could be serious physical injury and create tension between police and citizens. Mass arrest situations should be avoided because of the high likelihood of physical injury. It is best to identify those who will engage in civil disobedience in advance and notify police how many of these may participate. If this is a planned arrest situation, those who participate should have identification and bail money to facilitate law enforcement processing. Encourage nonviolent behavior by the participants during mass arrest situations.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

The goal of contingency planning is to be prepared for an emergency. Consider the possibility of an emergency and what you will do if one occurs. A contingency plan must have each step planned in advance to ensure that arrangements are in place for an effective response.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VOLUNTEER SELF-MARSHALS

Self-Marshals are asked to adhere to the following instructions to maximize safety and security for participants in this event:

1. Marshals should be on time and stay at assigned position(s).
2. Marshals should adhere to restrictions on authorized access to police command post and stage facilities.
3. Marshals should not accept gifts or other benefits that might influence their ability to carry out their duties.
4. Marshals have important responsibilities and should focus on their duties. You are helping to make the event a success by your work. Do not become involved in event-related contracts such as being a food or souvenir vendor.
5. Marshals should be polite, consistent, and supportive of participants. Do not be partial or use your position for personal advantage, such as to help a friend to the front of the line.
6. Marshals should follow instructions in handling complaints, injuries, property damage, disorderly conduct, and crowd control problems.
7. Marshals should monitor perimeters of demonstrators for disruptive groups or individuals and report any questionable behavior through the chain of command.
8. Marshals should always be able to communicate with their assigned captains.
9. Marshals should get help from a captain before a situation gets out of control.
10. A Marshal's job is to help everyone have a successful event.

HOW TO CONTACT CRS

CRS is available to help you develop sound plans and facilitate meetings with law enforcement on the planning and carrying out of the event. Contact the Regional Office in your area as early as possible to ensure your demonstration or march is a success.

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