

# **Beyond the Surface:**

## ***Inclusive Event Planning Centering 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and Disabled Youth Communities***

*Main Contributor: Brittany Wiley*

### **A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



As a disabled, gender non-conforming, queer, and trans person of color, I personally have experienced far more unwelcoming, inaccessible spaces than I have truly trauma-informed and inclusive ones. Traveling extensively for Youth MOVE National, I find myself often activated, marginalized, and left with the work of “figuring it out myself” (something that disabled and marginalized people shouldn’t have to be used to doing, yet we are). From a lack of all-gender bathrooms, pronouns not printed on name tags and/or positively used and modeled by speakers, tables and chairs packed in so much that even temporarily able-bodied folks can’t move around, the prohibited cost and the exhaustion of travel occurring on the same day as the event, the lack of interpreters and translators, the ableist and racist language and activities, the list goes on. This problem is exponentially worse for youth, from large registration fees, travel costs, hotel’s requiring credit cards with large holds (and use of legal name and sex assigned at birth), parental permission on flights and at check-in’s, corporate dress codes, conference security with police presence, pat downs (especially traumatizing for trans people), and much, much more. People sometimes view creating equitable, trauma-informed, inclusive spaces as far too much time, energy, and money to only serve a small, select number of folks. What they don’t realize is that when you center and take care of the most marginalized amongst us, everyone benefits. Is it that costly to just treat everyone with respect, to trust that they know what is best for themselves and what their needs are, even if you don’t understand it? Even if that hasn’t been your lived experience? When did a person’s self-identified needs suddenly need to be determined if they are “reasonable” by someone else? We aren’t asking to be flown in on a private jet, we are asking for closed captions, hearing devices, accessible buildings, wellness rooms, space to move with mobility devices, halal meals, enough vegan and vegetarian meals for everyone (not just who gets to the table first), etc., and if you can’t provide that - asking if we need accommodations is simply performative virtue signaling, and I have to tell you - we see right through it.

- **Arc Telos Saint Amour (they/them)**  
*Executive Director - Youth MOVE National*



## INTRODUCTION

There's an undeniable energy to in-person youth events; it's tangible and the connections are inspiring. For event organizers, the dream is to create a space where every young person feels welcomed, valued, and affirmed— a place where no need goes unnoticed. Yet, all too often, organizers and facilitators miss the mark. A glaring gap exists, one that consistently overlooks and undervalues queer, trans, and disabled youth of color. It's a stark reality that demands our attention and action.

This issue brief equips event organizers and facilitators with intentional considerations in service of creating welcoming and inclusive spaces for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, and other non-exclusively cisgender and/or heterosexual people (2SLGBTQIA+), Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), and disabled youth through a critical, intersectional, social justice lens. It emphasizes accessibility, and social justice integration, fosters a sense of belonging, and recognizes every person's inherent strengths and power.

## AWESOME ACRONYMS

**2SLGBTQIA+** - Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, and other non-exclusively cisgender and/or heterosexual people.

**BIPOC** - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

**QTPOC/D** - Queer and Trans People of Color/Disabled



## PRE- EVENT PLANNING



### ***Key Points:***

- Build Strong Community Partnerships
- Effective Marketing and Outreach
- Prioritize Accessibility for All Participants
- Comprehensive Staff and Volunteer Training
- Implement Trauma-Informed, Healing-Centered, Co-Reflective Practices
- Foster a Welcoming and Supportive Environment

- **Community collaboration:** Partner with 2SLGBTQIA+ - led organizations and youth leaders to understand their needs and interests. Co-create the event agenda and activities. Before the event, share detailed information with participants, including agendas, expectations, time commitments, and transportation arrangements.
- **Marketing and outreach:** Utilize diverse media platforms (such as Instagram, TikTok, and Discord) to reach 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth. Prioritize visuals that reflect a variety of identities and ethnicities. Partner with 2SLGBTQIA+ and BIPOC community centers, as well as disability rights & advocacy organizations, local and community disability programs, school-based programming, drop-in centers, sport and recreation programs, and other relevant organizations. When partnering with disability organizations, ensure that the collaboration is meaningful and inclusive. This might involve consulting with disability advocates to understand their needs and preferences and incorporating their input into the planning and implementation of the event.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure the venue is physically accessible (ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, spaces between tables so folks with mobility devices can move freely) and provides accommodations for various needs (hearing aids, ASL interpreters, dietary restrictions, translators, closed captions, etc.). Utilize microphones during the event to ensure that participants can hear the speakers clearly and do image descriptors. Offer virtual participation options for those unable to attend in person and engage that technology fully, not just as an afterthought. Provide accessible payment options, such as online payments or payment by phone, or not charging at all for the lowest barrier of entry. Consider the potential for additional participants, including peers, aides, or guardians / loved ones when planning the event.
- **Accommodating allergies:** It is important to create a safe and inclusive environment for all. Create messaging such as: “**If you have any allergies, please inform us in advance.** This will help us ensure your safety and well-being throughout the event. **In some cases, severe allergies may require eliminating certain allergens from the venue.** That’s okay, we are creating a safe space for everyone.
- **Brave / safe space training:** Train all event staff and volunteers on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusivity, anti-racism / anti-oppression practices, and create (as much as possible) trauma-informed safe spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth. This includes addressing microaggressions, misgendering, allyship skills and action items, and more.

- **Be trauma-informed & healing-centered:** Incorporate trauma-informed practices by training staff and volunteers to consider the impact of trauma and be responsive to potential trauma activation across spaces and engagement, as well as a focus on collective healing and growth. Create an environment that prioritizes all aspects of safety, including by offering quiet spaces, clear exits, and flexibility in participation. Ensure that interactions and activities are conducted with an understanding of the potential impact of trauma particularly for 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth. Offer options for participants to take breaks/self-care as needed, and with support resources available on-site.

## EVENT DAY



### ***Key Points:***

- Establish a Comfortable Atmosphere Through Affirming Language and Practices
- Provide Accessible and Diverse Programming
- Ensure Dietary Accommodations
- Create Brave/Safe Spaces for Participants.
- Respect Individual Identities and Needs
- Foster Open Communication
- Offer Opportunities for Connection and Support



- **Welcome and registration-**
  - **Create a welcoming atmosphere:** Use diverse greetings and pronoun badges. Have staff readily available to answer questions and provide support.
  - **Use affirming names:** When interacting with participants, use the name by which they self-identify, rather than their legal name. Ensure all staff and presenters introduce themselves with their name and pronouns to set a welcoming tone.
- **Signage and pronouns -**
  - **Display clear signage** that is inclusive and affirms all genders and sexualities.
  - **Utilize restrooms** with gender-inclusive signage and ensure a all-gender restrooms are available.

## • Photography -



- **Communicate clearly:** Before the event, inform participants about your intention to take photographs and videos.
- **Obtain consent:** Explain that participation in the event implies consent to be photographed or filmed, but offer an explicit opportunity for individuals to opt-out.
- **Respect boundaries:** During the event, be mindful of personal space and avoid intrusive photography.
- **Offer opt-outs:** If someone indicates that they do not want to be photographed or filmed, respect their wishes.
- **Provide access:** After the event, offer participants the opportunity to view the photos and videos taken of them.
- **Allow for deletion:** If a participant requests that a photo or video be deleted, promptly comply.
- **Seek additional consent:** Before sharing photos or videos publicly, obtain explicit consent from the individuals depicted, including for tagging them on social media.
- **Consider privacy settings:** When sharing photos or videos online, use appropriate privacy settings to control who can see them.



## • Programming and activities -



- **Offer a dynamic schedule with diverse activities:** Cater to various interests and abilities. Examples of diverse activities include presentations, games, raffles, team-building exercises, icebreakers, trivia games, fishbowl or roundtable discussions, scavenger hunts, polls, poster creation, awards, special guests/speakers, and more. Include workshops on social justice topics relevant to queer, trans, people of color, and disabled youth (QTPOC/D) youth, artistic expression opportunities, and mental health resources.
- **Incorporate real-time Q&A and feedback:**
  - Facilitate discussions and Q&A sessions within workshops and activities.
  - Gather feedback through surveys or polls to gauge participant interests and adapt the schedule as needed throughout the day. Offer anonymous feedback pathways for participants to share their thoughts and suggestions. This allows event organizers to pivot and offer additional activities or discussions that resonate with the group.



## • Food and refreshments -



- **Offer a diverse selection of food options:** Cater to various dietary restrictions and cultural needs. This includes, but is not limited to, options for those who are Kosher, Halal, vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, and nut-free.
- **Ensure accessibility:** Provide clear labeling of ingredients for all food items.
- **Schedule regular breaks** throughout the event to allow participants ample time to eat and rest. This will help ensure that everyone feels refreshed and focused throughout the day.
- **Hydration station:** Make clean drinking water readily available throughout the event.





## BRAVE / SAFE SPACE ZONES

- **Create designated safe spaces** with comfortable seating, calming activities, and staff available to offer support and resources. Consider incorporating items like:
  - Fidget/stimming tools
  - Coloring books, markers, colored pencils
  - Hidden pictures books
  - Word searches
  - Doodle station (paper and random assortment of writing/coloring utensils)
  - Fuzzy blankets/stuffed animals
  - Weighted lap pads
- **Creating a welcoming space through inclusive language:**
  - **Model inclusive communication:** All presenters, speakers, and staff will introduce themselves with their names and pronouns. This sets the tone for respectful interactions throughout the event.
  - **Use inclusive language:** Respect identities by avoiding gendered assumptions and using terms that are broad and welcoming. Avoid using acronyms or jargon that may be unfamiliar to participants.
  - **Offer pronoun check-ins:** Provide opportunities for participants to share their pronouns, either verbally or through name badges.



## POST EVENT



### **Key Points:**

- Collect Participant Input to Inform Future Events
- Share Event Highlights to Extend the Impact
- Continue Partnerships to Build on the Event's Success

- **Feedback and evaluation:** Collect feedback through surveys or discussion groups to improve future events. *Ensure that participants understand how their responses will be used and who will have access to them. Have a process in place for reviewing feedback and intentionally incorporating it into future event planning.*

- **Follow-up:**

- Share event photos and highlights with participants. Provide content notes, contacts, or resources for those needing additional support after discussing difficult topics. Maintain communication with community partners and keep them informed of future initiatives. Consider sending out resource sheets.
- Follow up with individuals who RSVP'd but did not attend to gather information about why they were unable to participate. This can help identify potential barriers and improve future event planning.
- Consider offering opportunities for participants to be involved in future event planning. This can help create a sense of ownership and foster a more engaged community.
- Explore various communication channels beyond email for follow-up, such as text apps, Discord, social media, or creating a social media hashtag. This can help reach a wider audience and ensure that participants stay connected.

### ***Checklist for Inclusive 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and Disabled Youth Events:***

Partner with 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth-led organizations  
 Use diverse marketing platforms and visuals (with alternative text embedded)  
 Ensure physical accessibility of the venue  
 Provide accommodations (e.g., ASL interpreters, dietary options)  
 Train staff on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusivity and anti-racism/oppression  
 Implement trauma-informed, healing-centered practices  
 Offer pronoun badges and gender-inclusive restrooms  
 Create brave/safe space zones with comfort items  
 Include diverse programming and activities  
 Use inclusive language throughout the event  
 Feature 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth speakers and performers  
 Provide information on local 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and Disability Resources  
 Collect post-event feedback  
 Follow up with participants and community partners  
 Eliminate as many fees and costs as possible  
 Eliminate rigid security policies and police presence  
 Allow for casual dress wear and for youth to come as they are  
 Eliminate credit card holds at hotels and mandatory use of legal name and sex assigned at birth for travel accommodations



## SOCIAL JUSTICE INTEGRATION



### Key Points:

- Incorporate Relevant Topics into Programming
- Feature 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and Disabled Youth Perspectives
- Provide Information on Local 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and Disability Organizations.

*The goal is to create a space for education, engagement, and community building.*

- **Partner with other organizations dedicated to social justice to create a more comprehensive and impactful event:** Collaborate on programming, resource sharing, and outreach efforts.
- **Develop actionable goals for the event that focus on the inclusivity of diverse communities:** This can involve collecting participants' demographic data to identify disparities in representation and creating action steps for future planning to ensure that all communities are engaged.

*True inclusion is not about simply adding diversity to a pre-existing structure; it's about transforming that structure to create intentional space for those historically excluded from, or harmed by them.*

- **Highlight social justice issues:** Integrate discussions on topics relevant to 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth, such as racial justice, 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, and representation. Incorporate these themes into workshops and activities.
- **Centering 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth voices:** Invite 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth speakers and performers to share their experiences and perspectives.
- **Actionable resources:** Provide information on local 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and Disability organizations and resources.





### **Reminder**

It's an ongoing process! Creating inclusive spaces is an ongoing intention with no finish line. We can always continue to learn/shift/grow in the ways we approach meaningful partnerships & engagement with youth across systems and intersecting communities of lived experience! Be open to feedback and adapt your approach based on the needs of your community. By thoughtful planning and executing an event centered on 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth, we can create a safe, inclusive, and supportive space. Through community collaboration, accessible programming, and a focus on social justice, we aim to uplift and enhance the well-being of marginalized youth. By prioritizing their needs and perspectives, we can foster a stronger, more equitable community.

**If you would like to request technical assistance and consultation from Youth MOVE National, you can submit your request [HERE!](#)**

## **RESOURCES**



- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and National Center for Transgender Equality. Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People: [https://www.thetaskforce.org/app/uploads/2008/04/opening\\_the\\_door.pdf](https://www.thetaskforce.org/app/uploads/2008/04/opening_the_door.pdf)
- GLSEN. LGBTQ+ Data Inclusion in K-12 Education Systems: <https://www.glsen.org/LGBTQ-data-inclusion>
- The Trevor Project. Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Young People: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/a-guide-to-being-an-ally-to-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth/>
- LGBTQIA Resource Center. Planning Inclusive Events: <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/planning-inclusive-events>
- Perkins. Accessible events: A guide: <https://www.perkins.org/resource/accessible-events-a-guide/>

## RESOURCES CONTINUED

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- Western States Center. Indigenizing Love Toolkit:  
<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/IndigenizingLoveToolkitYouth.pdf>
- Safe Zone Project: <https://thesafezoneproject.com/>
- GLSEN. Trans Action Kit: [https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/GLSEN\\_Trans\\_Action\\_Kit\\_Resource-2021.pdf](https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/GLSEN_Trans_Action_Kit_Resource-2021.pdf)
- GLSEN. Misgendering and Respect for Pronouns:  
<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Misgendering-and-Respect-for-Pronouns.pdf>
- Dakota Swiftwolfe. Indigenous Ally Toolkit:  
[https://gallery.mailchimp.com/86d28ccd43d4be0cfc11c71a1/files/102bf040-e221-4953-a9ef-9f0c5efc3458/Ally\\_email.pdf](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/86d28ccd43d4be0cfc11c71a1/files/102bf040-e221-4953-a9ef-9f0c5efc3458/Ally_email.pdf)
- Disability Cultural Center. A Guide to Planning Inclusive Events, Seminars, and Activities at Syracuse University: [https://experience.syracuse.edu/dcc/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2024/02/DCC-Inclusive-Event-Planning-Guide\\_December-2018.pdf](https://experience.syracuse.edu/dcc/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2024/02/DCC-Inclusive-Event-Planning-Guide_December-2018.pdf)
- Black Disabled and Proud. Tip Sheets for Accessibility:  
<https://www.blackdisabledandproud.org/tip-sheets.html>
- Ohio State University. Composing Access - An invitation to creating accessible events:  
<https://u.osu.edu/composingaccess/>
- Web Accessibility Initiative. Making Events Accessible: Checklist for meetings, conferences, training, and presentations that are remote/virtual, in-person, or hybrid:  
<https://www.w3.org/WAI/teach-advocate/accessible-presentations/>
- University of Arizona. Planning Inclusive and Accessible Events:  
[https://union.arizona.edu/mall/template/resources/DRC\\_PlanningAccessibleInclusiveEvents.pdf](https://union.arizona.edu/mall/template/resources/DRC_PlanningAccessibleInclusiveEvents.pdf)

## RESOURCES CONTINUED

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- Equality and Human Rights Commission. Engaging with Disabled People, an event planning guide: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/housing-and-disabled-people-engaging-with-disabled-people-event-planning-guide.pdf>
- AAA National Network. A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People With Disabilities: <https://adata.org/guide/planning-guide-making-temporary-events-accessible-people-disabilities>