Housing Washington 2026

The Athena Group
HUMANITY IN EVERY SYSTEM

Taking Right Action

Harm Accountability, Microaggressions, and Tools for Change

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Learning together

Reflect on experience

Practice with peers

Open Q&A



Community agreements



- Listen with curiosity and willingness to learn
- Do what you need to show up fully
- Resist the desire to interrupt
- Speak from your own story and use “I” statements
- Avoid speaking for another individual or group
- Be open to the wisdom in each person’s story
- Not everything will be comfortable to discuss

With a neighbor

How have you seen harm handled in communities you've been part of (friend groups, workplaces, movements, families)?

What did that teach you about what accountability is "supposed" to look like?

Introduction to Microaggressions: 2 Points

Racial, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions are active manifestations and/or a reflection of our worldviews of inclusion/exclusion, superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, and desirability/undesirability.

Introduction to Microaggressions: 2 Points

Microaggressions reflect the active manifestation of oppressive worldviews that create, foster, and enforce marginalization.

Introduction to Microaggressions: Hidden Messages

Racial Microaggressions:

- You are a group of criminals
- You are a second-class citizen and undeserving of first-class treatment
- Some groups have no assets or resources and need your help

Introduction to Microaggressions: Hidden Messages

Gender Microaggressions:

- Women should be passive in decision-making
- You should or shouldn’t fit into a different gender stereotype
- Commenting on appearance, body shape, or gender expression

Introduction to Microaggressions: Hidden Messages

Sexual Orientation:

- Heteronormative or gender normative culture and behaviors are best

Religion:

- Everyone celebrates (or should celebrate) the same holidays

Reflection Activity

Think of a time when you experienced a microaggression in a work setting.

1. With your neighbor, share what happened if you are comfortable doing so.

2. What's one word of wisdom you would lend if you could go back in time?



What Is or Isn’t Transformative Justice?

“…justice practices that go all the way to the root of the problem and generate solutions and healing there, such that the conditions that create injustice are transformed.”

Adrienne Maree Brown



We Will Not Cancel Us

“Canceling is punishment, and punishment doesn’t stop the cycle of harm, not long term…We will set down this punitive measure and pick each other up, leaving no traumatized person behind.”

Adrienne Maree Brown

Harm Accountability Guide

I was harmed in a group setting or one-on-one interaction

I think someone else was harmed in a group setting or one-on-one interaction

I caused or think I caused harm in a group setting or one-on-one interaction

Someone tells me I caused harm in a group setting or one-on-one interaction

Someone tells me they were harmed in a group setting or one-on-one interaction

Harm Accountability Guide

Pre-work: Norms must be in place first

1 Acknowledge

2 Ask

3 Amend

4 Audit



Acknowledge

1

Acknowledge when harm has or may have occurred as soon as possible (**within 72 hours**)

Acknowledgement can be led by anyone

Someone in leadership should be informed for follow-up

Ask

2

Ask the person or group harmed how they want to move forward

Ask the person or group harmed how they would like to be involved in the process

Ask if the person or group harmed if they need more time to process

Make Amends

3

The person who created harm is **given time to process and reflect**

The person who created harm makes amends. May be led by person or group harmed or leadership, on how to make amends

Forms of amends

Making amends can take on different forms:

Authentic apology and stated commitment to learn and do better

Complete recommended training(s)

Recognizing and implementing systems or practice change where needed

Make Amends – An Apology

Too many words, explanations, and justifications crowd the picture.

A statement that contains a “but” (I’m sorry but…) invalidates the apology.

Similarly, “if” (I’m sorry if…) suggests that your hurt may not have happened.

Vague wording (… for what happened) fails to take personal responsibility.

Review/Audit Process

4

This guide should be further developed, documented, and reviewed for updates

Recognize and implement systems and practice change where needed

Your organizational culture

Which of these parts do you think would be most challenging for your organizational culture? Why?

Acknowledge | Ask | Amend | Audit

Time to Practice!!

Scenario:

You are facilitating a conversation on environmental racism with a group of staff representing every level of your organization.

"Even the neighborhood I live in has environmental hazards, if I have a problem with it, I can write my legislators or move. Instead of focusing on a particular group, I think we should consider the impact on all people."

You respond appropriately in real-time…

Person A’s contribution

Person A: Later comes to you and shares that your reply in the moment felt incomplete and caused them harm.

Scenario variants

Variants to consider:
Person B is the Executive Director and Person A is a staff member.
Person B is a board member and Person A is a staff member.
Person B is a staff member and Person A is a staff member.
Person B is a staff member and Person A is the Division Director.

Open Q&A

Thank you!

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