
GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISING SAFER FESTIVALS

Planning an event is hard work. So, we have put together some important basic rules for promoters and organisers in a set of guidelines to help you better plan your next event. The essential rule here is to always keep in mind the well-being and safety of your target public.

The effective management of festival-goers begins with the access roads to the festival site and the parking lot. It continues on into the camping area and, of course, the festival site itself.

The more your audience feels welcome, the more likely they will have a good time, be entertained, and, consequently, less likely to become stressed and adopt aggressive or violent behaviour toward the staff or other festival-goers. Thus it is essential that, in the preparatory stages of the event, you regularly put yourself in the shoes of your target audience and ask: What kind of facilities would you expect at an event like this? If some of these are not available, have you been adequately forewarned of their absence?

These guidelines were developed to help ensure that the organisation can produce a safer festival and improve the all-around conditions to better ensure the well-being of the festival-goers.

A proper set of organisational guidelines, supplemented by the intervention of organisations that specialise in harm reduction in recreational settings, will allow you to avoid troublesome situations and will inevitably guarantee a more gratifying and successful event for both you and your audience!

VENUE SAFETY

- Ensure the security of all aspects of your festival venue including access roads, parking and camping facilities as well as the festival area itself. Dangerous areas should be made inaccessible.
- Overcrowding should be prevented, which means never exceeding the maximum crowd capacity for any event, even an outdoor event where space may not seem to be an issue. Remember to keep in mind that all of the food, drink, toilet and camping facilities were promised for a certain sized crowd.
- Adequate door staff should be hired to keep track of the number of people entering and leaving the venue so they have a good overview of total crowd figures during the course of the festival. Don't forget to include artists, guest lists, journalists and volunteers.
- Avoid the rapid entrance of too many people in a too short period of time. This can be alleviated by opening the doors or gates in advance so that people can calmly settle in as they gradually arrive before the event begins.
- Keep in mind that crowded venues are more difficult to manage when it comes to security issues such as an emergency evacuation or power outage for example.
- Organisers should ensure that there is adequate security staff present at all times during a large event. Security staff should be properly licensed, trained and clearly identifiable (uniforms or badges).
- Establish an efficient communication system that is fully operational at all times during the event and do not depend on a central power source. In other words, have a reliable back-up power source. Ensure the establishment of effective communication links between organisers, staff, emergency medical service workers, harm reduction teams and other relevant players such as the police and fire departments.
- Organise meetings between the various on-site services before, during and after the event. It is very important that everyone is aware of their respective roles.
- Be aware of utility safety, sources of electricity and all on-site electrical devices. Respect the host country's regulations regarding utility safety.
- Ensuring adequate emergency medical services on site should be a priority and should be provided by certified employees. It is advisable to set up a first-aid tent during large events and provide adequate information regarding its location. If this is impossible, you should establish an emergency protocol that can be applied during any and all health emergencies, including ensuring rapid emergency vehicle transport to a medical facility.
- Avoid fire hazards: if a festival is taking place in the countryside, especially during the summer months, you should ban barbecues, candles and all other open fires. You should have a clear evacuation plan and have sufficient fire extinguishers on hand.

- It is very important to come up with an effective evacuation plan that all involved staff should be familiar with.

PUBLIC WELL-BEING

- Organise an easily accessible chill-out area: a peaceful, comfortable place where people can relax. Free drinking water should be made available and the area should be well ventilated and shady.
- During hot weather and/or when people are using drugs (including alcohol), drinking water is necessary and should be readily available to prevent dehydration and heat stroke. Water should be available in all event areas including the camp ground and the festival itself.
- Ensure adequate availability of food and food vendors, especially during extended events and those located in rural settings far from residential areas.
- During summer festivals, it is important to ensure that there are shady areas where people can find shelter from the hot sun, especially during high-risk periods.
- Adequate camping facilities should be made available for multi-day events, The campgrounds should provide sufficient shade and drinking water.
- Ensure that there are enough clean and functional toilets available for the expected crowd during the entire course of the event.



VENUE AND SURROUNDING AREAS

A successful event implies respect for the local environment and the area's residents:

- Regular clean-ups during the course of the event and afterward are very important. Organisers should ensure that the venue and all surrounding areas including the campground, are cleaned up after the event to avoid damaging the environment and to prevent fires and other incidents. Ensure provision of enough garbage and recycling bins during the event. also make garbage bags readily available. Make this a green event!
- Whenever possible, try to have access roads circumvent residential areas so as to minimise disturbing local residents. Establish an effective traffic management plan to avoid traffic congestion in the festival area.
- Avoid dangerous noise levels! Any sound above 90 dB can lead to hearing loss. It can also cause public disturbances that affect local residents and may lead to public complaints and encounters with local law enforcement officers!

HARM REDUCTION TEAM COLLABORATIONS

A harm reduction team can provide technical support in a festival setting involving health, safety and well-being issues.

The risks associated with musical events – such as drugs use (including alcohol), hearing damage, etc. – have increased over the past decades and event organisers should be prepared to deal with this situation.

Harm reduction teams can be very helpful partners in addressing the aforementioned issues and other critical health issues.

There should always be a harm reduction team on hand for your event. The team can provide:

- Objective information on the risks of behaviour often associated with party events covering such areas as drugs use, sex, hearing loss, among others.
- Materials that can significantly reduce these risks: condoms, earplugs, alcohol tests, needle exchanges, etc.
- Harm reduction services: drug checking, first-aid and crisis management such as dealing with bad trips. These services are complementary of the on-site emergency medical team.

Harm reduction teams can help make your event even safer. If, for some reason, a team cannot be present during the event, then organisers should always provide adequate information and make preventive materials such as earplugs, alcohol tests and condoms readily available.



HOW TO HOST A HARM REDUCTION TEAM



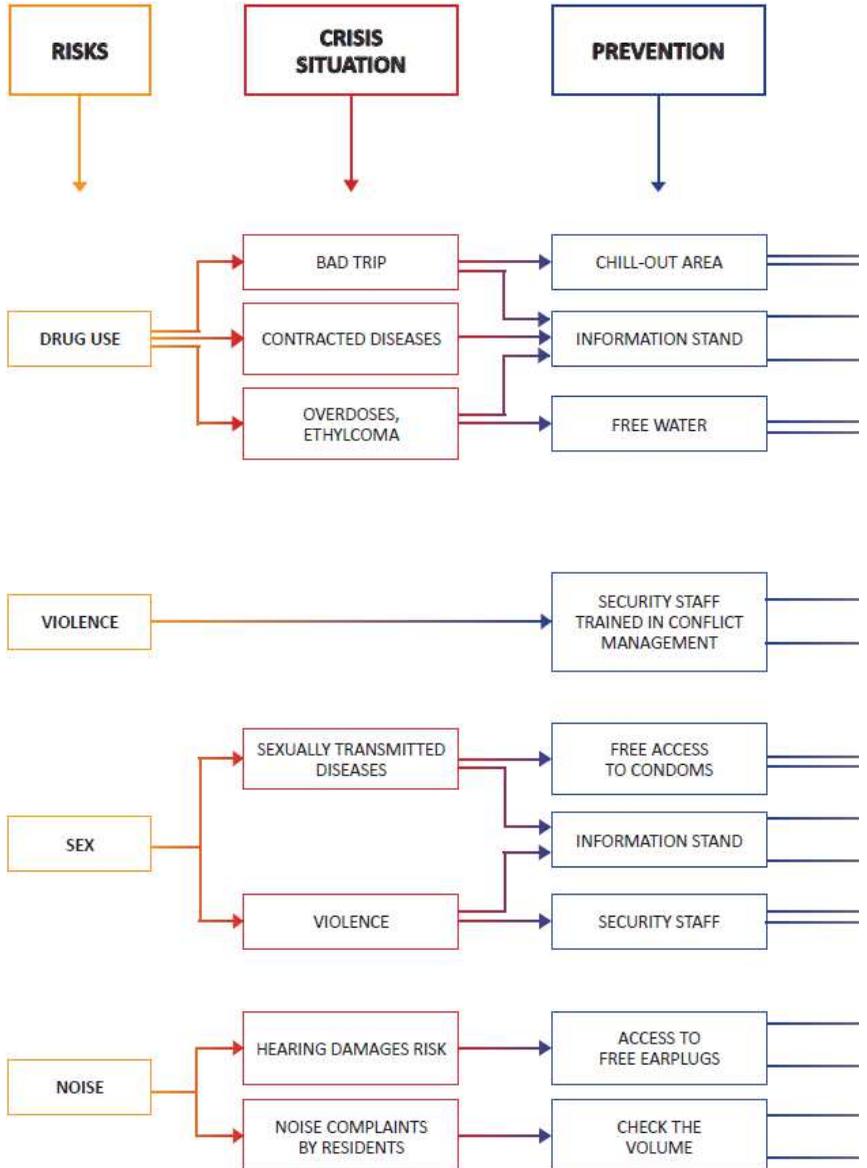
If organisers want to collaborate with a harm reduction team's services, they should contact them sufficiently before the event to ensure that they can draw up adequate plans adapted to your specific event including its duration, type of public and venue.

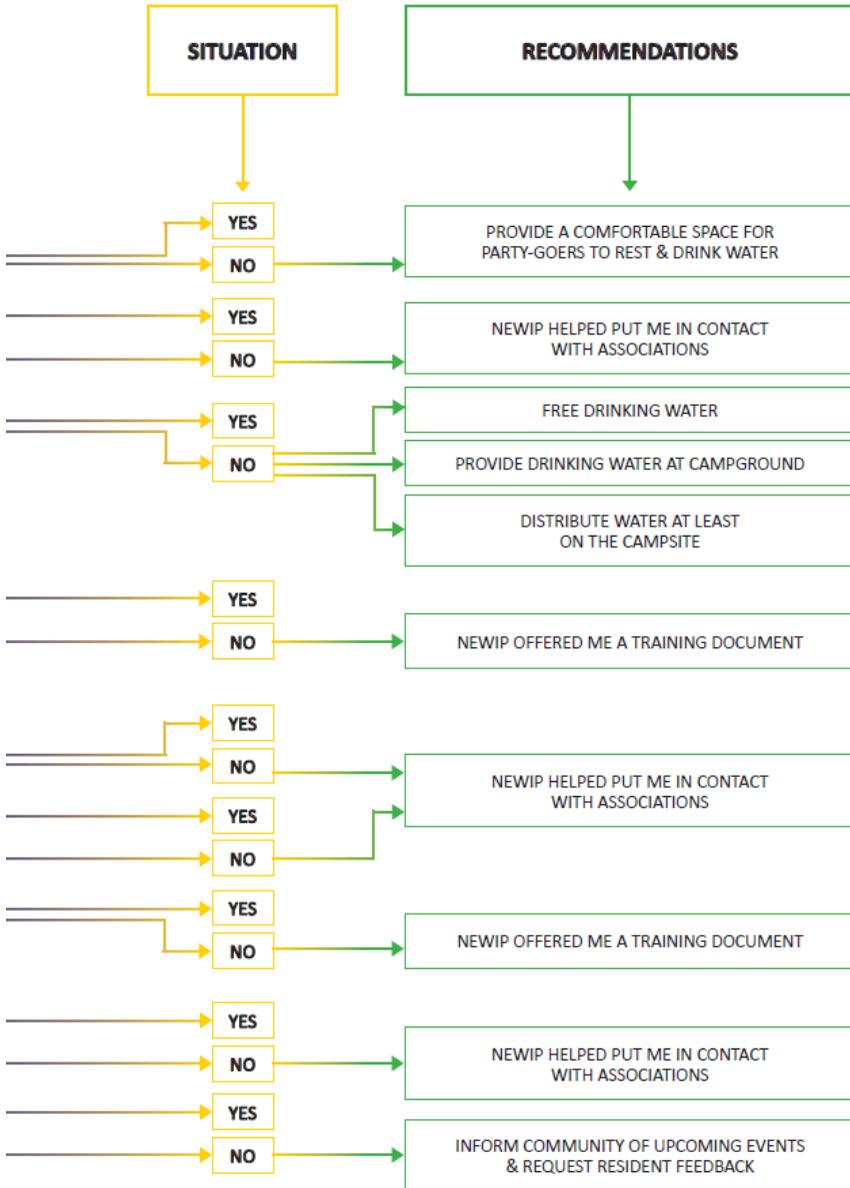
To ensure effective interventions, the hired team will probably have some suggestions and conditions including:

- Free entrance to the event for all team members. This number will depend on the nature and extent of the services to be provided and the size and duration of the event itself. For example, a minimum of 6 volunteers are necessary to man the information stand for a 12-hour event.
- Harm reduction team members should be provided with free meals and have access to food facilities, the camping areas, showers and toilets. Members should be made to feel they are part of your staff.
- Teams must have road access to the venue for the delivery of essential goods and services.
- Adequate reserved space to erect harm reduction stands and arrange chill out spaces that are conveniently located – not too close to the event itself but also not too isolated.
- Utilities such as water, gas and electricity should be provided to ensure the efficiency of the team's services. Some project can manage their logistics by themselves but in some cases, to ensure that the harm reduction information stand and chill out areas fit into the graphic theme of an event, organisers will have to provide the facility structures such as tents, stands, banners and/or logos. This also means involving the harm reduction team in the development of the concept and theme of the event.

Remember that most harm reduction team members are volunteers who are providing their services on their own free time. But, because they are unpaid, it means paying extra attention to adequately recognise their contributions and thanking them for their contributions.

CHECK RISKS





CONTACTS**Austria****Check It!**+43 1 585 12 12 - checkit@vws.or.at / www.checkyourdrugs.at**Belgium****Modus Vivendi**+32 26 44 22 00 - www.modusvivendi-be.org**France****Techno+**+33 6 03 82 97 19 - tplus@technoplus.org / www.technoplus.org**Germany****Drug Scouts**+49 34 12 11 20 22 - drugscouts@drugscouts.de / www.drugscouts.de**Italy****HTLab - Department of General Psychology - University Of Padua**<http://htlab.psy.unipd.it>**PSF - Onlus**+39 34 90 99 97 92 - psfitalia@gmail.com / <http://www.psicologisenzafrontiere.org>**Netherlands****Jellinek - Unity**+31 20 590 1330 - www.unity.nl / www.jellinek.nl**Portugal****CHECKIN**+35 12 27 53 11 06 - check-in@apdes.pt / <http://check-in.apdes.net>**Spain****Energy Control**+34 902 253 600 - info@energycontrol.org / www.energycontrol.org

Edited in September 2013 by NEWIP - Field Intervention

Funded by
the Health Programme
of the European Union