

Stepping In Tool

Leadership Planning Guide

The goal of this part of the tool is to help you prepare for a discussion with your group's members that results in every member agreeing to step in for other members and allowing other members to step in when they are at risk of harm or negative consequence related to alcohol use.

To start, you'll want to download or print out a copy of parts two and three of this tool, the **Membership Meeting Guide** and the **Stepping In Agreement**.

During your planning time, you will need to complete the following tasks:

1. Personalize the **Membership Meeting Guide** so that it fits the context of your group.
2. Personalize the **Stepping In Agreement** so that it works for your group. Do this by filling in the name of your college or university and your student organization's name at the top of the agreement. See if you agree with the information and examples listed in the following sections of the agreement:
 - As a member of this organization, I authorize any fellow member to
 - As a member of this organization, I agree that I will
 - Situations Where We Agree As a Group to Step In for Each Other
 - Rules About How to Step In that We All Want to Follow

If you don't agree with the examples, modify them. We don't recommend adding too many more examples to the situations and rules sections since you want to leave room for your group's members to suggest additional examples.

3. Decide when to hold the group meeting, who will lead the discussion, and how you will address issues that might arise during the meeting. Determine who will bring a laptop and if this person will take notes or write down ideas generated during the group discussion. Decide how you will respond if a member doesn't agree with the rest of the group about the situations and rules in the Stepping In agreement. (For example, you could tell the member who disagrees that you would like to speak with him or her one-on-one after the meeting or at another time, and ask if it's OK with him or her that the group continue to brainstorm about what members think the situations and rules should be.)
4. Consider the challenges group members might raise during the meeting about stepping in for each other, and make a plan for how members of the leader team will support one another.

The following are some questions for you, as the leader team, to consider as you prepare for the group conversation.

1. What kind of resistance do you think members of your group will have related to stepping in?

It can be helpful to think about the types of resistance you might face and how you would address each one. Examples of resistant attitudes could include members saying that: 1) it's not cool to be the boss of someone else, 2) it's not the responsibility of any member of the group to step in for others, 3) group members won't know when to step in because another group member might be acting drunk or stupid when they're actually fine, and 4) other people won't like them when they step in because they'll ruin the party.

If group members claim that it's not cool to be the boss of someone else (resistant attitude #1), you can say that no one likes being told what to do, but most people really don't like facing negative physical, legal, personal, or academic consequences as a result of alcohol use. Most of us can think of a time when we wish someone had stepped in to prevent us from doing something that caused us harm or negative consequences—especially if someone we knew and trusted had intervened in the right way. If stepping in is done right, it's not about being the boss of someone else, but about minimizing harm or risk to someone and to the group as a whole.

If members state that it's not their responsibility to step in for someone else (resistant attitude #2), you can explain why it can be important to prevent members from doing something that causes physical or emotional harm to themselves or others and how stepping in can prevent the entire group from developing a bad reputation and receiving other negative punishments (like not being allowed to host parties). Hopefully, group members share the goal of keeping everyone in the organization free from problems that affect the health or good standing of the organization. If certain group members don't, you may need to have a side conversation with those individuals. You can also explain that the group is going to discuss and come to agreement about the situations where it will be a group member's responsibility to step in, and that the final stepping in agreement won't include situations that the majority of group members don't agree with.

If group members say that they don't know when to step in (resistant attitude #3), you can clarify that together the group will identify specific situations where group members should step in. You could also suggest that before a group member steps in, they could ask another group member present if they agree that it is an appropriate time to step in and the best way to do it.

If members mention concern about ruining the party as a result of stepping in (resistant attitude #4), you could explain that the party would be truly wrecked if someone ended up being taken to the hospital or a fight broke out and the police showed up, both of which could lead to long-term negative consequences. If stepping in is done right, the party can often continue. Stepping in isn't meant to be a big public event where everyone stares at the drunk person being carried off by his or her friend.

2. How can you help members of your group to see stepping in as something they should do instead of something that's not cool?

If some of your group's members see stepping in as not cool, your leader team will probably want to do more than simply say, "No, really, it is cool to step in." There are many ways to try to shift people's perceptions through group and individual conversations. For example, you could ask group members to think about a recent time when they did something stupid while drunk (members don't need to share with the group what they did), and consider whether they would have wanted someone to stop them from doing what they did, and how they would have wanted the person to step in. Or, using a more direct approach, you could ask members to share why they don't think it's cool to step in.

If you decide to have group members think about a recent time when they did something stupid while drunk, give members a few minutes to reflect and ask them to write down their thoughts related to having someone step in and how they would have liked the stepping in to occur. After a few minutes, you can ask if anyone is willing to share with the group what they wrote, or you can ask everyone to choose a partner and share their thoughts with their partner. You can then ask a few pairs to share with the group a summary of their conversation, reminding them not to share their embarrassing incident with the group. A group member might say that he or she wouldn't have wanted someone to step in because it's more embarrassing to have someone step in than to do whatever you did while drunk. If this happens, ask why it is so embarrassing to have someone step in. You don't need to convince the group member that this belief is wrong, so don't try. Just hear the person out and ask others to share their thoughts.

If you decide to discuss why members think it isn't cool to step in, ask the group what is uncool about stepping in. Is it that the person stepping in seems like someone's parent? Does the uncool factor depend on how the person steps in? For example, is it OK to pull someone aside to talk when you step in, but totally uncool to talk to the person in the middle of a party? Does the uncool factor depend on what the person says? What if the person stepping in says, "Hey, I'm thinking that maybe we should get out of here because you're having a bit too much fun and I really want pizza. Come with me to get pizza." Is that OK? Is that better or worse than saying "Hey, you should stop taking so many shots because you are for sure going to puke and make a fool of yourself"? If your group isn't very talkative, you may want to have people first discuss these questions in pairs. Then you can have the pairs share out with the group, or ask one person from each pair to write down a summary of their ideas on a laptop or easel and report out or have the person who's leading the discussion read aloud the summaries.

3. What is the best way to introduce your group to the concept of stepping in?

There isn't one way to introduce stepping in that works for every group. We suggest first showing your group the Stepping In video (which is about four minutes long). Following the video, you can do one of the following:

- Discuss a recent event on campus where things got out of control and how someone could have stepped in at different points to stop this from happening.
- Describe what people in your group have said to you individually about wanting others to step in for them (without naming the group members who said this).
- Describe a time when you saw someone successfully step in for someone else.

Given that you know the members of your group better than anyone else, what do you think would be the most effective approach?

If you decide to discuss a recent event on campus where things got out of control, you could ask members at what points they think someone could have stepped in and how they could have done it. Be sure to describe the event in a way that doesn't embarrass the person(s) involved; for example, don't use anyone's name. Or you could make up a story loosely based on a recent campus event to avoid embarrassing the people involved.

If you decide to share what people in your group have said to you about wanting others to step in for them, you will need to do some preparation. First, you need to have those conversations with group members before the group meeting. Make sure that the members you speak with are OK with your sharing what they said with the group. (Be sure to explain that you will not reveal their identity.) You don't need more than three stories like this from group members. This is a good way to correct group members' misperceptions about what others in the group think, as you did when you discussed with the group the results of the **Member Alcohol Profile**. Once members know that others in the group want people to step in for them, they may be more likely to shift their thinking about whether stepping in is their responsibility.

If you want to describe a time when you saw someone successfully step in for someone else, do you have any good examples to share? If not, you could ask other group members to share an example, but this requires preparation. Whether it's you or another group member who describes the successful stepping-in incident, make sure to include details related to what the person stepping in said, how the other person responded (they might have been angry), and what happened next (e.g., did the party resume? did a friend of the person who was stumbling drunk and going off with someone thank the person who stepped in?). These details are key to group members' understanding what stepping in is and how to do it right.

4. How can help the group to talk about and agree on the kind of situations where members will step in for each other?

A key element in creating the **Stepping In Agreement** is having people suggest situations where group members will agree to step in for each other. If group members are talkative, you could begin by suggesting a few specific behaviors or situations, such as when someone is about to start a fight, is passed out, or is very intoxicated. Then ask group members to suggest additional behaviors/situations, and have someone write down the suggestions on a laptop or easel. List every suggestion, even those that seem off-base. Then ask the group to decide which behaviors everyone agrees should be included in the **Stepping In Agreement**. You don't want to have too many behaviors listed in the agreement. The ideal number is between five and eight, and definitely no more than 10.

If the group is not very talkative, you could provide one example and give everyone a few minutes to list on a piece of paper or laptop the behaviors/situations they think should be included. Then ask volunteers share their ideas with the group. Alternatively, you could ask people to work with a partner to jot down their ideas on a laptop or easel, and then read aloud the ideas.

5. How can you monitor and support this effort?

Let's fast forward to the future: you held the group meeting, everyone signed the **Stepping In Agreement**, and a month or two has passed. Chances are that you and your group members have been in situations where someone in the group put himself or herself at risk for harm or negative consequences related to alcohol use. As the team leader, you want to monitor and support group members to continue to step in for each other over time. There are several ways to do this, including modeling effective stepping in yourself, acknowledging group members who step in effectively, bringing new members up to speed on stepping in and having them sign a **Stepping In Agreement**, and probing a bit to find out why people aren't stepping in when they should. Each of these things is important to do.

Model for group members how to step in effectively, but when other group members are present in a situation that calls for stepping in, ask another group member if they want to step in, explaining that you'll be nearby for support. Acknowledge in one-on-one conversations or group settings when you've seen or heard about a group member stepping in successfully. Before doing this in a group setting, ask the person who was stepped in for (not the person who stepped in) if they were OK with the other person intervening on their behalf. If the person was OK with it, at the next group meeting, you could say something like "Hey, I heard that Adam was able to prevent one of us from maybe taking things too far on Saturday night, and it was appreciated. That's great to hear."

When new members join the group, review the **Stepping In Agreement** with them. If a new member suggests new situations or rules to add to the agreement, run these by the group during a meeting and modify the agreement as needed. It's a good idea to revisit the **Stepping In Agreement** with the group every six months because some people will have forgotten about the effort and new members might have joined who don't yet have the full picture.

What should you do if you hear that a group member did something that caused harm or negative consequences while other group members were present, but no one stepped in? You could have a conversation with the person(s) who didn't step in to understand why they didn't take action. Perhaps the situations and rules aren't described clearly enough in the agreement. Or maybe some members aren't getting the idea, and you need to discuss stepping in again with these members or with the whole group. Or perhaps a member or members did try to step in but it didn't go well. It's important to understand the specifics so you can figure out what you, as group leader, can do to address the obstacles to group members' stepping in.

6. How can you measure the success of this effort over time and make changes as needed?

Fast forward again a few months after group members have signed the **Stepping In Agreement**. You will want to assess if members are stepping in as the agreement describes. Have you seen or heard about group members stepping in when and how the agreement says they should? Are the stepping-in efforts working? Have you seen or heard about members not stepping in when the agreement says they should? Why do you think this is occurring?

If you have seen or heard about group members stepping in at appropriate moments, you can be fairly confident that the situations described in the **Stepping In Agreement** are clear to members. If people aren't stepping in when they should, revisit as a group the situations listed in the agreement. If members are stepping in for each other but it hasn't been going well, revisit the rules for stepping in to make sure everyone understands them. Do members need help finding the right words to use when they step in? If people want opportunities to practice how to step in, you could set aside meeting time for members to work with a partner to role play stepping in.

Based on what you've learned about whether and how group members are stepping in, does the **Stepping In Agreement** need to be revised? Do you need to make the rules clearer? Do you need to insert additional situations where members will step in for each other? At a group meeting, ask members what they feel is working well with the agreement and what the obstacles are to stepping in. Discuss potential changes to the agreement. Acknowledge members' successes with stepping in and encourage those who are struggling to continue working on it.