

Draft Concept for Awareness

Introduction

We create our standards to the best of our knowledge and belief – however, writing an awareness concept is a process that requires constant revision and criticism. We work on a voluntary basis and hold ourselves to a confidentiality agreement (see page 5).

The Awareness Team can be recognized by their pink vests and can be reached via:

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or meet us at the StuRa-Baracke: Georg-Bähr-Straße 4e

Goals and Self-Understanding

We aim to create a space where everyone feels comfortable, as free from discrimination and violence as possible. Not only the awareness team is responsible for this, but all of us. We see the awareness team as a low-threshold point of contact for all students and support in various situations (see: "When can I contact the Awareness Team?" on p. 2).

Definitions

- **Awareness:**

"The English term 'awareness' can be translated as consciousness. In the German-speaking world, it stands for an attitude and practice that counters discrimination and (sexualized) violence and promotes consensual behavior. On one hand, awareness refers to a structure on-site through which victims of discrimination and violence receive supportive assistance. Clarifying conversations with discriminatory or violent persons may also take place if necessary." (Awareness Initiative)

- **Discrimination:** Refers to behavior that disadvantages individuals based on (attributed) characteristics, such as skin color, culture, religion, and assigned gender. This behavior can manifest in prejudice, harassment, or violence.

- **Boundaries:** Personal and individual; boundaries are variable. A person may feel uncomfortable with behavior that is acceptable to someone else.

Example: If you do not like being hugged as a greeting, that is a personal boundary. Even jokes can be perceived as hurtful and overstepping.

- **Consent:** Describes mutual agreement and harmony in a situation. Consent is actively and voluntarily given, can be withdrawn at any time, and must be constantly re-checked.
Example: If you meet someone new and are unsure whether they want to be hugged, just ask beforehand. Similarly, agreeing to a kiss doesn't mean that touching intimate areas is okay.
- **Boundary Violations:** Ignoring personal boundaries. Examples include insults, catcalling (lewd whistling), touching without consent, physical assaults, discriminatory terms, inappropriate jokes, and racial slurs.
Example: You are pressured to drink alcohol, even though you don't want to.
- **Power of Definition:** The affected person holds the authority to define their experience – their perception and assessment of the situation are decisive.
Example: If you felt uncomfortable with a hug or didn't want it, it doesn't matter if others say, "It wasn't a big deal" or "It was just a hug." What matters is how you felt in the situation, not how others perceived it.
- **Safer Space:** A retreat for affected persons. We speak of "safer" (not completely "safe") because no space can be fully guaranteed to be free from discrimination.
- **Affected persons:** People whose personal boundaries have been violated and who, therefore, feel uncomfortable (e.g., if someone whistled at you or made fun of you for not drinking alcohol).
- **Perpetrating persons:** People who, in the eyes of the affected person, have intentionally or unintentionally crossed personal boundaries.

When Can I Contact the Awareness Team?

People can contact the Awareness Team with various concerns and issues, including:

- Experiencing or witnessing **boundary-crossing behavior** such as unwanted/inappropriate questions, jokes, or touches.
Examples: "You look sick today," a joke about blonde women, an unwanted hug, "You've put on weight," or "A glass of wine never hurt anyone." Such behavior often arises from ignorance or a lack of awareness of another person's boundaries.

- Experiencing or witnessing **boundary violations**, such as sexually suggestive remarks, repeatedly ignoring a “no,” or discriminatory questions about a person’s origin (“Where are you really from?”). Boundary violations are intentional disregard for boundaries and serve to exclude or degrade others.
- Experiencing or witnessing **coercive behavior**, such as demands for sexual acts or alcohol consumption.

Examples: “I bought you a drink, so you can give me a kiss” or “If you don’t drink beer, you can go home.” Coercive behavior is a violation of human dignity and may constitute a criminal offense.

Principles of Our Work

We are neither judges nor police officers. **We do not investigate, judge**, or issue house bans. Fortunately, we don’t need to, because when it comes to boundary violations, only one person’s perspective matters – that of the affected person. It doesn’t matter whether the behavior was “normal” or “not meant that way” from the perspective of the perpetrator or society. You decide where your boundaries are, and if they are crossed.

Our focus is on the affected person, which means we fundamentally believe you and act solely in your interest. You decide whether you need peace or someone to talk to. If another person is involved, it’s entirely up to you whether we confront the perpetrator or report the incident. We support you no matter what you choose. You don’t need to precisely categorize situations (“That was clearly a boundary violation because this boundary was deliberately crossed”) to feel uncomfortable and reach out to us.

When we highlight boundary-crossing behavior and confront the perpetrator, **our approach is constructive**. We do not act against individuals, but always against behavior. Our goal is for the perpetrator to understand that their behavior has crossed another person’s boundaries and to take responsibility for it. We want to raise awareness that people are different, have different backgrounds, have had different experiences, and, therefore, have different boundaries they feel comfortable with.

We are **focused on the affected person**. This means we act only in their interest, their perception and evaluation are decisive, and this also means that we are biased.

We are **needs- and consent-oriented**. This means that the affected person tells us what should happen and how we can help. What they want will be implemented – no more, no less.

We do awareness work to make people more sensitive to the boundaries of others. We want people to be insightful when they are made aware of their boundary-crossing behavior. Unintentional boundary violations can happen – it's important to be mindful of this and to deal with it responsibly. Our work does not target individuals.

Collaboration

- We are sober and well-rested.
- We always work in pairs (tandem principle).
- There are fixed shifts, and a shift handover process.
- We are mindful of our own capacity and seek support when we are unable to handle a situation (regular self check-ins).
- Before and after, there is a check-in with the whole team (preparation and debriefing).
- We ensure our own safety.
- We document cases anonymously for internal shift handover purposes.
- We justify our behavior and make our work transparent.

Tasks of an Awareness Team

- Be the first point of contact if visitors experience or witness inappropriate behavior, discrimination, or other forms of discomfort.
- Listen and provide calming support (e.g., using breathing exercises).
- Seek friends and additional support if needed.
- Offer a retreat space or accompany someone to a safer place.
- Provide information on further resources and contact points.
- Supply materials (awareness kits), such as water, fidget toys, dextrose, tissues, general hygiene products, etc.
- Independently intervene if you observe boundary-crossing behavior, and approach the potentially affected person.
- Accept feedback about the event and pass it on to the organizers.
- Document the incident anonymously.

What We Are Not

- We are not trained professionals but are volunteers – we can also misjudge situations.
- We are not moral apostles wagging a finger; we simply want everyone to feel comfortable.
- We are not a medical service but provide first aid within the legal framework.
- We are not bouncers or event organizers – we cannot issue warnings or expel perpetrators.
- We are not mediators or conflict resolvers – we do not solve disputes and are not impartial.
- We are not therapists for long-term support but a first point of contact.

Confidentiality Agreement

We handle the information shared with us responsibly, confidentially, and with care.

Personalized information will not be shared with third parties. Documentation for internal purposes is anonymized.