



FACILITATOR ONBOARDING

Chester County Community Conversations (2025–2026)

Thank you for stepping into the role of Community Conversations Facilitator. You are a vital part of helping Chester County residents engage with one another through respectful, inclusive dialogue. This guide will prepare you to lead meaningful, structured conversations in person or virtually.

1. FACILITATOR ROLE OVERVIEW

You Are Responsible For:

- Welcoming all voices into the space
- Setting and enforcing community agreements
- Guiding conversations with prompts and curiosity
- Managing time and flow respectfully
- Supporting participants through difficult moments

You Are Not Responsible For:

- Being an expert on the topic
- Solving the issue being discussed
- Taking sides or pushing a viewpoint

2. CORE FACILITATION PRINCIPLES

- **Respect First:** Every perspective shared is valid.
- **Listening Over Debating:** We seek understanding, not victory.
- **Curiosity Is Key:** Ask questions that invite depth.
- **Stay Neutral, Stay Present:** Guide the process, not the outcome.
- **Pause When Needed:** Silence can create space for deeper thought.

3. PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Before the Conversation:

- Review the chosen theme and discussion guide
- Coordinate with host organization on format, audience, tech/venue
- Confirm any accessibility needs (language, mobility, sensory)
- Create or adapt community agreements for your session
- Identify and meet with your co-facilitator (if applicable)

Virtual-Specific Needs:

- Tech test with host and co-facilitator (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.)
- Prepare breakout rooms and engagement tools (polls, chat)
- Confirm closed captioning, interpretation, or dial-in options

In-Person Needs:



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- Check room layout, seating, signage, audio
- Ensure availability of materials (name tags, handouts, signage)
- Identify a quiet area or exit path for participants who need breaks

4. DURING THE CONVERSATION

Opening (10–15 minutes):

- Welcome everyone and introduce yourself
- Acknowledge the theme and purpose of the session
- Review community agreements
- Invite participants to introduce themselves or share a warm-up prompt

Main Discussion (60 minutes):

- Pose open-ended questions tied to the theme
- Use “stacking” (keeping a speaking queue) or round-robin formats
- Watch for nonverbal cues, invite quieter voices in gently
- Redirect if conversation becomes tense or off-topic
- Remind folks of the agreements as needed

Closing (10–15 minutes):

- Ask for final reflections or takeaways
- Share next steps or follow-up resources
- Invite participants to complete the feedback survey
- Thank everyone and close with a moment of appreciation or intention

5. SUPPORT TOOLS

Provided by CCCF:

- Discussion guides tailored to each theme
- Checklists for virtual and in-person formats
- Pre-written agreements and prompts
- Sample agendas and outreach templates
- Feedback form links and QR codes

6. CONTINUED SUPPORT

- Facilitators will be invited to quarterly reflection circles to share learning and improve practices.
- Ongoing professional development opportunities will be offered in partnership with local DEI, mediation, and storytelling experts.

Contact: ajene@chescofcf.org for questions, materials, or support.

You are helping Chester County grow into a more connected, courageous, and inclusive community. Thank you.