

## Sample Ground Rules (Agreements) for Dialogue<sup>1</sup>

---

- 1) Speak personally, for yourself as an individual, not as a representative of an organization or position.
- 2) Avoid assigning intentions, beliefs, or motives to others. (Ask others questions instead of stating untested assumptions about them.)
- 3) Honor each person's right to "pass" if he or she is not ready or willing to speak.
- 4) Allow others to finish before you speak.
- 5) Share "air time."
- 6) Respect all confidentiality or anonymity requests that the group has agreed to honor.<sup>2</sup>
- 7) Stay on the topic.
- 8) Call people and groups by the names that they prefer.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>We often use the term "agreements" instead of "ground rules" to underscore the participants' ownership of their process. The agreements we propose are tailored to address the hopes and concerns expressed by participants in the planning phase. The list we propose becomes the group's agreements only after the group has amended and adopted them at the beginning of the meeting.

<sup>2</sup>Many groups make a provisional confidentiality agreement at the beginning of the meeting when they do not yet know what will happen. Example: "Unless we change our confidentiality agreement at the end of the meeting, no one here can say who was here or anything that was said. At the end of the meeting we will revisit the issue of confidentiality and may change the agreement if all agree to do so."

<sup>3</sup>For example, a participant may prefer to be called "African-American" rather than "Black" or "pro-life" rather than "anti-abortion."

