

# Columbus Association for the Performing Arts

## Conduct Policy for Youth Interactions



This Policy establishes how Columbus Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) will prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and youth by its employees and representatives. CAPA seeks to create a welcoming and nurturing environment and has zero tolerance for those whose actions may jeopardize the safety, health or innocence of a minor.

**Scope:** For the purposes of the Policy, except where noted, the word “adult” is used to define not just employees, but anyone engaged or utilized by CAPA to work with or around children and youth. This includes employees, teaching artists, directors, choreographers, interns, and anyone else who routinely works with youth as a representative of CAPA.

### Definitions

**Abuse** - Because it takes many forms, abuse can be broken down into the following subtypes, all of which are prohibited within the scope of this Policy.

- Physical abuse - Injury inflicted on a child or youth
- Sexual abuse - Contact or activity of a sexual nature between an adult and a child or youth
- Emotional abuse - Mental or emotional injury inflicted on a child or youth by the actions of an adult
- Neglect - Failure to provide adequate care for a child or youth
- Economic abuse - Deliberate misuse of the money or belongings of a child or youth

**Child** - A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12.

**Youth** - A youth is defined as anyone between 12 and 18 years of age.

### Personnel Screenings

Safeguards in the hiring will be used to eliminate from consideration any candidates who display characteristics that could classify them at a high risk for violating this policy. The required screenings and background information will depend on the positions and level of involvement with children and youth.

Candidates for paid positions that involve regular and frequent interaction with children or youth will be screened and selected using the following:

- In-person interview with the candidate
- A signed authorization to perform necessary background checks
- Criminal background checks in any and all states where the candidate has lived in the past seven years
- Sexual offender registry checks in any and all states where the candidate has lived for the last seven years
- FBI/BCI Fingerprint background check within 30 days of hire date and before any contact with youth or minors
- A signed Conduct Policy Acknowledgement form

Candidates for paid contracted positions that involve regular, but infrequent, contact with children or youth (either limited or ongoing) will be screened and selected using the following:

- In-person interview with the candidate

- A signed authorization to perform necessary background checks
- Criminal background checks in any and all states where the candidate has lived in the past seven years
- Sexual offender registry checks in any and all states where the candidate has lived for the last seven years
- FBI/BCI Fingerprint background check within 30 days of hire date and before any contact with youth or minors
- A signed Conduct Policy Acknowledgement form

Candidates for contracted positions that involve limited and/or infrequent contact with children or youth will be screened and selected using the following:

- In-person interview with the candidate (when possible)
- Supervision by a CAPA employee for the duration of the CAPA Education & Engagement activity
- A signed Conduct Policy Acknowledgement form (when possible)

All information collected about a candidate will be reviewed and used to determine if he or she is appropriate for the respective position. If hired, all information collected during the hiring process will be included in the employee's permanent file, which will be maintained over the course of their employment with CAPA.

### **Structural Guidelines for Programs**

All CAPA Education & Engagement programs are designed to encourage safe interaction between employees/adults and children or youth. The following guidelines are meant to keep established safeguards effective:

- Employees and adults are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth behind closed doors or where they cannot be easily observed by others
- Employees who are responsible for developing and implementing new programs for children must ensure this policy is followed and obtain management consent for any new program or activity that is outside their customary scope of duties.

### **General Conduct**

To provide a safe and healthy environment for both mind and body, the following guidelines are meant to guide CAPA employees and adults during their interactions with children and youth. These guidelines do not and cannot outline every situation that may be encountered while on the job, requiring employees and adults to act with a certain degree of personal discretion. Because a certain action is not prohibited in this section does not mean it is acceptable behavior. CAPA reserves the right to take disciplinary action against employees and adults whose actions are found to be inappropriate regardless of whether they appear in this section.

- All children and youth will be treated with respect and consideration. Treatment must be fair and equal and must not be based on gender or gender-identification, race, religion, ability or disability, economic or social status, or sexual orientation. All effort must be made to avoid favoritism or the appearance of favoritism.
- While representing CAPA, employees and adults must not possess, distribute, use or allow others to use any alcohol or drugs.
- Harsh or inappropriate language, degrading punishment, or any type of restraining device in the name of behavior management must not be used.
- Employees and adults must not participate in or allow others to engage in any form of hazing.
- Employees and adults must not have sexual contact with children or youth.

- Employees and adults must not dress, undress, shower or bathe with or in the presence of children or youth (who are not their own children).
- Employees and adults must not use physical punishment in any form. The only time physical force is allowed to be used against a child or youth is when their actions are placing others at an immediate risk for serious harm.
- Employees and adults are prohibited from sharing sleeping locations with children or youth (who are not their own children). This includes beds, tents, hotel rooms and other similar areas.
- Employees and adults must not discuss their own sexual history, preferences or fantasies nor their use of illicit or pornographic materials while in the company of children or youth.
- Employees and adults are not allowed to possess any sexually oriented materials (books, magazines, videos, clothing) when conducting business in the name of CAPA.
- When one-on-one discussion or counseling is warranted, employee and adult interaction with a child or youth will take place in an area that allows for private conversation while remaining in the view of others.
- Employees and adults must not interact or socialize with children or youth outside scheduled CAPA activities without sending prior written notice to the Program Manager, unless the adult is related to the child or youth or has a pre-existing relationship with the family of the child or youth (and that relationship has previously been disclosed in writing to the Program Manager).
- Employees and adults should not have private or personal email or other electronic or digital communications with a youth or child, unless the adult is related to the child or youth or has a pre-existing relationship with the family of the child or youth (and that relationship has previously been disclosed in writing to the Program Manager).

If, for any reason, an employee or adult feels there is a need to make an exception to these guidelines, they must submit to the Program Manager a written description of the incident and why their actions were necessary. Their report will be reviewed for propriety.

### **Fraternization with Minors**

CAPA is very protective of its reputation as a safe and educational environment for children and youth. Fraternization between adults and youth is strictly prohibited. The relationship between adults and children and youth must be kept as a strictly professional, working relationship. Social contacts must be limited to CAPA-sanctioned and chaperoned events and may require written parental permission, depending upon the type of event or activity.

If you are the object of “inappropriate” attentions from a youth, please notify the Program Manager.

Adults must remember CAPA’s education and engagement programs provide learning and enrichment activities for the community with an emphasis on children and youth, therefore, adults must uphold the same standards as expected of other educational institutions.

### **Reporting Violations**

Adults who violate these guidelines may be removed from their responsibilities and role with CAPA. Serious violations will result in being banned from attending or participating in any CAPA activities.