

Fort Wayne Youtheatre Youth Protection Policy

Policy Statement

As an organization that primarily serves youth, our highest priority is the safety and wellbeing of youth. It is the policy of Youtheatre to diligently protect youth by providing safe spaces for theatre education and experiences. We work every day to ensure our policies, procedures and practices embody the highest safety standards for the young people and artists that we serve.

Fort Wayne Youtheatre has zero tolerance for any abusive behavior against youth or between youth. If a paid or volunteer staff member is found criminally guilty of abusive behavior, their employment/volunteer right will be terminated immediately.

This policy is communicated and applied to staff, youth actors, youth taking Youtheatre classes, volunteers and contractors. It is also shared with parents of youth engaged at Youtheatre. Questions about interpreting this policy should be directed to Fort Wayne Youtheatre's Executive Director or Fort Wayne Youtheatre's Governance Committee.

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Definitions

For Fort Wayne Youtheatre's Youth Protection Policy, the following definitions apply:

- Adult: any person who is 18 years of age or older who is an actor, employee, intern, teaching artist, member of a production team, independent contractor, or volunteer with Fort Wayne Youtheatre.

- Youth: any person 17 years of age or younger involved in Youtheatre’s programming as a student, actor, assistant, volunteer, intern, or employee. Individuals are considered a “Youth” at Youtheatre throughout a particular program or production in which they are involved, even if they turn age 18 during the course of the program or production participation or are an 18-year-old high school student.
- Private Space: any non-public spaces including dressing rooms, bathrooms, rehearsal rooms, and classrooms.
- Public Space: any common space accessible to the general public or to those granted access to spaces such as lobbies, theatres, and hallways.
- Rule of 3: Youtheatre practices safe Adult-to-Youth ratios with a “Rule of 3”, meaning no Adult will be one-on-one with a Youth in a Private Space. For the purposes of this Rule of 3, any Youth who starts the program or production at age 17 will be considered a Youth even if the individual turns 18 during their participation in the program or production.

1) Mandatory Background Checks

Background checks, including criminal history and Sex Offender Database searches, are conducted for every position at time of hire, before programming begins. Background checks are not permitted for individuals under 18. Youtheatre conducts periodic rechecks for positions working directly with Youth and reserves the right to randomly check any employee or all employees at any point during their employment.

2) Youth/Adult Interactions

Youtheatre prohibits Adult interactions with Youth outside of scheduled rehearsals, performances, classes, or Youtheatre programming and/or professional activities.

Safe Ratios / Rule of 3: Youtheatre practices safe Adult-to-Youth ratios with a “Rule of 3”, meaning no Adult will be one-on-one with a Youth in a Private Space. Specific guidelines with respect to fraternization include, without limitation:

- a) Adults must comply with the Rule of 3. However, should Adults need to work one-on-one with Youth (beginning of class while waiting for other students, end of rehearsal before actor is picked up, during class for discussion, instruction, or coaching), the door to any Private Space will remain fully open and/or unlocked providing access to Public Space and to other personnel/build occupants.
- b) Generally, Adults may not offer and/or give rides to Youth at any time, for any reason. However, in certain limited circumstances where Youtheatre-sanctioned professional

activities require it and where parent authorization is provided in writing, an Adult may provide a ride to a Youth. In these circumstances, the parent/guardian and another Youtheatre employee should be notified.

- c) Adults may not host or accept invitations to parties hosted by Youth or their family, unless the entire cast or class is invited and the Youth's parent/guardian is present. The sole exception to this rule is for high school senior graduation parties hosted by Youth and their families.

We recognize that Adults and Youth may have relationships with a Youth's family outside of Youtheatre (whether familial or otherwise). Sections b) and c) do not apply to those relationships and apply only to Youtheatre related activities (rides or parties).

Adults are prohibited from "dating" Youth or otherwise having outside personal contact with Youth, or encouraging an emotional and/or sexual relationship with a Youth who is in any way affiliated with Fort Wayne Youtheatre or its programs. Anyone found in violation will be immediately dismissed, with possible law enforcement notification depending upon the situation

3) Appropriate Language and Communications

The use of obscene language, gestures, discussions about sexual content, drugs, alcohol, or other adult content around any Youth or volunteer is strictly prohibited.

Staff should not be in contact with Youth students, actors, or volunteers outside of their job duties. Any music, video, or illustration used in programming must be age appropriate for all ages in the room. Any media with sexual references, illegal drugs, tobacco/vaping products, alcohol references, adult themes, or adult language is not permitted for use in Youtheatre programs (unless the program itself contains it).

4) Social Media and Electronic Communication

Adults are not permitted to send email, social media, and/or text messages, conduct phone calls, photograph or post images of Youth outside of formal communication relevant to the business of Youtheatre. Where pre-existing relationships exist between an Adult and a Youth related to electronic communication, the Adult will notify in writing their supervisor or Executive Director.

5) Child Abuse/Neglect – Mandatory Reporting

Fort Wayne Youtheatre has zero tolerance for abuse. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service and cooperation with law enforcement.

Indiana Code §31-33-5-1 states any individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect shall make a report. Knowingly failing to report your belief that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect is a Class B Misdemeanor under Indiana Code §31-33-22-1. To report child abuse or neglect, please call 1-800-800-5556. The Indiana Department of Child Services allows these reports to be made anonymously. Reporting suspected child abuse must be completed within 24 hours from the time of any suspected abuse or neglect.

6) Non-retaliation

Fort Wayne Youtheatre will not permit retaliation against anyone who complains or participates in the investigation. If an individual attempts to retaliate, severe discipline, up to and including termination, will be imposed, regardless of the outcome of the investigation. If any employee believes that he or she has been retaliated against for exercising his or her rights under this policy, the employee should report such conduct using the complaint procedure set forth above.

7) False Accusations Prohibited

Because false accusations may have serious impact on the person accused, any individual who makes a complaint that they know to be false will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

8) Disciplinary Action

Interaction with Youth that violates Youtheatre policies will result in discipline, up to and including termination, as well as reporting of the incident to relevant authorities as required by law.

**Fort Wayne Youtheatre
Youth Protection Policy**

Acknowledgment Form

Please sign and date below, to verify the following:

- I understand the policy explained herein.
- I will ask my supervisor or other appropriate party at Youtheatre if I have questions or concerns about this policy.
- I understand that I am required to report any and all good faith concerns regarding interactions with Youth to my supervisor or other appropriate party at Youtheatre.
- I understand I will not be retaliated against for making a good faith report under this policy.
- I understand that individual Youtheatre programs may have additional guidelines, procedures, and practices to protect Youth, and I will review and adhere to them.
- I have received, read, and understand Youtheatre's Youth Protection Policy, and I am aware that any violation of this policy may constitute grounds for my immediate dismissal.

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____