

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Actor | ☐ Teaching Artist |
| ☐ Board Member | ☐ Volunteer |
| ☐ Cast | ☐ Production |
| ☐ Employee | ☐ Other |

South Carolina Children's Theatre Safe Stage Policy

Safe Stage Policy Statement: South Carolina Children's Theatre (SCCT) has zero tolerance of child abuse. It is the policy of SCCT to diligently protect Youth by providing safe spaces for theatre education and theatre experiences, and to minimize risks to individuals and the organization. This policy is communicated and applies to staff, the Board of Directors, student actors, students taking SCCT classes, volunteers, and contractors. Questions about interpreting this policy should be directed to South Carolina Children's Theatre's Chief Executive Officer.

Policy Summary: This policy is a codification of the Safe Stage policy language included in SCCT's Employee Handbook and found throughout SCCT procedures, manuals and agreements. The following areas are covered by this policy:

1. Screening and Background Checks
2. Fraternization
3. Appropriate Touching
4. Prohibited Language and Communications
5. Social Media
6. Child Abuse/Neglect –Mandatory Reporting
7. Non-retaliation
8. Disciplinary Action

Definitions: For purposes of all areas of SCCT's Safe Stage Policy and any related policies, the following definitions apply:

- **Adult:** any person 18 years of age or older who is an actor, Board member, cast parent, employee, independent contractor, or volunteer at SCCT.
- **Youth:** any person 17 years of age or younger, involved in SCCT programming, who is a student, actor, volunteer, intern, or employee, whether on-site or off-site. Individuals are considered a "Youth" at SCCT 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:** All non-public spaces including office space, dressing room, bathroom, rehearsal room and classroom.
- **Public Space:** any common space, accessible to the general public or to those granted security access to the facilities including lobbies, theatres and hallways.
- **Rule of 3:** SCCT practices safe Adult to Youth ratios with a "Rule of 3", meaning no Adult will be one-on-one with Youth in 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. Screening and Background Checks

Employees, independent contractors, Board members, adult cast members and any other adult volunteers who interact with and/or have any contact whatsoever with any Youth while volunteering with SCCT will be required to undergo a criminal background check and be screened through the National Sex Offender Registry. The costs of all such checks and screening will be paid for by SCCT and results will be stored for two years by SCCT.

Adult volunteers who work outside of Youth's activities at SCCT and who do not have any contact with children while volunteering with SCCT will be screened through the National Sex Offender Registry only, with any such results being stored by SCCT for two years.

Any and all candidates for employment and/or independent contractor status with SCCT, as well as all existing employees and independent contractors, will undergo a criminal background check process along with the screening through the National Sex Offender Registry. All such candidates and or existing employees or contractors must cooperate in completing all necessary paperwork in connection therewith. Employment and independent contractor status will be contingent on satisfactory background check results as determined by SCCT in its sole discretion.

2. Fraternization

Safe Ratios / Rule of 3: SCCT practices safe Adult to Youth ratios with a 'Rule of 3', meaning no Adult will be one-on-one with Youth in 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 class before student is picked up, during class for discussion, instruction, or coaching), the door to any Private Space will remain fully open providing access to Public Space and to other personnel in the building.
- b) Adults may not offer and/or give rides to Youth at any time, for any reason. However, in certain limited circumstances where SCCT-sanctioned professional activities require it and where parent authorization is provided, an Adult may provide a ride to a Youth.
- 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.
- d) We recognize that Adults may have relationships with a Youth's family outside of SCCT (whether familial or otherwise) and section b and c do not apply to those relationships and applies only to SCCT related 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 the Theatre or its programs. State laws prohibit sexual contact or sexual intercourse with anyone under the age of 16. Consent of a minor is irrelevant in the eyes of the law. This includes improper touching; one must be aware that even a casual gesture may cause emotional injury, particularly to a child.

3. Appropriate Touching

In order to help employees, contractors, Board members, and volunteers of SCCT with providing a safe environment for all Youth SCCT participants, SCCT provides the following guidelines in regard to appropriate touching.

- a) Hugs and other forms of appropriate physical affection between SCCT staff, independent contractors, Board members and volunteers are important and generally suitable in our environment of expressing oneself where the adults involved consent thereto.
- b) However, such physical touching should be appropriate in nature and closely monitored in relation to SCCT's Youth, with any physical touching being appropriate to the situation, needs and/or age of the Youth. For example, it may be appropriate for a 4 year old to sit on the lap of an adult, but it is generally never appropriate for a teenager to do the same.
- c) Any and all touching should be initiated by the Youth and should be an appropriate response to their need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
- d) Any such appropriate touching should only occur in the presence of other staff, volunteers or independent contractors as it is much less likely that touching will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adults are present and the touching is open to observation.
- e) A Youth's preference not to be touched should be respected at all times and no adult should ever force touching or affection upon a reluctant Youth.
- f) When touching a Youth, it is generally appropriate to touch the hand, shoulder or upper back. However, it is never appropriate to touch a child on any areas that would normally be covered by a bathing suit or that would otherwise be deemed objectionable for any reason.
- g) Staff, volunteers and independent contractors must promptly report to the Chief Executive Officer any inappropriate behavior or touching by other adults.
- h) Touching is considered appropriate if necessary to protect a Youth from accident or injury or as required by nature of business (such as costuming, etc.).

4. Prohibited Language and Communications

Adults and Youth are expected to comport themselves with respectful behavior and to use age appropriate language at all times. Sharing of inappropriate language, images, materials and content is prohibited.

5. Social Media and Electronic Communication

Adults are not permitted to be "friends" with or to follow Youth on any social media platforms, to send email and/or text messages, conduct phone calls, photograph or post images of Youth outside of formal communication relevant to the business of SCCT. Where pre-existing relationships exist between an Adult and a Youth related to social media or other electronic communication, the Adult will notify in writing the Chief Executive Officer.

6. Child Abuse/Neglect-Mandatory Reporting

South Carolina law requires that certain professionals (including Educational professionals) report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect, because they have unique opportunities to observe and interact with children. While the law does not specifically mention non-profit arts organizations like SCCT, it does encourage all persons to report.

To report suspected child abuse or neglect, contact the SCDSS 24-hour, toll-free hotline at 1-888-CARE4US or 1-888-227-3487. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Intake staff will assist the person making the report and assess the information provided to determine if an investigation is necessary. **Contact 911 immediately if the situation is a life-threatening emergency.** An emergency is a situation where a child appears to face an immediate risk of abuse or neglect that could result in death or serious harm. In addition, the reporter should notify one of the following as soon as possible: (1) Chief Executive Officer (2) or the Chair of the Board of Directors.

7. Non-retaliation

SCCT strictly prohibits retaliation against any person of any form in response to reports made in good faith under this policy, including retaliation against the reporter, the child with respect to whom the report was made, or anyone involved in a related investigation. Individuals who are found to have engaged in retaliation will be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. If there are any questions or concerns about retaliation please contact the Chief Executive Officer.

8. Disciplinary Action

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

I have read and understand the South Carolina Children's Theatre Safe Stage Policy and agree to abide by all terms set forth therein.

Signature _____

Date _____

**Acknowledgement and Authorization
for Criminal Background Check and Obtaining Other Information**

As a condition of my potential employment/Board member/volunteer/and/or independent contractor status with the South Carolina Children's Theatre (SCCT), I understand that SCCT will conduct a criminal background check on me. I hereby consent to and agree to said background check as set forth in greater detail below.

By signing this Acknowledgement and Authorization, I authorize SCCT and/or its agents or third-parties hired by SCCT, to access any and all such relevant information as may be necessary to complete a criminal background check on me and/or any other background check deemed necessary by SCCT for the purposes of my association with SCCT as an employee, volunteer or independent contractor. I understand that the information obtained about me may include, but may not be limited to, my driving record, any records of my having been arrested, any civil or criminal legal proceedings in which I have been involved, and/or other information about me that can be legally obtained with or without my consent. I hereby consent to SCCT's obtaining such information about me, and this writing shall serve as my consent for any person in possession of such information to provide it to SCCT. In consideration of SCCT's willingness to consider my application to be an employee, volunteer or independent contractor of SCCT, I hereby release from liability all persons and/or entities supplying any such information in connection with any such background check. I hereby release SCCT from any and all liability which may arise from the reasonable use of any such information obtained by way thereof for the purpose of determining if I be associated with SCCT as an employee, volunteer or independent contractor. I agree to hold SCCT harmless from any damages resulting from SCCT requesting and/or obtaining the information described herein. I agree that a copy of this signed Acknowledgement and Authorization may be accepted with the same authority as the original. I understand that upon my request, I will be given a copy of the background report.

I believe to the best of my knowledge that all information provided below is accurate, true and correct, and that I fully understand the terms of the Acknowledgement and Authorization. All of the information below is **required**, please fill it out completely.

(First Middle Last)

Date of Birth

Current Address - Street, City, State and Zip Code

Former address if less than 7 years at current address - Street, City, State and Zip Code

Signature_____

Date_____

Save and email this form to our Patron Services Manager, Andrea at andrea@scchildrenstheatre.org