

Marblehead Little Theatre Youth Protection Policies

Purpose

MARBLEHEAD LITTLE THEATRE (MLT) understands the importance of protecting youth in the community and in our programs and therefore wishes to provide a safe and secure environment.

The Board of Directors of **MLT** has adopted this revised policy on AUGUST 14, 2018 in order to provide practices that will protect youth from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior and also to protect the employees and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions

Staff : All employees, members, and program volunteers over 18 years of age that have any contact with youth or access to facilities.

Performer: All participants over 18 years of age that are involved in a performance role that have any contact with youth or access to facilities.

Youth: Individuals 17 years of age or younger.

Screening

All **MLT** staff and performers will be screened in accordance with this policy. Screening will include at least the following:

Personal Interview

A personal interview will be conducted with the applicant by management staff to discuss the position and the applicant's talents, qualifications, and abilities. Multiple and/or group interviews may be conducted as appropriate.

A personal interview will be conducted as an audition with the performer by the management staff as a demonstration of the performers talents, qualifications, and abilities.

Reference Checks

All staff applicants must provide at least two (2) references. References may be personal or professional and be presented in written form or by providing phone contact information. References will be confirmed by management staff and documented. At least one reference will be from a personal contact if available.

A reference check for the performer will be pursued by the management staff at their

discretion. All performers must provide a resume of performance experience for the management staff to review and document.

Criminal Background Check (CORI)

Criminal background checks (CORI) will be conducted for all potential staff and performers after they have completed the required CORI Acknowledgment Form.

No person will be considered for positions and will not be given access to the facilities when checks show evidence of convictions for an offense involving children.

Persons may be considered for position when checks show evidence of other offenses on a case by case basis in accordance with Commonwealth of Massachusetts guidelines.

Supervision

Supervision of youth, programs, facilities and staff will be designed to protect youth and staff at all times. Practices to ensure a safe and caring environment will include:

1. Management staff will make unannounced visits to every youth program.
2. A minimum of two adults over 21 years of age should be assigned to each program, operating site, and vehicle. These adults must include at least one staff member. The second adult may be a parent/guardian of a participating and present youth member.
3. Staff and other adults will never be alone with an individual youth where they are not observable by others.
4. Non-adult (minor) staff will not be included in prescribed staff to youth ratios.
5. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside a room.
6. All sites of operation will have access to a telephone on location during operating hours.
7. All adults, staff, performers, and youth will follow the "Rule of Three" at all times.
8. Youth will never be left unsupervised.
9. Guests, service, and contractors must check in with an adult staff member and be given permission to enter the facility whenever youth are present.
10. Staff will never release youth to anyone other than the authorized parent(s), guardian(s), or an individual authorized by parents in writing or verified by phone.
11. Staff will utilize constructive methods for maintaining group control and managing youth behavior.
12. Staff and performers will not disrobe a child other than outer garments.
13. All adults, staff, and performers will avoid changing clothes in front of youth. Separate dressing room areas must be available and maintained for youth and adults.
14. Management staff will assign a designated Child Guardian for each production featuring youth.
15. Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, and digital devices is prohibited.
16. No hazing. Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited.
17. No bullying. Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited.

Contact with Youth

It is understood that caring, quality staff will develop positive relationships with youth while involved in **MLT** programs. To insure protection of both youth and staff outside of **MLT** programs, staff will appear and behave in a manner consistent with the mission and values of **MLT** while on or off duty; including electronic, written and verbal communications.

Communications

MLT will promote positive values and youth protection strategies in its programs, facilities, with parents and in the community.

Parents will receive regular written information from management staff about the programs content and schedules; feedback regarding their child's participation in program including behavior and general health; and an introduction to the program staff.

Parents will receive regular written information from the Stage Manager about the production's content and schedules. Parents will receive regular written information from the designated Child Guardian about feedback regarding their child's participation in a production including behavior and general health.

Parents will be allowed to observe programs at any time as appropriate by notifying management staff.

MLT will designate a spokesperson to the media and community in the event of any incident concerning abuse or neglect.

Training

Staff, performers and members of **MLT** are encouraged to seek training in the principles of youth protection. The Boy Scouts of America provides an On-line Youth Protection Training Course that is open to anyone. This 90 minute course on line at <http://www.scouting.org>

The "three R's" of Youth Protection

The "three R's" of Youth Protection convey a simple message for the personal awareness of our youth members:

- Recognize risks and risky situations.
- Resist unwanted and inappropriate attention.
- Report attempted or actual abuse.

Reporting Requirements

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological, or emotional health and development.

All **MLT** staff is recognized as mandated reporters and will report known or suspected child abuse immediately or as soon as practically possible. **MLT** will follow current regulations and guidelines for the reporting of abuse.

Staff will follow an internal chain of command (Program/Production Director – Facility Manager – Board President) for the reporting of abuse and may report directly to local authorities if their supervisor does not handle any report immediately.

If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at or during **MLT** programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The appropriate authorities will be notified; consistent with local, state and/or federal regulations.
3. The alleged perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from **MLT** pending an investigation.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and an incident report will be completed.
5. **MLT** will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a management team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with **MLT**.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed and updated as needed by the **MLT** Board of Directors on an annual basis.