

TLC Procedures for Abuse and Prevention

PURPOSE

Vero Beach Theatre Guild and the Theatrical Learning Center 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 the Vero Beach Theatre Guild has adopted this policy on January 1st, 2021 in order to provide practices that will protect youth from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior and also protect the employees and volunteers from false accusations.

DEFINITIONS

Staff – all employees, full and part-time, and program volunteers that have any contact with youth or access to facilities

Youth – individuals 17 years of age or younger

SCREENING

All Vero Beach Theatre Guild staff will be screened in accordance with this policy. Screening will include at least the following:

Written Application

All potential staff must complete and sign a written application form that includes a Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) compliant release allowing the Vero Beach Theatre Guild to conduct a background information search. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in a personnel file at the Vero Beach Theatre Guild's administrative office.

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.

Reference Checks

All applicants must provide at least three (3) references. References may be personal or professional and be presented in written form or by providing phone contact information. All references will be confirmed by management staff and documented in the applicant's personnel file. At least one reference will be from a personal contact if available.

Criminal Background Check

Criminal background checks will be conducted for all potential staff after they've completed an application. Background checks will comply with applicable regulations governing programs. Applicants will not be considered for positions when checks show evidence of convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to the mission of the Vero Beach Theatre Guild. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form may also terminate an

individual's application.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- All staff will receive an orientation that includes:
- Review and receipt of the Vero Beach Theatre Guilds Code of Conduct; an original signed copy will be kept in the individual's personnel file – at the time of activation
- Review of policies related to the prevention and reporting of child abuse and emergency procedures - within the first week of their activation
- Training in recognizing signs of suspected child abuse - within three months of activation
- Training in the prevention of "Bullying" - within three months of activation
- Supervisors will be trained on hiring and screening potential staff members - within three months of activation
- Policy volunteers will review this policy as part of their initial orientation
- Staff training and orientations will be updated and refreshed each year. Documentation of all training will be maintained in each individual's personnel file.

The Vero Beach Theatre Guild will offer educational information and resources for the community, parents and youth through workshops, programs, and the use of printed and/or audio-visual resources.

SUPERVISION

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:

- Staff members will have their photo taken for an ID badge that will be worn at all times while on duty. A copy of the photo will be included in each individual's personnel file.
- Management staff will make unannounced visits to every youth program.
- Staff members will never be alone with an individual youth where they are not observable by others.
- Non-adult (minor) staff will not be included in prescribed staff to youth ratios.
- Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room. All storage, maintenance and utility area doors will be secured when not in use.
- All sites of operation will have access to a telephone on location during operating hours.
- Staff and youth will follow the "Rule of Three" at all times (one staff member and 2 or more students)
- Youth will never be left unsupervised; and will use the restroom in pairs.
- Written restroom use practices will be in place for all youth programs.
- Facilities will be well lighted indoors and out.
- Guests, service and contractors will sign-in to all facilities.
- 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. Sign-in and sign-out will be in place for all youth programs.
- Staff will take notice of signs of physical injury or emotional abnormality each time a child reports to the program.
- Staff will utilize constructive methods for maintaining group control and managing youth behavior.

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- Staff will not disrobe a child other than outer garments without the presence of another staff member.
- Staff will avoid changing clothes in front of youth.
- All staff will fulfill a probationary period of three months until all training and orientation is completed.

CONTACT WITH YOUTH

It is understood that caring quality staff will develop positive relationships with youth while involved in Vero Beach Theater Guild programs. The following practices will be followed to ensure the protection of both youth and staff outside of Vero Beach Theatre Guild programs.

- Staff will not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for youth outside of The Vero Beach Theatre Guild programs and activities, including baby-sitting or private instructions. Staff with prior or family relationships to youth may be relieved of this restriction with prior documented Executive approval.
- Staff will not communicate with youth outside of <Organization Name> programs via written, electronic or other means without express Executive approval.
- Staff will appear and behave in a manner consistent with the mission and values of The Vero Beach Theatre Guild at all times while on or off duty; including electronic, written and verbal communications.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Vero Beach Theatre Guild will promote positive values and youth protection strategies in its programs, facilities, with parents and in the community.

- Parents will receive regular written information 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 be allowed to observe programs at any time as appropriate
- Parents and the community will be made aware of the of the Vero Beach Theatre Guild youth protection efforts through regular written and/or electronic communication including: the staff code of conduct, abuse prevention training for staff and youth, how to report suspicious behavior and that staff is not allowed to contact youth outside of programs.
- The Vero Beach Theatre Guild will designate a spokesperson to the media and community in the event of any incident concerning abuse or neglect.

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 Vero Beach Theatre Guild staff is recognized as mandated reporters and will report known or suspected child abuse immediately or as soon as practically possible. The Vero Beach Theatre Guild will follow current regulations and guidelines for the reporting of abuse. Staff will follow an internal chain of command 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 Vero Beach Theatre Guild programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

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- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified
- The appropriate authorities will be notified; consistent with local, state and/or federal regulations
- The alleged perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from the Vero Beach Theatre Guild pending an investigation
- The insurance company will be notified, and an incident report will be completed
- The Vero Beach Theatre Guild 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.
- Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with the Vero Beach Theatre Guild.

ADMINISTRATION POLICY APPROVAL

This policy will be reviewed and updated as needed by the Vero Beach Theatre Guild. Board of Directors or its designee on an annual basis.

- Adopted on January 1st, 2021 by the Vero Beach Theatre Guild Board of Directors.
- Revised and Approved by the Vero Beach Board of Directors on _____
- Insured by Philadelphia Insurance Companies One Bala Plaza, Suite 100. Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004
- Prepared and approved by Michael Naffziger, MEd, Dean of Education.