

ACTIVITY SAFETY GUIDELINES

Overview

The Educational Theatre Association (referred to herein as “EdTA”), their Chapters and Troupes together with the International Thespian Society have a strong interest in protecting the safety of our youth and adult members while being associated with and involved in any activity sponsored by, supported by or being presented by EdTA or any of its group affiliates, Chapters and Troupes, in order to foster a safe, caring, respectful learning environment for all Youth members, adults, staff and Activity Workers.

This document provides guidelines for activities sponsored by EdTA and for activities sponsored by Chapters and Troupes at various venues both on and off school campuses. Except as noted herein, EdTA may, on their own, adopt policies that are stricter or adopt specific policies provided by sponsoring school districts other than the policies and guidelines listed in this document.

Definitions

Staff—A person who is a direct employee of any EdTA entity involved with planning, directing and/or supervising Youth Activity programs and staff.

Youth Activity Director—The person responsible for the oversight, direction and control of the Youth Activity. This may be a staff member, volunteer or a leadership team member of a Chapter or a Troupe, such as a Troupe Director, Chapter Director or Chapter Board Member.

Activity Worker—Includes but is not limited to volunteers, presenters, directors, coaches, consultants, staff, faculty, counselors, chaperones, officials, judges, and teachers, and any other adults and students acting as supervisors/mentors/workers in a paid, unpaid or volunteer status, as part of a Youth Activity.

Youth—Any person under the age of 19, member, participant or attendee, participating in a Youth Activity. This may include both Thespians and non-Thespians.

Guidelines for Youth Activity Directors and Sponsoring Organization Requirements for Holding Youth Activities at EdTA¹

All Youth Activity Directors managing activities sponsored by EdTA, its Chapters and Troupes, are responsible for the safety of the workers, volunteers and participants for the duration of the Youth Activity. They are responsible for the behavior of the Activity Workers. Youth Activity Directors acting on behalf of EdTA for Youth Activities should meet the following requirements:

1. All Youth Activity should meet the minimum guidelines as described by EdTA and the minimum guidelines and requirements set forth by their school district.
2. All Youth Activities held by EdTA should comply with these *Youth Activity Safety Guidelines*.
3. All Youth Activities must comply with EdTA policies regarding weapons, drug and alcohol, bullying policies, and the reporting of child abuse and neglect.
4. It is recommended that all contracts with venues and key vendors be forwarded to RiskManagement@schooltheatre.org for review prior to execution.
5. It is recommended that the Activity Director ensure all Activity Workers have received a copy (electronic or paper) of these *Activity Safety Guidelines*.
6. It is recommended that Activity Workers, volunteers and Activity Support Staff successfully pass a Sex Offender Registry Check for the state(s) in which they currently reside. No Activity Worker or Activity Support Staff should be listed on any Sex Offender Registry. Sex Offender Registry Checks should be conducted at least annually. One resource for such checks is:

The National Sex Offender Public website: <http://www.nsopw.gov/core/Portal.aspx>

¹ Youth Activities “at EdTA” are not limited to activities that take place at the EdTA national headquarters; this is meant to include all activities managed under the umbrella of EdTA or its chapter affiliates. If there is a question whether an activity is covered by EdTA’s general liability insurance, contact riskmanagement@schooltheatre.org.

There are third party vendors who provide similar search services; EdTA currently uses a third party vendor to conduct. There are benefits to a third party provider to conducting these searches; the key benefit is separation from the search, should we do a search internally and miss something material. This recommendation is not meant to supersede policies set by sponsoring schools or districts.

7. It is recommended that all Youth Activities have, or arrange for, access to individuals that are certified in Adult & Youth CPR and First Aid within reasonable proximity to the Youth Activity. In the case of an emergency or accident involving youth, Parents/Guardians should be notified, following notification of the appropriate emergency personnel.

Guidelines for Activity Worker and Activity Support Staff Eligibility

As these guidelines indicate, EdTA is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for youth and adult members, staff and volunteers. Accordingly, it is recommended that Chapter and Troupe leadership hosting a Youth Activity ensure that an Activity Worker does not have a criminal background that would disqualify the individual from participating in the Youth Activity. Options to determine this information may include a question on an activity application or a criminal history background check through local, state or federal law enforcement agency resources.

It is expected that all Chapters and Troupes will comply with the guidance provided by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regarding consideration of conviction records in hiring. Generally, the following convictions will render an Activity Worker ineligible to participate in Youth Activities:

1. Any sexual offense;
2. Felony assault, including domestic violence related incidents;
3. Child abuse, molestation or other crime involving endangerment of a minor;
4. Murder; or
5. Kidnapping.

Other convictions, such as misdemeanor assault, drug distribution activity, felony drug possession, and any other felony or crime involving moral turpitude, may also render an Activity Worker ineligible to participate in Youth Activities.

Guidelines for Vehicle Travel

1. It is recommended that any Activity Worker employed by EdTA who will be responsible for transporting youth by vehicle should undergo and pass a Driving Record Check. One might utilize a resource such as [this](#) to conduct a driving records check (for \$1.00 per report):
2. https://www.dmv.us.org/land.php?utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=DMV.us.org&utm_term=driving%20record%20check&utm_content=driving%20record%20check
3. Non-EdTA Activity Workers who transport youth must have a valid driver's license and be approved by the Activity Director to transport youth.
4. Activity Workers should avoid any one-on-one transportation of youth.
5. If one-on-one travel will occur, the Activity Worker is encouraged to contact event coordinator or designee immediately before departure and immediately upon arrival at the destination.

Guidelines for Activity Worker/Youth Interaction

1. A ratio of at least one adult supervisor to every 20 youth is recommended, with a minimum of two adult supervisors regardless of size of activity. At least one adult supervisor of the same sex as the youth should be required. It is encouraged that when youth are present no less than two adults are present. The goal is to avoid any situations where only one adult or one youth are together. Two or more youth and one adult is acceptable.
2. When in bathrooms or locker rooms, Activity Workers must be the same gender as the youth.
3. Activity Workers showering or bathing with youths is strictly prohibited under all circumstances. Activity Workers will not be in the shower or bath areas with youth except during extreme medical emergencies.

4. Youths will not be unsupervised in the residence facility at night during overnight stays.
5. Taking pictures of youth or posting pictures or information about youth to social media sites without parent/guardian permission is prohibited.
6. Activity Workers are prohibited from meeting youth off-site or off hours. Exceptions require parent/guardian advance written approval.
7. All Activity Workers are expected to exercise appropriate supervision of youth. Oversight may vary based on the activity, the age of participants, the location of the event, etc.

Guidelines for Anti-Bullying

Bullying of any students, members, staff, adults, or Activity Workers occurring at any EdTA premises or events is strictly prohibited and should not be tolerated.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is a pattern of aggressive, intentional or deliberately hostile behavior that occurs repeatedly and over time. Bullying behaviors normally fall into three categories, physical, emotional and verbal, and may include, but are not limited to, intimidation, assault; extortion; verbal or written threats; teasing; name-calling; threatening looks, gestures or actions; rumors; false accusations; social isolation; and cyber-bullying.

Intervention/Consequences

Reports of bullying are taken seriously and should be dealt with quickly and effectively. If a Youth member, staff, adult or Activity Worker is found guilty of bullying behavior the consequences should depend on both the results of the investigation and the severity of the incident. Consequences may include but are not limited to mediation, a parental involvement, counseling, suspension or expulsion from the activity, or referral to local law enforcement agency.

EdTA encourages all members, staff and parents who become aware of an act of bullying to immediately report the incident(s) to the Youth Activity Director on site. Any person who retaliates against another for reporting bullying should also be subject to consequences.

Guidelines for Anti-Hazing

Hazing of any students, members, staff, adults, or Activity Workers occurring at any EdTA premises or events is strictly prohibited and should not be tolerated.

Definition of Hazing

Hazing is any action, behavior or situation created by a youth member, adult, staff or Activity Worker which willfully or recklessly causes mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment or ridicule of another youth member, adult, staff, Activity Worker or individual.

For the purpose of these guidelines, "hazing" includes but is not limited to physical abuse; forced calisthenics; extreme mental stress, including sleep deprivation; verbal abuse; physical or psychological shocks; exposure to the weather; forced consumption of food, beverage, drug, or other substance; or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity likely to adversely affect an individual.

Intervention/Consequences

Reports of hazing are taken seriously and should be dealt with quickly and effectively. If a youth member, staff, adult or Activity Worker is found guilty of hazing behavior the consequences should depend on both the results of the investigation and the severity of the incident. Consequences may include but are not limited to parental involvement, suspension or expulsion from the activity, or referral to local law enforcement agency.

EdTA encourages all members, staff and parents who become aware of an act of hazing to immediately report the incident(s) to the Youth Activity Director on site. Any person who retaliates against another for reporting hazing should also be subject to consequences.

Policies for Reporting Child Abuse

Any Youth members, staff, adults or Activity Workers must immediately report any reasonable suspicion or knowledge of abuse to minors occurring at any EdTA premises or events.

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse is an injury or pattern of injuries to a minor that is non-accidental including but not limited to (a) sexual abuse, such as inappropriate touching, encouragement to engage in sexual activity, or engaging in a sexual activity in front of a minor, (b) physical injury, and (c) neglect.

Mandatory Reporting/Consequences

Reports of child abuse are taken seriously and should be dealt with immediately. If a youth member, staff, adult or Activity Worker suspects child abuse, it should be reported directly to the Youth Activity Director on site. The Youth Activity Director must then report the incident to the local law enforcement agency or the Division of Family and Children Services.

Failure to notify appropriate individuals of suspected child abuse will result in consequences which may include but are not limited to expulsion from the activity and referral to local law enforcement agency. Many states impose penalties, often a fine or imprisonment, for failure to report suspected child abuse; the laws of each state can be found at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/report.pdf>.

To prevent malicious or intentional reporting of cases that are not founded, any youth member, adult, staff or Activity Worker found to knowingly falsely accuse will be subject to consequences including but not limited to mediation, a parental involvement, counseling, suspension or expulsion from the activity, or referral to local law enforcement agency.

EdTA prohibits any youth member, adult, staff or Activity Worker from retaliating or taking adverse action against another for reporting a reasonable suspicion of sexual or physical abuse or neglect of a minor. If an individual believes he or she is being retaliated against, the individual should contact the Youth Activity Director as soon as possible. Any reported retaliations should also be subject to consequences.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse Policy

The illegal possession, use, or distribution of drugs or alcohol by Youth members, staff, adults, and Activity Workers is a violation of EdTA policies as well as local, State and Federal laws. EdTA supports these laws and practices as a “zero tolerance” policy while supporting and cooperating with local, state and federal agencies in the prevention of drug abuse.

In satisfaction of this mandate and in order to fulfill its obligations under the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988 and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994, EdTA has formulated standards of conduct for both its employees and its Youth members which prohibit the following acts:

1. Use, possession, manufacture, distribution, or sale of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia on EdTA premises both temporary and permanent or while on EdTA business or at EdTA activities, or in EdTA supplied vehicles either during or after working hours;
2. Unauthorized use or possession or manufacture, distribution, or sale of a controlled substance as defined by the Federal Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. §§ 801 et seq., on any EdTA premises, or while engaged in EdTA business or attending EdTA activities or in EdTA supplied vehicles, either during or after working hours;
3. Unauthorized use, manufacture, distribution, possession, or sale of alcohol on EdTA managed premises or while on EdTA business or at EdTA activities, in EdTA supplied vehicles, either during or after working hours;
4. Storing in a locker, desk, vehicle, or other place on EdTA owned or occupied premises any unauthorized controlled substances, drug paraphernalia, or alcohol;
5. Use of alcohol off EdTA managed premises that adversely affects staff, adult or Activity Worker’s work performance, or staff, adult, or Activity Worker’s safety or the safety of others;

6. Possession, use, manufacture, distribution or sale of illegal drugs off EdTA managed premises that adversely affects the staff, adult, or Activity Worker's work performance, or staff, adult, or Activity Worker's safety or the safety of others;
7. Violation of State or Federal laws relating to the unauthorized use, possession, manufacture, distribution, or sale of alcohol, controlled substances, or drug paraphernalia.

Consequences

Any Youth member, staff, adult or Activity Worker found in violation of this policy will face consequences which may include but are not limited to parental involvement, suspension or expulsion from the activity, or referral to local law enforcement.

Policies for Weapons Safety

Possessing or carrying any weapons by any youth members, staff, adults or Activity Workers, regardless of whether they are licensed to carry the weapon or not, is strictly prohibited on any EdTA premises or at events and should not be tolerated.

Definition of Weapons

For the purpose of these guidelines, "weapons" include but are not limited to (a) firearms, such as handguns, shotguns, rifles, pellet guns, machine guns, stun guns, Tasers, or electronic stun weapons; (b) explosives, such as bombs, grenades, blasting caps, or other vessels containing explosive substances; and (c) other equipment, material, and devices that, in the manner they are used ordinarily cause harm, or are capable of causing serious bodily injury. The items described in clause (c) include, but are not limited to, knives, tear gas, chemical substances, brass knuckles, darts, clubs, or chains.

Consequences

Any Youth member, staff, adult or Activity Worker found in possession a weapon as defined in this guideline will face consequences which may include but are not limited to parental involvement, suspension or expulsion from the activity, or referral to local law enforcement.

Questions regarding these guidelines can be addressed to riskmanagement@schooltheatre.org.