

The Chicago Theater Standards

“Not in our House”

As Adopted by
The Seed Theater
January 2026

This document is authored by representatives of Chicago theatre companies, artists, and administrators who volunteered their time, experience and expertise over the course of two years. It has been tested over the course of a year by 20 Chicago theatres and vetted by a variety of industry and legal professionals. It was further revised and amended by the staff of

The Seed Theater and adopted by the Board of Directors on (date).

A list of contributing institutions and individuals can be found at notinourhouse.org.

History

On January 15, 2015, Chicago actor Lori Myers made a social media rallying cry “NOT IN OUR HOUSE” after hearing yet another account of sexual harassment by the same perpetrator at their long-standing theatre. Hundreds of responses revealed that the problem was well known, but no one felt safe enough to speak out. They feared reprisal both from their abuser and from the larger community. They feared they would not be believed. They feared they would not work again. People who knew felt they could not speak out because they didn’t have first-hand experience. They feared they would harm the survivor. They feared they would be labeled as a gossip or divisive in the community. While a whisper network warned many, others knew nothing and some hoped they could “handle it.” This theatre was highly regarded and offered opportunities to emerging artists, who often got noticed by the press and eager audiences. The brave survivors who spoke out changed the tide, and the Not in Our House Chicago Theatre Community was born. By March of 2015, this document was underway. Coordinated by Chicago actor Laura T. Fisher, a small group of theatre artists and administrators crafted a draft over the course of a year. Twenty theatres agreed to pilot the document – they incorporated it into their theatre practices and met periodically to improve the document and discuss implementation strategies.

Mission Statement

The Chicago Theatre Standards (CTS) is a voluntary tool for self--governance that seeks to nurture communication, safety, respect, and accountability of participants at all levels of theatrical production. Its mission is to create:

- **Spaces free of harassment**, whether it be sexual, or based in race, gender, religion, ethnic origin, color, or ability;
- **Nurturing environments** that allow us to challenge ourselves, our audiences, and our communities; that support risk of mind and body; and that establish the freedom to create theatre that represents the full range of human experience;
- **A common understanding of practices** for theatre environments, including written, reproducible standards available at no cost; and by
- **Peer support** through mentorship and collaboration through online communication and community outreach.

The Process

Adopting the CTS is a process that engages every level of a producing organization from season--selection through strike. This process requires a balance wherein the CTS is present without stifling creativity or causing participants to feel hesitant or distracted. One extreme would be filing the document away in a drawer and forgetting about it until a problem comes up. The other extreme would be a policed environment in which the document became a tool for punishment or judgment. While each organization should strive to make the CTS work in their own space. A few things to keep in mind:

1. The CTS should be discussed at every level of the company, including company and board meetings. Everyone from the Board Chair to administrative staff to ensemble members to visiting participants should be encouraged to read the document, understand the company's commitment to its adoption, and any responsibilities each participant may have.
2. The CTS should be discussed as early as season selection meetings and pre--production meetings. Many problems can be avoided when safety issues are a regular part of pre--production discussions. For example, if a company cannot afford safe rigging, it should avoid plays that require aerial work. If a company cannot afford a fight choreographer, then a play with onstage violence might not be in the cards. The CTS is a tool for discussion to ensure that organizations choosing to adopt it work within their financial means and/or expertise.
3. Prospective stage managers should be informed that this document is being used with enough time for them to review the document and discuss the additional procedures and responsibilities.
4. The casting authority has an important role to play, and should be well versed in the document, particularly the audition section.
5. The CTS requires a thorough discussion on the first day of rehearsal. This is when participants with no exposure to the CTS will first encounter it. Taking the time (a suggested minimum of 30 minutes) to discuss the CTS in the first rehearsal will increase the chances of success with the CTS. Getting off on the right foot is essential to this process and the First Day Implementation Notes is designed to help.
6. CTS protocols throughout the rehearsal process, particularly for high--risk content.

7. Many elements of the CTS come into play during tech. Taking the time to visit safety, privacy, and other CTS elements helps to prevent problems before they happen.

8. The CTS offers suggestions for preventions and responses to issues throughout the run.

9. Theatres should be ready to address concerns. This document seeks to prevent some issues, but given that the document encourages those with concerns to come forward, it's recommended that theatres avail themselves of conflict resolution techniques.

First Day Implementation Notes

Creating a script for first rehearsals can make sure that all of the important points are covered. This script should be delivered by one or more representatives of the producing theatre (the Producer, the Stage Manager (SM), the Director, the Production Assistant) See the appendix section of this document for a First Rehearsal Script example, including an Ouch/Oops approach for handling issues when they arise.

Here are some of the most important things to communicate at the First Rehearsal:

1. Tell the company why you've chosen to adopt the Chicago Theatre Standards.
2. Distribute the Concern Resolution Path (CRP). The CRP documents communication pathways for resolving concerns before they get out of hand, to inform participants who to talk to if issues arise, to avoid repeated unsafe practices, and to mentor those who violate boundaries. The CRP and Deputy are designed to provide confidential reporting channels that support and protect everyone, including the person/s that create concern. Gossiping with those outside the reporting channels, or creating an atmosphere of "heroes and villains" can result in an inability to use the document to mentor and resolve issues peacefully. There are gray areas on stage. People can get hurt physically and/or emotionally without there being a "bad guy." In every possible situation, the CRP should be used to mentor participants, and nurture a positive and safe environment.
3. Discuss the Safety Deputy/Production Assistant (SD). The SD is a confidential liaison (reporting channel) between participants, the stage manager, and others on the Concern Resolution Path. The SD does not decide who's right and wrong, or even necessarily solve problems, but helps to ensure that communication paths are open. The SD is selected by the participants of each production by the end of the first week of rehearsal and is, whenever possible, not an ensemble member or employee of the producer. More specifics are available in the section of this document dedicated to the SD.
4. Point out areas of the CTS that are particularly pertinent to the production. If there are high-risk elements in the production (sexual content, fights, nudity) suggest that the participants read those sections of the document in the interest of letting them know that safety protocols have been a part of the planning process for the production.
5. Producers are not asked to distribute hard-copies of the entire document, but please tell the company that they can read the document in its entirety online at www.notinourhouse.org.

Concern Resolution Path (CRP)

The Goal

The goal of the CRP is to provide a documented communication pathway to address issues in a production or within an organization. The CRP seeks to inform participants what to do and who to address with serious issues, and dispel the fear of reprisal for reporting issues of safety, harassment, or other serious concerns.

The Standard

This Concern Resolution Path should be printed and distributed to all participants and discussed on the first day of rehearsal. It should be clearly communicated that the producer seeks to resolve concerns early, before participants or the production are put at risk and before the concern escalates.

What is a concern resolution path? The CRP provides names and contact information for members of the organization and production who have agreed to be responsive to reported issues and work to resolve them. It consists of:

- A written, clear, and transparently shared list of procedures for addressing a concern;
- A written, clear, and transparently shared list of persons with whom the concern should be addressed;
- A commitment to give reported concerns priority and a reasonable timeline for resolution.

Structure

• **Level One**—We recognize that many concerns can be resolved through conversation with the parties involved. Whenever possible participants should be encouraged to discuss challenges and concerns with one another. Sharing and hearing concerns with openness and respect can prevent situations from escalating further.

• **Level Two**—The following participants should be granted a certain level of authority and trust to determine whether a concern can be resolved at this level or if it needs to be sent to the next level. All concerns should be reported to Level Three, even if no action is required.

o *Safety Deputy / Production Assistant*

o *Stage Manager*

o *Producer*

o *Director*

• **Level Three**—These participants should be considered the final level of the path, capable of resolving issues that have not been resolved prior to reaching this stage. They are strongly advised to consult with each other and review legal or other implications of any decision.

o *Artistic Director*

o *Managing and/or Executive Director*

o *Board Members*

o *Other individual not currently associated with the theater*

Communication

- The CRP should be verbally explained and provided in writing at the first rehearsal (digitally and/or in print). It should include the name, title, and contact information for every individual on the CRP.
- A copy of the CRP should be posted or otherwise available in the rehearsal and performance spaces.
- Participants should be encouraged to report their concerns in writing for recordkeeping purposes.
- The Board should be informed in a timely manner of any concerns not resolved on or before Level Three.

Recordkeeping

- The producer should maintain personnel files, which should include reported concerns. Such files are to be kept confidential and accessible only to a designee of the Board and the individual(s) responsible for maintaining the files.

Legal Remedies

- In the event of civil or criminal misconduct or liability, the CTS is not a replacement for legal advice or action, nor does it stand instead of any local, state or federal law.

Implementation Notes

- Producers should complete a CRP with the names and contact information of all individuals who will serve on the path for each production. Theatres may adapt the CRP to reflect their staffing structure.
- The CRP is a tool to help create communication pathways to prevent and resolve issues, not create divisions. To that end, nothing in the CTS encourages firing or marginalizing participants for mistakes, a momentary loss of temper, an argument (whether artistic or personal), a single unintentional injury, etc. The CRP is designed to provide pathways to respond to events, behavior, and conditions that create reasonably understood unsafe conditions, not uncomfortable situations. The function and goal of the CRP should be discussed at the first rehearsal.
- Some of the individuals on the CRP will change with each production, and it should be updated for each production.
- All individuals listed on the CRP should understand their role in resolving concerns, the process for recording concerns, and the process for reporting those concerns to others on the path.
- Creating and using a Concern Resolution Path can assist with recordkeeping.
- The individuals listed on the CRP should be provided with resources and/or training in conflict resolution.

The Role of the Stage Manager Regarding the CTS

The Goal

The Stage Manager (SM) is traditionally the primary communication conduit between participants and producers as well as between actors and directors, and so plays a crucial role in executing the CTS. The goal of this standard is to acknowledge that the additional responsibilities of the SM in theatres that use the CTS compliment the expertise and authority of the SM as a leader and advocate throughout the production.

The Standard

The Stage Manager's responsibilities with regards to the CTS are:

- Read and be familiar with the CTS.
- Know and follow the theatre's published CRP.
- Ensure that consent is discussed before scenes of sexual content and nudity, and document applicable specifics.
- Document all choreography, including sexual content. The Stage Manager must be present for all rehearsals when choreography is rehearsed.
- Allow for the selection of the Safety Deputy (SD) during the first week of rehearsal and include the SD in the safety walk on the first day of tech before actors take the stage.
- Work with and communicate with the SD, particularly regarding any raised concern.

Requires Disclosure

- SMs should be told if an organization has adopted the CTS before they commit to a production.
- SMs should have access to the script, or known scope of a production, before they agree to participate.

Safety Deputy (SD)

The Goal

The goal of the Safety Deputy (SD) is to create a confidential and peer-level liaison and reporting channel between participants and the producer. Communicating concerns can be challenging. Participants often have long-standing relationships, aspirations for future collaboration, or a fear of being labeled "difficult." Any of these might dissuade a participant from voicing a concern. The SD can help to alleviate this tension.

The Standard

The SD was inspired by the Actors' Equity's "Equity Deputy," but the SD does not report to any outside regulatory body, since the CTS is a tool for self-regulation. The SD navigates the CTS for participants over the course of a single production, can serve as a reporting channel for an individual participant or an acting company when confidentiality is required or requested, and may also serve (alongside the stage manager) as a first contact when a concern cannot be resolved by an individual.

Role and Responsibilities of the Safety Deputy (SD)

- Become familiar with the CTS, CRP, and any related policies and procedures provided by the producer.
- Help familiarize others with the CTS, CRP.
- Provide contact information and availability for consultation outside of rehearsal/performance space/hours.

- Serve as a liaison between the cast, crew, stage manager, and producer for issues brought to attention by participants.
- Protect anonymity whenever possible.
- Report concerns, both their own and those reported by fellow participants, using the CRP, and communicate the resolution of such concerns to fellow participants as appropriate.
- Respond to concerns as quickly as possible (within 24 hours whenever possible).
- Shadow the SM on the safety walk-through (see the Basic Health and Safety standard).
- Commit with integrity and empathy to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of participants and discourage efforts (intentional or otherwise) to use the CTS to divide or create an atmosphere of “heroes and villains.”
- Engage the CRP if the SM is unable, unwilling, or is the individual of concern.
- Understand that their role is not to solve problems or act in a judiciary role, but serve as a confidential reporting channel and liaison.
- Understand that their role is one of service, and not a position of power or status.

Outside of the SD's Scope

- The SD should not override traditional roles of the SM, director, or any other member of the organization.
- The SD should never create divisions or marginalize participants.

Implementation Notes (how to select a SD)

- Each producer should establish a process for selecting an SD. For example, this might include a nominating process with secret ballot at the first rehearsal or shortly thereafter.
- If a getting-acquainted period is necessary (where participants don't know one another), a SD may be chosen by the end of the first week.
- For theatres with acting ensembles, the SD should not be a member of that ensemble, whenever possible.

The Standards

Auditions

The Goal To help prospective participants make informed decisions about proposed productions' requirements and expectations. We seek to communicate what we expect of our participants and what those participants may expect of us. For the purpose of this section, auditions may constitute interviews, readings, presentations of prepared pieces, improvisation, singing, movement, or similar activities involved in a casting process.

The Standard

Audition Notices and Invitations

We intend to include the following information in audition notices and invitations:

- Role(s) for which the actor is called, and role(s) that already have been cast;
- Any role that depicts a character with a specifically stated disability;
- The nature of the activity to be performed at the audition (i.e., sides from the play, choreography, improvisation, monologue, etc.);
- Any potential stage combat, feats of physical daring, nudity, partial nudity, sexual content, or other reasonably-understood high-risk activities;
- An assertion that prospective participants can decline auditions without fear of losing future audition invitations;
- Disclosure if the audition will be recorded;
- The names of the director, casting authority, and producer.

Auditions

- We intend to provide a safe space for the audition including:
 - o A smoke-free environment.
 - o A reasonably clean space with sufficient lighting and safe temperature.
 - o A safe surface for dance or fight calls, if applicable.
- We will not ask prospective participants to attend more than three (3) audition calls for a single production.
- Audition calls should be no longer than three (3) hours, and should not run later than 11pm.
- Required materials (scripts and sides) should be provided at the audition.
- We will not ask prospective participants to perform violence or sexual contact as part of the audition without disclosing this expectation in the audition notice or invitation.
- Any physical contact required for an audition should be disclosed and choreographed. Actors should not be asked to improvise violent or sexual contact.
- We will not ask prospective participants to disrobe at an audition. (See the Sexual Content and Nudity standard.)
- The casting authority should confirm with the prospective participant that they have reviewed the supplied materials and are aware of the requirements as outlined in the audition notice or invitation.

- Auditions should not be recorded unless specified in the notice or invitation. If recordings are made, there will be written assurance that the recording will be used privately among casting authorities and destroyed/deleted after the completion of casting.
- We will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations to facilitate access, such as allowing interpreters when necessary, holding auditions in accessible facilities, and providing audition materials in advance to artists with disabilities.
- Disclosures should be clearly posted at all auditions and callbacks (See the Sample Audition Disclosure Form).
- We will not charge prospective participants a fee to audition.
- Prospective participants may decline audition invitations or casting offers without fear of losing future opportunities, and will not be asked to explain their reason.

Requires Disclosure

- If scenes of violence, sexual content, or other intimacy choreography will be a part of the audition.
- Whether or not understudies will be engaged for the production.
- Who is in the audition room.
- If an audition will be recorded.
- If known, when callbacks are scheduled.

Explore It Further

- Provide the full script with audition invitation.
- Provide the names of the production's design team, including choreographers.
- If the producer has an inclusivity policy, it should be provided with audition notices or invitations.
- Once casting is complete, producers should notify those who were called-back, but not cast.

Implementation Notes

- Try creating a template email posting for audition notices and invitations. This will help ensure you don't forget anything important.
- An Audition Disclosure Form visible at all auditions can streamline communication and disclosure.
- Engage Casting Director in any meetings/conversations to share necessary information with enough time to prepare audition disclosures with accurate information.

Agreements

The Goal To create an understanding between Participants and Producers of what is expected throughout the production process at the beginning of the process.

The Standard We will provide each participant with a document outlining our mutual expectations for each production. These agreements do not imply that participants are employees, but seek to provide information about the terms of the participant's role in the production.

Requires Disclosure

Agreements should include, at a minimum, the following disclosures:

- Compensation—the amount and payment schedule of any stipend, honorarium, or other compensation to participant.
- Responsibilities—a general outline of the responsibilities of the participant.
- Schedule—the basic schedule information (start date, whether the rehearsals will be the day or evening, proposed hours-per-week, dates/hours of tech) and the possibility of extensions.

(cut a section on understudies that went here)

Basic Health and Safety

The Goal

Performance-day problems are often preventable with careful planning, and we endeavor to create spaces and processes for auditions, rehearsals, and performance that are as physically safe as possible.

The Standard

We intend to make health and safety a regular topic at production meetings, and to maintain awareness and procedures that contribute to a safe environment at all times. We seek to prevent injuries, identify and remedy situations that might be considered unsafe or unhealthy, and respond to injuries and medical events, and seek medical attention when required.

We will strive to promote basic health and safety practices by providing the following:

- Toilets and sinks, with soap and towels or a hand dryer;
- Access to drinking water or disclosure a lack of availability;
- A reasonable working temperature (avoiding inclement weather or unsafe temperatures outdoors);
- Lighting suitable for the work being carried out;
- Reasonably clean and well-maintained rehearsal space;
- Floors and traffic routes that are free from undue obstructions and tripping hazards;
- Functional, non-expired fire extinguishers;
- A suitably stocked first-aid kit;
- An insurance policy that covers on-site injuries;
- A plan for costume maintenance and laundry.

At the first rehearsal and first tech day with actors, a safety walk with the SM and SD should include:

- Fire exit locations;
- Locations of first-aid kits;
- Emergency procedures (including contact information for local police stations and the nearest ER);
- Tripping or safety hazards in rehearsal settings and constructed stage settings;
- Locations of restrooms;
- Scenic units, stage floor surfaces, and special effects;
- Areas of potential hazard that have or may require glow tape, including the opportunity for performers to point out where they need additional glow tape.

If unsafe conditions are discovered, they should be immediately reported to the stage manager, who should keep a record of concerns and their resolution. The SM should also maintain:

- Accident, incident, and first-aid reports;
- A checklist of first rehearsal and first tech rehearsal walk-throughs.

Requires Disclosure

• If any aspect of this Standard cannot be achieved because of the nature of the rehearsal or performance space, it should be disclosed to all prospective and active participants. For example, if a rehearsal or performance space is outdoors, participants should be notified in advance so that they can wear appropriate shoes and clothing for the weather and the surface (grass, asphalt, etc.). Another example: if the theatre cannot supply, maintain, or launder costumes, that should be disclosed at the time of audition.

Choreography: Nudity, Violence, Movement, and Physical Theatre

The Goal

Some forms of theatre and styles of movement carry with them a greater risk of harm than others, and the goal of this section is to outline considerations specific to these forms of higher-risk theatre, including onstage violence, sexual choreography and nudity, and physical theatre. These forms share many of the same considerations, while some considerations are form-specific. The shared considerations also apply to other forms of physical theatre, including dance and other forms of choreography, and this section may serve as a guide for these forms as well.

The Standard In audition notices, auditions, agreements, understudy preparation, rehearsals, tech, and performances, we intend to create a safe and respectful atmosphere for all participants. We believe that communication, safety, respect, accountability, artistic freedom, collaborative integrity, and personal discipline are the cornerstones of this atmosphere.

Facilities

The following should be provided in all rehearsal and performance spaces in which high-risk physical theatre takes place:

- First-aid kit, including cold packs
- Accident report forms
- Water
- Telephone for emergencies
- Adequate on- and off-stage lighting
- Temperature control
- Ventilation
- Space for warm-ups
- Floors and surfaces that are clean, well maintained, and appropriate for the activity
- Padded and/or glow-taped corners and hazards
- Proof of liability insurance

Equipment, Weapons, and Specialized Costumes

All specialized equipment and costumes should be:

- o Suitable for the required choreography;

- o Installed by a qualified rigger, if applicable;
- o Inspected/maintained by a trained technician before each use;
- o Inspected by any actors who use the equipment before each use.
- o Handled only by those required to do so.

Preproduction and Auditions

- A designer or choreographer should be engaged for any production that includes weapons, hand-to-hand combat, sexual violence, specialized movement techniques, or any similar high-risk activity.
 - o This designer/choreographer may or may not be the production's director or an actor in the production, so long as the role is clearly communicated to all participants.
 - o This designer/choreographer should be engaged as early in the production process as possible and be included in production and design meetings whenever feasible.
- At the time of audition, prospective participants should be notified about:
 - o The nature of any specialized movement or physical theatre (i.e. weapons, physical combat, sexual violence, tumbling, aerial acrobatics, dance, yoga, etc.) acknowledging that concepts may change;
 - o The name and professional experience of the designer/choreographer if possible.
- At the time of audition, prospective participants should be asked to provide accurate descriptions of their physical abilities and limitations/injuries as they relate to the possible choreography.

Rehearsal

- The designer/choreographer should be introduced to the cast at the first rehearsal, or as soon thereafter as possible.
- A schedule for rehearsing all choreography should be established and followed.
- Adequate time should be allocated for stretching and warming up before all choreography rehearsals.
- Adequate time should be given to teach, rehearse, and adjust all choreography or movement techniques.
- Adequate time should be allocated at the end of rehearsal for cooling down, asking questions, and voicing concerns.
- Before work starts the actors, director, choreographer, and stage manager should agree to the requirements of the planned activity (kiss, slap, dance, etc.). Participants are then responsible for staying within those agreed-upon boundaries.
- A choreography captain (typically a cast member with experience in the form of physical theatre being taught) should be chosen to ensure that the choreography is rehearsed and doesn't change unintentionally. The captain should be empowered to notify the stage manager or designer/choreographer of any issues with the choreography.
- Choreography should be recorded (in writing or on video, if appropriate) so that performers and captains have a reference for maintaining the choreography.
- Time should be set aside at the beginning of rehearsal to run through choreography. These calls are particularly important before running the show. Calls should be conducted in a distraction-free, appropriately lit space.

- Actors should communicate any injury, discomfort, or fatigue experienced before, during, and after rehearsals.
- A 10-minute break should be provided after every 80 minutes of physical work.
- The director/choreographer and actors should agree on a vocabulary of safety (i.e., the word “bail” could be used to abandon a movement mid-execution).
- A comfortable working temperature should be maintained in the rehearsal space. The nature of the choreography should be considered when establishing this temperature (warmer in the case of nudity, cooler in the case of highly physical activity, for example).

Performance

- Choreography calls should occur before every show, and should take place in a focused environment free of interruptions or distractions.
- Performance reports should include the designers/choreographers, noting any issues that arise and any actor injuries (whether related to the choreography or not).
- Performers should have a communication plan with the stage manager to report (on the day it occurs) any inappropriate or potentially unsafe changes in the performance of choreography and/or use of equipment or weapons.
- A comfortable working temperature should be maintained in the space. The nature of the choreography should be considered when establishing this temperature (warmer in the case of nudity, cooler in the case of highly physical activity, for example).
- The stage manager should check in before and after performances with each actor involved in the choreography, confirming that the choreography is maintained and consent/boundaries have not been overlooked.
- If any choreography is altered during performance, actors should notify the stage manager and/or SD as soon as possible.

Specific Considerations: Violence

The Goal

Onstage violence can be a shove, a slap, the use of weapons, elaborate fight sequences, sexual violence and more. We believe that performers should not routinely incur pain, bruises, or other injury while enacting violence. Our intention is to prepare for and mitigate the risks of onstage violence to create a safe space in which to take artistic risks.

Implementation Notes

- It can be helpful to assign a fight captain who is not involved in the fight choreography, so that the fight captain has the opportunity to observe the choreography from the outside (off-stage during performances, if possible).
- The stage manager should have a good line of sight to any fight choreography so that they can monitor and discuss any changes during the run of the show.

Specific Considerations: Sexual Content and Nudity

The Goal Sexual Content and Nudity (SC/N) require careful consideration as early as the season selection process. Artists in scenes with SC/N take great personal risk, and our goal is to allow them to take that risk in an environment that is as safe, supportive, and comfortable as possible. SC/N should only be included in a production when it can be done responsibly and

according to the following recommendations. We seek to replicate the conditions, detail and documentation and accountability traditionally employed for fight choreography for scenes with intimacy choreography.

Preproduction and Auditions

- SC/N should not be required or requested at any audition.
- Actors performing nude must be at least 18 years old, and should provide proof of age at the audition.
- Actors who will be asked to perform SC/N as part of the production should confirm consent to performing SC/N at the time of audition.

Rehearsal

- Prior to rehearsing scenes with SC/N, the actors, director, choreographer, and stage manager should discuss the content and create consent for the rehearsal. Participants should build consent and discuss boundaries before rehearsing scenes with SC/N. A safe word (such as “hold”) should be established for SC/N rehearsals.
- Initial SC/N rehearsals should be closed, such that only participants involved in the scene are present. SC/N rehearsals should be opened after agreement by the stage manager, director, and actors involved. The stage manager should be present at all rehearsals where SC/N is rehearsed.
- Stage managers should document the terms of consent and details of sexual choreography.
- Actors performing nude scenes should be allowed to have and wear robes or other coverings when not rehearsing.
- Actors should have the option to decline SC/N elements added after audition disclosure.
- Nude actors should not be photographed or recorded on video at any time during rehearsal, tech, or performance, unless video is needed for rehearsal purposes. The videos will only be sent to the actors involved in the performance, and will be deleted after the run of the show.

Tech

- Nudity during technical rehearsals should be limited to those times when it is absolutely necessary. Flesh-colored clothing or a robe may be worn when nudity is not required.
- Technical rehearsals should be closed to visitors during scenes with SC/N.
- The stage manager should be vigilant in identifying and resolving potential physical hazards for nude actors, such as splinters and rough edges.

Performance

- Only participants whose presence is required should be present in the wings or in any backstage space with a view of the stage. Gawkers should be dispatched.

Consent

We believe that building consent among participants is an important part of creating an atmosphere of trust and communication. We intend to recognize the following practices when building consent among participants:

- A consent-building conversation should specify the range of contact that is acceptable (e.g., anything but bikini area is within the range, or kissing is always closed mouth, etc.).
- The boundaries may change over the rehearsal process, either narrowing or broadening, but any change to the boundaries should be discussed and agreed upon before the rehearsal.
- There should be an opportunity to discuss potential boundary violations at the end of each rehearsal and performance.
- The agreed-upon structure of intimate contact should be maintained once a show is in production.
- Actors should inform the stage manager and their scene partner(s) if they are sick (sore throat, cold sore, etc.), and alternate choreography should be defined for sick days.

Requires Disclosure

- SC/N should be disclosed in notices and invitations and at auditions.
- Precast actors or hired designers should be made aware of SC/N prior to accepting their roles.
- Designers should receive disclosure of SC/N and known design requirements.

Explore It Further

- When sexual choreography is required, prospective participants can be auditioned using nonsexual choreography to determine physical control.
- Discussions around sensitive requirements and how they will be handled should begin during preproduction meetings.
- Intimacy designers should be engaged for the production and included in pre-production meetings.
- The producer should standardize communication and protocols with directors requiring SC/N.
- If a full script is made available to prospective participants, language similar to the following should be included: "Please read the script closely and confirm that you are comfortable working with this material. Feel welcome to bring questions about content to the audition process. Your level of comfort with the content of this script will not impact your casting consideration for future productions."
- Robes should be provided and regularly laundered for all actors who will appear nude.
- Actors, directors, and choreographers should have equal status in devising SC/N scenes.
- A time limit for rehearsing SC/N should be established and communicated.
- Backstage areas and dressing rooms should provide reasonable accommodations for modesty/privacy.

Specific Considerations: High-Risk Physical Theatre

The Goal

High-risk physical theatre uses performance techniques that carry with them a greater chance of injury than traditional theatre practices. This includes but is not limited to acrobatics, tumbling, performing on silks or other equipment, and performing in motorized set pieces. This type of work should not be undertaken without the extra attention, equipment, and precaution needed to do so safely.

Sexual Harassment

The Goal

We seek to understand sexual harassment as it pertains to the theatre, provide procedures to prevent it, and outline recourse when it occurs. We recognize the potential for harassment in rehearsal, during performance, and outside the theatre among participants, staff, board, and audience members. We acknowledge theatre environments can court confusion about the difference between chemistry, artistic freedom, and harassment; we believe participants can be bold and live “in the moment” of theatrical material while maintaining choreography, fellow participants’ safety, and agreed-upon boundaries.

The Standard

Clear boundaries should be established and agreed upon among all participants involved, both in rehearsals and performance, particularly in scenes depicting violence, sex, intimate contact, abuse, or gestures of intimacy.

For reference, according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), sexual harassment is described as follows: [the following is amended to replace the word “sex” with “gender.”]

It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person’s gender. Harassment can include “sexual harassment” or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person’s gender. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general.

Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same gender.

Although the law doesn’t prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted).

The harasser can be the victim’s supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer.

The EEOC covers “employees” only, not contractors and volunteers. For that reason, this standard seeks to provide a definition for sexual harassment in the theatrical workplace for participants not covered by EEOC laws and other regulations, and to provide an understanding of and sensitivity to the nuances of a theatrical workplace.

Harassment in a broader sense includes, but is not limited to:

- Inappropriate or insulting remarks, gestures, jokes, or innuendoes or taunting about a person’s gender, gender identity, sexual identity, racial or ethnic background, color, place of birth, citizenship, ancestry, creed, or ability;

- Persistent unwanted questions or comments about a participant's private life outside the boundaries of consent established in rehearsal;
- Posting or displaying materials, articles, graffiti, and so on, which may cause humiliation, offense, or embarrassment on prohibited grounds that are outside the parameters of the production. A production about pornography, violence, or racism may involve such images in the rehearsal space or in a dramaturgy packet, but such images are not appropriate for open display in dressing rooms, bathrooms, or other similar spaces.

Sexual Harassment in a theatrical workplace:

- In a theatrical context, harassment can be additionally defined as one or a series of comments or conduct of a gender-related or sexual nature outside the boundaries of consent or production content, which is known or ought reasonably be known to be unwelcome/unwanted, offensive, intimidating, hostile, or inappropriate. It is worth noting that the higher the emotional/sexual risk a production asks of its artists, the greater the diligence of each member of production and artistic staffs is needed to foster an environment of emotional safety.
- Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to:
 - o Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunts about a person's body, attire, gender, or sexual orientation outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - o Negative stereotyping of race, gender, gender identity, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, ability, or other status protected by law outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - o Any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact such as touching, kissing, massaging, patting, hugging, or pinching outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - o Unwelcome inquiries or comments about a person's sex life or sexual preference outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - o Leering, whistling, or other suggestive or insulting sounds outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - o Inappropriate comments about clothing, physical characteristics, or activities outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - o Posting or displaying materials, articles, or graffiti that is sexually oriented outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - o Requests or demands for sexual favors, especially those that include, or imply, promises of rewards for complying (e.g., job advancement opportunities) and/or threats of punishment for refusal (e.g., denial of job advancement or opportunities) outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - o Attempting to engage in sexual behaviors offstage that are choreographed for the stage;
 - o Suggesting an actor who appears naked onstage or in rehearsal is not allowed physical boundaries and/or privacy backstage or in the dressing room and/or not respecting those boundaries;
 - o Inviting an actor to rehearse sexual content outside of scheduled rehearsals;
 - o Repeated invitation/suggestion to take relationships of a sexual nature beyond the stage;

- o Using the text of a production that is sexual, violent, threatening, or offensive in offstage discourse;
- o Improvising sexual content without expressed consent.
- Participants have the right to be free from:
 - o Sexual solicitation or advance made by a person in a position to confer, grant, or deny a benefit or advancement outside production content;
 - o Reprisal or threat of reprisal for the rejection of a sexual solicitation or advance where the reprisal is made by a person in a position to grant, confer, or deny a benefit or advancement outside production content.

Any of the behaviors outlined here have the potential to create a negative environment for individuals or groups. It should be noted that a person does not have to be a direct target to be adversely affected by a negative environment. It is understood that creative atmospheres are not always “emotionally sanitary”—they can safely be bawdy, profane, vulgar, and challenging. We assert that having (a) a practice of building consent and (b) an environment that allows for response to clear boundary violations can broaden our opportunity to be challenging and fearless in our work.

Concerns about harassment, safety, or a negative environment should be reported using the concern resolution path (starting with level one wherever possible), and all concerns should be treated with the utmost respect for the safety and wellbeing of all participants.

Diversity, Inclusion and Representation

The Goal

Theatre engages the full spectrum of humanity. Telling the stories of complex human experience often includes representations of violence, racism, homophobia, abuse, and other challenging content. We seek an ethical atmosphere when engaging in this content, working with diverse groups of participants, and particularly when producing culturally sensitive work. The Chicago Theatre Standards does not dictate content, casting, design, or other production elements but seeks to create respectful, safe and equitable environments.

The Standard We make the following commitments to all participants who work with us:

- When invited to audition, prospective participants have the right to make inquiries about how their cultural personhood will be used within the production, particularly when the work will be devised (when there is no script at the time of audition). Inquiries will receive a thoughtful response and will remain confidential.
- Sometimes a potential participant discovers in the course of auditioning that they are uncomfortable with production elements as they relates to their personhood. Potential participants have the right to decline casting offers without fear of reprisal such as losing future opportunities. It is not the participant’s responsibility to explain why they chose to decline an offer.
- Whenever possible, diversity and inclusion should be considered both in casting and in assembling production and design teams. In particular, culturally specific work should seek production personnel who can speak to that cultural experience.

- During the rehearsal process, participants should voice concern if they feel uncomfortable with the use of their cultural personhood, which may include:
 - o Costume pieces that can reasonably be understood as culturally demeaning, which were not disclosed at audition/casting, and could not have been expected by a reading of the script or otherwise available materials;
 - o Staging (culturally based violence or abuse, for example), which was not disclosed at the time of audition/casting;
 - o Accents or dialects to underscore a cultural representation not disclosed at the time of auditions/casting;
 - o Make-up that can reasonably be described as “black face,” “brown face,” or similar portrayal, which was not disclosed at the time of audition/casting.
- When staging scenes of cultural violence, or other culturally charged narratives and language, we will follow the same practice of consent building outlined in the Sexual Content and Nudity standard. Disclosure of this type of performance will be made at the audition, and the emotional risk associated will be recognized throughout the process.
- We seek to address concerns with generosity and humility through the channels of the Concern Resolution Path as outlined in this document.

Explore it Further

- Producers should seek opportunities to intern, mentor, include, and professionally engage participants of color at all levels of their organization.

Appendix: Forms and Scripts

Sample First Rehearsal Language

The following is adapted from the First Rehearsal Script created by Lifeline Theatre In Chicago; one of the contributors to the Chicago Theatre Standards. The following is an extension of the “First Day Implementation Notes” described earlier in this document. Pilot theatres have found these support documents particularly helpful. The following is not prescriptive or definitive, but is offered as a sample to be used or adapted. This script does not include the election of the SD, although that is often done at the first rehearsal.

Staff Member: The Seed Theatre has adopted The Chicago Theatre Standards, available at notinourhouse.org. The aim of the CTS is to adopt procedures to prevent and respond to unsafe and/or abusive events, environments or individuals. If there is a fight scene in the show, there will also be a qualified choreographer. If there's a sex scene in the show, parameters will be agreed upon and safeguards will be put in place to maintain them. An important component of the CTS is the Concern Resolution Path. This is a three-tiered list of people who you can contact if you feel uncomfortable or have any concerns throughout this production process. You have received a printed copy of the Concern Resolution Path with contact information for everyone on the path. This document will also be posted in the rehearsal and dressing rooms for your reference. I'd like to ask everyone on the path to introduce themselves. (introductions)

The Chicago Theatre Standards contains a number of pledges that we, the producing theater, make to you. Among these is a welcoming environment free of harassment and discrimination. Since a positive environment is a team effort, we'd like to take this opportunity to read the definitions of harassment aloud to make sure we have a shared understanding. NAME (show director) if you could begin, and then everyone else just jump in for a section when you like, no particular order, changing speakers with color changes.

Company members read aloud:

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

1. Inappropriate or insulting remarks, gestures, jokes, innuendoes or taunting about a person's racial or ethnic background, color, place of birth, citizenship, ancestry, creed, or disability,
2. Unwanted questions or comments about an Artist's private life,
3. Posting or display of materials, articles, or graffiti, etc. which may cause humiliation, offence or embarrassment on prohibited grounds.
4. Sexual Harassment:
 - a. One or a series of comments or conduct of a gender-related or sexual nature that is known or ought reasonably be known to be unwelcome/unwanted, offensive, intimidating, hostile or inappropriate. Artists have the right to be free from:
 - i. Sexual solicitation or advance made by a person in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement,
 - ii. Reprisal or threat of reprisal for the rejection of a sexual solicitation or advance where the reprisal is made by a person in a position to grant, confer, or deny a benefit or advancement.

b. Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to:

- i. Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes or taunting about a person's body, attire, gender, or sexual orientation,
- ii. Unwanted touching or any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact such as touching, kissing, patting, hugging or pinching,
- iii. Unwelcome enquiries or comments about a person's sex life or sexual preference,
- iv. Leering, whistling, or other suggestive or insulting sounds,
- v. Inappropriate comments about clothing, physical characteristics or activities,
- vi. Posting or display of materials, articles, or graffiti, etc. which is sexually oriented,
- vii. Requests or demands for sexual favors which include, or strongly imply, promises of rewards for complying (e.g., job advancement opportunities, and/or threats of punishment for refusal (e.g., denial of job advancement or opportunities).

All or part of the above grounds may create a negative environment for individuals or groups. This may have the effect of "poisoning" the work environment.

It should be noted that a person does not have to be a direct target to be adversely affected by a negative environment. It includes conduct or comment that creates and maintains an offensive, hostile, or intimidating climate.

Staff Member: Thank you. Negative comments or actions often occur accidentally – but even when that is the case -- if we don't address them in the moment it can start a slide into a less professional room. *(please see following page for Ouch and Oops approach)*

Ouch and Oops:

One way to handle negative comments or actions in real time

We'd like to recommend a system of "Ouch" and "Oops." For instance:

Speaker A is trying too hard to be funny and makes a thoughtless remark. Speaker B says "Ouch!" This cues Speaker A to realize that the funny remark was potentially hurtful. Speaker A says "Oops" to indicate recognition and regret. Then there's a Pause.

It's up to the Ouch-caller whether this moment requires some conversation. So maybe there's a conversation – or maybe the Ouch caller says "Cool, let's move on." But the decision to move on must come from the Ouchcaller.

Please note that anyone in the room can call "Ouch." It does not have to come from the person who is the focus of the potentially hurtful remark.

Any questions or discussion?

(• Most common question is: "Sometimes I don't know there was an "ouch" until I'm trying to sleep that night. Can I bring it back later?"

•"Yes. If you've felt an ouch and didn't say anything, please do bring it to whoever you're comfortable with on the leadership team. We want to know and we will figure out how to address it.)

Thank you. May I ask that we pledge to each other that we will work together to promote an environment where it feels safe to speak up -- and that we will welcome any reminder to maintain a positive and respectful room. If you so pledge, please say "I do."

Thank you. If an experience ever feels larger than an Ouch-Oops moment, please know that concerns about harassment, safety, or a negative environment may be reported through several channels.

1. For cast members:

- a. The stage manager.
- b. The safety deputy (SD)
- c. If you do not feel comfortable reporting to either your stage manager or the SD, please report to either _____ (Artistic Director) or _____ (Managing Director)

2. For production team:

- a. _____ (Production Manager)
- b. _____ (Artistic director) or _____ (Managing director)

Sample Audition Disclosure Form

The Seed Theater has adopted The Chicago Theatre Standards, which seeks to foster an environment of communication, safety, respect, accountability, and the health, safety, and well-being of institutions and its participants. We hope the following disclosures help you make an informed choice should you be offered a role in this production.

- All theatres that abide by The Chicago Theatre Standards make the following audition commitments to you:
 - o You will not be asked to audition more than 3 times for this production
 - o You will not be kept at any audition more than 3 hours, or past 11pm.
 - o You will not be asked to disrobe or perform any intimate contact or violence as a part of your audition.

PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

First day of rehearsal: _____

Range of rehearsal hours: _____

Tech begins: _____

First preview: _____

Opening: _____

Closing: _____

Days/times of planned performances: _____

Performance venue: _____

DISCLOSURES (check all that apply):

- ☐ There is a possibility that the production will be extended through _____.
- ☐ Costumes will be supplied by the producer.
- ☐ Actors will be expected to help build and strike the set.
- ☐ There will be understudies for this production.
- ☐ There will be pay for this production in the amount of _____.
- ☐ This production contains sexual content.
- ☐ This production contains nudity.
- ☐ This production contains violence.
 - ☐ If yes, a fight choreographer will be on staff for this production.
- ☐ This production contains culturally sensitive content.
- ☐ This production is accessible to actors who use a mobility device.
- ☐ This production will have a nontraditional audience seating arrangement.
- ☐ There are _____ previews planned for this production.

Sample Concern Resolution Path

Creating a safe and comfortable environment for all members of our team is important to this company. We take concerns seriously and seek to address issues in a sensitive and timely manner. The following individuals are available to help you resolve any concerns or issues that may arise. We encourage concerns of level 2 and above to be made in writing when possible.

Level One If you feel comfortable doing so, we encourage you to first directly address your concern with the individual(s) involved. This helps to foster an honest and open community and is often the fastest path to a resolution.

Level Two If you are not comfortable directly addressing the individual(s) involved, or if no resolution can be agreed upon, your next points of contact can be any of the following:

NAME: _____
TITLE: Stage Manager
EMAIL: _____
PHONE #: _____

NAME: _____
TITLE: Director
EMAIL: _____
PHONE #: _____

NAME: _____
TITLE: Safety Deputy
EMAIL: _____
PHONE #: _____

NAME: _____
TITLE: (Equity Business Rep. or other/s)
EMAIL: _____
PHONE #: _____

Level Three If an issue is not been resolved through Levels One and Two, or if you are an individual named in Level Two who needs assistance to resolve the issue, your next points of contact can be any of the following people. The contacts at this level may consult with each other and review any legal or other implications of any decision.

NAME: _____
TITLE: Artistic Director
EMAIL: _____
PHONE #: _____

NAME: _____
TITLE: Managing or Executive Director
EMAIL: _____
PHONE #: _____

NAME: _____
TITLE: Board Member
EMAIL: _____
PHONE #: _____

NAME: _____
TITLE: (Other Individual)
EMAIL: _____
PHONE #: _____

A complaint may include allegations of civil or criminal misconduct or liability, and may require legal advice or action. A violation of civil rights should be reported to the Tennessee Attorney

General: <https://www.tn.gov/attorneygeneral/cred.html>

In case of physical emergency or criminal activity, call 911.