



CTSMD Youth Safety Policy

Policy Statement: Children's Theatre of Southern Maryland Inc (CTSMD) has ZERO tolerance of child abuse.

As an organization that primarily serves children, our highest priority is child safety. It is the policy of CTSMD to diligently empower and protect our Youth by providing safe spaces for theatre education and experiences. We work every day to ensure our policies, procedures, and practices embody the highest safety standards for the young people that we serve. We are committed to doing everything we can to create and strengthen a culture that protects and respects children, while embracing the joy and impact of theatre.

This policy is communicated and applied to staff, student actors, students taking CTSMD classes, and volunteers. It is also shared with parents of students engaged at CTSMD. Questions about interpreting this policy should be directed to a member of the Children's Theatre of Southern Maryland's Executive Board or Board of Directors at CTSMD.

Policy Summary: This policy is a codification of the Youth Safety Policy language included in CTSMD's Volunteer Handbook and found throughout CTSMD's procedures, manuals and agreements. The following areas are covered by this policy:

1. Mandatory Background Checks
2. Fraternalization
3. Prohibited Language and Communications
4. Social Media
5. Child Abuse/Neglect – Mandatory Reporting
6. Non-Retaliation
7. Additional Procedures and Practices for Youth
8. Disciplinary Action

Definitions: For purposes of all areas of CTSMD's Youth Safety Policy and any related policies, the following definitions apply:

- **Adult:** Any person 18 years of age or older who is an instructor, or person in a position of authority or any volunteer within CTSMD.
- **Youth:** Any person 17 years of age or younger, involved in any CTSMD production or class, who is a student, actor, volunteer, whether on- or off-site. Individuals are considered a "Youth" at CTSMD throughout a particular program or production in which they are involved, even if they turn 18 during the course of the program or production participation or are an 18-year-old high school student.
- **Private Space:** All non-public spaces including elevators, office spaces, dressing rooms, bathroom, rehearsal rooms, and classrooms.
- **Public Space:** Any common space that is accessible to the general public or to those granted access to the facilities including lobbies, theaters and hallways.
- **Rule of 3:** CTSMD practices safe Adult to Youth ratios with a "Rule of 3", meaning **NO** Adult will be one-on-one with any Youth in a Private Space unless they have a familial relationship with that Youth (e.g. parent and child). When a class is being taught, other than the instructor, there will always be a second adult present to keep not only students safe, but our instructors and adult volunteers as well.

- For the purposes of this Rule of 3, any Youth who starts the program or production at age 17 will be considered a Youth even if the individual turns 18 during their participation in the program or production.
- Maximum number of students per teaching artist/volunteer will be 15 (in accordance with [COMAR's staff/child ratios](#)).

1. Mandatory Background Checks

Background checks, including criminal history and the National Sex Offender database checks, are conducted for every volunteer prior to beginning any volunteer position prior to beginning the function that individual volunteered for. These background checks are conducted in compliance with the Fair Credit and Reporting Act and other legal requirements. Background checks are not permitted for individuals under 18.

CTSMD will conduct periodic rechecks for positions working directly with children. CTSMD will recheck all volunteers at least every 5 years and will recheck those with direct contact with children at least every 3 years. CTSMD reserves the right to randomly check any volunteer more frequently than the stated 3-year or 5-year intervals.

2. Fraternalization

CTSMD prohibits Adult interaction with Youth outside of scheduled rehearsals, performances, classes, or CTSMD-sanctioned activities.

Safe Ratios/Rule of 3: CTSMD practices safe Adult to Youth ratios with a "Rule of 3", meaning no Adult will be one-on-one with any Youth in a private space. Specific guidelines with respect to fraternalization include, without limitation:

- Adults must comply with the Rule of 3. However, should Adults need to work one-on-one with Youth (beginning of class while waiting for other students, end of class before student is picked up, during class for discussion, instruction, or coaching), the door to any Private Space will remain fully open providing visibility and access to the Public Space and to other personnel on the floor.
- Adults may not offer or give rides to Youths they are not related to at any time except in certain limited circumstances. These could include when CTSMD activities require it, when written parental authorization is provided in advance, or in an emergency. In such cases, an Adult may provide a ride to a Youth.
- Adults may not host or accept invitations to parties hosted by a Youth or their family, unless the entire cast or class is invited and the Youth's parent/guardian is present.
- We recognize that Adults may have relationships with a Youth's family outside of CTSMD (whether family or otherwise) and Section B and C do not apply to those relationships and applies only to CTSMD related rides or parties.
- Bathroom Safety:
 - One child at a time:** There should never be more than one CTSMD child in a restroom stall or single-use restroom at a time.
 - Supervision:** Volunteers should observe the child entering and leaving the restroom from the hallway, but shall not enter the bathroom with the student unless there is an emergency or safety concern. That is to ensure that the child does not leave the classroom area.

- c. **Hand Washing:** All children should be reminded to wash their hands after bathroom use.
- d. **Reminder:** Instructors or Volunteers should not assist students or children with going to the bathroom.

Adults are prohibited from “dating” Youth or otherwise having outside personal contact with Youth, or encouraging an emotional and/or sexual relationship with a Youth who is in any way affiliated with CTSMD or its programs. State laws prohibit sexual contact or sexual intercourse with anyone under the age of 18. Consent of a minor is irrelevant in the eyes of the law. This included improper touching. Adults must be aware that even a casual gesture may cause emotional injury, particularly to a child.

3. Appropriate Language and Communications

Adults and Youth are expected to conduct themselves with respectful behavior and to use age appropriate language at all times. Sharing of inappropriate language, images, materials and content is prohibited. See also CTSMD’s IT use policy, which also relates to inappropriate use of CTSMD resources.

4. Social Media and Electronic Communication

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

5. Child Abuse/Neglect – Mandatory Reporting

Consistent with Maryland Law, CTSMD is committed to protecting children whose health or welfare may be jeopardized through neglect or physical or sexual abuse. CTSMD requires its volunteers to be familiar with the Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors law (See Maryland Statutes, [Family Law Article 5- 704, 5-705](#)) that mandates, in certain circumstances, reporting of possible child neglect or abuse.

Under Maryland Law, Adults may have a mandatory obligation to report actual or suspected child neglect and physical or sexual abuse. Therefore, Adults who know or have reason to believe that a child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused, or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years, are required to immediately (as soon as possible, but in no event longer than 24 hours) report this information to the local welfare agency or other appropriate governmental agency. If the person making the report is unsure about the appropriate governmental agency to which the report should be made, contact one of the following:

- Charles County Child Protective Services – 301-392-6400
- St. Mary’s County Child Protective Services – Daytime 240-895-7016 or After Hours 301-475-8016
- Calvert County Child Protective Services – 443-550-6900

If the child is in immediate danger, call 911. In addition, the person making the report should notify one of the following CTSMD officials as soon as possible:

- Any Executive Board member
- Any active Member of the Board of Directors

6. Non-Retaliation

CTSMD strictly prohibits retaliation against any person of any form in response to reports made in good faith under this policy, including retaliation against the reporter, the child with respect to whom the report was made, or any persons involved in a related investigation. Individuals who are found to be engaged in retaliation will be subject to discipline up to and including termination from being a member of or having the honor of participating in any and all activities at CTSMD. If there are any questions or concerns about retaliation please contact CTSMD's Executive Board or any active member of the Board of Directors.

7. Disciplinary Action

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

Under 8 Youth Safety Addendum

The Children's Theatre of Southern Maryland is proud to offer classes to students under the age of 8. Below are the policies and guidelines for those classes and workshops.

1. Students must be able to use the bathroom and clean up independently, without help from an adult, or have a designated caretaker present to assist them.
2. The maximum number of students per teaching artist/volunteer will vary, depending on the ages of the children participating. If all children are 5-8 years old, the 15:1 ratio will remain. If the group includes children 3-5 years, the ratio will move to 10:1 (in accordance with [COMAR's staff/child ratios](#)).
3. At least one parent or guardian of the student is required to remain on site for the duration of the class.
4. Any parent or guardian on site must pass our approved volunteer background check and be on a volunteer rotation to assist with class supervision in order to maintain our required student to volunteer ratio:
 1. Go to ctsmd.org/volunteer to fill out the interest form.
 2. Within 48 hours, you will receive an email from our background check company, JDP. Please complete their form.
 3. After your background check is approved, you will receive another email from our Volunteer Coordinator to electronically sign our policy forms.

Adopted as the Youth Safety Policy of the Children's Theatre of Southern Maryland, INC on this date of: May 7, 2021.

Amended:

March 14, 2024

July 23, 2024