

## Outcry Theatre Safeguarding Policy

Outcry Theatre, also referred to as Outcry Youth Theatre or “the group,” recognizes its duty of care under the current legislation surrounding child safeguarding.

The group recognizes that abuse or danger can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, harm to him/herself through drug use, suicide, or other self-abuse. The group is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of the group accept and recognize their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

### **The group believes that:**

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All members, leaders and employees of the group should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

### **The group will ensure that:**

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity;
- The welfare of each child will always be put first;
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned;
- All adult members of the group provide a positive role model for dealing with other people;
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behavior;
- It will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation;
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children;
- It will undertake relevant development and training;
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the group and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

**The group has a dedicated Safeguarding Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedures are adhered to. That person's name is Danielle Soffa and may be contacted at [danielle@soffa.com](mailto:danielle@soffa.com) or 214-914-5572. You may also contact any member of the Outcry Theatre Governing Body. See page 6 for full contact information.**

As an organization working with young people we undertake to follow the child protection procedures agreed for our local area by Social Services. It is our duty to refer to Social Services any incident that may undermine the welfare of the child.

### **Adult/Child Ratios**

- Recommended numbers of adults to children is 1:15
- This includes director, assistant director, staff, volunteers and members over the age of 18 years.

### **Responsibilities of the Group**

At the outset of any production the group will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process;
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (if necessary in consultation with the local education authority);
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times;
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

### **Parents**

- Outcry Theatre believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the group. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the group and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents are given access to a copy of the group's Safeguarding Policy;
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals, classes or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of any member of Outcry Theatre to take children other than their own home.

### **Unsupervised Contact**

- Outcry Theatre will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children;
- If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children;
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimize risk.

### **Managing sensitive information**

- Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- The group's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- The group will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information.

### **Suspicion of abuse or a dangerous situation**

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the group, please make this known to the person with responsibility for Safeguarding. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for Safeguarding is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to someone else in an official capacity on the Governing Body.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of Outcry Theatre, director, group leader, volunteer, etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the group.

### **Disclosure of abuse or a dangerous situation**

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for Safeguarding. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that "they did the right thing" in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for Safeguarding. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or

mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

### **Recording**

- In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.
- An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken eg. suspension of an individual, where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

### **Rights & Confidentiality**

- If a complaint is made against a member of the group, he or she will be made aware of this.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- In criminal law the prosecuting authority has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

### **Accidents**

- To avoid accidents, children will be advised of “house rules” regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the group, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the group’s accident book. This record will be counter-signed by the person with responsibility for Safeguarding.
- If a child joins Outcry Theatre with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be counter-signed by the person with responsibility for Safeguarding. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later, and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

### **Health & Safety**

- All leaders should know the location of the nearest telephone.
- Adults must be aware of a safety/fire procedure. A fire drill should be carried out regularly. Fire extinguishers should be available and regularly checked out.
- Children with infectious illnesses must not attend.
- Outcry Youth Theatre operates a total no smoking policy.
- A responsible adult should make sure that the premises are open in good time and that children are collected at the end of rehearsals and productions.
- One person should never be left alone to lock up premises after meetings. Two responsible adults should make sure that all children have left the building.

### **Finance**

- Please refer to the “Outcry Theatre Financial Policy.”

### **Insurance**

- Outcry Youth Theatre has a fully comprehensive insurance policy which also includes public liability

### **Status**

**Approved:** December 7, 2019 **Approved by:** Outcry Youth Theatre Board

**Next Review:** Annually **Owned by:** Outcry Youth Theatre Board



## Outcry Theatre 2021 Governing Body

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>
Board President	Chauncey Eastes	chauncey@chaunceyeastes.com
Board Vice President	Katie Guiou	kguiou@gmail.com
Board Treasurer	Cynthia Aranda	cynthia.aranda28@gmail.com
Board Secretary	Kerri Rubens	dgkerri@gmail.com
Board Member	Gustavo Pérez Diaz	gustasvo24@gmail.com
Board Member	Jim Johnson	mrjim@mrjims.pizza
Artistic Director/Board Member	Becca Johnson-Spinos	becca@outcrytheatre.com
Managing Director	Danielle Soffa	danielle@soffa.com
Marketing Director	Jason Johnson-Spinos	jasonspinos@gmail.com



**Outcry Theatre is a supportive and inclusive organization, committed to creating a safe space and protect children from harm.**

If you, or someone you know, needs support, we have a dedicated Safeguarding Officer, Danielle Soffa, who is in charge of ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedures are adhered to. You may also contact any member of the Outcry Theatre Governing Body.

Here are some additional resources:

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

**1-800-662-HELP (4357) <https://www.samhsa.gov/>**

### Suicide & Crisis Center of North Texas



If you are in crisis or have suicidal thoughts, please call our suicide crisis hotline. You can also text "CONNECT" to **741741** anytime to reach trained, caring volunteers at the National Crisis Text Line.

**214-828-1000**

**<https://www.sccenter.org/>**

### Texas Department of Family and Protective Services



To report abuse, call the Abuse Hotline toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide, or report with our secure website and get a response within 24 hours.

**1-800-252-5400**

**<https://www.txabusehotline.org/>**