

ARKANSAS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Policy and Guidelines for the Protection of Minors

Employees and Volunteers with Regular Contact with Minor Children

Introduction

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra seeks to provide an environment that is safe and supportive for minors participating in Arkansas Symphony programs and activities. The following policy and guidelines have been adopted by the Arkansas Symphony in order to protect minors while they are on the premises or when participating in activities or programs sponsored and controlled by the Arkansas Symphony.

Policy

It is the policy of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra that measures and procedures are implemented for the protection of minors participating in programs and activities that are occurring on its premises, and programs and activities sponsored and controlled by the Arkansas Symphony regardless of the location.

Background Checks

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra shall ensure that all employees and volunteers working with minors have undergone criminal records checks within the past five (5) years. Criminal records checks shall include a national criminal background search, and a check of the National Sex Offender Registry.

Personnel whose criminal records checks include a conviction, or pending charges, for a sex-related offense or crime against a minor, or who appear on the National Sex Offender Registry, will not be allowed to participate in any activity that is subject to this policy. The offenses that may serve to disqualify someone from working with minors are not limited to sex offenses and crimes against minors.

The Human Resources Department will maintain a registry of Arkansas Symphony employees who have undergone criminal records checks.

Orientation

All Arkansas Symphony Orchestra employees and volunteers who interact with minors will be provided with a copy of this policy and must sign a statement acknowledging a thorough understanding of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra's policy and guidelines for the protection of minors.

Protection of Minors Guidelines

In carrying out its programs and activities, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra employees and volunteers may come into close contact and interact with children on a regular basis. This policy outlines expected conduct by employees and volunteers to

assure the welfare of children who participate in Arkansas Symphony Orchestra-sponsored programs and to protect Arkansas Symphony Orchestra's employees and volunteers.

Definitions:

- "*Abuse*" as used herein means the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person responsible for a child's welfare (see definition below) or someone who works with or around children. The mistreatment must cause injury or harm or put the child at risk of injury or harm to be considered abuse. Child abuse can be physical, sexual, or emotional.

- "*Child*" as used herein means any person under the age of 18 years, unless legally emancipated by reason of marriage or entry into a branch of the United States armed services, who participates in Arkansas Symphony Orchestra-sponsored programs that involve supervision by and interaction with Arkansas Symphony Orchestra employees and/or volunteers.

- "*Neglect*" as used herein refers to situations when a parent or responsible caretaker fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, medical care or other basic needs for a child. Neglect is also alleged when an adult provides inadequate supervision of a child. Children can also suffer injuries as a result of blatant disregard which is also considered neglect.

Employees and volunteers should avoid being alone with a single child in any location where the child cannot also be observed by another employee, person or volunteer. Employees and volunteers should generally conduct or supervise all activities involving a single child with two adults present. When this is not feasible, adults are to be positioned or situated so that they are easily visible to others who are present. For purposes of this policy, employees and volunteers will not be considered to be alone with a child whenever a second employee member or volunteer is positioned as outlined above in proximity (both sight and sound) of the child such that the second employee member or volunteer could be physically present with the child at any time or upon outcry from the child.

Children participating in Arkansas Symphony Orchestra programs should never be left alone and/or unsupervised by an adult at any time. Employees and volunteers are required at all times to:

- Provide adequate supervision to children.
- Ensure full compliance with all Arkansas Symphony Orchestra policies regarding interactions with children.
- Act as role models for children involved in Arkansas Symphony Orchestra programs and activities by maintaining an attitude of responsibility, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, maturity and respect.
- Use positive techniques for guiding children, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement, rather than comparison or criticism.
- Employees and volunteers should have age-appropriate expectations and establish guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline.

- Respond to children with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of gender, race, color, religion, culture, economic status, disability, or other status protected by law.
- Refrain from making any sort of remark, comment, or joke to/regarding a child that is in any way demeaning, suggestive, explicit or overly personal or otherwise inappropriate or from offering a child any “special” treatment that may (or appear to) place a child in any sort of risk of exploitation.
- Respect a child’s right not to be touched or looked at in ways that make him/her feel uncomfortable or that violate reasonable boundaries. Each child has a right to say “No.”
- Other than diapering, children should not be touched on any area of their bodies that would be covered if they were wearing a bathing suit.
- Avoid all intimate displays of affection toward children or others. Examples of inappropriate physical contact include, but are not limited to, full body hugs, tickling, wrestling, piggyback rides, and compliments relating to body development. Examples of appropriate physical contact include side hugs, shoulder-to-shoulder hugs, pats on the back, “high fives,” verbal praise, sitting beside small children, or holding hands when walking with small children.

Employees and volunteers at all times are prohibited from physically or psychologically abusing children in any way, including, but not limited to:

- Engaging in any form of physical discipline, e.g., striking, spanking, shaking, slapping or any other physical or physically threatening behavior unless is necessary for the safety or immediate well-being of the child.
- Engaging in verbal abuse, e.g., shouting, yelling, or making humiliating, degrading, threatening or similar comments to or about a child.
- Engaging in any inappropriate touching, speech or gestures of an intimate or sexual nature or any conduct that could be interpreted as such.
- Engaging in psychological abuse, e.g., ignoring a child, separating the child from the group or otherwise subjecting the child to ridicule or demeaning conduct or allowing others to engage in such conduct.
- Withholding or threatening to withhold food, water, restroom breaks or other basic needs, recognition, care or services.
- Being alone in a closed restroom stall or a single restroom enclosure with a child of any age, under any circumstances.
- Giving cash or personal gifts to children involved in Arkansas Symphony Orchestra programs or activities.
- Attempting to date or dating program participants who are under the age of 18.

No form of abuse or neglect will be tolerated, and employees and/or volunteer who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. Volunteers who engage in such activity will be prohibited from participating in the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra’s volunteer program.

Under no circumstances may employees or volunteers release children to anyone other than an authorized parent or guardian, unless written parental authorization is on file with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra to release a child to another adult.

Physical Danger

When necessary to protect a child or other children from physical danger, an employee, member, or volunteer may use their body in such a way as to eliminate danger. This may include actions such as taking a child by the hand to prevent an accident or remove the child from a hazardous environment, standing in front of a child's path to prevent him/her from running into a dangerous area, or leading the child by the hand to an area of safety.

Reporting

Policy violations should be immediately reported to the Director of Education for immediate investigation. All complaints will be promptly and thoroughly investigated and documented. The proper course of action will be pursued.

Anyone who has reason to believe that a minor has been abused, is at risk of abuse, or receives a report of alleged abuse that he or she has reason to believe to have been made in good faith, shall immediately report this to the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-2A-CHILD (800)422-4453. If a child is currently in danger, call 911 or your local law enforcement. As an alternative, a reporting party may also contact the Symphony's Director of Education at 501-666-1761 ext. 116, or the Chief Executive Officer at 501-666-1761 ext. 115.