

# **The Colonial Players, Inc.**

## **Child Protection Policy**

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## **1 Introduction**

The Colonial Players, Inc. is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone involved in the organization will safeguard minors from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect minors and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing minors with appropriate safety/protection while volunteering with The Colonial Players, Inc., and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

**A minor is defined as a person under the age of 18.**

### **1.1 Policy Statement**

The Colonial Players, Inc. is committed to the following:

- The welfare of minors is paramount.
- All minors, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in theatrical productions in a fun and safe environment.
- All reasonable steps will be taken to protect minors from harm, discrimination, and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes, and feelings.
- All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Working in partnership with minors and their parents is essential for the protection of minors.

## **2 Promoting Good Practice**

### **2.1 Introduction**

To provide minors with the best possible experience and opportunities in theatre, everyone must follow accepted ethical practices.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees or participants of The Colonial Players, Inc. to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is, however, their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the minor.

This section will help you identify what is intended by good practice and poor practice.

## 2.2 Good Practice

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g., avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Make theatrical experiences fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying.
- Treat all minors equally and with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of the minor first.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with minors. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the minor. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the minor's consent has been given.
- Involve parents/guardians wherever possible (e.g., where minors need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child if necessary).
- Request written parental consent for transporting minors in cars and/or any significant travel arrangements for theatrical performances.
- For any event at the theater or annex (e.g., the public ticket sales event for *A Christmas Carol*), minors must be accompanied by a parent or must have an adult assigned to supervise them until their parent returns.
- Strive to always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Secure written parental consent for The Colonial Players, Inc. to act in loco parentis to allow permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any first aid given.
- Keep dressing room doors closed when any person is changing clothes.
- When making a fast costume change in an alley, hall, or the shop, stage managers and actors should make reasonable efforts to shield the quick-change in an appropriate manner.

## 2.3 Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with minors away from others and/or being alone in a room with a minor with the doors closed, including a dressing room
- Taking minors alone in a car on journeys, however short

- Taking minors to your home where they will be alone with you
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allowing minors to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a minor, even in fun
- Reducing a minor to tears as a form of control

The Colonial Players, Inc. has strict policies on smoking and drinking (*Production Manual, sect. 3.8*) which are always in effect. Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the theatre or annex (except onstage if required in the action of the play). Consumption of alcohol is not permitted onstage or backstage. Alcohol may be permitted during special events as stated in the *Production Manual* (3.8.3). At no time should cigarettes or alcohol be made available to anyone under legal age.

## 2.4 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported to Social Services. It is recognized that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Report any allegations made by a minor to **Social Services of Anne Arundel County: (410) 421-8400** or to **Maryland Department of Child Protective Services**.

If you need to use this number, you will be walked through the entire process with someone on the other end of the line. Someone will answer this call 24/7. For more information, please contact: Social Services Administration at (410) 767-7112 or email: [Vernice.McKee@maryland.gov](mailto:Vernice.McKee@maryland.gov)

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My signature below signifies I have received, read and agree to follow this policy, and/or have discussed this policy with my child (if applicable).

<b>Participant Signature:</b> (Parent/Guardian signature for minors)	
<b>Date:</b>	

Please print the following information:

<b>Participant Full Name:</b>	
<b>Participant Address:</b>	