

THEATRE MIDWEST

Sexual Harassment

TheatreMidwest's general policies about sexual or related harassment are based on the "Chicago Theatre Standards." Additional CTS information is found at: <https://www.notinourhouse.org/>

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:

It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person's sex [sic]. 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 sex [sic]. 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 sex [sic].

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:
 - Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunts about a person's body, attire, gender, or sexual orientation outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - 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;
 - Any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact such as touching, kissing, massaging, patting, hugging, or pinching outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - Unwelcome inquiries or comments about a person's sex life or sexual preference outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - Leering, whistling, or other suggestive or insulting sounds outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - Inappropriate comments about clothing, physical characteristics, or activities outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - Posting or displaying materials, articles, or graffiti that is sexually oriented outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
 - 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;
 - Attempting to engage in sexual behaviors offstage that are choreographed for the stage;
 - 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;
 - Intentional failure to observe the dressing room standards laid out in this document;
 - Inviting an actor to rehearse sexual content outside of scheduled rehearsals;
 - Repeated invitation/suggestion to take relationships of a sexual nature beyond the stage;
 - Using the text of a production that is sexual, violent, threatening, or offensive in offstage discourse;
 - Improvising sexual content without expressed consent.
- **Participants have the right to be free from:**
 - Sexual solicitation or advance made by a person in a position to confer, grant, or deny a benefit or advancement outside production content;
 - 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 well-being of all participants.