Guidelines for Aerial Teacher Training Programs

The guidelines are broken down into three sections: Facilities & Operations, Policies & Practices and Curriculum & Staff..

Some of the guidelines have examples or ACE recommendations listed next to them. In examining programs, we realize that there will be legitimate instances where our examples or recommendations would not represent the safest possible policy or course of action. Do not take these examples as hard and unmovable rules, but as pointers in the right direction.

Important terms

You will see some terminology used consistently throughout the guidelines. Most terms will be self explanatory, but three of them warrant special explanation.

"Appropriate"

The guidelines are designed to be flexible and adaptable to many different types of programs. What is "appropriate" for a professional school where equipment sees hundreds of hours of wear every week will be different than what is "appropriate" for a recreational kids program that has eight hours of classes. If you are unsure if your practices are "appropriate" that's fine; that is why your process of recognition includes a real person as your consultant.

"Competent Person"

This is a term from OSHA. It is defined as:

"one who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and who has authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them"

In our field, this simply refers to someone who is able to identify hazards in the space, equipment or classroom and has the clear authority to step in and correct any situation they deem unsafe. Because most circus classes involve a level of risk, everyone on your staff should count as a "Competent Person" in their field.

"Qualified Person"

This is a term from OSHA. It is defined as:

"one who, by possession of a recognized degree, certificate, or professional standing, or who by extensive knowledge, training and experience, has successfully demonstrated his ability to solve or resolve problems relating to the subject matter, the work, or the project."

In our field, this will refers to a higher level of expertise in the subject matter at hand. For example, curriculum should be created by a Qualified person (someone with "extensive knowledge, training and experience"), as opposed to a Competent person (who need only be capable of identifying hazards and dangers). In another example, the rigging design of a space should be handled by a Qualified person, but the rigging check before a class can be a Competent person.

Make sense? If not, don't worry; that's why we have Safety Consultants.

1. Facilities & Operations

1.1. *General*

1.1.1. Embody a "culture of safety," within which all program participants (staff, volunteers and students) experience themselves as responsible and part of the risk management team, actively engaged in an ongoing quest for safety

1.1.2. Model good practices with the expectation and recognition that what students see and experience will be replicated wherever they go next

1.1.3. Create an appropriately welcoming and warm environment for staff, students and visitors

1.1.4. Express and communicate the mission and orientation of the organization through the design and execution of the physical space

1.1.5. Provide a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters learning and teaching

1.2. Compliance

1.2.1. Comply with all applicable local codes and regulations for intended and actual uses (including, where relevant, fire codes, public assembly, performance and accessibility)

1.2.2. Have and enforce appropriate policies relating to substance use and abuse, including but not limited to alcohol, recreational drugs, prescription and over-the-counter medications, and other mood altering substances

1.3. Comfort and Accessibility

1.3.1. Maintain temperature, humidity, indoor air quality and other environmental factors within a comfortable and acceptable range

1.3.2. Have adequate, clean, accessible restroom facilities sufficient to meet the needs of all users

1.3.3. Provide adequate lighting and visibility for all activities at all times, including rigging and storage areas

1.3.4. Have clearly defined training and performance spaces, with appropriate and adequate separation from observation and public traffic areas.

1.3.5. Have appropriate security policies or layout to ensure the safety and security of the space and students.

1.4. Risk Assessment and Management

1.4.1. Demonstrate good repair, cleanliness, orderliness and "ship-shapeness"

1.4.2. Have a thoughtful program in place for ongoing comprehensive risk analysis and mitigation *Ex: a monthly or bi-weekly staff meeting where ongoing safety concerns are identified and addressed.*

1.4.3. Have effective orientation and training programs for staff and volunteers aimed at identifying potential hazards and addressing them, including familiarity with and access to emergency plans and resources

1.4.4. Have a written emergency plan, maintained, up-to-date and accessible

1.4.5. Have qualified personnel on-site and available to deal with emergencies as needed, including appropriately trained first responders with current certifications. This should include Workplace First Aid/CPR

1.4.6. Have clearly visible signs and notices identifying relevant policies and potential risks

1.4.7. Have appropriately secured areas for potentially hazardous substances, materials and equipment

1.4.8. Have appropriate first aid kits and equipment fully stocked and available, along with a program to ensure timely restocking as needed.

1.4.9. Have at least one AED (Automated External Defibrillator) located in an appropriate location on-site, along with appropriate identifying signage and an approved program of training in its use.

1.4.10. Have identified the specific personnel designated as Qualified and Competent Persons with the authority and responsibility for specific tasks and actions, including identifying and addressing hazards

Ex: certain staff members may be identified as Competent for checking and hanging equipment., but are not Qualified to assess, design or install points.

1.4.11. Have personnel who have completed OSHA training as may be applicable, advisable or required by local, state, and federal law and regulations.

1.4.12. Provide appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for all identified hazards, including training in its proper use.

Ex: CPR masks and rubber gloves in the First Aid kit, or appropriate harnesses for riggers working at height.

1.4.13. Have MSDS (material safety data sheets) and other hazardous materials information posted and available as appropriate.

1.5. Rigging and Apparatus

1.5.1. Have all structural elements, connections to structure, and permanent rigging points designed, implemented or inspected and approved by a Qualified Person to be capable of supporting all intended and potential loading scenarios, including appropriate design factors.

1.5.2. Have a method, system, and equipment for the creation of temporary rigging points or connections to structure (as may be required) which has been designed, implemented or inspected and approved by a Qualified Person to be capable of supporting all intended and potential loading scenarios, including an appropriate design factor.

1.5.3. Ensure that all temporary rigging is done by or under the direct supervision of a Competent Person.

1.5.4. Have means of access to rigging points which allow for regular inspection, maintenance and adjustments to rigging (including attachment and removal of lines and apparatus and the installation of temporary points) without undue risk or inconvenience to the people doing the work or others in the vicinity. This includes fall protection and arrest systems as required by law, regulation, public policy, and common sense. Ensure that persons doing such work are trained in the proper use of personal fall arrest systems (PFAS) and other PPE, as indicated.

1.5.5. Have effective means and methods of securing or making inaccessible aerial equipment when it is not intended to be accessible.

1.5.6. Ensure that all rigging points and the areas surrounding them are free and clear of potential conflicts or hazards, including but not limited to:

proximity to other rigging system components, lighting fixtures, ducting, electrical wiring, plumbing and sprinkler pipes and structural members.

1.5.7. Have and use (or permit to be used within the facility) only equipment, apparatus and hardware which has been approved by a Competent Person as suitable for its intended and actual uses, taking into account the potential for inadvertent or intentional misuse.

1.5.8. Have and use spotting systems and mats on a consistent basis, as determined by a Qualified Person to be appropriate for such uses.

1.5.9. Ensure that all equipment (including apparatus, rigging hardware, spotting systems, mats and other relevant components) which is used in the facility is in current good and working condition, by having and consistently applying a program of regular inspection, maintenance and retirement of equipment and installations, overseen by a person or persons competent to do so, having the authority to take necessary actions to eliminate actual or potential hazards.

1.6. Working at Height

1.6.1. Have established and consistently enforced policies and practices for anyone working at height, including appropriate training for all users.

1.6.2. Provide appropriate PPE and training in its proper use, including but not limited to OSHA-compliant fall protection and arrest systems for those working at height.

1.6.3. Have established and consistently enforced policies prohibiting anyone from working alone at height, either in a rigging or training capacity.

1.6.4. Have and rehearse rescue and retrieval plans and scenarios.

2. Policies & Practices

2.1. Documentation and record keeping

2.1.1. Maintain a rigging equipment inspection log. ACE does not mandate the specific contents of this log but it should be designed by a Qualified Person and filled out regularly by Competent Persons.

2.1.2. Apparatus inspection log provided and in order. This information can be included in the rigging equipment log or can be a separate document.

2.1.3. All equipment and apparatuses inspected and approved by Qualified Person

2.1.4. Maintain an Incident/accident log

2.1.5. Comprehensive program in place for the identification and retirement of damaged or worn equipment.

2.2. Safety Practices

2.2.1. Teacher to point ratios are established, appropriate and enforced in classes.

For example: general supervision ratio (warm-ups, reviews, conditioning) is 1:6. One teacher can safely supervise up to 6 active aerial points at one time. Specific supervision ratio (new skills, beginning students)

is 1:2. One teacher can safely supervise up to 2 active aerial points at one time.

2.2.2. A written emergency plan exists and is known to the staff and anyone overseeing practice opportunities. At a minimum this should cover serious injury and fire procedures.

2.2.3. Maintain appropriate liability insurance that covers all activities (minimum policy number is generally $1 million).

2.2.4. Clear delineation between travel areas and working areas, including clear spaces under each apparatus.

2.2.5. Students working on new skills practice at the minimum height required for that skill.

2.2.6. Students and teachers observe safe practice distances when in the air.

2.2.7. All aerial practitioners must have appropriate matting regardless of age or context. *Examples: minimum 1 ½" mat for students whose lowest point is 0' – 4' in the air, 6"- 8" crash mat if student is not actively spotted or is above the spotters shoulders. AYCO recognizes that there are times when choreography cannot be completed with recommended matting in place, but these situations should be uniquely determined rather than the norm.*

2.2.8. If your program allows students or guests to practice outside of classes or private lessons, have a comprehensive set of policies that address the following, as appropriate:

2.2.8.1. Intake and evaluation of users

2.2.8.2. Behavioral and risk agreements with users

2.2.8.3. Appropriate policies addressing supervision

2.2.8.4. Appropriate policies around the teaching or practicing of new skills

3. Curriculum & Staff

3.1. Staff

3.1.1. All teacher trainers must have appropriate knowledge, extensive experience and engage in continuing education.

3.1.2. All teacher trainers must be CPR/First Aid certified.

3.1.3. There is a process in place for the hiring/training of new qualified teacher trainers.

3.2. *Curriculum*

3.2.1. Have a written teacher training curriculum. This curriculum should include teaching theory as well as practical study.

3.2.2. Specific progressions for skills as well as general methods for how to break down skills into progressions.

3.2.3. Warm-ups and injury prevention techniques

3.2.4. Discussion of different learning modalities and how to work with different kinds of student.

3.2.5. Safe spotting methods for all skill progressions

3.2.6. Methods of evaluating a student's body mechanics, motor skills and behaviors for safe progressions/practices.

3.2.7. Class management skills: where to position yourself in the room, proper

teacher-student ratios, establishment of authority, etc.

3.2.8. Clearly delineated levels and assessments through which any teacher trainee can know what they can and cannot teach.

3.3. Practical skills

3.3.1. Hands-on practice of spotting techniques, preferably with real students and not just other trainees.

3.3.2. Practice leading warm-ups and giving skill demonstrations.

3.3.3. Basic rigging training. At a minimum, rigging training should include information on Ratings & Working Load Limits, Dynamic Forces, Attaching to Structures and Assessing Basic Rigging Materials. The goal is not to make trainees into aerial riggers, but to give them information to be able to safely assess a rigging situation, and execute simple rigging systems.

3.3.4. A process through which trainees receive feedback during and/or after training so that they have a realistic sense of what they're qualified to teach.