



AYCO/ACE Ethical Principles of Sexual Harassment and Abuse Prevention

for all AYCO/ACE staff, board members, and organizational and individual members

1. All people have bodily autonomy.
 - Informed, explicit (not implied) consent should be required for any physical contact, and for communications outside of or unrelated to the educational or professional context. Consent is voluntary and revocable.
 - All people have the right to decide how and when they are touched, including during circus training or when being spotted.
 - People should not engage in sexual activities, verbal, physical, or otherwise, without full consent.
 - Minors cannot consent to sexual activities. *(Note: State laws may vary regarding “age of consent,” and we support healthy youth development in all its components. However, within the context of circus education and performance, AYCO is clear about our relational and ethical standards and aligns on this point with child protective services agencies throughout the U.S.)*
2. Sexual abuse and harassment is an abuse of power.
3. Uneven power dynamics exist in circus communities, for example:
 - Circus teachers and coaches have power over students of all ages.
 - Employers, administrators, and boards have power over employees.
 - Adults have power over minors.
4. Context matters. Relative positions of power, prior relationships, and intersectional relationships may be taken into consideration when creating policy about acceptable conduct.

5. Well-considered, written policy is necessary for preventing abuse and harassment.
- Circus programs are required to follow federal, state, and local laws and any applicable regulations (e.g. licensing, trade organization)
 - The owners or managers of programs have the right to decide on the policies of their institutions.
 - Within a circus program, what is considered acceptable can be more narrow than what is legally allowable, and acknowledge that ethical expectations for educational and professional environments exceeds legal requirements, and should reinforce safety and equity.
 - Programs should do their best to plan ahead for the most common problems, rather than be stuck reacting to them, and should have clear reporting paths, clearly and proactively communicated to students, parents of minors, employees, volunteers, contractors, administrators, and board members, for witnessed or experienced problems.
 - Staff needs to know, understand, agree to support, and be trained in how to enforce policies and reporting requirements, and consequences for non-compliance
 - It is not enough to merely have policies; they must be part of an ongoing culture of open discussion, implementation, and training for staff and students.
 - It is counter-productive to have policies that are not followed and/or enforced.

For other related policies and resources, (e.g., Minor Safety Policies, Health and Wellness Resources), please see the resource list on [ACE's website](#).

This document was developed by Health and Wellness Committee members 2017-2020: Marci Diamond, Henry Wheaton, Amy Cohen, Kristina Wicke, Jen Agans, Anne Miller, Tara Jacob, Nathalie Gauthier, Jen Cohen, Soni Razdan, Julia Langer, and Bones Newstead.

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