

Child Safety Policy

BLT is committed to providing a safe environment for every child who participates in an event at Brookhaven Little Theatre. The purpose of this policy is to prevent any form of child abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual), and to protect employees, and volunteers from false allegations.

I. Definitions

- **Child abuse** is any treatment that threatens the safety of a child or could leave his/her life with physical or emotional scars.
- **Physical abuse** is any injury to a child which has been caused by non-accidental means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.
- **Emotional abuse** is any verbal communication that harms a child such as harsh and degrading criticism, belittling, threats, disparaging name-calling, unnecessary shouting, or violent or obscene language.
- **Sexual abuse** is any action that violates a child's sexual privacy. It can include fondling or inappropriate touching of a child's body, oral sex, sexual intercourse, exhibiting or showing ones genitals to a child, or soliciting any sexual behavior from a child.

II. Guidelines for Adult Leadership

- All employees and volunteers who serve in leadership roles and work directly with children under the age of 18 must be approved by the BLT Board of Directors and are subject to a criminal background check.
- Unauthorized adults who show up at an event or rehearsal to volunteer with children and have not been approved by the Board of Directors should respectfully be instructed to leave the rehearsal space or asked to serve in another area of the theatre. "Red flags" should never be ignored or overlooked.
- At least 2 adults should be present at all times during rehearsals and gatherings that include children. For one-on-one rehearsals or private lessons, a parent or another adult should be on site. Under no circumstances should an adult be alone with one child at the theatre.
- Under no circumstances may an adult give alcohol, tobacco, or any drugs to a child.

- Adult leaders should only affirm children with appropriate touching by using only brief “side-hugs”. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit next to you.
- Physical punishment such as spanking is not permissible under any circumstances.
- All cast members, including children, are expected to change in a designated dressing room. Male and female dressing rooms are kept separate and no one should enter a dressing room of the opposite sex at any time.
- All adult leaders should use discretion when photographing kids. No photo of a child should be posted to a personal social media account without prior approval from the child’s parent. BLT obtains permission from parents or guardians to use pictures for marketing purposes on the BLT social media outlets and website, but this permission is not extended to personal accounts.

III. Reporting Abuse

- Any form of abuse witnessed or reported should immediately be reported to the BLT Production Manager, Business Manager, and Board President. These leaders will be responsible for determining the validity of any allegations and notifying any necessary authorities including the child’s parents and law enforcement.
- The accused adult should have no further contact with the victim until the issue is resolved.
- The accused adult should be removed from their leadership role until the issue is resolved.
- An incident report should be completed and submitted to the BLT Business Manager for any incident of abuse at BLT.