

# The Spitfire Theater Community

## Code of Conduct

### **Introduction**

Spitfire Theater is guided by the principles of improv, thus we strive to be an organization that exemplifies acceptance, play, free expression, empathy, and listening intently to others. Because improv is a spontaneous art form, we cannot account for every possible conduct problem that may arise in classroom, rehearsal, and performance settings. Rather, we set forth this code to model the behavior we wish for all of our community members to exemplify, and provide steps for rectifying potential conduct issues which may arise. We define “community” as any person who interacts with Spitfire Theater, including students, employees, performers, audience members, and patrons.

### **Scope**

The contents of this code of conduct apply to our interactions in various areas of our shared lives, including the Spitfire Theater spaces, classes, rehearsals, performances, our social media and email exchanges, and industry conferences or other events where we represent Spitfire Theater.

### **Our Guiding Principles and Policies**

Spitfire Theater community members are expected to give each other, onstage and off, the best experience possible in any given situation. In improv, this refers to playing at the top of one’s intelligence onstage and treating one’s scene partners as brilliant artists and creators, as one would want the same treatment from them. Striving to make the experience of others as enjoyable as possible greatly contributes to a healthy environment where everyone may succeed.

Spitfire Theater supports the free, unrestricted artistic expression of its performers and students, and does not willingly censor or pass judgment on the content generated through the practice of improvisation. That being said, as Spitfire Theater is an environment of acceptance and empathy, we do not condone intimidating, abusive, or harassment-based action from any member of the community.

These aforementioned actions undermine Spitfire Theater’s core beliefs and are not tolerated under any circumstance. These actions are inherently destructive in nature and require decisive, immediate responses. These behaviors may include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Discrimination, harassment, or intimidation of any kind based on:
  - a. an individual’s gender expression or identity
  - b. race, ethnicity, national origin, or ancestry
  - c. religion
  - d. age
  - e. genetic information
  - f. sexual orientation

- g. education status, socioeconomic background, or military status
  - h. disability, use of a guide or support animal for disability, or relationship to a person with a disability
- 2) Assaultive or otherwise violent conduct (verbal or physical) directed toward another community member or audience member.
  - 3) Inappropriate or unwanted sexual harassment, conduct, or advances (written, verbal, or pictorial) made toward another community member or audience member.
  - 4) Wanton and deliberate destruction of Spitfire Theater property or another community member's personal property.
  - 5) Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol during a performance or class.

The listed actions above demand swift and forceful discipline, up to and including dismissal from Spitfire Theater and its related events and venues. Disciplinary actions may include being asked to leave a class, being unenrolled from a class, being asked to leave a performance, being dismissed from Spitfire Theater for a specified period of time or permanently, etc.

### **Statement on Artistic License**

Spitfire Theater acknowledges that playing a judgmental or discriminatory character is not the same as being judgmental or discriminatory in practice offstage. We welcome free artistic expression and the treatment of difficult or sensitive topics, but in a manner consistent with the empathy and respect we strive to exemplify.

However, if it is determined that the offensive content of a performance was done in an effort to harass a particular individual from the stage or to express the performer's hatred and/or intolerance to a protected individual or group, then appropriate disciplinary action may and will occur. Additionally, if it is determined that an individual performer or group of performers is pervasively offensive or harassing in their performances, disciplinary action may and will occur.

Furthermore, if it is determined that behavior that was done without intent to harass but has nevertheless caused discomfort, fear, or other feelings of harassment in members of the community or audience, this behavior (at the time it is identified to leadership of the Theater) will be pointed out to the performer or performers responsible. If the identified behavior is not remedied, corrective action will occur.

As an artistic entity, Spitfire Theater reserves the right to generate work that ventures into fearful, discomfiting, or disturbing territory, but solely in the interest of artistic enrichment and exploration. Spitfire acknowledges the critical distinction between artistic fear and discomfort and pointed fear and discomfort directed at a protected entity or group.

### **General Behavior Guidelines and Disciplinary Procedures**

Additionally, Spitfire Theater acknowledges the following less severe behaviors as requiring corrective action:

- For students and actors, giving unsolicited notes to another student or actor in the context of a class, rehearsal, or performance.
- Leaving a mess or trash behind in a rehearsal or performance space.
- Bringing uninvited guests to a class or rehearsal.
- Being excessively or consistently late to rehearsal or performance calls, or failing to provide notice thereof.
- For directors, calling actors or technicians for rehearsals or performances when they are not required, or keeping actors or technicians for undue or unreasonable rehearsal lengths.

Inappropriate conduct will not be tolerated and will result in corrective action, up to and including removal from a class or show (or, in extreme cases, being barred from Spitfire Theater and any related events or venues). Violations of this nature are typically addressed by the following individuals:

- 1) By the show director or course instructor
- 2) If the problem ceases to be resolved, it will be addressed by one of the Spitfire Managers or one of Spitfire's management team
- 3) If the problem persists, it will result in removal from the show or class
- 4) Pervasive conduct will result in being barred from Spitfire Theater and all related events and venues.

\*\*\*In severe cases, such as intentional discrimination with intent to harm another individual, violent or destructive actions, or sexual harassment, dismissal from Spitfire Theater will be the first and only step implemented on the discipline ladder. To be abundantly clear, Spitfire Theater has a ZERO TOLERANCE policy for these aforementioned offenses.\*\*\*

Complaints are addressed and processed according to Spitfire's reporting and investigation policies detailed in a later section.

In all reported cases, a 3<sup>rd</sup> party mediator will be notified (though confidentiality of the reporting party will be maintained).

Refunds will not be given to students who are removed from a class due to conduct.

Students who wish to appeal their removal from class or any other corrective action should follow the appeals procedure detailed in a later section.

### **Reporting Procedure**

If any of our employees, volunteers, customers, clients or anyone associated with the Spitfire Theater community believes that he or she has been subjected to discrimination, harassment or offensive conduct, either directly or in their presence, and whether committed by other employees, supervisors, clients,

vendors, or visitors, that person has the right to report such conduct. This may be done in writing. The Spitfire Managers may be contacted at the following email addresses:

Nicholas Riggs

Artistic Director

[nick@improvwork.com](mailto:nick@improvwork.com)

Hannah Prince

Managing Director

[hnoprince@gmail.com](mailto:hnoprince@gmail.com)

Warren Buchholz

Outreach Director

[buchholzwarren@gmail.com](mailto:buchholzwarren@gmail.com)

Additionally, if an individual is uncomfortable contacting any of the Spitfire Managers or the Spitfire management team, Kate Winkler, trained Social Worker and Victim Advocate, may be contacted in their stead. Her contact information is as follows:

Kate Winkler, BSW

Victim Advocate

(727) 282-6112

If the conduct occurred in a class setting, the conduct may be reported to the instructor. In all other instances, the conduct may be reported to the director of a particular show or one of the Spitfire Managers. If the conduct in question involved any of these individuals, the conduct may be reported to any other member of the Spitfire management team.

### **Investigation**

When we receive the complaint, Spitfire Theater will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. Our investigation will include:

- A private interview with the person filing the complaint and with 3rd party witnesses, and
- A private interview with the person alleged to have committed the discrimination or harassment. An effective policy and thorough investigation requires the support of all personnel.

Consequently, employees who engage in discrimination, harassment, or retaliation or who fail to cooperate with investigations of discrimination, harassment or retaliation may be subject to discipline, up to and including:

- Teachers or staff being placed on unpaid leave until the matter is resolved.
- Show cast members being unable to perform until matters are resolved.
- Students being unable to attend classes they are enrolled in until matters are resolved.

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct by taking appropriate remedial measures. The confidentiality and privacy of our employees and those involved will be respected during the investigation.

Furthermore, if it is determined that inappropriate conduct has been committed by one of our employees, we will take such action as is appropriate under the circumstances. Such action may range from counseling to termination from employment, and may include such other forms of disciplinary action as we deem appropriate under the circumstances. In addition, those who refuse to implement remedial measures, obstruct the remedial efforts of other employees, or engage in retaliation may also be subject to discipline.

### **Notice of No Retaliation**

This policy also strictly prohibits any retaliation against an individual who has complained about discrimination or harassment, or any retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a harassment complaint.

### **Appeals Procedure**

If an individual who is the subject of an investigation believes a complaint has been made in bad faith, without reasonable grounds or justification, the individual in question may request an appeal no later than two weeks after the initial ruling or corrective action has been decided upon and implemented. The appeals procedure will consist of a review of the matter by a committee composed of the following individuals:

- 1) The instructor, director, or supervisor of the class, show, or event in which the conduct allegedly occurred,
- 2) One of the Spitfire Managers who did not investigate the original complaint, and
- 3) A 3rd party from an outside entity or another noted and trustworthy member of the Spitfire improv community

The appeals procedure will consist of:

- 1) An initial individual and group review of the matter by the above-named individuals
- 2) An in-person interview consisting of the person requesting the appeal and the above-named committee
- 3) A final, confidential ruling by the above-named committee to uphold, amend, or dismiss the initial corrective or disciplinary action implemented in the aforementioned case. The committee makes this decision following the interview with the individual requesting an appeal and a subsequent confidential conference amongst the committee themselves

The ruling of an appeals committee shall be final.

### **Definitions**

The term “**harassment**” means unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical or visual, that is so severe or pervasive that it unreasonably interferes with an individual’s participation in Spitfire Theater programs, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or working environment.

**“Sexual harassment”** means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually-motivated physical contact or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature where:

- Submission to that conduct or communication is made a term or condition of employment or status as a performer or status/opportunities as a student at Spitfire Theater either explicitly or implicitly; or
- Submission to or rejection of that conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting that individual’s employment or status as a performer or student at Spitfire Theater; or
- Such conduct or communication unreasonably interferes with an individual’s job or theatrical performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment also includes sexual assault. No one involved with Spitfire Theater may request or require an employee, applicant, instructor, performer, or student to submit to sexual harassment as a condition of receiving any benefit or avoiding any detriment.

### **Conclusion**

Spitfire Theater sets forth these guidelines to hold our community to high standards of communication, collaboration, and artistry. We do not anticipate bad behavior on the part of any member of our community; rather, we implement this code to detail explicitly the principles we wish to model and exemplify in our mission, vision, values and everyday practice. This code outlines the major steps and processes for disciplinary action should the need arise, but it does not contain every answer for all of the complex and nuanced matters which may require attention. This document is meant to be reviewed, critiqued, and amended periodically to reflect the ever-changing and growing landscape of the Spitfire Theater community.