

## WGAZ CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct applies to everyone involved with WGAZ, including all participants, minor participants, units, adult supervisors, WGAZ personnel, volunteers, and contractors. Everyone must follow this Code of Conduct to stay in good standing with WGAZ. The policies in this Code of Conduct aim to ensure safe environments and experiences during all WGAZ activities.

This Code of Conduct explains what behavior is appropriate or inappropriate. While it cannot cover every possible situation, everyone must follow the letter and spirit of these guidelines to stay in good standing with WGAZ.

### Definitions of Parties

- **Participant:** An individual over 18 performing with a unit.
- **Minor Participant:** An individual under 18 performing with a unit.
- **Unit:** The entire organization or an individual participating unit.
- **Adult Supervisor:** An individual in a managerial, instructional, design, or volunteer role spending two or more hours in-person with participants.
- **Volunteer:** An individual who freely gives their time to WGAZ or a unit and provides support in any capacity.
- **Contractor:** An individual who provides occasional services for a fee.

WGAZ will not tolerate conduct that violates its policies. Even if an action was not intended to violate this Code of Conduct, WGAZ prioritizes the actual impact of the action over the person's intentions to prevent negative experiences.

In addition to upholding this Code of Conduct, WGAZ can review and may take interim action against anyone involved in or accused of unlawful activities related to their participation in WGAZ or the marching arts.

All parties should consider themselves ambassadors of WGAZ. They are expected to uphold these policies, remind others of them when necessary, and report alleged violations.

### Alcohol & Drug Policy

WGAZ parties have the right to participate in an environment free of alcohol, drugs, and other substances. Prohibited substances include narcotics, marijuana, products containing THC, inhalant drugs, and over-the-counter medications unless used with a valid medical prescription. Violations include, but are not limited to:

- Distributing alcohol and prohibited substances to any participant.
- Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or a prohibited substance while under a participating
- Unit's supervision or providing services to WGAZ in connection with any event or activity, including rehearsals.
- Possessing or distributing alcohol or a prohibited substance on school grounds or arena facilities where such activities are prohibited.

Exceptions to this policy may be made on a case-by-case basis by WGAZ to allow alcohol at specifically sanctioned WGAZ events. At such allowable events, local regulations are expected to be followed. Prohibited substances remain forbidden at all times.

### **Anti-Retaliation, Whistleblower, and False Reporting Policy**

WGAZ will not tolerate retaliation against any party who makes a good faith report or threatens to make a good faith report. Retaliatory actions include threatening, intimidating, harassing, coercing, or any other action that could dissuade someone from reporting misconduct. Retaliation does not include good-faith actions lawfully pursued in response to a reported violation.

Any participant knowingly making a false allegation will be subject to disciplinary action. A false allegation differs from an unsubstantiated allegation, which means there is insufficient evidence to determine whether an allegation is true or false. An unsubstantiated allegation alone is not grounds for a Code violation.

### **Bullying Policy**

Bullying means severe behavior directed at a participant that is aggressive and likely to hurt, control, or diminish the participant emotionally or physically often centering around a real or perceived power imbalance. Examples of bullying include repeated physical, verbal, or social abuse. Physical abuse may refer to hitting, pushing, beating, biting, or other offensive contact. Verbal abuse may refer to ridiculing, taunting, name-calling, intimidating, or threatening to cause harm. Social abuse may refer to using rumors or false statements to diminish someone's reputation or socially excluding someone and asking others to do the same. Bullying may occur in person or virtually through any social or electronic mediums.

Bullying does not include occasional instances of rude or mean-spirited language, conduct arising from a conflict or struggle between persons with incompatible views or positions, or professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, or improved participant performance.

### **Confidential Reporting**

Reports are made confidentially to WGAZ. Confidentiality means WGAZ will know the reporter's identity but will not share it unless consent is provided or if WGAZ is legally required to do so. Inaccurate or withheld information will limit WGAZ's ability to conduct an inquiry and respond.

### **Fraternization Policy**

WGAZ maintains a strong position on fraternization between all parties. Fraternization means any close personal relationship that goes beyond a professional working relationship and can include romantic or intimate relationships, excessive socializing, and favoritism. Examples include:

- Sexual or romantic relationships between adult supervisors/volunteers and minor participants are prohibited.
- Establishing a new sexual or romantic relationship between adult supervisors/volunteers and adult participants while working with the same unit is prohibited. Additionally, establishing a new sexual or romantic relationship between any party where there is, or a perceived power imbalance is strongly discouraged.
- Fraternization between participants and minor participants is strongly discouraged.
- Already-existing relationships between adult supervisors and participants are not encouraged but are not forbidden. These relationships must be managed to address potential conflicts or power imbalances.
- Any relationship that puts any party at risk of harm is prohibited.

### **General Conduct Policy**

The experience of each party and the reputation of WGAZ depends on the conduct of all parties involved. Good manners, basic decency, and common sense are generally all that is required to ensure appropriate conduct and behavior. Engaging in conduct or using language that could be perceived as rude, inappropriate, abusive, disorderly, derogatory, immoral, or threatening will not be tolerated.

Violations of this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Applying undue and unfair pressure to another party, especially if one party has authority over another.
- Verbally abusing any WGAZ staff.

- Inappropriate conduct on the contest floor, rehearsal sites, or event venues.
- Disruptive or rude behavior anywhere, anytime during a WGAZ activity.
- Affiliates of a unit, such as parents or spectators, engaging in inappropriate conduct directed at any party
- on the contest floor, rehearsal sites, or event venues.

### Harassment Policy

All parties must maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment. Harassment means repeated or severe conduct that causes fear, humiliation, or annoyance and reflects discriminatory bias to establish dominance, superiority, or power over an individual or unit based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, orientation, culture, religion, national origin, mental or physical disability. Harassment also refers to conduct that creates a hostile environment. A hostile environment exists when the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to interfere with, limit, or deprive any individual of the opportunity to participate in any program or activity. Harassment may occur in person or virtually through any social or electronic medium.

Harassment does not include occasional instances of rude or mean-spirited language, conduct arising from a conflict or struggle between persons with incompatible views or positions, or professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, or improved participant performance.

### Hazing Policy

Hazing means any conduct that subjects another person to anything that may endanger, abuse, humiliate, degrade, or intimidate them as a condition of joining or being socially accepted by a unit, team, or organization. Consent by the person subjected to hazing is not a defense, regardless of their perceived willingness to cooperate or participate.

### Hostile Rehearsal Environment Policy

The rehearsal space is where units develop creative routines and foster teamwork. A rehearsal environment is defined as periods when the unit is practicing under the direct supervision of an authority figure or coordinator. It is a violation of this Code for any party to engage in severe or pervasive conduct that hampers a party's ability to participate meaningfully in the rehearsal environment. Rehearsal environments should remain educational both in the planning and commentary provided to any party. When rehearsal techniques and feedback are no longer educational, a hostile rehearsal environment could be created. Conduct prohibited by this Code, such as harassment, hazing, and bullying, is also prohibited in the rehearsal environment. Additionally, violations of this policy include:

- Creating a rehearsal environment intended to make any party excessively afraid, nervous, or anxious regardless of intention. This does not include professionally accepted coaching methods.
- Withholding educational information to achieve skills safely
- Attacking the personal character of participants rather than aspects of their performance.
- Rehearsing for extended timeframes while withholding, recommending against, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep.

### Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct of any kind will not be tolerated. Offenses include sexual or gender-related harassment, nonconsensual sexual contact, exposing a minor to sexual content/imagery, and sexual exploitation.

- **Sexual or Gender-related Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, unwanted and continued sexual flirtations, and propositions. It also includes sexually degrading words and other conduct of a sexual nature.
- **Nonconsensual Sexual Contact:** Engaging in sexual contact without consent.
- **Exposing a Minor to Sexual Content/Imagery:** Intentionally exposing a minor to sexually explicit imagery.
- **Sexual Exploitation:** Taking non-consensual or abusive sexual advantage of another for one's own advantage.

### Reporting Instances of Sexual Misconduct

If any party receives information suggesting sexual misconduct has occurred, they must report it to WGAZ immediately. Units should report allegations of sexual misconduct to law enforcement. They must maintain effective policies and procedures for the protection and safety of all parties, including the ability to report suspected sexual misconduct without retaliation.

If any party learns of or suspects child abuse, including sexual misconduct, they must immediately report it to law enforcement, WGAZ, and comply with other applicable reporting requirements. Reporting to WGAZ alone is not sufficient.

### **Social Networking Policy**

WGAZ values the freedom of expression on social networking sites and does not wish to discourage self-publishing or self-expression. However, we expect all parties involved in any capacity in WGAZ to follow the applicable guidelines and policies. It is important to understand that any posts made on social media are personal and do not represent WGAZ. Our policy prohibits the use of social media to post or display comments that are vulgar, obscene, threatening, intimidating, harassing, or hostile on account of any protected characteristic under applicable law on platforms controlled by WGAZ.

### **Weapons Policy**

To ensure a safe environment for everyone, WGAZ strictly prohibits the wearing, carrying, storing, or possession of firearms or other dangerous weapons at any of our events or event venues. Anyone found violating this policy will be immediately removed and barred from future WGAZ events. Additionally, if the violator is a participant, adult supervisor, or volunteer affiliated with a participating unit, that unit will be disqualified and asked to leave the venue.

## OVERVIEW OF INQUIRY PROCESS AND RESOLUTION ACTION

If a report is received of a party allegedly in violation of any policy within this Code of Conduct, they may be subject to the WGAZ Inquiry Process. Based on the facts and circumstances surrounding each situation and determined responsibility of findings, the resolution determined is at the sole discretion of the WGAZ Administration.

### Overview of the Process

In WGAZ's commitment to fostering a respectful, inclusive, and safe community, WGAZ has adopted an Inquiry Process that emphasizes dialogue and restorative action over traditional litigation and legalistic approaches. This process is designed to address misconduct in a manner that promotes healing and reconciliation through accountability. As such, individuals or units who participate in the process will do so without legal representation as this process is internal for our private members within our private organization and not a criminal or civil proceeding. If reports detail criminal activities those matters will be referred to jurisdictional authorities and would follow those determined protocols, as well as a temporary suspension for the individual or unit would be determined by WGAZ Administration until such matter is resolved.

WGAZ will only review reports that are submitted through the online reporting form, which can be found [here](#). Once a report is received, it is review by WGAZ Administration. The review examines if the details in the complaint are within the scope and jurisdiction of WGAZ, violate a policy within the Code of Conduct, and provide enough information to begin the Inquiry Process. There are separate processes for Independent Units versus Scholastic Units.

Scholastic Unit reports will be referred by WGAZ to the appropriate district administration for resolution. While follow up on resolution will be requested, employment or privacy policies may not allow such response.

Independent Units are subject to the Inquiry Process of WGAZ. For reports that do not violate the Code of Conduct or do violate the Code of Conduct but do not pose an immediate threat or harm to a party, a coaching conversation will occur with the reporting party on recommendations for self-directed resolution opportunities.

The Inquiry Process includes notifications to parties involved, meetings with those who have direct knowledge about the reported behavior, and a determined finding on responsibility of violating the Code of Conduct and resolution. Suspension and termination resolutions do allow for the responding party to request a review of the resolution if meeting the review criteria.

### Resolution Actions

The type of resolution is grounded by the facts and circumstances surrounding each situation and information gleaned from the Inquiry Process. Please note that the resolutions are not linear or progressive. It's important to note that the type of resolution, as well as any prior resolution, is at WGAZ's sole discretion. In extreme circumstances, termination of a party's participation in WGAZ may be considered. WGAZ will not make employment or casting decisions of a unit, WGAZ will only make resolution actions that may or may not impact an individual or units participation at WGAZ sanctioned events. Resolution actions may include the following, but not limited to:

- **Resolution Not Required** – this would be determined if the Inquiry Process does not determine findings of responsibility against the respondent and the charged Code of Conduct violations.
- **Alternative Resolution Process & Resolution Agreement** – in some cases where there are violations of the Code of Conduct but the findings determine there is not a threat of harm to any party but likely a more interpersonal conflict that could be address respectfully and safely by all individuals through self-determination, it may be advised that those individuals come together jointly and discuss their challenges and needs and formulate a resolution agreement. A completed resolution agreement is review and kept on file for WGAZ Administration and should further issues arise with any party a documented history is on record and more sever resolutions may be determined.

- **Restorative Action Plan** – this resolution includes various exercises, education or upskilling to address the responsible findings against the listed claimed Code of Conduct violations and may or may not also be accompanied by a probationary period as outlined below.
- **Probationary Period** – this resolution notifies the responding party of their increased monitoring of behavior. This timed period would also monitor further reports. If findings of responsibility continue during this probationary period, it may lead to a more severe resolution.
- **Suspension** – this is a timed separation of any individual or unit from WGAZ. The unit may still exist but will not be allowed to participate at WGAZ sanctioned events. For individuals on a suspension, there is likely to be no contact with any unit participating in any WGAZ sanctioned events in an administrative, instructional, consulting or designing capacity. At the conclusion of a suspension, a reinstatement meeting will occur to determine if the party is prepared and able to return to WGAZ. Individuals or units who are suspended will not be able to participate in or hold official roles in WGAZ's governance structure.
- **Ban** – this is a permanent separation of any individual or unit from WGAZ. The unit may still exist but will not be allowed to participate at WGAZ sanctioned events. For individuals who have been banned from WGAZ, there is to be no contact with any unit participating in any WGAZ sanctioned events in an administrative, instructional, consulting, or designing capacity. Individuals or units who have been banned will not be able to participate in or hold official roles in WGAZ's governance structure. If an individual is banned and is in the WGAZ Hall of Fame, they will be stripped of this honor. A reinstatement meeting may be requested one time and is at the sole discretion of the WGAZ Administration to determine if such a meeting will be granted.



