

GUIDANCE FOR NAVIGATING ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

WGI has a clear policy outlining fraternization, stating that establishing relationships beyond a professional working relationship is strongly discouraged. This includes either short or long-term romantic and intimate relationships between staff members and performers. Additionally, any of these relationships between staff and minor performers are strictly prohibited.

Groups may discuss their specific positions and expectations regarding romantic and/or intimate relationships. These conversations should be had among staff members with other staff members and among performers with other performers. This guide should serve as a tool to help ensemble members navigate that discussion and ensure that personal connections enhance, rather than detract from, the creative and collaborative energy of our community.

Fraternization Policy

WGI 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 staff/volunteers and minor participants are prohibited.



Any relationship that puts any party at risk of harm is prohibited.



Establishing a new sexual or romantic relationship between staff/volunteers and adult participants while working with the same group is prohibited.



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 staff and participants are not encouraged but are not forbidden. These relationships must be managed to address potential conflicts or power imbalances.



Present Conflicts of Interest:

If you enter a relationship, consider voluntarily disclosing it to your administrative team and Director, especially if there is a potential for perceived conflicts of interest. Transparency builds trust and ensures that the organization can support you in navigating boundaries appropriately while avoiding favoritism or bias.

For those individuals who are considering entering a romantic or intimate relationship allowable by WGI's policy and any group policy should consider the 5 P's BEFORE starting a relationship.

Prepare for All Outcomes:

Enter into relationships with mutual understanding and maturity, recognizing that personal relationships might evolve or change. If a relationship ends, the parties should commit to maintaining professionalism, avoiding gossip, and handling interactions respectfully. If that isn't possible, then it is best to avoid beginning a relationship entirely.

Prioritize Professionalism:

Maintain the same level of professionalism in all of your relationships, whether or not a romantic connection exists. Avoid behavior that could make others feel uncomfortable or excluded, such as public displays of affection or private jokes that impact team dynamics. Focus on rehearsal tasks and performance during ensemble time, ensuring personal relationships do not affect productivity or collaboration.

Protect the Neutral Environment:

Avoid behaviors or decisions that could lead to perceptions of favoritism, bias, or exclusion. This includes refraining from discussing personal relationship matters during rehearsals or in group settings. Also, ensure decisions related to assigned parts or featured roles are based on merit and skill and are not influenced by personal relationships.

Practice Discretion:

Protect your relationship and professional reputation by keeping personal matters private. Be mindful of how much information you share with friends and respect each other's boundaries when discussing relationships. Be mindful that the relationship is private between partners, and it is not a relationship the group agreed to engage in; thus, they likely do not want to be a part of the relationship.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR GROUPS



Be clear in your written policy about intergroup dating among performers and with staff. The policy should be enforceable and be able to be monitored. The policy should be signed in a performers contract and employment contract.



Develop a clear and barrier free process for reporting concerns should they arise that provide confidentiality and retaliation free.



Should your policy allow for intergroup romantic or intimate relationships and disclosure is a part of your process, you should consider having a written agreement between the parties outlining expectations during the relationship but also what could happen should a breakup occur that negatively impact the group's dynamics.



Do not avoid addressing this topic. Given the reports and experience, the phrase "It's good until it isn't" is very realistic and often the outcome of relationship separation and without written practices any outcome or discipline can be viewed as an act of favoritism, bias, or another unethical practice.