
Hancock County Children's Choir

Child and Youth Protection Policy

Definition of Terms

Student: Any youth enrolled as a member of Hancock County Children's Choir (referred to as "HCCC" or "Choir") and/or any youth participating in any Choir event.

Volunteer: Any youth or adult engaged in serving the Choir in an official capacity, for example Student Council, performance weekend volunteers, Celebration Dinner servers, Spring Banquet Committee.

Approved Adult: (for the sake of brevity sometimes herein after referred to collectively as "Adults" or singularly as the case may be as "Adult") Any adult who has satisfied HCCC's screening and training requirements and has been authorized by HCCC to supervise students. This includes eligible staff members and qualified volunteers.

Staff Member: Paid employees of the choir.

Artistic Staff: Ensemble directors and collaborative pianists

Executive Staff Member: Executive Director, Director of Finance

Board: HCCC Board of Directors

KidCheck: KidCheck is a child safety company that provides secure, electronic check-in software and equipment. Their service helps organizations manage attendance, prevent unauthorized child pickup, and track allergies. It is used by churches, fitness clubs, activity centers, and camps. In addition to attendance services, KidCheck provides child safety training and criminal background check services for organizations that subscribe to its platform.

Six-month Participation Requirement: To serve in a child-facing role, volunteers must have been members of the choir for at least six months before assuming those responsibilities.

Hancock County Children's Choir Code of Conduct:

Approved Adult Volunteer Screening and Training

Adult volunteers working with HCCC must complete a criminal background screening before serving and thereafter at intervals determined by HCCC. Additionally, volunteers who have a child-facing role will complete a Child Safety Training Course. Both of these requirements are administered through KidCheck and will be offered to the volunteers at Choir expense. Volunteer Approved Adults must also satisfy the six-month participation requirement.

Rule of Two is a safety standard. It means that at least two adults must always be with a child or a group of children. This rule prevents any single adult from being left alone with a child. It keeps children safe and protects adults from false claims.

Scope of the Policy:

This policy applies to all HCCC-sponsored activities, whether on-site or off-site, including but not limited to rehearsals, performances, travel, fundraising events, camps, and virtual activities when applicable.

Purpose

The Hancock County Children's Choir ("HCCC") is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment where every student can learn, grow, and thrive. Through excellent musical education and mentorship, HCCC equips children and youth with musical excellence, essential life skills, and positive relationships while fostering a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

The safety and well-being of every student entrusted to the Choir's care is of highest priority. This policy establishes expectations for staff members, directors, accompanists, board members, volunteers, and any individual serving on behalf of HCCC. It outlines our standards of conduct, supervision practices, reporting procedures, and response to concerns involving child safety.

All individuals serving HCCC are expected to read, understand, and comply with this policy.

Section 1 – Commitment to Child Safety

Hancock County Children's Choir maintains a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and inappropriate conduct involving children or youth.

Every adult serving HCCC shares responsibility for creating a safe environment. Staff members and volunteers are expected to:

- Place the safety and well-being of students above all other considerations.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students.
- Follow the supervision and conduct standards outlined in this policy.
- Immediately report any suspected abuse, neglect, policy violation, or concerning behavior.

Protecting children is everyone's responsibility.

Section 2 – Reporting Concerns

HCCC takes all reports of suspected abuse, neglect, grooming behaviors (as described below in this policy), or policy violations seriously. Every concern will be handled promptly, respectfully, and in accordance with Indiana law.

Any staff member or volunteer who observes, suspects, or receives information regarding inappropriate conduct involving a student must report the concern immediately.

Reports should include, whenever possible:

- Who was involved
- What occurred
- When and where the incident occurred
- Any witnesses
- Any immediate safety concerns

Reports should be made to:

- Executive Director
- Board Chair (or designated Board member)
- Immediate Program Supervisor

If a child is believed to be in immediate danger, emergency services should be contacted immediately.

HCCC will report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by Indiana law.

Individuals who make reports in good faith will not be subject to retaliation.

Whenever possible, reports will be handled confidentially while allowing HCCC to fulfill its legal and ethical responsibilities.

Nothing in this policy prevents any individual from making a report directly to law enforcement or the Indiana Department of Child Services as permitted or required by law.

Grooming Behaviors

Child sexual abuse is often preceded by grooming behaviors. Grooming is the deliberate process of building trust with a child, family, or organization in order to lower boundaries and increase opportunities for abuse.

Examples of grooming behaviors may include:

- Giving excessive or inappropriate gifts or attention to a particular child.
- Seeking opportunities to be alone with a student.
- Communicating privately with students outside approved channels.
- Encouraging secrecy.
- Ignoring or testing established boundaries.
- Frequently violating supervision policies.

The presence of one behavior alone does not necessarily indicate abuse. However, repeated boundary violations or patterns of concerning behavior should always be reported.

When in doubt, report the concern.

Section 3 – Response to Policy Violations

Any allegation involving abuse, neglect, exploitation, grooming, or a significant violation of this policy will be taken seriously.

When appropriate, HCCC may immediately remove the individual from duties involving children while the concern is reviewed.

Depending on the circumstances, HCCC may:

- Conduct an internal review;
- Notify law enforcement or Child Protective Services;
- Suspend volunteer or employment responsibilities;
- Prohibit participation in HCCC activities;
- Terminate employment or volunteer service.

Final decisions regarding disciplinary action will be made by the Board of Directors after consultation with appropriate leadership and legal authorities when necessary. Before a final decision is made, the individual involved will be informed of the allegations or concerns, given an opportunity to respond, and afforded a fair and impartial review consistent with the organization's policies and applicable law. The Board will consider all relevant information before reaching a final determination.

Failure to report suspected abuse or significant policy violations may itself constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

Section 4 – Monitoring and Accountability

Child safety requires continual attention from every adult serving HCCC.

Choir administrative staff will regularly observe rehearsals, performances, travel activities, and other events to ensure compliance with this policy.

Monitoring may include both scheduled and unscheduled observations.

In addition, HCCC will:

- Ensure that artistic, administrative, and executive staff participate in annual child protection training such as Child Safety Training, a service accessed through KidCheck, the choir's secure children's and youth check-in software system.
- Complete a background check for all artistic, administrative, and executive staff through Protect My Ministry, a service accessed through KidCheck.
- Identify staff members who will conduct the observations and ensure that the observations are completed for every area of programming and student supervision.
- Documentation will be maintained confidentially and retained in accordance with HCCC's record retention policy.
- Submit observation data to the Board of Directors for review quarterly if observations reveal no concerns. If a concern is noted, the Board of Directors will be notified immediately.

Section 5 – Supervision Standards

HCCC is committed to providing adequate supervision during all rehearsals, performances, travel, and other activities involving students. Appropriate supervision helps protect students as well as the adults serving them.

General Supervision

Students shall not be left unattended during HCCC-sponsored activities.

Whenever possible, activities involving students will follow the "Rule of Two," meaning at least two unrelated approved adults should be present and able to observe interactions with students.

Whenever an adult must provide individual assistance to a student, the assistance should occur in an observable location or with the knowledge of another approved adult whenever practical.

Adults should avoid situations in which they are alone with a single student in a private or non-observable location. If an unexpected one-on-one situation occurs, the adult should immediately move the conversation to an open, visible area or invite another approved adult to join.

Students should also be discouraged from isolating themselves in areas that are not easily observed. Additionally, students may not go outside the building while they are checked-in and under the responsibility of HCCC.

HCCC will provide adult supervision within each ensemble in addition to artistic staff members who conduct the rehearsal.

HCCC will have an attendant at the KidCheck check-in/out station.

HCCC will provide hall monitors during rehearsals, ensuring students are safely in either rehearsal spaces, speech coaching, wardrobe, or restrooms. Hall monitors are responsible for observing hallway and restroom traffic and assisting students as needed while maintaining appropriate supervision and respecting student privacy.

HCCC will designate youth restrooms versus adult restrooms when possible at every venue used.

Restroom Procedures

HCCC recognizes that younger students may occasionally require assistance while using restroom facilities.

Adults should not enter a restroom with a student unless necessary for health or safety reasons.

When assistance is necessary:

- Another approved adult should be notified whenever possible;
- The restroom entrance should remain observable;
- Parents should be notified if significant assistance was required.

Adults should never assist a student with toileting except in extraordinary emergency circumstances.

Adult-to-Student Ratios

HCCC will maintain appropriate supervision ratios for all activities.

For rehearsals and performances:

- Up to 30 students: minimum of two approved adults
- 31–45 students: minimum of three approved adults
- One additional approved adult for every additional 15 students

If supervision ratios cannot be maintained, the activity leader must immediately notify the Executive Director or designated supervisor so additional assistance can be arranged.

Adult Leadership

Adults serving in leadership roles with students should demonstrate appropriate maturity and judgment.

- Artistic and administrative staff and volunteers must be at least five years older than the oldest student in the ensemble in which they are working.
- Students age 13 and older may work as ensemble assistants under the leadership of an approved adult.
- Adult volunteers must be associated with the choir for at least six months before they may volunteer for a child-facing role. For example, a parent new to choir may volunteer to help with activities such as set up, providing snacks, or serving as a seamstress upon joining the choir. However, volunteer positions such as ensemble parent will not be an option until after six months of choir membership.

Section 6 – Standards of Conduct

Every adult serving HCCC is expected to model professionalism, integrity, and respect in all interactions with students.

Appropriate Physical Contact

Appropriate physical contact may include brief, public, and non-intrusive gestures such as:

- Handshakes
- High fives
- Fist bumps
- Side hugs (when welcomed by the student)
- Brief reassuring pat on the shoulder or upper back

Physical contact should always:

- Benefit the student rather than the adult;
- Occur in observable settings;
- Respect the student's personal boundaries;
- Never appear secretive, coercive, or inappropriate.

Physical contact should never be forced upon a reluctant student.

Medical emergencies may require additional physical contact when necessary to provide care.

Inappropriate Physical Contact

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Prolonged embraces;
- Lap sitting;
- Tickling;
- Wrestling;
- Unwanted touching;
- Touching areas normally covered by clothing except when necessary during a medical emergency;
- Any contact intended to meet the emotional or physical needs of the adult rather than the student.

Any inappropriate physical contact or suspected abuse must be reported immediately.

Verbal Conduct

Adults should communicate with students in ways that are respectful, encouraging, and age appropriate.

Adults shall not:

- Ridicule or humiliate students;
- Threaten or intimidate;
- Use profanity or degrading language;
- Engage in bullying or harassment;
- Discuss their own intimate relationships or sexual experiences with students.

Conversations with students should support HCCC's educational mission and foster a positive, encouraging environment.

Section 7 – Student Discipline

HCCC believes discipline should be respectful, instructional, and appropriate to the student's age and maturity. Whenever possible, disciplinary conversations should occur within sight or hearing of another approved adult.

Physical punishment of any kind is strictly prohibited.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Spanking
- Hitting
- Slapping
- Grabbing
- Pinching
- Shaking
- Physical intimidation

If a student's behavior threatens the safety or learning environment:

- Verbal redirection should be attempted first;
- Staff should seek assistance from another adult if needed;
- Parents or guardians may be contacted to remove the student from the activity when appropriate.

If immediate physical intervention is necessary to prevent injury to a student or another individual, only the minimum reasonable force necessary to protect safety should be used.

Section 8 – Appropriate Attire and Changing Areas

HCCC recognizes that students may need to change clothing before and during performances.

Whenever possible, changing areas should provide reasonable privacy while allowing appropriate adult supervision.

Adults shall never change clothing in the same room as students.

Students should be encouraged to wear appropriate undergarments or modesty garments beneath concert attire when costume changes are anticipated.

When supervision is necessary in changing areas:

- Supervision should be provided by approved adults of the same biological sex whenever practical;
- Supervision should protect student privacy while maintaining student safety.
- Staff and volunteers should knock and announce themselves before entering a changing area whenever practical.

Photography, audio, video, digital, or any other method of recording is strictly prohibited in changing areas.

Section 9 – Transportation

Transportation provided or arranged by HCCC should prioritize student safety at all times.

Whenever practical:

- Students should be transported directly to their destination;
- Unauthorized stops should be avoided;
- Students should never ride alone with a single adult who is not their parent or legal guardian.

Drivers transporting students to or from any HCCC event must:

- Possess a valid driver's license;
- Maintain appropriate automobile insurance;
- Comply with all traffic laws;
- Refrain from using handheld electronic devices while driving.
- Maintain a clean driving record.
- Be over the age of 25.
- Have express written permission of parents
- Whenever emergency transportation is necessary, two approved adults should accompany the student whenever practical. If this is not possible due to the nature of the emergency, parents or guardians should be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

Section 10 – Electronic Communication and Social Media

Electronic communication between adults and students should always be transparent, professional, and related to HCCC activities.

Whenever possible:

- Parents or guardians should be copied on all electronic communication with students.
- Group messaging should be used instead of private messaging.
- Communication should occur only during reasonable hours.

Adults shall not:

- Request or send disappearing messages;
- Communicate secretly with students;
- Request personal photographs unrelated to HCCC activities;
- Engage in conversations unrelated to HCCC programming that could reasonably be viewed as inappropriate.
- Adults shall not "friend," "follow," or otherwise connect with currently enrolled students on personal social media accounts unless they are members of the student's immediate family.

Adults shall:

- Use approved communication pathways: email, KidCheck texting, NeonOne email and texting.
- Text only for time-sensitive information needs such as: clarifying meeting time and place, asking for directions, or timely reminders for wardrobe, etc.

Section 11 – Photography and Media

HCCC celebrates the accomplishments of its students through photographs, videos, and promotional materials.

Photography and video should always respect student privacy and follow parental permissions.

Adults should never:

- Photograph students in restrooms or changing areas;
- Post images that could embarrass or exploit a student;
- Identify students in ways inconsistent with HCCC's media release policy.
- Identify a student (other than their own) by name on social media.

Adults should:

- Be familiar with and follow the guidelines of the choir's media release form.
- Photography during rehearsals should be limited to authorized HCCC staff, approved volunteers, parents or guardians of participating students, or individuals designated by HCCC leadership.

Section 12 – Parents, Check-in and Check-out Procedures, and Visitors

Parents and guardians are valued partners in HCCC's mission.

Parents are welcome to observe rehearsals and performances as permitted by HCCC policies.

Individuals who regularly assist with students beyond casual observation must complete HCCC's volunteer screening process.

HCCC will maintain current emergency contact information for every student.

Parents or guardians of all registered students must establish and maintain a free account with KidCheck (kidcheck.com). Parents must upload a current photograph of their HCCC students and the adults who are approved to check in and pick up their students. This account must be updated annually.

Check-in procedures:

- Students in grades K-3 must be escorted to rehearsal, performance holding area, etc. by a parent or guardian.
- Students in grades 4-12 must check in with KidCheck. Parents can determine whether their student will check himself in or whether the parent will complete that task.
- When WiFi is unavailable or limited, the choir will use a physical sign-in sheet for check-in.

Check-out procedures:

- Students will only be released to a parent or authorized adult and according to the established dismissal procedures through KidCheck.
- Alternate check out arrangements may be arranged ahead of time by the parent or guardian and must be approved by HCCC.
- Students in grades K-3 must have a parent or guardian pick them up at the rehearsal or holding room. An Approved Adult Volunteer will use photographs and information on KidCheck to verify that a student is being released to an approved adult.
- Students in grades 4-12 must check out with KidCheck. Parents can determine whether their student will check himself out or whether the parent will complete that task.
- When WiFi is unavailable or limited, the Choir will use a physical sign-out sheet for check-out.

Extenuating circumstances and emergencies:

- If a parent is late for pick up, two adults will stay with the student until a parent arrives.
- If weather, natural disaster, or other situation forces a rehearsal or performance to end earlier than planned, a KidCheck text will be sent to parents with information about picking up their students.

Visitors:

- Visitors must check in with choir staff before entering a choir rehearsal, performance, camp, or activity space.

- Once approved, visitors will wear a visitor name tag during the entire visit.
- All visitors must be accompanied by an adult choir member at all times.
- Visitors should never be left alone with students.

Section 13 – Travel and Overnight Events

Some HCCC activities, including tours, festivals, or performance trips, may require travel or overnight accommodations.

Additional safeguards apply during these events.

These include:

- Maintaining the Rule of Two whenever practical
- Appropriate adult supervision throughout the trip
- Separate sleeping accommodations for non-related adults and students
- Room assignments based on age and gender unless otherwise approved by parents and HCCC leadership
- Regular room checks conducted respectfully and without unnecessary physical contact
- Appropriate HCCC approved dress during overnight activities

Adults should never enter a student's hotel room alone except in an emergency. Whenever entry is necessary, at least two approved adults should be present whenever practical.

Parents will receive advance information regarding:

- Travel itineraries
- Lodging arrangements
- Supervision plans
- Emergency contact information
- Required permission forms.
- Choice of hotel accommodations. Students will stay with their parents in hotels unless the choir attends a festival or event where a tour company manages the accommodations. In this case, parents will be involved in choosing roommates for hotel accommodations.
- Medication procedures. If a student needs medication while on a trip, the medication must be in the possession of the parent, guardian, or supervising staff member. Students may not self-medicate while under the responsibility of the choir.
- Curfew expectations. Students and parents will be given a clear guideline for where they can go and when they need to be back in their rooms.
- Medical emergencies. Parents will fill out a medical record form that will guide choir staff to make appropriate decisions for emergency care. Parents will also be notified right away of any emergent situation.

- Behavioral expectations during travel. Students must abide by the Hancock County Children's Choir Membership Code of Conduct at all rehearsals, performances, camps, festivals, choir organized events, and while traveling.

Acknowledgment

I have received, read, and understand the Hancock County Children's Choir Child and Youth Protection Policy.

I do hereby agree to comply fully with the expectations and standards described in this HCCC Child Safety Policies and Procedures policy ("Policy") while serving HCCC.

I understand that failure to follow this Policy may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or termination of volunteer or employment responsibilities.

I understand that this policy may be updated periodically and that I am responsible for reviewing any revisions.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____