



# THE NOVA COMEDY COLLECTIVE

## ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

### **ORGANIZATIONAL STATEMENT**

The Nova Comedy Collective is committed to building fun, entertaining, and creative environments that are free from harassment or discrimination, for all of our contributing artists, students, participants, and audience members. We value accessibility, inclusivity, and anti-racism, the principles of which guide these efforts. We create and uphold this policy with the intention of cultivating spaces that achieve the highest standard of safety and support.

### **SCOPE**

Anyone and everyone who interacts with or participates in The Nova Comedy Collective has the right to this policy's assurances, as well as a responsibility to help maintain the standard of safety and respect described herein. As such, this policy is intended to support and apply to all individuals present at Nova Comedy classes, shows, rehearsals, and any other community spaces. This includes contributing artists, such as performers, directors, instructors, and producers; it includes anyone attending or participating in events that Nova Comedy is hosting or sponsoring, including audience members and students; and it includes all Nova staff, contractors, and members of present partnered organizations.

### **POLICY**

The Nova Comedy Collective does not tolerate acts of harassment, sexual harassment, racism, or discrimination of any kind. All or part of what is described below may create a negative environment for individuals or groups. It should be noted that a person does not have to be a direct target to be adversely affected by a negative environment. This policy includes conduct or comment that creates and maintains an offensive, hostile, or intimidating climate.

Acts of harassment, sexual harassment, or racism do not need to have malicious intent; ***the impacts on the person reporting the harassment should be addressed regardless of the intent of the action.***

### **Discrimination**

Discrimination is the unequal treatment of another person, based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, religion, age, size, sex, gender identity, gender expression, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship status, geography, place of origin, marital status, familial status, or on any other facet of a person's actual or perceived identity.

Discrimination may be Direct or Indirect. Direct Discrimination is when someone has been personally denied opportunity, received unequal pay, or been otherwise treated poorly on the basis of their identity. Indirect Discrimination refers to the enactment of unjustified policies that put some groups at a disadvantage. Indirect Discrimination is often unintentional, but always unacceptable.

### **Harassment**

Harassment is any behavior which causes distress, feelings of a lack of safety, or physical harm to another person in the space. Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

1. Inappropriate or insulting remarks, gestures, jokes, innuendoes or taunting about a person's actual or perceived race, ethnicity, religion, age, size, sex, gender identity, gender expression, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship status, geography, place of origin, marital status, familial status, or any other facet of a person's actual or perceived identity,
2. Unwanted questions or comments about a person's private life,
3. Posting or display of materials, articles, or graffiti, etc. which may cause humiliation, offense or embarrassment,
4. Any decision, feedback, comment, or note that is made, or perceived to be made, based on a person's actual or perceived race/ethnicity, religion, age, size, gender, gender expression or identity, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship status, geography, place of origin, marital status, or familial status, or that causes discomfort to a person in the space.

### **Sexual Harassment**

One or a series of comments or conduct of a gender-related or sexual nature that causes distress, feelings of a lack of safety, or physical harm to another person in the space. Everyone in our spaces have the right to be free from:

1. Sexual solicitation or advance made by a person in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement,
2. Reprisal or threat of reprisal for the rejection of a sexual solicitation or advance where the reprisal is made by a person in a position of perceived or legitimate power. Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to:
  1. Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes or taunting about a person's body, attire, gender, or sexual orientation,
  2. Unwanted touching or any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact,
  3. Unwelcome enquiries or comments about a person's sex life or sexual orientation,
  4. Leering, whistling, or other suggestive or insulting sounds,
  5. Inappropriate comments about clothing, physical characteristics or activities,
  6. Posting or display of materials, articles, or graffiti, etc. which is sexually oriented,
  7. Requests or demands for sexual favors which include, or strongly imply, promises of rewards for complying (e.g., job advancement opportunities, and/or threats of punishment for refusal (e.g., denial of job advancement or opportunities).

### **Racism**

Racism exists on the individual, institutional, and societal levels. Individual racism occurs when an individual with societal power and privilege holds a prejudice against others of a marginalized or minority racial identity. Institutional racism is the unfair treatment of and inequitable impacts on people of color by institutions, through policies and discriminatory treatment. Societal, or structural, racism is the treatment and representation of people of color in our history, culture, and everyday lives that results in chronic disadvantage for people of color, and upholds privilege, power, and

preference for white people. Individual, institutional, and societal racism sustain each other, contributing to a cycle of racism that creates a hierarchy in favor of white people, and rampant inequity for people of color.

We include this definition of racism to acknowledge how this can contribute to the power dynamics of working, creative, and entertainment spaces. Acts of Racism are acts perpetrated by an individual with racial privilege that include, but are not limited to:

1. Racial slurs, offensive or derogatory remarks about a person's race or color, or the display of racially-offensive symbols
2. Any comment, remark, microaggression, joke, gesture, assumption, or observation about race, color, or racial identity that causes discomfort
3. Any decision, feedback, comment, or note that is made, or perceived to be made, based on racial prejudice
4. Any tokenization, fetishization, or exclusion experienced by a person of color

### **CONSENT AND ONSTAGE PLAY**

At The Nova Comedy Collective, comedy is for everyone. We recognize that in order to make our spaces and practices inclusive and accessible, we must strive to implement consent-based and trauma-informed practices in our artform.

At the start of classes and rehearsals, we will create Community Agreements that outline the support and access needs of the individuals in the space, and that create a plan for engaging in onstage play involving physical contact. Guidelines and recommendations for these conversations are included in our Code of Conduct. Additionally, communication practices for consent should also be implemented and maintained for any physical contact in performance between performers and audience members.

With improvised play and contact, we recognize that everyone makes mistakes. But patterns of behavior that reflect the willful ignorance of communicated boundaries, the denigration of marginalized groups, or that infringe upon the standards of psychological safety described in this policy, are unacceptable. Mistakes should be acknowledged, discussed, and utilized as opportunities for growth. Patterns of behavior may constitute harassment, and are subject to reporting procedures.

At the request of any Nova Comedy cast, a qualified theatrical Intimacy Director can be provided to clarify or enhance the group's consent protocols for engaging in physical play.

## **REPORTING STRUCTURE**

Addressing negative comments or actions - whether accidental or intentional - is an important part of maintaining a professional and positive environment. The following is a list of people you can reach out to if you feel uncomfortable or have concerns:

### **Individual Level**

If you feel safe and comfortable doing so, we encourage you to first directly address your concern with the individual(s) involved. This helps to foster an open and transparent community, and is often the fastest path to a resolution. If you would like assistance or mediation for this conversation, reach out to your Cast Representative, Director, Instructor, or any member of the Nova Comedy staff.

### **Space Leadership Level**

If your concern arose in a particular space, like a classroom or cast rehearsal, you may approach your Cast Representative (if your cast has chosen to elect one), the Director, the Lead Producer, or the Class Instructor. Those individuals may assist you in resolving the issue using the Post-Reporting Procedure, or they may approach another party on the Leadership Level or Organizational Level of the Reporting Procedure with your consent if the report requires further action, or if they feel unequipped to handle the report for any reason.

### **Organizational Level**

Whatever capacity in which your concern or report arose, you are always welcome to reach out to a member of The Nova Comedy Collective team. On our website ([thenovacomedymedia.com](https://thenovacomedymedia.com)), you can view the headshots, backgrounds, and bios of all our team members. To reach any one of us, reach out to [info@thenovacomedymedia.com](mailto:info@thenovacomedymedia.com) and request to be connected.

If you'd like to reach out to the organization in an anonymous capacity, a form for anonymous reporting is coming soon. Please be aware that if an anonymous report is left with no contact information, we will not be able to follow up following our investigation and/or post-reporting procedural actions. All reports to the organization, anonymous or otherwise will be investigated, regardless of the method of reporting.

## **POST-REPORTING PROCEDURE**

When you make a report with any of the above individuals, they will work with you to create a plan of action to address your concerns. Reports will be addressed with discretion and in a timely manner. A secure record will be kept of all reports. In the interest of transparency, all parties will be kept informed of next steps to the full extent allowable by law. Actions taken to resolve reports may include any of the following:

**Mediation and Seeking Apology:** We encourage you to have open and transparent conversations with people in your community whenever safe and comfortable to do so. To assist in these conversations, you may approach a mediator (see Reporting Structure for options), and/or explore the Tips for Productive Communication and Apologies, provided in this policy's first Appendix.

**Creative Mitigation:** Solutions in this category may include changing rehearsal schedules, switching dressing rooms, or providing support structures like check-ins or walks to and from the T.

**Assigned and Demonstrated Growth:** If reported actions involved microaggressions or demonstrated lack of awareness towards a specific marginalized community, next steps for the offending party may involve learning assignments and allyship discussions with a Nova staff member to demonstrate growth.

**Reporting to an Outside Party:** With the consent of the reporting party, a report may be escalated to an outside party, including but not limited to the manager of a venue or partnering organization, or to outside authorities.

**Termination or Dismissal:** Reported actions may result in the termination of the offending party's contract, or in their dismissal from the space. This step may involve escalation to the Organizational Level, with the reporting party's consent, to discuss the offending party's future allowable relationship with The Nova Comedy Collective.

## **RETALIATION**

The Nova Comedy Collective encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. The Nova Comedy Collective prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or participates in an investigation of such reports.

No hardship, loss, benefit or penalty may be imposed in response to:

1. Filing or responding to a report of discrimination or harassment
2. Collaborating with someone to corroborate or resolve a report

The above actions will in no way be used against the contracted artist or have an adverse impact on the individual's status or reputation with The Nova Comedy Collective. Any contracted artist who is found to have violated this aspect of the policy will be subject to discipline up to and including termination of contract.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This policy was created by The Nova Comedy Collective, and the members of its People, Policies, and Procedures team. It was created with support and shared language from the following people, organizations, and documents:

*Entropy Theatre and its company members, with consultation by Deidra Montgomery and Dawn Meredith Simmons*

*Chicago Theatre "Not in Our House" Standards*

*The Line Drawn Initiative, ImpactBoston*

## **APPENDIX I: Tips for Productive Communication and Apologies**

The following tips are intended to assist you with any difficult conversations, including those resulting from Individual Level communication after conflict or discomfort arises in a Nova Comedy space. If you would like assistance, please seek out someone on the Space Leadership or Organizational Level for help with mediation.

**Use “I Statements”:** Speak clearly to your own needs, boundaries, observations, and requests.

**Assume Best Intent, but Address the Impact:** We can assume that everyone is here with the intention to support each other and create together, but we need to take responsibility for the impact we have on those around us. Instead of guessing at others’ intentions, or defending our own, *let’s focus our actions and on the impact they have.*

**Our Boundaries are Non-Negotiable:** A conversation should never be a negotiation of your or someone else’s boundaries. Everyone’s boundaries are acceptable and encouraged, exactly where they are. When we communicate about them, we should be talking about how we can best respect each others’ boundaries, never how to move or adjust them.

**Leave Room for Breath:** Like in everything we do, we need to leave room for breath in these conversations. Conflict communication can cause panic responses and increased stress levels, which can negatively affect you and your ability to communicate effectively. Counteract those effects by breathing deeply, and taking breaks from the conversation whenever they are needed. Don’t be shy about pausing and returning to a difficult conversation after you’ve had some time to process.

**Apologize Effectively:** If your difficult conversation involves an apology, here are some guidelines for apologizing in a way that feels genuine and meaningful.

***No “but’s”, and No excuses.** Even sharing “I didn’t mean to” can detract from your apology. Remember, what matters most is the impact your actions had.*

***Apologize for your Actions.** Focus on your actions and accountability, and not on the other party’s response. (“I’m sorry I did that”, rather than “I’m sorry you felt that way.”)*



***Include Next Steps.*** After your apology is given, include corrective action for moving forward. Let the other party know specifically why they can expect different from you moving forward.

***No Expectations.*** Apologies should be given freely, without any expectation of forgiveness or reciprocity.

## APPENDIX II: RESOURCES

The following resources are provided to aid you in your journey of self-advocacy and your pursuit of wellbeing, inside and outside of The Nova Comedy Collective:

A complaint may include allegations of civil or criminal misconduct or liability, and may require legal advice or action. A violation of civil rights should be reported to the Massachusetts Attorney General office at [mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-attorney-general](https://mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-attorney-general).

If you feel you have been discriminated against at work, you may file a charge with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The EEOC also offers resources on fair employment practices at [eeoc.gov](https://eeoc.gov).

The Black Theatre Network provides opportunities for networking, connection, and development to Black theatre artists at [blacktheatrenetwork.org](https://blacktheatrenetwork.org).

The Latinx Theatre Commons on HowlRound provides a meeting place and other resources to Latinx theatre artists at [howlround.com/ltc](https://howlround.com/ltc).

The Consortium of Asian American Theaters and Artists offers community and resources to Asian American theatre artists at [caata.net](https://caata.net). An aligning organization based in Boston is Asian American Theatre Artists of Boston ([aataboston.wordpress.com](https://aataboston.wordpress.com)).

Ring of Keys is an artist service organization that fosters community and visibility for musical theatre artists - onstage and off - who self-identify as queer women, transgender, and gender non-conforming artists at [ringofkeys.org](https://ringofkeys.org).

The National Alliance on Mental Illness has a mental health emergency hotline (available Monday through Friday, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm EST) at 1-800-950-6264.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has a mental health emergency hotline available 24 hours a day at 1-800-662-4357.

The National Institute of Mental Health has an emergency mental health hotline (available Monday-Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm EST) at 1-866-615-6464, and an online chat option at [nimh.nih.gov](https://nimh.nih.gov).

Impact Boston has resources for survivors of abuse and trauma, and more, available at [impactboston.org](https://impactboston.org).