



YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

I. Introduction

The Pioneer Valley Symphony, Inc. is an organization consisting of various performance groups, including an Orchestra, Chorus and Youth Orchestra. The members of the Orchestra and Chorus are primarily adults. The members of the Youth Orchestra are primarily children under the age of 18. Occasionally, children under the age of 18 become involved in the activities of the Orchestra or Chorus, usually as players or singers. The PVS encourages the involvement of young people to foster their musical development.

II. Aims of the Policy

Child abuse is a threat that we must all take seriously today. The primary goal of this Youth Protection Policy is to minimize the risk of child abuse and maximize the safety of any child entrusted to the care of the PVS. PVS is committed to the goal of preventing abuse to children while they are involved in promoting orchestral music in our organization. It is the policy of the PVS to safeguard the welfare of children, and all others involved in activities, by protecting them from neglect and abuse (physical, emotional and sexual). It is also the policy of the PVS to protect adults working with children by providing them with appropriate guidelines and safe working practices. An additional goal of this policy is to provide all persons with knowledge as to how to properly respond to allegations concerning behavior toward children. Further, this policy aims to protect the position of the PVS in event of any allegations of misconduct towards such children.

III. Definitions

The following terms are defined for the purposes of this Policy:

- **PVS** – the Pioneer Valley Symphony, Inc., inclusive of all performing groups
- **Activity** – any rehearsal, concert or associated activity officially arranged by the PVS
- **Child** – any person under the age of 18 years, regardless of physical or mental condition, taking part in a PVS Activity
- **Board** – the Board of Directors of the PVS
- **Child abuse** – the non-accidental commission of any act by a caretaker upon a child under age 18 which causes, or creates a substantial risk of, physical or emotional injury; or constitutes a

sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; or any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child under the care of that individual

- **Physical injury** – Death; or fracture of a bone, subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, and any other such nontrivial injury; or soft tissue swelling or skin bruising, depending upon such factors as the child's age, circumstances under which the injury occurred and the number and location of bruises
- **Emotional injury** – an impairment to or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by observable and substantial reduction in the child's ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior
- **Approved Children's Workers** – those individuals who have met the requirements of this Policy and have been approved in accordance with this Policy to work with children attending the Activities of this organization. Approved Children's Workers are responsible for the care, custody and control of children who attend the programs of the PVS.
- **Adult** – any person 18 years of age or older, regardless of physical or mental condition

III. Policies

Permission:

- Before a child takes part in any Activity, written permission must be provided to the PVS by his/her parents/guardians. A sample permission form is attached to this Policy. This Policy and the sample form can be accessed from the member's section of the website, or a hard copy can be requested from the Managing Director.

Two Person Rule:

- Every reasonable attempt will be made by Approved Children's Workers to have two adults present at all times with children during PVS Activities. Reasonable attempts will be made to see that at least two unrelated adults are present at all times during any Activity. No adult, other than a parent/guardian, should spend unsupervised time alone with any child under the care of the PVS during any Activity, without making every reasonable attempt to gain the consent of the child's parent/guardian. Independent arrangements made by parents/guardians are excluded from this clause.
- No adult, other than a parent/guardian, should meet with any child outside such Activities or away from the normal meeting places of the PVS, unless every reasonable attempt has been made to receive consent from a parent/guardian or to have present a parent/guardian or other adult approved by a parent/guardian.
- This Rule is not meant to prohibit the conduct of PVS Activities where only one adult is present, if there is a large group involved in the Activity (e.g. full youth orchestra rehearsal with only conductor present).

Expected Behavior:

- Child abuse, in any form, will not be tolerated.
- There is to be no inappropriate touching between any adult and any child under the care of the PVS during any Activity.
- It is the responsibility of each adult to ensure that his/her behavior is appropriate at all times.

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- It is the responsibility of each adult to abide by the Code of Behavior attached to this Policy.

Reporting:

- All adults will be alert to the potential for child abuse and will report incidents and/or allegations of child abuse to a PVS board member immediately in accordance with the procedures described in this policy.
- Upon report of allegations of child abuse, Approved Children's Workers will do their utmost to ensure the well-being of alleged victims.

Background Checks:

- Adults desiring to be involved in PVS Activities that involve youth, at the discretion of the PVS Board, may be asked to complete a Background Check Form (attached to this Policy) and be approved by the Board in accordance with this Policy.
- To qualify as an Approved Children's Worker, an individual must:
 - Read and understand the PVS Youth Protection Policy.
 - Complete and sign the confidential PVS Background Check Form, which includes giving permission for the PVS to seek the relevant Criminal Records Check.
 - If asked, complete any necessary form required by the relevant government agency to authorize the PVS to perform a criminal records check.
 - Receive final approval from the PVS Board of Directors.
 - For workers age 18 or older, receive re-verification screening at least every five (5) years.
 - NOTE: Upon submission of a properly completed form, an individual may begin serving youth in the PVS with the approval of at least two PVS board members pending final completion of form processing.
- The Music Director of the PVS Youth Orchestra is required to complete a Background Check Form and undergo a police background check.
- Information received through a criminal records check shall remain confidential and be seen only by the PVS Board officers listed in Appendix A.

IV. Actions upon complaints and/or allegations.

Immediate reporting

- Anyone aware of allegations of child abuse, either by direct observation or otherwise, is responsible for reporting these allegations immediately to the supervisor of the Activity or to a member of the PVS board of directors.
- Any complaints regarding the safety of children and/or the conduct of members towards such children are to be referred immediately to the supervisor of the Activity or to a member of the PVS board of directors.
- All persons receiving any complaints or allegations under this policy are to immediately report them to officer of the Board of Directors.
- The contact information for the officers of the Board is listed in Appendix A.

Investigation

- Any member of the Board will raise all complaints and allegations with the Board.

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- The Board will decide what further action should be taken, if relevant, including, but not limited to appointment of a committee to investigate the allegations and report back to the Board.
 - The Board will be responsible for dealing with any child protection issues reported to it by any officer.
 - At the conclusion of the Board's involvement, the President of the Board will report back to the complainant.

Reporting to authorities

- Should there be evidence of child abuse, the President of the Board is responsible for contacting the authorities. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Child-At-Risk Hotline phone number is 1-800-792-5200.

Disciplinary Actions

- The Board is responsible for issuing any interim disciplinary actions, including suspension of involvement with any Activity of the PVS, upon receipt of any complaint allegation of child abuse, until such allegation has been satisfactorily investigated and the individual is exonerated.
- The Board is responsible for issuing any ongoing or permanent disciplinary actions, including suspension or termination of involvement with any Activity of the PVS upon the conclusion of an investigation, if the Board deems such action warranted.

Records

- Adequate records should be kept by the President of the Board to document all efforts at handling the incident.

V. Policy Reviews

This Youth Protection Policy will be reviewed annually and approved by the Board of Directors.

Adopted by the PVS Board of Directors on August 14, 2013

Appendix A

Board of Directors board@pvso.org

Kara Peterman, President
Amy Patt, Vice President
Ian Coddington, Treasurer
Alex Meade, Secretary

Pioneer Valley Symphony, Inc.

Code of Behavior

All committee members, music staff and volunteers should demonstrate exemplary behavior in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate:

- Do treat everyone with respect and dignity.
- Do provide an example you wish others to follow.
- Do plan activities so that they involve more than one other person or are in sight or hearing of others.
- Do respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- Do create an environment where children feel comfortable to point out attitudes or behaviors they find difficult to tolerate.
- Do give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Do ask the caring question of any activity: For whose benefit is this activity?
- Do act as a responsible adult role model.
- Do not permit abusive peer activities (e.g. bullying or ridiculing).
- Do not participate in activities based primarily on physical contact (e.g. wrestling, horse play etc.)
- Do not make inappropriate comments or verbal exchanges with young people (e.g. swearing, inappropriate jokes, suggestive comments, etc.).
- Do not fail to act upon and/or record any allegations made by a child.
- Do not get into a situation where you rely on your 'good name' to protect you from allegation.
- Do not believe it could never happen to you.

We wish to promote a common sense approach to child protection. We do not want to create an atmosphere of paranoia or discourage appropriate committee members, music staff or volunteers. We recognize that no policy is fool proof and no organization is beyond reproach. However we want to be seen to be proactive in delivering what we understand to be best practice to protect the children in our care.

If you are uncertain about any of this policy please contact the President of the Board to discuss the matter privately before it has the opportunity to become an issue.

PIONEER VALLEY SYMPHONY, INC.

BACKGROUND CHECK FORM

Legal First Name _____ Middle Initial _____
Last Name _____ Date of Birth _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____ Gender: Male Female

Please complete the following questions and attach an explanation for any “yes” answer.

1. Have you ever been convicted of any crime against children or other persons? **Yes No**
2. Have you ever been found in any dependency action to have sexually assaulted or exploited any minor or to have physically abused any minor? **Yes No**
3. Have you ever been found by a court, in a domestic relations proceeding, to have sexually abused or exploited any minor or to have physically abused any minor? **Yes No**
4. Have you been convicted of the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the last 5 years? **Yes No**
5. Have you been released from incarceration for a conviction of the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the last 5 years? **Yes No**
6. Within the past 30 days, have you abused alcohol, legal or illegal drugs? **Yes No**
7. Has your driver’s license been suspended or revoked within the last 7 years? **Yes No**
8. Other than the above matters, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance or mentoring of children under the age of 18? **Yes No**

Massachusetts Residents: I understand that a background inquiry may be made to the DCJIS in accordance with MGL ch. 6 sec. 172 through 172K, inclusive.

Vermont Residents : I understand that a background inquiry may be made to the VCIC in accordance with Title 20, Chapter 117, Section 2056(c) or other pertinent State law.

Residents of Other States: I understand that a background inquiry may be made to the State Police of the state in which I live.

I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct. If it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand it may be cause for prohibiting my involvement with the PVS.

Signature _____ Date _____

YOUTH PARTICIPATION PERMISSION FORM

CONSENT AND AGREEMENT BY PARENT/GUARDIAN:

I am the parent or legal guardian of the child named below. The child desires to participate in the activities of the PVS. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Youth Protection Policy (found on the PVS website), and, if applicable, a copy of the PVS Youth Orchestra Family Participation Letter, have reviewed and understand the same, and have had the opportunity to discuss the same, if desired, with persons responsible for the Activity. I have also carefully reviewed and discussed with the child his/her obligations and responsibilities as a participant in the Activity. I understand that participation by the child is conditioned upon the consent, agreements, and other provisions contained in this document. I give permission for the child to participate in the Activities of the PVS.

PHOTO/MEDIA RELEASE: I agree to the use of the child's likeness, or a representation of his likeness (such as sketches or photographic adaptations), in materials developed by or on behalf of the PVS, including posters, photographs, videos, films and multi-media products. I give permission for photos or electronic images of the child to be displayed in the member's section of the website (this page is not accessible to the general public). I give permission for the child to be included in small group / full orchestra photos which may be used for advertising and/or marketing purposes. Individuals will not be identified by name in the photos.

I release the PVS and its licensees from all liability for any claim of infringement of publicity or privacy rights that I might otherwise have had in connection with the use of the child's likeness, or a representation of his likeness.

MEDICAL TREATMENT PERMISSION: I authorize the PVS, through its representatives (volunteers, staff, board or music personnel), in whose care the child has been entrusted, to consent to any emergency x-ray examination, anesthetic, medical, surgical or dental diagnosis or treatment and hospital care, to be rendered to the child under the general or special supervision and on the advice of any physician or dentist licensed in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or on the medical staff of a licensed hospital or emergency care facility. I, the undersigned, shall be liable and agree to pay all costs and expenses incurred in connection with such medical and dental services rendered to the aforementioned child or youth pursuant to this authorization.

I **DO** / **DO NOT** give permission for the child to leave the premises where the concert is taking place, between a rehearsal and a concert.

Signed _____ Date _____

Name of Parent or Guardian _____

Name of Child _____