

BEST PRACTICES IN PROTECTING TEEN & YOUNG ADULT ASSISTANTS

Any student who is engaged by an event in an extra-special capacity requires extra-special care. These are the class assistants, demonstrators, and ambassadors who work alongside and get to know teaching faculty, judges, and technical staffers.

This familiarity can lead to a casualness that has the potential to cause problems: adults may come to think of the students as older or "more mature" than they really are, and students might be excited or flattered by the attention.

Follow these best practices to protect all parties from unsafe situations:

1 Personal boundaries

Instruct adult workers to take seriously their roles as mentors and role models to these impressionable young dancers. Faculty should refrain from over-sharing, "opening up" about personal experiences and relationships or contacting students.

2 Rehearsals

Hold group rehearsals only and insist that at least one other adult (not including the faculty member) is present. If a faculty member wishes to speak one-on-one with an assistant, the two should move to the side of the room (but still within the viewing of observers). All student contact should be observable and interruptible.

3 Direct messaging and texting

Train staff to respond to student direct messages with a blanket reply and redirection, such as "Thank you for your message. Please contact me through the official event page here or via email at this official event staff email address." During times when texting may be necessary, staff should include a parent on the thread.

4 Travel

Travel and hotel arrangements should be made by the dancer's family or chaperone(s), not event staff. This relieves any implication of impropriety by the event to control the minor's whereabouts. Ensure all underaged assistants are under the supervision of a chaperone throughout the course of any and all events. For those over age 18, it might be acceptable for two friends of similar age (e.g., college students working as interns) to room together, but first, ensure that both are comfortable with the arrangements.

Sources:

[YPAD™ Education](#)

[U.S. Center for SafeSport](#)