



LINE DRAWN SUMMIT & SURVEY REPORT

Prepared for StageSource

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Introduction & Overview

In 2018 StageSource launched a collaboration with IMPACT and other partners to strategize around creating a New England-wide initiative to prevent sexual harassment, misconduct and abuse in the performing arts. The goal of the initiative is to create shared community standards for safe and ethical work environments within performing arts organizations, and to build the capacity of both individual professionals and organizations of all sizes to prevent abuse.

This report summarizes the findings of a survey conducted by Stage Source in May 2018 to assess the problems and needs facing the performing arts community. It also gives a summary of the inaugural Line Drawn Summit held June 16, 2018 and open to all members of the New England performing arts community, *followed by a summary of the second Line Drawn Summit which was held January 23, 2019.* It concludes with recommendations for next steps based on the survey and the summit.

Survey

In preparation for the summit, Stage Source created and circulated an anonymous survey which asked respondents about their experiences of witnessing or being the target of sexual harassment, misconduct and abuse, their perceptions of the barriers to reporting and stopping harassment, and their ideas for standards and practices the New England performing arts community can adopt. The survey received 189 responses. The respondents were mostly female (70%) and the majority were actors (106 out of 189 or 56%). The next most represented roles in the arts community were directors (54), administrative staff (48) and stage managers (31). The least represented roles were company manager (5), critic (6), music director (7) and

technical director (8). The survey allowed for participants to choose multiple roles and many respondents did.

Experiencing Harassment, Abuse or Boundary Violations

When asked if they had experienced sexual harassment, misconduct, abuse, or related uncomfortable situations, 81% indicated that they had experienced at least one incident.

The most commonly reported incidents were:

- Had a coworker make sexualized or suggestive comments, verbally or nonverbally (67%)
- Had a person in a position of authority (director, tech director, choreographer, etc.) make sexualized or suggestive comments -- verbally or nonverbally -- about your body (47%)
- Had someone directly or indirectly communicate that you were unfit to perform work duties because of your gender, sexuality, or appearance. (46%)
- Been made to change costumes in an insufficiently private area (37%)
- Had an experience where you had to work alongside co-workers who were engaging in excessive (though consensual) displays of physical affection and/or sexually charged conversation while in the work environment (37%)

Six respondents (3.9%) reported having experienced sexual activity without their consent.

Witnessing Harassment

Fifty percent of survey respondents reported witnessing sexual harassment in performing arts. The remaining 50% were split between the answer choice “no” and the answer choice “unsure” with 28% responding “unsure.”

The large number of “unsure” responses points to a need for education about what constitutes sexual harassment and abuse, and shared community standards that clearly define this behavior.

Reasons for Not Reporting & Outcomes of Reporting

Of those who witnessed sexual harassment, the majority (70%) did not report. The most common reasons respondents gave for their decision not to report were:

- I didn't think anything would be done about it

- I wasn't sure it was sexual harassment
- I didn't know who to tell
- I didn't want to get anyone in trouble

Survey respondents who reported sexual harassment were most likely to report to stage managers (23), artistic directors (20), and directors (19). Almost half the respondents to this question checked "other," and their responses ranged from Human Resources to the Production Manager to University administrators responsible for Title IX.

The majority of respondents reported unsatisfactory outcomes to the reports they made. The most common unsatisfactory responses were:

- The person was understanding but didn't know how to handle the situation. As a result, the situation was not resolved and nothing changed. (30%)
- The person minimized or explained away the incident (25%)
- I don't know, I left the situation (22%)
- My report was ignored (17%)

In very few cases did a report of harassment result in either a harasser being removed from a production or the harassment stopping:

- The harassment stopped (13%)
- The person was removed from the company or production (5%)

A small minority of reports of harassment or abuse resulted in the harassment stopping and/or the harasser being removed from the company or production.

Barriers to Change

Survey respondents were asked in an open-ended question to identify the barriers they see to creating harassment- and abuse-free workplace in New England performing arts. Out of 117 open-ended responses, the following were the most common themes:

- Old ways, old men (18)
- No consequences for harassers (16)
- Lack of knowledge of how to make/receive reports (16)
- Gender & societal inequity: power differences between harasser and harassed (14)
- Fear of losing work (14)
- Fear of retaliation/being labeled a trouble maker (13)
- Lack of training for arts organization leaders (8)
- Lack of community standards (8)

June 2018 Summit Description

The first Line Drawn Summit drew 20 members of the New England performing arts community. Thirteen performing arts organizations and businesses were represented by Artistic Directors, Managing Directors, a Director of Human Resources as well as interns and other non-managers. Freelance stage managers (including an Equity liaison), directors, performers, and theater critics were also in attendance. The summit drew representatives from large, mid-size and fringe performing arts organizations, almost all were representing companies New England

The Summit began with a report on the **anonymous survey** Stage Source conducted to understand the scope of the problem of sexual misconduct, harassment and abuse in New England performing arts. It then included a presentation on **policies**, with some participants sharing their organizational policies and the issues and situations that led them to create policies.

The group then self-selected into three small work groups to have more focused discussions:

- Issues facing freelancers and fringe companies
- First rehearsal/first production meeting: setting a tone
- Training

The groups reported back on the issues and challenges they addressed and those issues informed the larger group effort to identify common ethical standards.

The summit ended with a first effort to reach a **consensus on ethical standards for New England performing arts**.

Policies

After the survey report, the summit provided space for arts organizational leaders to present their existing policies and the process by which they were developed. Below are some highlights of key elements of policies. Due to the frank discussions of organizational problems that led to policy development, this report will present the issues and developed policies without identifying individual organizations. Several arts organizations have shared their policies with StageSource and those are available as a guide for others to adopt.

Developing Policies in Response to Edgy, Sexual Art

One theater company found that most of their problems with harassment were situations in which edgy or sex-positive material was used as an excuse to cross boundaries and/or abuse

power. As a result, the company developed policies and investigation processes designed to prevent this type of harassment and abuse of power.

Their policy includes:

- No sexual or dating relationships between people who are in a supervisory relationship
- No nude or sexually explicit scenes can be rehearsed after hours or in a private place
- Feedback can be given about a character's sexual desirability or sex appeal but not about an actor's body, looks, or sexual desirability

Adopting the Chicago Standards in Response to Sexual Abuse Incidents

One theater company adopted the Chicago Theater Standards in response to abuse and harassment incidents. In implementing the standards, they initiate long discussions of standards at the first rehearsal. A representative from the Board also follows up to reach out and give support so that freelancers have a connection to someone who is removed from the rehearsal process. They also circulate a survey at the end of the production to get feedback about the work environment.

Online Harassment

While online harassment is a need expressed by many summit participants, one theater review site has a policy of referring all online harassment to the editor so that individual reviewers are not responsible for engaging with harassing or abusive responses to their articles.

Consensus Community Standards

A primary purpose of the summit was to begin a process of creating community standards and practices that arts organizations can adopt in order to ensure safe and ethical workplaces. Through small break-out groups followed by a large-group consensus building process, summit participants created a first iteration of shared ethical standards for New England Performing Arts.

This summit was the first step. Stage Source plans to follow up with additional summits, and to circulate the report to get feedback on the initial standards that the assembled group identified. Members of the New England performing arts community are welcomed and encouraged to communicate any feedback on these standards to StageSource and to participate in future convenings.

The following standards represent the greatest areas of consensus among the group:

1. Reports will be acknowledged within 24 hours and include information for the next step.

2. Gender identity and sexual orientation will not be used to make assumptions about ability, talent, skill level or fitness for performing duties.
3. The creation of a community based on safety & responsibility will supersede artistic, financial, or reputational goals.
4. Touch (by actors, directors, costume/wardrobe staff, etc.) will always be preceded by asking for consent.
5. Anyone who critiques an actor will focus on the actor's work as a professional, not their appearance of identity as a person.
6. All employees will be notified prior to auditioning and hiring that the company has agreed to be part of the New England Standard of Ethics policies, which will be available to read on the website.
7. All employees will be held to the same standards of conduct. No one gets a "pass" because of age, donation amounts, reputation, marketability.
8. Any nudity, intimacy, or touching required in a role will be clearly identified to the actor and all artists on or before hiring and never to be added after hiring without the consent of the actor (note: there were some variations on this standard with some advocating for directors being able to add intimacy if it is supervised by a trained intimacy choreographer.
9. Intimate material will not be rehearsed without the presence of both a director and a stage manager or intimacy director.

The Importance—And Challenges—Of Addressing Community Members Who Have Perpetrated

Summit participants came to greater consensus on standards related to preventative measures and practices than standards related to individual artists and technicians with past histories of perpetration. All summit participants were clear and in agreement that they wanted to work in arts organizations that are free of people who perpetrate, yet the summit revealed how difficult is to reach consensus on how to make this intention a reality, more specifically, how to address individuals who have a history of perpetration.

Some participants expressed willingness to consider some sort of "do no hire" list, while others expressed strong concerns about any action that could replicate the blacklisting tactics of the McCarthy era that targeted artists. Another question that arose was how an arts organization would establish that someone had perpetrated—would they believe rumors? Would they rely on the criminal legal system and only apply this standard to someone who has been convicted? Would they use other models like restorative or transformative justice?

“You could imagine not hiring a lighting designer who had a reputation for missing deadlines, but some people in the room are not ready to do the same for a person with a reputation for sexually harassing or abusing”

Arts administrators and directors acknowledged that they often make hiring decisions based on a person’s reputation (for meeting deadlines, for working effectively with a team, for doing quality work), yet the thought of making hiring decisions based on a reputation for having caused sexual harm was an area that provoked challenging and important conversation. Strong and conflicting opinions on this issue were expressed and deeper and longer conversation will be needed to create consensus.

In abuse prevention initiatives, deciding how to address individuals who have perpetrated is among the most difficult and the most important decisions. As StageSource continues its work, exploring this issue more deeply will be crucial to creating standards and practices that are strong enough to be effective at stopping abuse.

January 2019 Summit Description

On January 23, 2019, StageSource held another summit with the same agenda as the June 18 Summit. The goal was to engage members of the New England Performing Arts Community who had not attended the June summit and to get a broader picture of the community’s needs and ideas. Approximately 25 people attended the second summit, including people in many of the same roles as the June summit. Also represented were StageSource Board members, a technical director engaged in increasing racial and gender diversity in technicians, and several university-based theater programs.

Policies

In addition to types of policies that overlapped with the June summit, the following existing policies and policy-related challenges were identified:

Policies:

- *One company’s policy identifies two designated people to whom reports of sexual harm can be made. Both of these people are full-time employees of the theater organization who do not make hiring decisions. This structure was chosen as a way of removing stigma that may come from reporting to someone who may have the power to determine a person’s future employment with the company.*
- *Another company has a policy that people can report to anyone in a management role, and the report ultimately comes to the Managing Director or Human Resources.*
- *Safe Space guidelines are posted all over the building so that anyone, regardless of the depth of their involvement with the company, can see them.*

- *One company that rents its space to other organization now includes its sexual harassment policies as part of the rental agreement. This is both as a general good practice and because the theater company's front of house staff are often working events sponsored by renters.*
- *Another company keeps a file of reports even when they are not high-level situations or when they cannot be investigated. That way if they receive multiple reports involving a particular person they can begin to see a pattern of problematic behaviors, even if no one behavior is egregious.*

Policy-related challenges:

- *University-based theater practitioners unsure of when Title IX applies to people working on productions who are not students or faculty.*
- *Adjunct faculty and teaching artists not aware that they were mandated reporters until after a student reported sexual assault to them.*
- *Some companies have policies which enable people to report to a Board member. The benefit is that people can report to someone with whom they don't interact on a daily basis, but the drawback is that people may not feel safe reaching out to someone they have never met. The group discussed the possibility that the board member designated to receive reports could come to a first rehearsal and production meeting, and to introduce themselves to freelance technicians.*

Consensus Community Standards

Similar to the June Summit, participants in the January Summit were asked to identify standards, structures, and conversations needed to address sexual harm in performing arts. Below are the standards and structures that got the most votes:

1. *An outside organization/entity to investigate abuse reports and share results with others in the theater community who make hiring decisions.*
2. *Ways of sharing information & facts about the people who have caused harm across theater companies*
3. *Required training and certification on abuse for freelancers*
4. *Removing stigma of reporting harassment + being out as a survivor*
5. *Standard anti-abuse, anti-harassment language is written into contracts of artists and technicians.*
6. *Intersectional anti-oppression training*

Challenges with Creating an External Reporting Entity

Despite widespread support for creating an external organization to address abuse reports, many summit participants identified problems or barriers to establishing such an entity. These barriers include:

- *Legal implications of disclosing details an internal investigation or reasons for terminating employment*
- *Not wanting an external body to replace or supplant internal processes.*
- *Needing to have a way of ensuring that companies follow through and report to the external entity. Either that or making it possible for a survivor to report themselves.*

One benefit to an external reporting entity was also identified:

- *When a company is small and everyone is close, having an external entity is safer than reporting to a person in the company who is too close to the situation.*

Reflections on the June and January Groups

Different groups bring different focuses, so there was great value in having two distinct summits made up of different members of the arts community. The June group focused largely on standards and practices for creating safe workplaces, while the January group placed significantly more emphasis on responding to reports and creating accountability. These are two complimentary and essential pieces of an abuse prevention initiative—Line Drawn will be most effective if it is simultaneously proactive and reactive.

Recommendations

1. Create and Pilot Bystander and Boundary Setting Trainings Unique to Arts Organizations

During the summit, many participants requested training for how to respond to situations in which they or others are experiencing harassment. Specific identified training needs included:

Bystander Skills

De-escalation: how to de-escalate a situation and return to a productive rehearsal

Responding to abuse reports

Managing the freeze response—to advocate for oneself in the moment

Misogyny and trans/homophobia in technical/crew spaces

Respectful intervention when someone says the wrong thing

Boundary setting

All of these topics would be most effective if presented in a way that was unique to arts organizations.

IMPACT therefore proposes to create a pilot bystander training and a pilot boundary setting/self-advocacy training. Arts organizations could sponsor their own staff and/or freelance stage managers, artists and technicians to attend the training. Pilot training

participants would be asked to give input to help shape these trainings so they could eventually become a recognized credential for permanent staff and freelancers.

2. Survey Technicians, Stage Managers, and Others in Male-Dominated Professions

The few responses from carpenters, backstage crew, and other backstage professionals identified role-specific experiences of sexism and harassment, yet the majority of respondents to the Stage Source survey were actors. Also, several summit participants commented about ways in which the survey was actor-centered. IMPACT therefore proposes that Stage Source conduct specific outreach to backstage professionals so that their experiences are well-represented in future efforts of the Line Drawn initiatives.

3. Draft Sample Contract Language that Supports & Protects Freelancers Who Intervene to Prevent Harassment, Misconduct and Abuse

Fear of losing work and being labeled a trouble maker are key barriers to reporting harassment and intervening to stop abuse. IMPACT therefore recommends that Stage Source work with the Arts & Business Council and other partners to draft language for stage management, production management, and similar contracts that affirms the organization's commitment to creating a harassment-free workplace and protects the freelancer from retaliation for reporting or intervening.

4. Hold a focused summit with an attempt to achieve consensus or have more focused conversation on standards for people who are known or reputed to have perpetrated.

Based on the results of the survey and the summit, IMPACT makes the following recommendations:

The **biggest** area of disagreement among summit participants was on how to create an ethical standard related to not hiring people who have perpetrated sexual harassment or abuse. Controversy centered around how to evaluate rumors and whether it is fair to use that as a reason to consider someone unfit to work. Further reflection and conversation is needed to more deeply understand this resistance or hesitation on the part of some and enthusiasm on the part of others.

One summit participant proposed creating a grid of appropriate responses to different types of misconduct ranging from micro-aggressions and sexist comments to sexual assault and rape. The thought behind the grid was that arts organizations would respond to less serious acts with education or support, while responding to more severe abuses with more serious consequences.

Example:

Act	Response
Sexist/Racist.Ableist/Homophobic comment	Training & education
Sexual Harassment	
Sexual Assault/ Rape	

During the community standards exercise this chart got the highest number of votes.

IMPACT therefore proposes a specific, focused summit designed to more deeply explore this issue with the chart as an example of what such standards could look like. We further propose to invite guest speakers who can address restorative and transformative justice models, models used in sports organizations for banning abusive coaches and athletes, and other models. During the community standards exercise this chart got the highest number of votes.

5. Explore the Possibility of Creating an External Reporting Entity

IMPACT proposes to convene a work group of restorative justice practitioners and arts community leaders to study the possibility of creating an external organization that would receive and respond to abuse reports. There are few effective models of community-wide accountability, so the New England performing arts community has the potential to become a true innovator and leader in the work. IMPACT is willing and able to collaborate with StageSource and member organizations to apply for a planning grant that would support staff time and resources for an in-depth strategic planning process.