**Overview of GenOUT Policies**

The policies outlined here are intended to provide a protective framework for the GenOUT program of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington, DC.

1. **GenOUT Policies** – outlines how GenOUT protects, directs, and connects GenOUTers, including:
   1. Guidelines on adult/youth contact;
   2. Guidelines on dressing rooms and holding areas;
   3. Guidelines on transportation; and
   4. Guidelines on participation in GMCW by adults who are listed on Sex Offender Registries.
2. **GenOUT Chorus Rules & Expectations** – outlines the behaviors that GenOUTers must demonstrate in order to participate in the program, including:
   1. Following instructions;
   2. Respecting others;
   3. Participating fully in the rehearsal and performance schedule;
   4. Dressing appropriately; and
   5. Staying focused on the community by *not engaging in intimate relations* (a.k.a. “PDA”).
3. **GenOUT Rehearsal Team Guidelines** – outlines the following:
   1. Who may participate in the GeOUT Rehearsal Team;
   2. What GenOUT Rehearsal Team members typically do during rehearsals; and
   3. Information about Background Checks.
4. **GenOUT Chaperone Guidelines** – outlines the responsibilities of adult supervisors at GenOUT events, including:
   1. Signing youth in and out;
   2. Keeping youth focused backstage; and
   3. General supervisory/mentoring responsibilities that may be needed.

**GenOUT Policies** (8/6/18)

The mission of GenOUT is to (1) give LGBTQ+ and allied youth a voice, and (2) to connect that voice to community. The second part of our mission is facilitated in large part by positive, nurturing interactions with members of GMCW.

The goal of these policies is to articulate how GMCW protects (i.e., ensures the safety of), directs (i.e., imparts knowledge and skills to), and connects (i.e., points out resources and opportunities to) GenOUTers.

How does GMCW **protect** GenOUters?

GMCW ensures that GenOUT is a “safe space” for all (youth and adults) with regards to:

* The unique expression of self;
* The respect owed to every individual;
* The courteous, thoughtful expression of ideas; and
* The exploration of one’s voice and musical skills.

GMCW protects GenOUTers outside of rehearsals and performances

* GMCW will report any suspected case of abuse to or neglect of a GenOUT singer.

GMCW protects GenOUTers in their rehearsal and performance spaces

* GenOUT ensures that access to rehearsal space is limited to participants, parents/guardians, rehearsal team members, and invited guests. Locked points of entry are overseen by receptionists and/or security staff, and entrances to the gathering spaces are overseen by GenOUT Rehearsal Team members and/or chaperones.
* GenOUT ensures that gathering spaces (such as backstage holding areas at performances) are overseen by parent/guardian chaperones and/or background-checked GenOUT Rehearsal Team members.
* GenOUT provides chaperones with guidelines that foster positive adult-child interactions in gathering spaces (such as backstage areas at performances.) SEE: GenOUT Chaperone Guidelines.

GMCW protects GenOUTers and the organization in interactions among GenOUT singers and GMCW

* Policies about background checks:
  + GMCW ensures that all of its staff as well as multiple persons serving on the GenOUT Rehearsal Team have been background checked by Validity Screening Solutions.
  + No GMCW member may participate on the GenOUT Rehearsal Team without first obtaining the approval of the Artistic Director or GenOUT Director.
  + No GenOUTer is ever in rehearsal or at an event without the presence of a background-checked adult and/or a parent/guardian chaperone.
  + As a general rule, at least two adults are in the room/space with the GenOUTers at all times, and one of the adults must be background-checked. Three examples of limited exceptions to the “two adults” rule are: individual voice checks, individual tutoring, and leading students from one room/space to another.
* Interactions among GenOUT singers and GMCW members are to be professional and beyond reproach at all times. Interactions include written (including online), verbal, and physical.
* Written communications to GenOUT students (including texts, e-mails, social media, and letters) are not initiated by GMCW members, nor do GMCW members “follow” individual GenOUT members on social media; instead, these written communications are coordinated by the Artistic Director (Thea Kano) and/or the GenOUT Director (Paul Heins), and are generally limited to:
  + Information about GenOUT events;
  + Information about youth events of particular interest to GenOUT students;
  + Notes and cards expressing get-well wishes, congratulatory wishes, etc. (In some instances, GMCW members may be asked to sign letters or cards to illustrate the community of support.)
* GenOUT singers and GMCW members are prohibited from interacting via dating sites or applications (such as, but not limited to, Grindr, Growlr, Manhunt, Recon, Scruff, and Tinder).  In the event that a GMCW member encounters a GenOUT singer on such a site or application, he/she/they are not to engage with the GenOUT singer.  If the GMCW member is pursued by the GenOUT singer, the GMCW member should inform the Artistic Director (Thea Kano) and/or the GenOUT Director (Paul Heins), who will address the matter directly with the GenOUT singer.
* Verbal communication with GenOUT students should foster positive, nurturing community. Topics of conversation should never include sex, or be of a subject matter inappropriate to or outside of the mentoring relationship, or contradict a known or obvious parental instruction. Note that kind words and smiles are ALWAYS welcome!
* In most cases, there should be no physical contact between a GenOUT singer and a GMCW singer, production member, or volunteer except in such limited circumstances as:
  + helping with theatrical blocking;
  + assisting with outer components of a costume in full view of additional chaperones;
  + assisting students in pedagogical demonstrations relevant to musical and theatrical instruction (e.g., helping a student place his/her/their hands in such a way as to feel the activation of intercostal muscles in a breathing exercise, or helping a student position his/her/their feet for a choreographic move);
  + a handshake;
  + a brief pat on the back (e.g., as an expression of congratulations); and
  + a brief, congratulatory hug if initiated by the student.
* Following up on our Day One Pledge, all members of the GMCW community are reminded that we will tolerate no bullying, no harassment, and no mistreatment of any GenOUT singer by another GenOUT singer, by a GMCW singer, or by a member of the GMCW artistic staff, production team, or volunteers.  Similarly, GMCW will also tolerate no bullying, no harassment, and no mistreatment by any GenOUT singer, directed to another GenOUT singer, to a GMCW singer, or to a member of the GMCW artistic staff, production team, or volunteers.  These behaviors are likely to result in immediate and permanent exclusion from the GenOUT program, at the discretion of the Artistic Director.

GMCW protects the GenOUT experience

* GenOUT singers who violate GenOUT Expectations may have his/her/their opportunities limited or may be dismissed from the ensemble. SEE: GenOUT Expectations.

GMCW protects the privacy of GenOUTers in Dressing Room and Holding Room situations

* GenOUT Chorus members will have their own dressing area (i.e., separate from adult GMCW singers) for every mainstage performance with the GMCW.
* Generally, the GenOUT dressing area is a “holding area;” i.e., GenOUT students should arrive to rehearsals or performances fully dressed in concert attire.
* At least two adult chaperones will be present whenever GenOUT members are in the dressing room/holding area.
* Only those adults who have assigned roles with GenOUT are to be in the GenOUT Chorus dressing area/holding area. Primary examples are:
  + Chaperones assigned to specific shifts;
  + GMCW staff (including artistic staff, the stage director, and choreographers);
  + GenOUT Rehearsal Team members;
  + GMCW soloists; and
  + Stage crew and production crew.
* The primary reasons for an adult to be in the GenOUT dressing area/holding area are:
  + Chaperoning;
  + Reviewing music, blocking, choreography, and/or logistics; and
  + Warming up;
  + Costume fitting (always in full view of other chaperones);
  + Retrieving GenOUT singers for a cue.
* Sometimes, a GMCW member or volunteer may need to pass through to pick up something in the GenOUT dressing area/holding area or an adjacent space. Chaperones are empowered to use their judgment and usher out those who have no reason to be there.

GMCW protects GenOUTers in their arrival to / departure from events and transportation to and from events

* A parent/guardian of a GenOUT singer may indicate in writing if/when their child may leave the venue (and under what circumstances) at the end of an event and/or for breaks.
* No GMCW member may provide a GenOUT singer with private transportation *except in emergency situations at the discretion of GMCW staff* unless both of the following requirements are in place:
  + Two adults must be present in the vehicle; and
  + Advance, written permission must be provided by the GenOUT singer’s parent.  The note of permission must include the date(s) of transportation and the name(s) of the driver(s).
* When a GMCW member has permission to provide private transportation to a GenOUT singer, he/she will call or text the GenOUT singer’s parent(s) before departing and will indicate an approximate time of arrival.

GMCW protects GenOUTers from interactions with persons known by GMCW to be on a Sex Offender Registry

* GMCW recognizes that successful reintegration into society after a criminal offense usually requires ongoing support structures. For many in GMCW, the Chorus is a significant support structure. GMCW also recognizes the priority of keeping our GenOUT students safe and providing them with a positive, nurturing community in which individual identities are acknowledged and celebrated. In order to maintain the safety of GenOUT students, GMCW requires that any member listed on a Sex Offender Registry must inform the Artistic Director (Thea Kano) and/or the GenOUT Director (Paul Heins) of this status. This information will be kept private.
* Regardless of the parameters of a member’s probation, the following courses of action will be in place:
  + The member is prohibited from any written and any physical contact with any GenOUT student.
  + The member is prohibited from any verbal contact with any GenOUT student, with the limited exception of occasional, incidental conversation, such as responding “hi” to a student who has greeted you, or saying “thank you” to a student who has said “that was a great show.”
* Depending on the parameters of a member’s probation, the following courses of action may be in place:
  + The member may be required to submit documentation from his/her/their probation officer outlining protection parameters.
  + The member may be required to enlist a mentor (vetted by GMCW staff) who would assist him/her/them in staying within protection parameters AND would report to GMCW staff.
  + The member may be prohibited from participating in an event or performance that includes GenOUT.

How does GMCW **direct** GenOUters?

GMCW directs GenOUTers in the acquisition of skills in singing and performing through:

* Weekly rehearsals, scheduled from September through June, led by trained music educators and augmented by vetted rehearsal team members;
* 30-minute workshop periods, included in many rehearsals, to work with trained specialized instructors in such areas as choreography and American Sign Language; and
* Summer camp and retreats, providing additional opportunities for music/performance instruction.

GMCW directs GenOUTers in the acquisitions of such life skills as time management and communication through:

* 30-minute workshop periods, included in many rehearsals, which from time to time may be focused on group discussions and special presentations on life skills;
* Schedule coordination, via Conflicts Sheets;
* Access to GMCW leaders to communicate questions and attendance issues, along with the expectation that such communication is done in a timely manner that respects the leader, the ensemble, and the guidelines for membership;
* Opportunities for the expression of ideas (through group discussions, etc.) as well as to promote the ensemble (at events such as Youth Pride);
* Opportunities for the development of leadership skills, via Student Leader positions, presentations, and informal roles (such as line-leaders, ASL coaches, etc.); and
* Summer camp and retreats, providing additional opportunities for skill acquisition.

How does GMCW **connect** GenOUters?

GMCW connects GenOUTers to resources and opportunities that:

* Increase their understandings of LGBTQ+ history and their place in it;
* Expose their voices to the community (notably including members of the GMCW, our audiences, and GenOUT alums);
* Increase their capacity to understand and appreciate themselves; and
* Increase their skills in relating to others and to new situations.

GMCW connects GenOUTers via such resources as:

* A regularly published GenOUT Newsletter;
* Chorus Connection application; and
* Scholarships, which ensure that every student may participate regardless of his/her/their financial capabilities.

**GenOUT Chorus Rules & Expectations** (7/26/18)

As part of the Permission Form completed and submitted every season, GenOUT participants and parents/guardians agree to participate in the GenOUT Chorus and to appear in public performances with the GenOUT Chorus and/or the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington, DC. By signing the Permission Form, participants and parents/guardians agree to follow the rules listed here and to meet the expectations required for all participants in the GenOUT Chorus.

1. GenOUT Chorus participants will follow instructions as given by chorus staff, adult volunteers, and adult chaperones. Instructions may be provided verbally or in written form (including by e-mail and text).
2. GenOUT Chorus participants will always behave in a way that is respectful to self and to others.
3. GenOUT Chorus participants will not use or be under the influence of any illegal substances (including prescription drugs not specifically prescribed to the user) at any time during GenOUT Chorus events. Since all GenOUT Chorus participants are under the age of 21, this applies to the consumption of alcohol, either privately or publicly.
4. GenOUT Chorus participants will not use tobacco at any time during GenOUT Chorus events, either privately or publicly. This applies to all GenOUT Chorus participants regardless of age.
5. **GenOUT Chorus participants are expected to participate fully in the rehearsal and performance schedule.** “Flaking out” (e.g., a late-notice cancellation) is not an option. Punctuality and preparedness for all events are expected. Students with excessive absences or who demonstrate lack of preparation may be excluded from performances, at the discretion of the artistic staff. If a GenOUT Chorus participant is not able to attend an event on the Chorus schedule, the singer must notify Chorus director Paul Heins at 202-271-2689 (or cpheins@gmcw.org) with as much advance notice as possible.
6. Music assigned to GenOUT Chorus members will be protected from damage. Rehearsal markings will be added in *pencil* only. Music will be promptly returned when instructed. If a GenOUT Chorus member leaves the ensemble, that member must promptly return all music.
7. GenOUT Chorus participants are expected to dress appropriately. For rehearsals, casual attire is expected (unless directed to wear costumes or other specific attire). Modesty is expected at all times. For concerts during the regular season, our usual attire is all-black (including black belt, black socks, and black dress shoes) or khaki shorts and GenOUT tee-shirts. The artistic staff will announce attire specifics before each show.Any questions or disputes on the appropriateness of attire are determined 100% by the artistic staff.
8. No GenOUT Chorus participant shall engage in behavior that will endanger others or themselves. If someone around you is behaving in an unsafe way, leave the situation immediately and tell chorus staff, adult volunteers, or adult chaperones.
9. No GenOUT Chorus participant shall have intimate relations with another GenOUT Chorus participant during a GenOUT Chorus event.
10. Private one-to-one interactions between a GenOUT Chorus participant and GMCW staff or volunteers are discouraged. For situations that require personal meetings, the meeting shall be conducted in view of other members or in safe public settings.
11. Any suspected case of sexual misconduct shall be reported to a GMCW staff member immediately. The staff or chorus leadership will initiate contact with the appropriate investigative agencies and offer assistance to the affected individual(s).
12. In the event of extreme misconduct, GenOUT Chorus participants may be sent home early from an event and/or dismissed from GenOUT Chorus. The singer and the singer’s parents will be responsible for any additional costs resulting in an early dismissal.

Additionally, GenOUT participants and parents/guardians sign a Media Release which states:

I grant permission for the GMCW and GenOUT Chorus to use my unrestricted image including the display, distribution, publication, transmission, or other use of photographs, electronic images, and/or video recordings taken of me for use in materials including, but not limited to, printed materials such as promotional brochures and newsletters, video recordings, and digital images such as those on the GMCW/GenOUT web sites and other internet platforms. I understand that these images and recordings may be used for a variety of purposes and that these images and recordings may be used without further notifying me. I also understand that my full name may be included in conjunction with any audio or video recordings or digital images.

**GenOUT Rehearsal Team Guidelines** (8/7/18)

The GenOUT Rehearsal Team (GORT) exists to support the GenOUT Chorus in short-term development (e.g., production support and preparation for concerts) and long-term development (e.g., mentoring young people, serving as positive role models).

Who may participate in the GenOUT Rehearsal Team?

GORT members are singers in GMCW who are vetted by GMCW artistic leadership. Any member of GMCW may be considered for membership. If you would like to participate, contact the Artistic Director (Thea Kano) or GenOUT Director (Paul Heins). All GORT members must complete the Laity Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire before participating in any GenOUT event at Mt. Vernon Place United Methodist Church (the rehearsal home for GenOUT and GMCW). See Paul Heins for a copy of this form.

What do GORT members do in a typical rehearsal?

* Arrive 30 minutes early to help set up the rehearsal space;
* Assist with attendance;
* Distribute materials throughout rehearsal;
* Assist singers in learning parts, choreography, ASL, and other performance elements;
* Participate in discussions;
* Lead sectionals;
* Gently and respectfully refocus attention as needed; and
* Stay after rehearsal to restore the rehearsal space.

About Background Checks

GORT members may choose to be background-checked (at GMCW’s expense). Background checks provide our youth and our organization with additional layers of protection. Only background-checked Team members may be alone with youth, although only in such limited situations as individual voice checks, individual tutoring, and leading students from one room/space to another. As a general rule, at least two adults are in the room/space with the GenOUTers at all times, and one of the adults must be background-checked.

GMCW contracts with Validity Screening Solutions for its background checks. These background checks are focused on criminal records and Sex Offender Registries.  They are not credit checks, although in some instances, credit information becomes intertwined with criminal records.  The report received by GMCW provide general information about whether an individual has “passed” or “not passed” in various categories, but the report does not list details; thus, your privacy is protected. VSS maintains all of the results of its investigation; none of the reports reside at the GMCW office or with GMCW staff in any form.  We believe this system is optimal for protecting your privacy while providing GMCW with the basic information it needs to determine if someone can be in a supervisory role with our GenOUT students.

Individuals who do not pass the background check are prohibited from participating in the GenOUT Rehearsal Team.

To process a background check, applicants request and complete a Disclosure Authorization Acknowledgment from the GenOUT Director (Paul Heins) and return it to him by mail or e-mail. GMCW submits the form electronically to VSS, and typically receives its report within one week. GMCW is obligated to retain the Disclosure Authorization Acknowledgment form for seven years past the signature date, after which it is destroyed. Forms are retained in a locked cabinet in the GMCW office.

Individuals such as teachers and government workers who have completed background checks that include checks of criminal records and Sex Offender Registries may submit documentation indicating passage to GMCW, which will securely retain the document for seven years. To be eligible, the background check must have been completed within three years of the first event with GenOUT.

New background checks must be completed every three years in order to continue participating in the GenOUT Rehearsal Team.

You do not have to undergo a background check to participate in the GenOUT Rehearsal Team.

In order to maintain the safety of GenOUT students, GMCW requires that any GMCW member listed on a Sex Offender Registry must inform the Artistic Director (Thea Kano) and/or the GenOUT Director (Paul Heins) of this status, even if he/she/they do not intend to participate in the GenOUT Rehearsal Team. This information will be kept private.

**GenOUT Chaperone Guidelines** (12/5/17)

Thank you for serving as a chaperone for one of our GenOUT events! Your main jobs are to:

* Sign students in and out;
* Keep students focused backstage; and
* Keep students safe backstage.

Signing in and out

1. When you are assigned the start of a shift, please arrive about 10 minutes before the call time, so that you are available to sign in students as they arrive.
2. Please make a note if a student is late.
3. In the Chaperone Folder is a copy of each GenOUTer’s permission form. On pg. 3 of the form, parents/guardians have indicated authorizations about signing out. Please be aware of these:
   1. \_\_\_\_\_ (N/A for Camp) For meal breaks at performances, my child may sign out and leave the venue to eat at a local restaurant. My child understands that signing out with a chaperone is required before departing.
   2. \_\_\_\_\_ At the conclusion of rehearsals/Camp sessions and performances, my child may sign out on his/her/their own. My child understands that signing out with a chaperone is required before departing.
   3. \_\_\_\_\_ At the conclusion of rehearsals/Camp sessions and performances, my child may be signed out by another adult for transportation home. I will communicate the name of the authorized adult(s) prior to the performance date.
4. All students must sign out with a chaperone when leaving the venue. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) have indicated that they will pick up their child, make sure you connect with the parent(s)/guardian(s) before allowing the student to leave. “Connecting” means you have seen the parent(s)/guardian(s).
5. At the end of a shift, please stay until every child has safely departed the venue. Please make sure the holding area is left clean and the Chaperone Folder is returned to Paul Heins. \* NOTE: You are not the Holding Area Maid, so any mess the kids make can and should be cleaned up by the kids.

Keeping students focused backstage

1. Students’ primary focus should be on the performance at hand. This means:
   1. Staying calm.
   2. Not overusing the voice.
   3. Reviewing music and choreography.
2. GenOUT is about community, so working together for the benefit of the ensemble is critical to our success. This means:
   1. Students work together to review music, choreography, and/or ASL about to be performed.
   2. Students work together to review music, choreography, and/or ASL programmed for a future performance.
   3. Students participate in quiet activities that build and strengthen friendships.
   4. All students are a part of the community. No student should feel excluded from group activities.
   5. No intimate relations are permitted. This separates out two people from the community, and it is against our GenOUT Expectations.

Keeping students safe backstage

1. There are many dangerous components to a backstage area – poor visibility, trip/fall hazards, moving curtains and scenery, etc. The safest place for kids to be when they are not on stage is the holding area.
2. Make sure students know where restrooms are (including single-stall options). Before leaving the holding area to use a non-adjacent restroom, a student should notify a chaperone. Students should not congregate in the restroom.
3. No one should be in the holding area with the kids except you, with a few exceptions (see below). A few people who might stop by:
   1. GMCW staff (including Thea Kano, Paul Heins, the stage director, choreographers)
   2. GenOUT Rehearsal Team members
   3. Soloists (sometimes a GMCW soloist who is singing with GenOUT will stop by to wish them well)
   4. Stage crew and production crew

Sometimes, a GMCW member or volunteer may need to pass through to pick up something in the holding area or an adjacent space. We trust you to use your judgment and usher out those who have no reason to be there.

What you might need to do

Generally, we need you to do what you do best – be a parent – but to a whole bunch of kids! Guide the kids in making good decisions and be there for them if they need help. Chaperones are almost always paired up, so you are encouraged to work as a team.

1. You might need to gently encourage a student to spruce up a bit, or assist with the outer component of a costume, so that they look sharp on stage. When assisting with attire, you should be in full view of another chaperone.
2. You might need to remind students to leave cell phones in the holding area. (No cell phones on stage.)
3. You might need to gently remind students not to congregate in the restroom (or other places that are not the holding area).
4. You might need to gently remind students to maintain a quiet space (although it doesn’t have to be absolutely silent).
5. You might need to help students bring someone into the fold. (Be on the lookout for a child that is on his/her/their own.)
6. During a meal break, you might need to stay with a student who does not have permission to leave the venue. Please do not leave students without chaperone oversight.
7. You might need to gently encourage two or more people to stop engaging in intimate relations. This requires some diplomacy. Focus your efforts on bringing the people into the fold, rather than reprimanding the behavior.
8. In the event of a minor medical event (e.g., cut/scrape requiring a bandage), you might need to retrieve the first aid kit, and help the injured student clean the wound and apply the bandage. Please contact the parent to let them know what happened.
9. In the event a student becomes sick, you might need to help him/her/them as warranted, and call the parents.
10. Sometimes a student will become anxious in anticipation of a performance. Staying calm and helping the child take deep, slow breaths will go a long way in helping them.
11. In the very rare event of a serious medical emergency, call 911 for help and call the parents. GMCW membership includes several medical professionals, and one or more of these *may* be available to provide initial help. If an ambulance is required, you might need to ride along with the injured/sick child (bringing the permission form with you) and be a point of contact at the hospital.