BALLROOM SCENE · 2026

CONSENT TOOLKIT

Boundaries, consent, and looking out for each other in the ballroom scene.



SOAIDS Nederland · BALLROOM WORKS. · HOUSE OF B · bi+

INTRODUCTION

Welcome

This toolkit offers practical tips to help prevent sexual boundary-crossing behavior and sexual violence.

For example, when you see something happen or when someone shares an upsetting experience with you. Together, we can create a safe, inclusive ballroom scene where everyone can be themselves.

This toolkit is a collaboration between Soa Aids Nederland, Ballroom Works, House of B, and Bi+ Nederland. In May, more than 15 key figures from the ballroom scene took part in training on boundary-crossing behavior led by Carolina Obispa. They added further input during the training, so the content you are reading is supported by a broad group.

Voor iedereen in de scene: van 007s en house members tot house parents en leaders.

CONTENTS

Table of contents

01 Sexual boundary-crossing behavior and sexual violence

02 New legislation

03 Consent

04 Digital safety

05 Power dynamics

06 First aid in case of an incident

07 The Support Map

01

SEXUAL BOUNDARY-CROSSING BEHAVIOR AND VIOLENCE

The aim of this toolkit is to prevent boundary-crossing behavior and sexual violence.

What is it?

Sexual boundary-crossing behavior is a broad term. It refers to sexual behavior that crosses someone's boundaries, wishes, or consent.



unwanted sexual comments



unwanted touching



pressuring someone for sex



sending unwanted nude photos



A more serious form

Sexual violence is a more serious form of sexual boundary-crossing behavior. It involves sexual acts without freely given consent.

Sexual assault

Sexual acts and touching without consent, such as forced kissing, being touched without consent, or being forced to touch someone else's genitals.

Rape

Someone is penetrated without consent with a body part or object.

Sexual abuse

Sexual acts that exploit an unequal power relationship, such as a difference in age or dependency.

Everyone has the right to feel safe.

On the street, at a ball, on public transport, online, within your relationship, and at work. This also applies if this is sex work.



02

NEW LEGISLATION

What changed on July 1, 2024.



New legislation

Since July 1, 2024, a new Sexual Offences Act has applied in the Netherlands. This law focuses on consent, rather than only on coercion.

Before the new law, a victim of sexual violence had to prove that they had been coerced. In practice, however, coercion is not always involved. A victim may be unable to say no because of a freeze response, power dynamics, and/or alcohol and drug use. This means sexual violence can still have taken place even without coercion.



What is coercion?

Physically restraining or threatening someone to force sexual acts.

Forcing someone to undress or masturbate.

Blackmailing someone with intimate photos or videos (this is called sextortion).

Applying pressure through manipulation, threats, or abuse of power.

Continuing to pressure someone after a clear 'no'.

Sending or demanding sexual images without consent, such as dick pics.

Forcing someone to watch pornography.

Unwanted sexual touching in public spaces.

The law in short

Consent is central. Sex is only okay if everyone involved wants it of their own free will and gives consent.

It is a criminal offense if someone knows, or should have known, that the other person doesn't want sex, but continues anyway. Even without coercion or a clear 'no,' it is punishable. If there was coercion, the penalty is higher.

Victims are now better protected. Even if you didn't say a clear 'no,' you can still take legal action.



03

CONSENT

Build it together, and keep checking in.



Keep checking

You build consent together by continuing to check in with each other.

It is also important to pay attention to each other's body language. Not everyone responds in the same way. Unsure? Always ask. You can do this with words or without them, for example through sign language.

Beforehand

'Do you feel like...' 'What turns you on?'

During

'Does this feel good?' 'Do you like it when I [...] ?'

Afterward

'How do you feel?' 'What did you find sexiest?'



Yes-signals



makes eye contact



turns their body toward you



touches you on their own initiative



responds enthusiastically



indicates they like you and want to be with you



flirts attentively (back)



kisses (back)

No-signals



doesn't make eye contact



keeps their distance from you



looks for an excuse to get away



indicates they're not interested



doesn't kiss back



barely responds or doesn't respond during sex



indicates they don't feel comfortable

04

DIGITAL SAFETY

Keeping intimate material private.



Online boundaries & exposing

Consent matters not only offline, but online too.

Sending nude photos, intimate images, or sexy messages can be fun and exciting. That is completely okay, as long as it truly stays private.

But forwarding private material is not okay. It abuses the other person's trust and violates their privacy. Under the new law, it is also a criminal offence. You are also committing an offence if you send someone unwanted sexual messages, videos, or photos, or approach children under 16 in a sexual way (sexchatting).

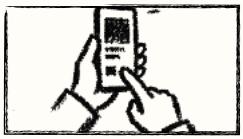


Intimate material leake

What do you do if you receive someone else's forwarded intimate material?



Don't share the images further. If you do, you become part of the problem and are also committing a criminal offense.



Take a screenshot. This serves as evidence.



Share this with the victim and offer support.



Then delete the images from your phone.



Check Offlimits.nl for more information.

If your own material is being forwarded without your consent, you can seek help at Offlimits.

05

POWER DYNAMICS

Who has power and who is vulnerable?



Why people stay silent

Perpetrators are still confronted too rarely, including within the ballroom scene.

This may be due to fear of losing the community when reporting something, or reluctance to accuse someone because the community already faces discrimination from outside. Power differences among members also play a major role.



Power & vulnerability

What can create power?
Being first generation
Having a title in the scene (pioneer, trailblazer, legend, icon)
Having a title within a house (house parent, leader)
Being a judge
Being a teacher
Being an organizer
Belonging to a house
Winning prizes
Being popular (online/ offline)
Pretty privilege

What can make someone vulnerable?
Being new to the scene
Being very young or older
Not belonging to a house (007s)
Not having a leadership title
Being trans
Being a refugee
Being financially dependent
Being gender-non-conforming
Identity
Cultural background

Name the behavior. Help in a way that fits you.

Only by recognizing sexual boundary-crossing behavior together instead of ignoring it can we address it. Do you have more 'power' than the other person? Be especially aware of your behavior. Set a standard, because others are more likely to follow it.

House leaders

House leaders can also be responsible for abusing power, manipulation, and approaching vulnerable young people and newcomers for sexual contact. You are allowed to take action in these situations too. Power dynamics can make this difficult for house members and 007s. That is why it is important for house leaders to hold each other accountable.



06

FIRST AID IN CASE OF AN INCIDENT

What do I do if...



I am the victim

What should you do if you experience sexual boundary-crossing behavior or sexual violence yourself?



First of all: it is never your fault.



Try to confide in someone: a member, house parent, partner, or friend you feel comfortable with.



You do not have to share everything. Share what feels right for you.



Check the Support Map for additional help if you need it.

I see something happen

As a bystander, don't look away. Pay attention to what is happening and consider how you can help.



Address it directly. Confront the person who is intimidating someone about their behavior, without labeling them as, for example, an assailant, sexist, or racist. Say: 'I'm not okay with what you just did or said. Leave that person alone.' This can be effective, but they may react negatively. Only do this if you feel safe enough.



Ask for help. If you do not feel able to intervene yourself, ask an organizer, house parent, or another bystander for help.



Offer support. Check in with the victim afterward. Ask how they are doing and offer your help.

Someone shares an experience with me



Create a safe setting. If you are at a busy place like a ball, find a quiet spot. Get some water if the person is panicking.



Express appreciation for them sharing this. → “I’m really glad you’re sharing this with me. I can imagine that’s difficult for you.”



Have an open, non-judgmental attitude. Listen actively, do not interrupt, and do not immediately offer solutions. Silences are okay. Emotional, calm, or distant reactions are all normal.

Someone shares an experience with me



Show that you believe them. → “I believe you. What do you need right now? How can I help you?”



Avoid victim blaming. Questions like “Why didn’t you say anything?” or “Are you sure?” can cause doubt and guilt.



Don’t force further steps. Explain the options so they can choose. → “If you want, I can think along with you” or “I can go with you.”



Pay attention to safety and boundaries. Accompanying someone home or limiting contact with the person who crossed the boundary can help.

You may be affected yourself, for example because the situation is intense and/or brings back your own earlier experiences. If so, share your feelings with someone you trust, without naming the other person or sharing their details.

I crossed someone's boundary

You may accidentally cross someone's boundary.

If they tell you, respond with understanding.

> *I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cross your boundary, but I understand that what happened did not feel okay for you. Thank you for telling me. I will make sure it does not happen again.*

If they do not say anything but you have doubts afterward, check in with them.

> *Hey, I've been wondering whether you felt comfortable with what I did recently, and I wanted to check in. How was that for you?*



07

THE SUPPORT MAP

Where you can find help.



The Support Map

Victim Support Netherlands

Emotional support and practical help, for example with filing a report.

0900-0101
slachtofferhulp.nl

Offlimits

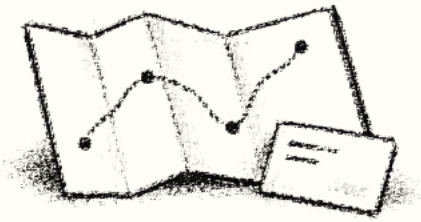
Online boundary-crossing behavior.

020-2615275
offlimits.nl

Sexual Assault Centre

24/7 help after a distressing sexual experience. Anonymous calls or chat, medical care, and psychological support.

0800-0188
centrumseksueelgeweld.nl



More help

Safe at Home

Domestic violence and child abuse.

0800-2000

RefugeeHelp

Support for refugees and newcomers.

113 Suicide Prevention

Suicide prevention, available day and night.

113

Onder De Pannen

A De Regenboog Groep initiative offering temporary housing.

06-82062709
onderdepannen.nl



Queer-specific

Roze in Blauw

LGBTQ+ police network.

088-1691234

Trans clinic consultation hours, GGD Amsterdam

Sexual health for trans and non-binary people.

More about consent

mantotman.nl/nl/seks-relaties/consent/zo-vraag-je-consent



Take care of each other.

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Soa Aids Nederland



Ballroom Works



House of B



Bi+ Nederland