



Handbook and Code of Conduct

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1. Code of Conduct

Doing things right is one of our most important values at Eloria Independent. Not only does it mean that we provide a world-class experience, but we are also dedicated to our members learning to cooperate, set goals, and understand what it takes to be successful. Participation with Eloria Independent means committing to upholding our organization's values as outlined in the code of conduct in this document. This Code of Conduct applies to all participants, staff, officers, directors, and volunteers.

Participant Standards

- I will treat everyone with respect, dignity, patience, integrity, and consideration. I will be fair, professional, and honest.
- I will encourage participation of and respect for individuals of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives, and treat everyone equally.
- I will maintain a high standard of moral and ethical conduct, including self-control and responsible behavior.
- I will be a positive role model.
- I will respect the property of hotels, educational institutions, dormitories, dining facilities, gymnasiums, and all other venues.
- I will ensure that Eloria Independent is a positive experience for participants, employees, contractors, volunteers, and alumni, and will work to provide the highest quality programs and events possible.
- I will respect the general welfare, health, and safety of participants, employees, contractors, volunteers, and alumni during the course of my assigned duties.
- I will abide by all Eloria Independent policies, rules, standards, and guidelines.
- I will abide by all MCCGA and WGI policies, standards, and guidelines.
- I will obey all local, state, and federal laws.
- I will refrain from the use of all alcohol, tobacco, nicotine, marijuana, and related products while representing Eloria Independent at any rehearsal or performance event, particularly while in the presence of youth or while representing Eloria Independent publicly.
- I will refrain from using profane, demeaning, or derogatory language.
- I will refrain from any form of verbal, sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or harassment toward participants, employees, contractors, volunteers, and alumni.
- I will not engage in any demeaning, disrespectful, or defamatory conduct with respect to Eloria Independent and its participants, employees, contractors, volunteers, and alumni, including, but not limited to, demeaning, disrespectful, or defamatory conduct by email, social media, or on the internet.
- I understand that I am only authorized to represent Eloria Independent as permitted by my position.
- I will perform all duties and responsibilities for Eloria Independent in a timely and professional manner.

Note on Compliance: I understand that the Code of Conduct applies throughout the year, and failure to adhere to any or all parts of this code may result in suspension from my duties and/or termination of my relationship with Eloria Independent.



a. Fraternization & Sexual Relations

Establishing professional trust between staff and members is central to Eloria Independent's Mission. Non-professional ties or fraternization between instructional staff and active members are prohibited. Eloria Independent holds a zero-tolerance policy for consensual sexual relations between staff/interns/volunteers, and members. If a pre-existing relationship exists, it must be formally disclosed to the Executive Director.

Key Definitions

- **Member, Active Member, or Participant:** An individual contractually engaged with Eloria Independent for the current season as a performer (including participants assigned as swings or participants who cannot fulfill their duties due to injuries or health concerns).
- **Group:** A participating organization or individual group affiliated with Eloria Independent.
- **Staff:** An individual employed by Eloria Independent in either an instructional or administrative capacity.
- **Intern:** A student or trainee who works with Eloria Independent to gain practical experience in their field of study.
- **Volunteer:** An individual who freely donates their time to support Eloria Independent in any capacity.
- **Contractor:** An individual who provides specific services to Eloria Independent on an occasional basis for a fee.

Policy Restrictions

Non-professional ties encompass more than only consensual sexual relations. This includes, but is not limited to: inappropriate physical contact, non-professional messaging/texting, inappropriate dialogue, 'sexting', and non-professional or inappropriate sexual messages via any social media platform.

For clarity: Sexual or romantic relationships, whether regarded as consensual or otherwise, between individuals in inherently unequal positions are prohibited. Sexual or romantic relationships between a staff member (instructor or admin) and a member/student—even where consensual and whether or not the member/student is subject to supervision or evaluation by the staff member—are inconsistent with the proper role of the staff member and are prohibited.

This restriction applies regardless of the age of the member/student or the staff/volunteer, or whether there are any current or future direct or indirect supervisory responsibilities for that performer. Exceptions to the non-professional ties policy exist for immediate family ties such as parent/child, siblings, or pre-existing partnerships that have been approved by the Executive Director.

While the organization strives to create a professional and respectful environment, we recognize that pre-existing relationships between staff, volunteers, interns, and members may exist. To align with WGI and MCCGA policies, Eloria Independent allows such pre-existing relationships but requires formal disclosure and adherence to a code of professional behavior during all official Eloria Independent activities.



Eloria Independent requires that any staff member, volunteer, intern, or member involved in a pre-existing romantic or sexual relationship complete a **Pre-Existing Relationship Form**. This form will confirm that the relationship did not begin while either party was under contract with Eloria Independent as a performer and that both individuals will maintain appropriate, neutral behavior during official Eloria Independent times. This includes refraining from public displays of affection and maintaining a professional demeanor at all times.

Staff/Member Relations Reporting

- Staff/interns/volunteers must disclose any past or present non-professional ties with members.
- Members must disclose any non-professional ties with a staff member, intern, or volunteer.
- If fraternization is evident, it is your responsibility to report said activity.

The procedure for reporting relationships or incidents is to notify the Executive Director immediately at eloriaindependent@gmail.com, copy the Associate Directors, or complete the anonymous report form on the organization's Participant Protection Form. Appropriate action is taken depending on the details of the incident.

Staff/Staff Relationships

Relationships (romantic or sexual) between adult staff members or volunteers are not generally prohibited by these policies. However, if there is a pre-existing non-professional relationship or if one develops where one person is in a position of greater authority or power, they should notify their supervisor to ensure proper oversight is in place where needed.

b. Hazing

All forms of hazing are prohibited by Eloria Independent. Aiding and abetting another person who is engaged in hazing is prohibited. Hazing can result in disciplinary action up to and including possible dismissal from the organization.

Hazing: What is it?

Hazing is a fundamental violation of human dignity. Hazing is a broad term encompassing any action or activity that does not contribute to the positive development of a person, which inflicts or intends to cause physical or mental harm or anxiety or sleep deprivation; which may demean, degrade, or disgrace any person, regardless of location, intent, or consent of participants.

Hazing encompasses any actions or situations, whether intentional or unintentional, that are presented as optional or mandatory and result in mental, physical, or emotional discomfort, servitude, degradation, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule. This behavior is aimed at inducing initiation into, affiliation with, or admission to a group, clique, team, or organization, or as a condition for maintaining membership, regardless of an individual's willingness to participate.

Evaluation Questions

If you are not sure about whether an activity may be hazing, ask yourself the following questions:



1. Does this activity add to the worth and growth of the individual?
2. Would you be willing to invite your parents, or the parents of the new member involved, to the activity?
3. Would you be prepared to go to court to defend the merit of this activity?
4. Is this an activity in which new members and initiated members can participate equally?

If you answer "no" to any of these questions, the activity could be considered hazing, and you should reconsider.

Responsibility & Reporting

Individuals who haze are insecure people who think they can gain respect from other individuals by threatening, beating, taunting, mocking, humiliating, or torturing new members of the group. ALL participants of Eloria Independent share the responsibility to challenge, stop, and make known to Eloria Independent Administration acts of apparent hazing. Apathy in the presence of hazing, or agreeing to being hazed, are not neutral acts. Individuals who participate in acts of hazing as perpetrators or victims are personally accountable under this policy. If you are a new participant or a veteran, simply refuse to participate in hazing activities. Eloria Independent participants are required to report any and all hazing activities to the Executive Director, Associate Directors, or via the anonymous Participant Protection Form on the website.

Legal Realities (Missouri State Law Notice)

Hazing is strictly against state law. Under **Missouri Revised Statutes § 578.365**, hazing is a criminal offense. If the hazing does not result in serious physical injury, it is classified as a Class A misdemeanor. However, if the hazing causes serious physical injury or death, or involves the forced consumption of alcohol or drugs creating a life-threatening situation, the offense escalates to a **Class D or Class E felony**. Violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, which may include heavy fines, a permanent criminal record, and imprisonment. If you observe hazing and stand by silently, your silence condones these activities and makes you just as liable as the hazers themselves. If there is an emergency, you are responsible for calling Emergency 911.

c. Participant Safety & Sexual Misconduct Policy

Eloria Independent has adopted a number of policies aimed at eliminating opportunities for abuse within the organization's programs. The main purpose of this protection policy is to protect ALL from harm while in Eloria Independent programs and services, whether from staff or other participants. Participant safety (Members, Staff, Volunteers, Students, etc.) and the protection of ALL is of the highest priority for Eloria Independent.

Being a member of Eloria Independent is a privilege, not a right. Applications for initial and continuing employment, contract work, and continuing volunteer work are strictly scrutinized, including all necessary and appropriate background checks before an applicant is allowed to work.

i. No One-on-One Contact

One-on-one private meetings between personnel and participants are permitted in situations that require personal attention, such as private conferences, instruction, or the like. The meeting is to be conducted in view



of other staff members and/or participants, or be an open-door meeting.

Should an exceptional situation require direct one-on-one contact (such as a single staff member driving a sole participant to an Eloria Independent event), such contact may be permitted only with the clear and direct approval of the participant's parent or legal guardian (if under 18), or direct approval by the Executive Director or Associate Directors if the participant is over 18.

The Partner System (Buddy System)

All participants of Eloria Independent programs must adhere to the Partner System at all times, except as noted below. The partner system means that no participant should be alone. Examples include walking between rehearsal locations, walking between a rehearsal location and sleeping area, at performance sites, at any part of a housing site, at bus stops, in a vehicle or bus, etc. Note that the partner system does not extend to areas and times where individual privacy is reasonably expected or required (e.g., inside restroom stalls and in an individual's assigned bed/sleeping bag).

ii. Restroom and Shower Facilities

If separate shower and restroom facilities are not available at housing or rehearsal sites, separate times for male, female, and alternative needs use should be scheduled and posted. If you require an alternative need, please inform the Executive Director or an Associate Director.

- **Zero Tolerance Rule:** Cell phones and electronic device usages are strictly prohibited in locker rooms, restrooms, or showers.

iii. Sexual Misconduct & Definitions

- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual conduct that either creates a hostile environment or is presented as a demand in exchange for gaining something. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a member's performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment. This includes **Visual** (ogling, inappropriate texts/pictures), **Verbal** (repeated requests for dates, lewd comments), **Written** (obscene letters/cards), **Touching** (violating space, patting, grabbing, kissing), **Power** (using position to request dates/sex), and **Threats/Force** (quid pro quo demands).
- **Sexual Assault:** Sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim. This includes physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent because of temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity, age, or intoxication.
- **Sexual Exploitation:** Taking sexual advantage of another person for the benefit of oneself or a third party without consent. This includes indecent exposure, recording someone in a private space without consent, or distributing personal sexual images/recordings.
- **Stalking:** A pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or cyber-stalking that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety or suffer substantial emotional distress.
- **Minor Protection Clause:** Sexual relationships between a person who is under 18 years of age and a person who is 18 years of age or older are strictly prohibited, notwithstanding any local laws that may permit minor-adult partnerships.



d. Sexual Abuse & Complaint Procedures

If you have a reasonable belief that any person has violated any part of the above policies or has been a victim of harassment or discrimination, you must report the conduct to management promptly. Reports may be oral or written and are not required to be in any specific format. You may report directly to:

- **Executive Director:** Zachary Barber (eloriaindependent@gmail.com)
- **Associate Directors:** Brady Eaton & Alyssa Navarro
- **Participant Protection Form:** Via the Eloria Independent anonymous web form.

Abuse Reporting Laws

- If the victim is an adult, the abuse can be reported to the local or state Adult Protective Services (APS) Agency.
- If a child (under 18) is the suspected victim, Eloria Independent personnel will immediately report it to the **Missouri Department of Social Services Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-392-3738)**. Appropriate family members/guardians of the minor victim must be notified immediately.

i. Investigations

All reports will be investigated promptly by a designated individual appointed by Eloria Independent. Both the complainant and the alleged violator will be interviewed, as well as any witnesses. All Eloria Independent representatives must cooperate fully with the investigation.

We reserve the right to place the subject of the investigation on an involuntary leave of absence or to reassign that person to responsibilities that do not involve personal contact with members. If the subject of the investigation is a performing participant, the individual's status with the ensemble is suspended pending full completion of the investigation. If the investigation substantiates the allegation, disciplinary penalties up to and including immediate termination of the relationship with the organization will occur. If any law is broken, the incident will be reported directly to law enforcement.

ii. Confidentiality

Eloria Independent will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of the complainant, the accused, and the witnesses to the greatest extent possible under the circumstances. Absolute confidentiality cannot be promised, but information is strictly restricted to a need-to-know basis.

e. Gender Expansive Participants

This policy addresses the support, needs, and concerns of transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive students to ensure a safe, affirming, and healthy learning environment. Accommodations for each student must be assessed and addressed individually based on the specific requests and needs of each participant.



f. Names, Pronouns, and School Records

Every participant has the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond to their identity. Regardless of whether a transgender, non-binary, or gender-expansive student has legally changed their name or gender, Eloria Independent allows participants to use a chosen name and pronouns.

Every effort will be made to update internal records with the student's chosen name and gender markers. All participants and staff are requested to respect these designations, and individuals may politely correct missteps or notify the Executive or Associate Directors to address continued misuse.

g. Bullying, Harassment, & Discrimination

Discrimination, bullying, and harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, or physical/mental disability are strictly prohibited within Eloria Independent.

Harassment is defined as repeated or severe behavior that causes fear, humiliation, or distress, or actions that create a hostile environment. A hostile environment occurs when conduct is so severe or pervasive that it interferes with, limits, or deprives any individual of their ability to participate in any Eloria Independent program, rehearsal, performance, or activity. This applies in person and online/via social media.

h. Hostile Rehearsal Environment Policy

The rehearsal space is where creativity is nurtured, routines are developed, and teamwork is fostered. A rehearsal environment refers to periods when the group is actively practicing under the direct supervision of an instructor, director, or coordinator. The rehearsal environment must always remain educational, both in techniques used and feedback provided.

Prohibited Rehearsal Behaviors

- Creating an environment designed to make any participant excessively afraid, nervous, or anxious, regardless of intent (this does not include professionally accepted coaching methods).
- Withholding essential educational information necessary for participants to learn and perform skills safely.
- Attacking or criticizing the personal character of participants rather than focusing on aspects of their performance.
- Rehearsing for extended periods while denying, discouraging, or withholding necessary hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep.



i. Additional Policies and Procedures

- **Proper Preparation:** No activity involving increased physical risk should be undertaken without proper preparation, equipment, clothing, supervision, and safety measures.
- **No Secret Organizations:** Eloria Independent does not recognize any secret organizations or social groups. All organization activities are completely open to observation by parents, personnel, and volunteers.
- **Appropriate Attire:** Proper clothing for activities is required. Because rehearsals take place within scholastic or community facilities, attire must remain appropriate at all times.
- **Possession of Weapons:** Eloria Independent strictly prohibits the possession or use of weapons of any kind (outside of approved color guard performance equipment, such as design rifles and sabres) during any organization activity, or events sponsored by MCCGA, WGI, or affiliates.
- **Respect for Property:** Theft or damage to property owned by another person, facility, or the organization is prohibited. Facilities used must be left in as good a condition, if not better, as when Eloria Independent arrived ("Leave no trace").
- **Discriminatory Language:** Racist, sexist, anti-religious, or other discriminatory behavior, slurs, statements, or jokes, as well as the display of symbols supporting such discrimination, is strictly prohibited.

j. Code of Conduct Violations & Disciplinary Action

If management finds that any policy has been violated, proper disciplinary action will be taken. Actions include verbal/written reprimands, suspension, and dismissal. Retaliation against any party involved—the accused, accuser, witnesses, or investigators—will not be tolerated and will result in immediate termination of association with Eloria Independent.

2. Communication Protocols

Communication between staff and participants must always be professional, not personal. There is zero tolerance for staff crossing into a participant's personal, mental, or physical space, or using suggestive language, innuendo, or intimidation. Particular care must be taken to protect private participant information (health issues, home addresses, phone numbers, etc.). Group emails must always utilize the "BCC" function to preserve privacy.

If a participant makes inappropriate overtures toward a staff member or volunteer, a private, three-person meeting involving an Associate or Executive Director must be held to mandate behavioral boundaries, and a written synopsis must be submitted to the Executive Director.

Official Communication Channels

1. **Organization-Provided Email:** (Primary/Preferred method).
2. **Official Team Apps:** BandApp, Slack, or other identified communication applications.



3. **Text Messages:** Text messages are permitted, with a strict preference for a 2-to-1 ratio (two adults included in the text thread to ensure transparency and safety).
4. **Social Media Boundaries:** Staff members are prohibited from initiating invitations to connect to participants' personal social media accounts. Staff may accept participant-initiated connections but must maintain strictly professional public boundaries.

3. Contagious Illness Protocol

Health and safety is a priority for all members, staff, and facility personnel. Following recommendations from the CDC, MCCGA, and WGI, Eloria Independent institutes guidelines to mitigate illness transmission throughout the competitive season.

Mitigating Measures

- Practice good hand hygiene, washing frequently or using alcohol-based sanitizer (60%+ alcohol).
- Do not share food, drinks, or cosmetics to prevent exposure to saliva or secretions.
- **Symptom Screening:** DO NOT attend any Eloria Independent event if you are experiencing contagious symptoms (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, new loss of taste/smell, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea).
- **Fever Rule:** Members must be completely fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications before returning to rehearsal.
- **Closed-Door Rehearsal Policy:** To protect the health environment and minimize facility distractions, Eloria Independent operates closed-door rehearsals. Any outside visitors or spectators must receive prior approval from the Executive Director or an Associate Director.

4. Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Eloria Independent believes that freedom of thought, innovation, and creativity are fundamental characteristics of a community of performers. To promote such a learning environment, Eloria Independent has a special responsibility to seek diversity, promote inclusion, instill a global perspective in its students, and nurture sensitivity, dialogue, and mutual respect.

Discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran status, gender identity, or expression is strictly inconsistent with our purposes and will not be tolerated. Violations should be reported directly to the Executive Director or Associate Directors.



5. Media Relations Policy

The Executive Director serves as the official organization spokesperson on all matters pertaining to Eloria Independent and its operations. Inquiries from external media outlets must be referred directly to the Executive Director. No Eloria Independent stakeholder may speak in a derogatory manner about another participating organization or about MCCGA, WGI, or other affiliate circuits.

Guidelines for Media Interaction

- Refer all media inquiries to the designated spokesperson.
- Do not speak to the media without the organization spokesperson present.
- A staff member must be present during any media interaction with performing members or volunteers.
- **Do not answer questions regarding:** Legal issues, internal personnel issues, questions impacting organizational integrity, or crisis/emergency situations. Do not offer speculations, gossip, or answer with "no comment".

6. Member Smoking, Alcohol, & Drug Policy

Smoking & Vaping

Smoking and the use of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, vape devices, and Juuls, are illegal on school grounds in the United States and strictly prohibited anywhere on or around rehearsal/housing facilities.

- Pursuant to Missouri state law, it is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to possess or use tobacco or nicotine vapor products. Members under 21 are strictly banned from possessing these items at any time.
- Members of legal age (21+) are prohibited from using or possessing these products at any rehearsal site, housing site, show site, or organization vehicle. Performance staff may designate specific "Off Time" during trips where adult choices are permitted away from the facilities, provided members are not actively representing the ensemble or wearing Eloria apparel.

Alcohol

- Members under the legal drinking age (21) are strictly prohibited from the use, possession, sale, or being under the influence of alcohol at any time during Eloria Independent time. Violations result in immediate dismissal.
- For members of legal age, alcohol use, possession, or being under the influence is strictly prohibited at housing sites, rehearsal sites, show sites, on organization vehicles, or during any official travel block. Under no circumstances may alcohol be present at an ensemble facility. Members must never return to a team activity under the influence.
- Staff and volunteers are strictly prohibited from providing alcohol to any member, and members are prohibited from supplying alcohol to other members, regardless of age.



Drugs and Other Illegal Substances

Eloria Independent adheres to all federal laws regarding drug use and is firmly opposed to the non-medical use of any controlled substances. No member is permitted to use, distribute, sell, or be under the influence of marijuana during Eloria Independent times, regardless of any state laws legalizing recreational use. The distribution of any regulated substance to a member by staff, volunteers, or other members is strictly forbidden and will result in law enforcement notification.

Applicability ("Official Capacity")

These policies apply 24 hours a day throughout the competitive season during all rehearsals, performances, clinics, camps, events, and organized travel, except during explicitly designated, administrative "Designated Off Time." Independent team dinners or personal travel to and from rehearsals in private vehicles are considered personal time; however, members are still expected to act responsibly and maintain basic standards of character.

Violation Reporting

It is your responsibility to report drug or alcohol violations, whether committed by yourself or others. Failure to report violations may result in disciplinary action for both the violator and those who stood by silently. Any violator dismissed at an away event is responsible for arranging their own immediate transportation home from the ensemble. Reports should be made immediately to the Executive Director or Associate Directors.

7. Acknowledgment & Signatures

For Participants Aged 18 and Older:

I have read, completely understand, and agree to abide by the Eloria Independent Code of Conduct, Communication Protocols, and Operational Policies.

- **Signature of Participant:** _____
- **Printed Name of Participant:** _____
- **Date:** _____

For Participants Under 18 Years of Age (Minors):

I, as the participant, agree to abide by the rules outlined in this handbook. As the parent/legal guardian, I acknowledge that I have reviewed these policies with my child, understand the safety standards (including the buddy system and reporting procedures), and grant permission for my child to participate contractually with Eloria Independent.

- **Signature of Participant:** _____
- **Printed Name of Participant:** _____
- **Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian:** _____
- **Printed Name of Parent/Legal Guardian:** _____
- **Date:** _____

