Safe Dance and Performing Arts Practice Guidelines for Dance and Performing Arts Studios

Part 1 - Safe Dance and Performing Arts Practice Policy
Part 2 - Rules of Operation
Part 3 - Compliance and Auditing

Part 1
Safe Dance and Performing Arts Practice Policy

Safe dance practices are crucial in a dance studio and serve several important purposes:

Injury Prevention: Dance, by its nature, can be physically demanding. Safe dance practices help prevent injuries among both students and instructors. This is particularly important in the case of children, as their bodies are still developing and may be more susceptible to injuries if proper care is not taken.

Legal and Ethical Obligations: dance and performing arts studios have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants, including children. Failure to do so can result in legal liabilities and damage to the studio's reputation. All studios in Victoria must have child safety policies and procedures in line with the ten Victorian Child Safety Standards.

Child Welfare: Protecting the welfare of children is of paramount importance. Victoria has strict laws and regulations regarding child safety, and dance and performing arts studios must comply with these regulations. Ensuring a safe environment helps prevent any form of abuse or neglect.

Professional Standards: Safe dance and performing arts practices are a hallmark of professionalism in the industry. It demonstrates that the studio is committed to providing quality instruction and a secure environment for learning and practising dance and performing arts.

Student Retention: Parents are more likely to enrol their children in a dance studio that prioritises safety. A reputation for safe and responsible practices can lead to higher student retention rates and positive word-of-mouth referrals.

Quality Education: Safe dance and performing arts practices are conducive to quality education. Students can learn and perform to the best of their ability when they feel safe and supported.

Physical and Emotional Well-Being: In dance and performing arts, the focus isn't just on physical safety but also on emotional well-being. Safe practices promote positive body image, self-esteem, and mental health among students.

Long-term Health: Teaching proper warm-up, cool-down, and nutrition habits not only reduces the risk of immediate injuries but also fosters a culture of health and well-being that can lead to long-term health benefits for students.

Parent and Community Trust: Parents entrust dance and performing arts studios with the care and education of their children. Demonstrating a commitment to safe dance practices builds trust and goodwill within the community.

Compliance with Regulations: Dance and performing arts studios in Victoria are required to adhere to the Child Safe Standards, which include requirements related to risk assessment, staff training, incident reporting, and more.

In summary, safe dance and performing arts practices are a fundamental aspect of running a dance studio in Victoria, as they not only safeguard the physical and emotional well-being of students but also ensure compliance with legal obligations and professional standards.

Part 2
Rules of Operation
Creating a safe dance and performing arts policy for a studio that works with children is crucial to ensure the well-being of both the students and instructors.

The framework and rules of operation are as follows:

1. Studio Safety Rules:
a. Maintain a clean and organised studio space to help prevent accidents and create a positive learning environment.
b. Ensure all dance equipment is in good condition and regularly inspected for safety. This includes checking the condition of barres, flooring, mirrors, and any props used in classes. Electrical equipment is regularly checked and tagged.
c. Students are able to access water at all times.
d. Appropriate uniforms are in place for classes with proper dance attire and shoes, that support students and allow safe execution of skills.
e. Policies are in place to ensure staff, students and families respect the studio property and facilities. This includes adhering to parking guidelines, being mindful of noise levels, and taking care of any provided amenities like waiting areas and changing rooms.

2. Injury Prevention:
a. Warm-up and cool-down exercises should be a part of every class.
b. Instructors should be knowledgeable about age-appropriate dance techniques and ensure students are not pushed beyond their physical capabilities.
c. Provide information on proper nutrition and hydration for students.
d. Encourage open communication about injuries or physical discomfort.

3. Emergency Procedures:
a. Instructors and staff should be trained in CPR and basic first aid.
b. Maintain updated emergency contact information for all students.
c. Develop and communicate an emergency evacuation plan.
d. Have a well-stocked first-aid kit readily available.

4. Student Supervision:
a. Ensure that students are supervised at all times, especially during breaks and transitions.
b. Parents or guardians should drop off and pick up their children promptly.

5. Code of Conduct:
a. Establish a code of conduct for both students and instructors that emphasises respect, discipline, and teamwork.
b. Address bullying, discrimination, and inappropriate behaviour promptly and consistently following a documented bullying policy accessible and available to all students and parents.

6. Communication:
a. Maintain clear and open communication channels with parents, including regular updates on class schedules, events, and any changes to policies.
b. Instructors should communicate effectively with students and parents regarding progress, expectations, and any concerns.

7. Studio Security:
a. Limit access to the studio to authorised personnel only.
b. Implement a sign-in/sign-out system for students. Attendance books should be marked at the beginning of each and every class.
c. Install security cameras where appropriate

8. Health and Wellness:
a. Instructors are encouraged to make sure that they warm up and cool down and follow safe dance guidelines for their own personal demonstration.
b. Encourage staff and students to stay home when they are sick to prevent the spread of illness.

9. Parent Involvement:
a. Encourage parents to attend open house events, parent-teacher meetings, and performances to stay engaged in their child's dance education.

10. Reporting Procedures:
a. Clear procedures are in place for reporting any incidents, accidents, or concerns related to student safety.

11. Background Checks:
a. Conduct thorough reference checks on all instructors and staff working with children.
B. All staff and volunteers must have current WWCC in place.

12. Training and Certification:
a. Ensure that all dance instructors are certified and trained in child safety, CPR, and first aid.

13. Discipline Policy:
a. Clearly outline the consequences of violating the code of conduct and safety rules.
b. Follow a progressive discipline approach when necessary.

14. Consent and Liability Waivers:
a. Require parents or guardians to sign consent and liability waivers for their children's participation in dance classes and performances.

15. Child Safety Policy and Procedures:
a. Develop a child safety policy that includes guidelines for preventing, recognising, and reporting child abuse.
b. Ensure all Child Safety Procedures are in line with the Victorian government Child Safety Standards.

16. Regular Policy Review:
a. Periodically review and update the all organisational policy and procedures to ensure they remain current and effective.
b. Involve parents, instructors, and staff in the process to ensure everyone is aware of and committed to maintaining safety standards.

Part 3
Compliance and Auditing

Auditing a dance and performing arts studio for compliance with the safe dance practice rules involves a systematic assessment of the studio's practices, procedures, and documentation.

Auditing Process:

Review Documentation: Begin by reviewing the dance studio's policies, including the safe dance policy, code of conduct, emergency procedures, and any related documents. Ensure that they are comprehensive and up to date.

Physical Inspection: Physically inspect the studio space, equipment, and facilities to assess their condition and adherence to safety rules. Ensure that the studio is clean, well-organised, and that equipment is in good working order.

Interview Key Personnel: Speak with studio management, instructors, and support staff to verify their knowledge and adherence to safe dance practices. Ask questions about how they implement safety rules and their understanding of the policies.

Observe Classes: Observe dance classes to ensure that warm-up and cool-down exercises are included, that instructors follow age-appropriate techniques, and that students are dressed appropriately.

Review Communication Practices: Evaluate the communication channels used to interact with parents, including the studio's website, newsletters, and direct communication between instructors and parents. Ensure that parents are well-informed about policies and events.

Check Security Measures: Review security measures, such as access control to the studio, sign-in/sign-out procedures, and the presence of security cameras if applicable.

Assess Health and Wellness: Verify that instructors and staff meet health requirements and encourage sick students to stay home. Check if information on nutrition and hydration is provided to students.

Review Reporting Procedures: Assess the procedures for reporting incidents, accidents, or concerns related to student safety. Ensure that there is a clear and efficient system in place.

Reporting Non-Compliance:

Document Findings: Clearly document the areas where non-compliance was identified. Describe what was observed or discussed that deviated from the established safe dance and performing arts policy.

Categorise Non-Compliance: Categorise non-compliance based on the severity and potential risks involved. Some issues may be minor and easily rectified, while others may pose significant risks and require immediate attention.

Provide Recommendations: Offer specific recommendations for how the studio can address the non-compliance issues. These recommendations should be practical and actionable.

Timelines: Include suggested timelines for addressing each non-compliance issue. Prioritise any urgent or high-risk items.

Report to Studio Management/Director: Share the audit findings, categorisation of non-compliance, recommendations, and timelines with the studio's management or leadership team. Discuss the importance of addressing these issues promptly.

Documentation of Remediation: Follow up to ensure that the studio takes corrective actions. Document the steps taken to remediate non-compliance and verify that they have been implemented effectively.

The audit report should be thorough, objective, and communicated to all relevant parties involved, with an emphasis on cooperation and improvement rather than punitive measures. The ultimate goal is to enhance safety and well-being in the dance and performing arts studio, particularly for children.