

# Welcoming Dance Environment

## CALLERLAB Goals and Handbooks – (2020 May 31)

As an international organization committed to building, promoting and sustaining the beloved recreation of Modern Western Square Dancing and the art and craft of square dance calling, CALLERLAB has created this set of documents to help callers, organization leaders and dancers in providing and supporting a welcoming dance environment where all dancers can enjoy the activity in a safe, nurturing, secure, and pleasant atmosphere.

In the spring of 2018, the CALLERLAB Board of Governors updated the CALLERLAB Code of Ethics to include the following item:

*5. Provide a safe and welcoming environment for all. I am committed to providing an environment free from sexual and other forms of harassment or bullying without bias based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability, and always be respectful of the hearts and spirits of others.*

Expanding on this commitment, it is our goal for all participants to have a pleasant social experience while attending square dance events. In support of this goal, CALLERLAB will provide its members and the greater square dance community with guidelines, information, and educational opportunities to assist them in preventing, recognizing, addressing, and eliminating inappropriate behavior. In addition to the documents listed below, look for additional educational opportunities such as large group presentations, small group discussions at the CALLERLAB Conventions, and Articles in *Direction*.

Please refer to the *Welcoming Dance Environment CALLERLAB Handbook for Organization Leaders and Callers* for information about the following topics.

- Definitions of Harassment and Other Inappropriate Behavior
- Enhancing Caller Awareness
- Teaching Dancers about Appropriate Behavior

Please refer to the *Welcoming Dance Environment CALLERLAB Handbook for Dancers* for information about the following topics.

- Appropriate Dancer Behavior
- Defensive Dancing
- Helping Create a Safe, Secure, and Welcoming Environment

Please refer to the *Welcoming Dance Environment Organization Guidelines for Dealing with Inappropriate Behavior* for a draft Club or Organization Policy with specific information about the following topics.

- When and How to Make a Report
- Guidelines for Taking a Report and Addressing a Complaint
- Inappropriate Behavior Complaint Form

### **Publication Note:**

For CALLERLAB members, all sections are combined into one document.

For other organizations, the intention is to offer the following sections separately as described above.

# Welcoming Dance Environment

## CALLERLAB Handbook for Organization Leaders and Callers

Square dancing is a very diverse activity. Participants range from youths to seniors. They come from a wide range of social, ethnic, racial, and personal identification groups. They also hold a wide array of individual beliefs and philosophies. Square dancing also involves a high degree of physical contact and social interaction, within a context of fun and enjoyment.

This combination of diversity, physical contact, and close social interaction means that all participants should be educated about inappropriate behaviors. It also means that organizations, callers, leaders, and dancers should develop procedures for recognizing and addressing situations where such behavior occurs.

CALLERLAB has the goal of encouraging and assisting organization leaders and callers in making the square dance environment such that all participants have a pleasant social experience while attending dance events.

Communication is important in accepting and appreciating the wide diversity of fellow dancers and in learning to recognize behaviors and words found offensive by others. Understanding the cultural norms of square dancing will help participants shape their interactions to fit within those norms. It is important that organization leaders and callers teach and model appropriate behavior to minimize the chance that someone experiences an unpleasant interaction while attending a square dance event.

This *Welcoming Dance Environment CALLERLAB Handbook for Organization Leaders and Callers* contains information about the following topics.

- Definitions of Harassment and Other Inappropriate Behaviors
- Enhancing Caller Awareness
- Teaching Dancers about Appropriate Behavior

Please refer to the *Welcoming Dance Environment CALLERLAB Handbook for Dancers* for information about the following topics.

- Appropriate Dancer Behavior
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## Definitions of Harassment and Other Inappropriate Behaviors

As individuals, dancers have varying degrees of comfort with physical contact and personal interactions. An interaction is appropriate if neither person finds it offensive, and the interaction is based on mutual friendship and respect. This section defines the general behaviors that are not appropriate.

**A. Harassment** is a series of incidents involving unwelcome and hostile, verbal, physical, or visual conduct directed toward one individual by another individual where the conduct:

- creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment;
- causes a member's participation to suffer; or
- negatively affects a member's opportunity to participate in events.

Specific actions that can be considered harassment include, but are not limited to:

- verbal conduct such as offensive name-calling, jokes, slurs, or negative stereotyping;
- nonverbal conduct such as staring, leering, threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts;
- physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touch, or intentional interfering; or
- visual conduct such as derogatory or offensive photos, cartoons, drawings or gestures.

Constructive criticism or teaching is not harassment.

**B. Sexual harassment** is unwanted sexual or sex-based behavior. Specific actions that can be considered sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- demanding sexual favors with an implied or overt threat concerning conditions of membership;
- conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with a member's participation and creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment; or
- uninvited or unnecessary physical contact of a sexual nature.

**C. Bias and Discrimination:** Bias is mental leaning towards or against a thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. Commonly, the groups are identified by race or color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, political views, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, or disability. Discrimination is action resulting from bias and it may occur either directly or indirectly. Specific actions resulting from bias and discrimination include, but are not limited to:

- expressing negative stereotypes or making jokes based on bias; or
- publicly refusing social interaction with someone based on bias.

**D. Bullying** is a form of harassment that involves the repeated use of force or threat to abuse, intimidate, or aggressively dominate others. One essential prerequisite is the perception, by the bully or by others, of an imbalance of social or physical power. Specific actions usually identified as bullying include but are not limited to:

- belittling and constant criticism;
- regular and unkind teasing or practical jokes directed at one person; or
- intimidation or abuse of power.

**E. Inappropriate Behavior:** Even though behavior may not fall into the harassment and discrimination definitions discussed above, it may be unprofessional or inconsistent with maintaining a respectful dance environment. If such inappropriate behavior comes to the attention of the governing body, they have the right to address it, even in cases where nobody steps forward to complain about it or when nobody present claims to have been offended by the inappropriate behavior.

## Enhancing Caller Awareness

Square dancing is enjoyed by a very diverse population. In recent years it has expanded into many countries and is now engaged in by people from a broad range of communities, beliefs and backgrounds. Considering this diversity, and because the social norms of appropriate behavior have changed, callers are discarding some traditional square dance calls, and filler words. Callers should consider adopting the following goals when attempting to foster a safe, secure, and welcoming environment.

- **Enhance my awareness** by educating myself about the topics included in this handbook and by participating in caller or leader workshops on this subject.
- **Learn to recognize** and appreciate the diversity within the square dance world. Be mindful of changes that may be needed at social events.
- **Be cautious** about using calls that can result in unwanted physical contact (e.g., Yellow Rock, Honey Bear, Stack the Wood, Bear Scratch, etc.).
- **“Think before speaking”** – especially when on the microphone. Avoid comments or jokes that might be considered demeaning or critical of a certain identity group or culture. By the rules of etiquette, inappropriate topics include sex, religion, and politics.
- **Avoid** filler patter and reminder words that could be misinterpreted by some dancers, refer to inappropriate actions, or are belittling descriptions.
- **Evaluate and filter** all personal interactions with dancers to avoid comments and physical contact that may be interpreted as harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying, or other inappropriate behavior.
- **Maintain knowledge and vigilance** about all of these issues and encourage other, callers, leaders and organization officers to do the same.

## Teaching Dancers about Appropriate Behavior

To foster a safe and welcoming environment for all, callers should make dancers aware of the need for discussion and understanding so as to maintain the traditional congenial friendships within the current social norms. Details about appropriate dancer behavior and defensive dancing techniques can be found in the *Welcoming Dance Environment CALLERLAB Handbook for Dancers*.

- **Encourage** dancers to appreciate diversity and to befriend fellow dancers. Try various strategies to encourage social interaction.
- **Teach** defensive dancing techniques and various styling options.
- **Demonstrate** gentle hand and arm holds that can easily be released by either dancer. Also explain when to release hands and how to gently assist another dancer.
- **Actively discourage** inappropriate actions by leading a general discussion about expectations regarding behavior. Help dancers become aware of behavior and words that could offend other dancers.
- **Provide documentation** about rules of etiquette, the definitions of the various types of harassment, and the local organization policy for dealing with inappropriate behavior.
- **Set examples** of intervention by standing up for the right of every dancer to participate in square dancing within a safe, secure, and welcoming environment.

# Welcoming Dance Environment

## CALLERLAB Handbook for Dancers

As a square dancer, you participate in a very diverse activity. Your age ranges from youths to seniors. You come from a wide range of social, ethnic, racial, and personal identification groups. You also hold a wide array of individual beliefs and philosophies.

Square dancing involves a high degree of physical contact and social interaction, so some accidental bumps should be expected. However, in light of your varied background and social norms, sometimes what other dancers intentionally do or say can make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, or can even be painful.

This handbook describes behaviors that you can learn to create a safe, secure, and welcoming dance environment for yourself and for those with whom you dance.

### Appropriate Dancer Behavior

- **Appreciate Diversity:** Appreciate diversity. Be aware of the fact that the square dance community is made up of a widely diverse population and be respectful of all dancers. Use our common joy in dancing as a basis for appreciating the full range of people who participate in our activity.
- **Expectations:** Square dancing is a friendly group activity that involves physical contact on the arms, hands, and shoulders, as well as eye contact while dancing. You should expect accidental touches and bumps that are occasional and fleeting. However, interactions should not make any dancer uncomfortable, so be aware of behaviors that are considered inappropriate.
- **Awareness:** Recognize and avoid behaviors and words that are inappropriate or uncomfortable and could offend other dancers.
- **Styling:** Learn styling options to accommodate all couple combinations.
- **Gentle Holds:** Use hand and arm holds that can easily be released by either dancer. (Hold your thumb beside the fingers or loosely spread and inactive.) For calls with "pull by" actions, make sure to let go as your shoulders pass. Do not push. When assisting another dancer, be patient and use gentle pointing or hand beckoning.
- **Communication:** Use the suggested defensive dancing techniques described in the next section to communicate your willingness or unwillingness to participate in actions involving close physical contact or rapid turns. This includes hugs, flourishes, and swings.
- **Social Interaction:** Have friendly conversations during breaks. Be aware of personal space outside of the square and remember that comfortable chatting distance varies.
- **Leadership:** Dancers as well as callers and club leaders need to be knowledgeable and vigilant about all of these issues.
- **Procedures:** Understand the procedures for identifying inappropriate behavior and addressing the issue. Please refer to the section on Helping to Create a Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment.

## Defensive Dancing

Dancers have the right and expectation not to be physically forced into actions that cause pain or discomfort. Clear communication helps to prevent uncomfortable incidents from happening. Learn to dance “defensively” and to recognize defensive signals from other dancers.

- **Swings:** If you do not want to be swung or twirled, keep your arms down and offer your hand in promenade position when approaching a dancer who appears to expect to swing or twirl you. You can also wear a badge that says “No Twirls” as a reminder.
- If you are fond of twirling or swinging other dancers, please be gentle and be sensitive to the cues of the other dancer. Refrain from vigorous Swings unless there is clear communication of mutual enjoyment.
- **Flourishes:** If a dancer approaches you aggressively to force a flourish, make an “X” gesture with your hands, or hold your arms over your chest to minimize physical contact.
- To decline flourishes while in Weave the Ring, Dosado, or similar calls, keep your hands “busy” with skirt work or put your hands behind your back.
- **Physical Contact:** To minimize the contact of an unwanted hug or Yellow Rock, hold up your right hand with palm out to block the hug and simultaneously suggest a “high five” instead.
- **Handholds:** If a dancer holds your hand too tightly or too long, give a gentle or light-hearted reminder, such as grimacing in an exaggerated way (with a smile) while “shaking out” your hand, or say “Please, don’t squeeze”, or “Please, let go”. If the dancer persists in being too rough, ask a club leader to speak to the dancer.
- **Be Understanding:** Remember that dancers generally do not intend to make others feel uncomfortable, so keep the interaction friendly when turning down another dancer’s actions. If you are denied a flourish, do not take offense.

## Helping to Create a Welcoming Dance Environment

CALLERLAB has the goal of encouraging and assisting organization leaders and callers in making the square dance environment such that all participants have a pleasant social experience while attending dance events. Achieving this goal will require the cooperation of all those involved in the dance activity.

There is a separate *Welcoming Dance Environment Organization Guidelines for Dealing with Inappropriate Behavior* which may be used by your club or organization as a policy draft. It provides guidelines for dealing with harassment, sexual harassment, bias and discrimination, bullying, or other behavior inconsistent with maintaining a respectful dance environment. There are details about when and how a dancer should make a report, as well as guidelines for taking a report and addressing a complaint.

In the event that you find it necessary to make a report about the caller of a caller-run club, look first to your local dancer or caller organization for help. If that is not satisfactory, then contact the Executive Director of CALLERLAB (email [info@callerlab.org](mailto:info@callerlab.org) or call 785-783-3665) for assistance.