

This is an evolving document meant to keep my (Celena Cox) costuming practice focused on the following values:

**Collaboration**

**Consent**

**Body neutrality**

**Affirmation of all identities**

**Inclusivity**

**Transparency**

While this document is specific to minors, I believe it is a good foundation for costuming all ages.

Measurements:

- Use gender neutral language for [measurement forms](#). EX: Replace “bust” with “chest at widest place”
- Give the option of a video meeting with their responsible adult taking the measurements and you walking them through it.
- If meeting in person, a responsible adult MUST be present. Measurement takers will narrate everything that is occurring.
- Measurements WILL NEVER take place in front of another cast member. Costuming team and responsible parties only.
- Measurements should only be shared with creative team members who require them. This is typically only the costuming team, but exceptions exist. The costuming team must be provided an explanation for sharing this information.

Pre-fitting communications:

- Do you have strong preferences about what genders you portray on stage?
  - This question is not always necessary or relevant. If the gender of the character has already been decided by the script, then that’s that. However, as is often the case when working with minors, the actor may be allowed some creative license if they are in a large ensemble.

The characters here are not defined by the script but by the director, costumer, and actor. This MAY OR MAY NOT affect the costuming, but can still be a useful question to get to know the actor.

- Any textile sensitivities or allergies I need to be aware of?
  - This question has obvious uses and importance, however I want to focus on “sensitivities”. Inclusivity of various neuro-types is an ever evolving goal in theater. I would like to start incorporating open-ended questions like these to give minors the opportunity to communicate any tactile “icks” that they may have. It will not always be possible to accommodate these sensitivities by eliminating those textiles, but there are often ways to reduce the “ick”: base layers, communicating how long the textile will touch skin, linings, etc.
- Communicating fitting procedures:
  - EXAMPLE:

Hello cast! Fittings for The Show will begin on Monday. Present in these fittings will be ME (costume designer), ANOTHER ADULT (assistant costume designer/ASM/parent volunteer), and SOMETIMES ANOTHER STUDENT (student costumer/student ASM). There will be at least 1 full costume for you to try on. I will ask you questions about the costume and your character. I may need to adjust the costume by pinning fabric, pulling fabric, or pinching fabric. You are welcome to have a parent/guardian at this fitting, but I cannot always accommodate schedules as we need to move quickly.

I would like to see CHARACTER NAME 1, CHARACTER NAME 2, CHARACTER NAME 3, AND CHARACTER NAME 4 on Monday. On Tuesday will be A BUNCH OF OTHER CHARACTER NAMES. On Wednesday: EVEN MORE CHARACTER NAMES. Please bring or wear your base layers on the day you are called for fittings.

If you haven't been named for a fitting, don't worry, you will be listed for your fitting call Wednesday evening. Please reach out with any questions you have.

#### Fittings:

- Explain the costume fully to the actor, answer any questions
- When the actor emerges in costume: Keep questions open-ended, and comments on body shape neutral
  - DO NOT SAY: That looks great on you! // That looks terrible on you! // Well that doesn't fit // You look uncomfortable
  - DO SAY : How does that feel? // Does this work with what you and the director have been working on? // Can you do some of your movement/blocking in this to make sure everything is working?
- If the actor emerges still in their rehearsal clothes it is important to take responsibility immediately.
  - Ex: I'm sorry none of that worked, how can I help? // I'm sorry if those didn't fit, did I pull the wrong sizes? I'm sorry again, let's retake your measurements. // I'm sorry, can I explain how this works again for you?
  - If a costume isn't working for an actor that's THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COSTUME TEAM, not the responsibility of the actor or the actor's body.
- Making adjustments to the costume on the actor - keep consent at top of mind
  - State clearly what needs to be adjusted, ask the actor if they are comfortable with me pulling/pinching/lifting fabric, narrate everything being done.
  - Most of the time the actor needs to be in a relaxed stance to get the proper drape of fabrics, however if it is possible, have the actor involved in the adjustments.
  - DO NOT comment on the actor's body in any way during this process.
- Note taking:

- Use all above language standards.
- Keep notes secure and confidential. Destroy after production post mortem.

#### Dress Rehearsals and Shows:

- Provide clear directions for each costume to actors using above language standards.
- Provide a confidential feedback mechanism for adjustments/timing issues. It is also important to continuously check in with minors on these items, as they can get into the habit of trying to create as little work as possible for the creative team. It is very easy for problems to go unsolved for this reason. Ensuring students understand how to identify problems and identify the proper team member for assistance will help them be more self reliant in theater settings in the future.
- Ensure that all dressers are familiar with above standards and practices.
- Quick changes:
  - Use all language standards above.
  - Provide as much privacy as is possible backstage.
  - Rehearse quick changes often with and without narration.
  - Regularly check in with the actor on comfort/ease of change/needs.

#### Strike/Post-Mortem

- Review all feedback.
- Destroy fitting notes.
- Destroy measurements. The bodies of minors change quickly, sometimes even during the course of a production. The measurements you take for one show will probably be wrong by the next, so preserving measurements rarely saves time. I have found that it is better to destroy measurements, so that I come in fresh for each production. This prevents the impulse to compare current measurements to past, for me and the actor.
- Provide necessary feedback to assistants/dressers/other team members.