

Policy for Dealing with Complaints of Inappropriate Behavior

Contradance Umbrella

Background and Scope

The Contradance Umbrella is concerned for the safety and comfort of the people who attend our contradances. We need the cooperation of all attendees to help us keep our events in accordance with the appropriate dance behavior guidelines.

▲ Responsibility of Dancer with a Concern/Complaint

If another dancer is doing something that hurts or makes you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, don't hesitate to let him/her know. If the inappropriate behavior continues, or if you do not feel comfortable confronting the person, report the matter to any member of the Contradance Umbrella or to the caller, who will report it to the Contradance Umbrella.

▲ Responsibility of the Contradance Umbrella

When instances of alleged inappropriate behavior come to the attention of the Contradance Umbrella, either through a complaint from a dancer or through observations by others attending one of our dances, the Contradance Umbrella shall follow the following procedures:

- 1 At least 2 representatives of the Contradance Umbrella who were present at the dance where the alleged incident occurred will speak to the accused individual to get his or her side of the story without providing information on the accuser. (If there was only one member present, then that one member will speak with the individual.) The representative(s) of the Contradance Umbrella will explain the "Policy on Dealing with Complaints of Inappropriate Behavior" and give the individual a copy of the policy, along with a copy of "Helpful Hints and Etiquette for Contra Dancers." At this time, the representative(s) of the Contradance Umbrella will also collect contact information from both the accused individual and the person making the complaint (or those who observed the incident), including full names, phone numbers, email and postal addresses.
- 2 If it is clear to the representative(s) of the Contradance Umbrella that there has not been an instance of inappropriate behavior, then the matter is ended (though a record of the incident will be preserved, as described in 3 below). In such cases, the person(s) raising the complaint will be notified of the decision and told the reason(s) for the decision. If it is clear to the representative(s) of the Contradance Umbrella that there has been an instance of inappropriate behavior, then, depending on the severity of the incident, the individual will receive either a verbal or written warning that future instances of inappropriate behavior may result in being banned from dances sponsored by the Contradance Umbrella, either for a specific period of time or permanently. A record of such decisions will be preserved, as described in 3 below. The representative(s) of the Contradance Umbrella will notify the rest of the Contradance Umbrella within 24 hours of the allegation and of the determination.
- 3 The representative(s) of the Contradance Umbrella will make a detailed written record of the conversations with the complaining dancer (or with those who observed the incident) and with the accused individual. The record will also contain any other written statements that may have been provided by the complaining dancer, any who

- observed the incident, or the accused individual. This record will be submitted to all members of the Contradance Umbrella within 24 hours with a recommendation of future actions. Any or all of these written records may be submitted as email messages to the Contradance Umbrella. These written records are confidential. Providing the written records to others than the Contradance Umbrella will be a violation of the Appropriate Dance Behavior Guidelines.
- 4 If a second instance of inappropriate behavior by the same individual occurs, the procedures described in 1, 2, and 3 above should again be followed. In addition, the accused individual ordinarily then will be sent a written warning that another instance of inappropriate behavior may result in being banned from events sponsored by the Contradance Umbrella, either for a specific period of time or permanently. The warning will be sent by one of the representatives by certified mail with a return receipt to the sender.
 - 5 If it is necessary for the Contradance Umbrella to conduct an investigation of an incident, the investigating member(s) may prohibit the accused individual from attending events for a reasonable amount of time while the investigation is conducted. Such a prohibition may be initiated on either a first accusation or on any subsequent accusation. The investigating member(s) of the Contradance Umbrella will notify the accused of the investigation and of the prohibition on attendance during the investigations.
 - 6 If an individual is banned from events sponsored by the Contradance Umbrella, either for a specific period of time or permanently, the individual has the right to appeal the decision to the full Contradance Umbrella. If an individual is banned for a specific period of time, he/she will ordinarily have 30 days to appeal the ban. If an individual is banned permanently, the time for appeal will ordinarily be 60 days. All bans will be issued in writing and delivered by certified mail. There is no right of appeal for a prohibition during an investigation.
 - 7 If an individual is banned from Contradance Umbrella events for a specific period of time, the Contradance Umbrella may make the individual's return to events contingent upon the individual signing a statement saying that he/she understands the "Policy on Dealing with Complaints of Inappropriate Behavior" and "Helpful Hints and Etiquette for Contra Dancers." This statement may also state that the individual may be permanently banned from events of the Contradance Umbrella if he/she engages in further inappropriate behavior. The Contradance Umbrella may also require additional dance training and discussion to help the accused individual better understand the difference between inappropriate and appropriate behavior on or off the dance floor.
 - 8 All written records will be archived and accessible to future members of the Contradance Umbrella. The Contradance Umbrella will take reasonable care to ensure the confidentiality of all of the conversations and records; however, due to the involvement of many people and the need to have some conversations at open dances, the Contradance Umbrella cannot guarantee full confidentiality.

NOTE: This policy is not intended to cover extreme cases (threats or acts of violence). In such cases, an offender may be told to leave immediately and never return to an event of the Contradance Umbrella. The authorities may also need to be notified.

December 2009

Helpful Hints and Etiquette for Contra Dancers

Especially for New Dancers WELCOME!

Many people find that they need to come to a few dances to get used to all the contradancing moves and traditions. We encourage new dancers to ask people to dance who look more experienced. Everyone changes partners for each dance, and women ask men to dance as often as men ask women; and same sex people also ask one another to dance.

If you make a mistake, or miss a figure, don't worry about it—it's all in fun! Instead of rushing through the botched figure, skip it and go on to the next. We've all been beginners once, and you'll catch on soon. You'll get many chances to practice each figure because all the moves in the dance keep repeating as you and your partner gradually move up or down the hall.

MOST IMPORTANT--HAVE FUN, ENJOY THE MUSIC AND THE PEOPLE!!!

Especially for Experienced Dancers

Experienced dancers should welcome newer dancers into our community by asking them to dance, and helping them to have a fun, satisfying evening. Refrain from twirls, spins, and other flourishes with newer partners. This can be disorienting, slowing the learning process for your partner, as well as for other less experienced dancers around you who are watching for clues as to what they should do next.

The goal is to help newer dancers face the right direction and smile! Keep verbal instructions to an absolute minimum. Point, tap on the shoulder, use other signals or call their name. It is hard for newer dancers to listen to you, other dancers, the caller, and the music all at the same time.

Twirling the lady is a common and popular embellishment in contra dancing. The man typically leads the woman into a twirl, but it is the *woman's prerogative* to follow the lead or override it, or, if followed, to limit the number of twirls.

For All Dancers

Top five styling tips

Timing: Dance each figure within its musical phrase.

Giving Weight: Keep arms firm to support each other through the figures.

Eye Contact: Eye contact is an important part of contra dancing. It's more fun and it reduces dizziness during swinging.

Smooth and Gentle: Move with an easy walking step.

Alert: Be sensitive to others' needs and preferences.

When the caller is teaching, be courteous and give your full attention. When the caller asks for hands four, this should be accomplished as quickly as possible to avoid confusion and later regrouping.

The importance of hands and giving weight. Let your partner's hand rest lightly in yours. Give

just enough weight with your arms (or your hands) to keep your connection while you move through the contra figures. This requires mutual sensitivity and adjustment. Don't squeeze too tightly or bend your partner's wrists.

Adjust to each dancer's needs and abilities continuously. If you dance with 30 people in line, big or little, older or younger, you'll need to dance 30 different ways. Aim to please every person (both genders) that you dance with.

Mistakes are OK. When helping other dancers, keep the atmosphere light. New dancers will relax when they sense your enjoyment and that you are more interested in being part of the flow than in perfection.

Couples join the line at the bottom, rather than inserting themselves in the middle or the top. If during the course of a dance you need to drop out of a line, do so when you reach the top or bottom because dropping out midline is disruptive to everyone else in it. (If you really must drop out midline, then take your neighbors with you and they can rejoin at the bottom.)

Long line, short line. Nobody's happy when a line is too crowded to dance comfortably and freely. When joining a line, join the shortest set, so the sets stay approximately the same length.

Finding partners. When looking for another partner after a dance ends, thoughtful dancers will look to the sidelines to see if there is someone who sat out the last dance who would like to dance the next. Generally, dancers wait until a dance is over before asking someone for the next dance. Everyone has the right to decline to dance.

Contra dancing can be quite aerobic, and, especially during the hot weather, some dancers work up a good sweat. Men (especially): if you perspire heavily, please bring extra shirts. All: carrying a kerchief or small towel is a good idea too.

Some dancers become ill when exposed to perfumes, so please do not use any before a dance.

Dancing should be fun and enjoyable. If your partner or anyone else is doing something that hurts or makes you uncomfortable or embarrassed, don't hesitate to let them know. If needed, ask a member of the Contradance Umbrella or the caller for further assistance.

Help protect the wooden dance floor. Please wear clean, soft-soled shoes.

(May 2010 - Montpelier Contradance Umbrella adapted this from the Princeton Country Dancers, who credit Glenside for the original version.)

Report Form
Allegations and Investigations of Inappropriate Behavior

Date the allegation is reported to the Contradance Umbrella _____

Date of the alleged incident _____

Contradance Umbrella member receiving the allegation _____

Contradance Umbrella investigators _____

Nature of the allegation _____

Person accused _____

Address: _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Date of discussion with accused _____

Accused's response to the allegation: _____

Is additional investigation necessary? No _____ Yes _____

Has the person accused been asked not to return pending investigation? No _____ Yes _____

Decision of representatives

_____ Inappropriate behavior has not occurred

_____ Inappropriate behavior has occurred

_____ Verbal warning was given (date) _____

_____ Written warning was given (date) _____

_____ Accused is banned from events until (date) _____

Content of the Warning:

Person reporting alleged inappropriate behavior _____

Address: _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____