

Brave New Voices 2017
Mentors and Coaches Community Guidelines

We bring young people to Brave New Voices so they can tell their stories, receive the stories of others, and build community. We bring young people to Brave New Voices with the hope that they will leave inspired, nourished, heard, proud, connected, expanded, open, thoughtful, and transformed in their understanding of themselves and what is possible.

As Brave New Voices Mentors and Coaches, we are responsible for:

- Creating an environment for healthy competition and respect for young people.
 - This looks like:
 - Encouraging poets to collaborate with, support, and celebrate the other poets and teams at the festival, as well as members of their own team. Giving attention to the poet performing on stage and responding to and clapping for other teams with the same energy as your own.
 - Challenging your team to meet new people and to participate in the workshops, town halls, and other programming with the same level of engagement as the slams.
 - Encouraging poets to lead with a spirit of curiosity and a desire to understand. This includes encouraging poets to talk to other poets instead of about them, whenever healthy to do so.
 - Leading all interactions with love. Never bullying, belittling, or yelling at a young person.
 - Preparing young poets to perform at their personal best for the festival, so they can focus on enjoying themselves and sharing their stories, instead of excessively stressing about the slam.
- Ensuring that when poets use their art to foster catharsis, they are appropriately supported before, during, and after the competition, and that they are mentored in a way that avoids inducing or reliving trauma.
 - This looks like:
 - The process of creating, rehearsing, and performing the poem centered on the poet (and their stories), rather than the competition.
 - Never coaching poets to relive trauma for the performance or otherwise.
 - Ensuring that poets are not triggered in unhealthy ways by their own poems.
 - Fully understanding the [mandatory reporting rules](#) that apply to coaches and their organizations.
 - Directors, employees, and volunteers at entities that provide organized activities for children, such as camps, day camps, youth centers, and recreation centers, are required to report in 13 States: California, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia
 - The way mandatory reporting rules apply before the festival may be more specific for some home organizations, given that some organizations are run through school systems, which often have more stringent requirements.
 - Reaching out to support systems if you think a poet needs help, especially if they could potentially cause harm to themselves or others.
- Knowing the physical and emotional needs of the poets on our teams -- everything from medication and dietary restrictions to potential triggers. As Mentors and Coaches, we must act *in loco parentis** for youth at the festival and must anticipate needs of our poets.
- Establishing safer spaces to unpack, challenge, and/ or disrupt hate speech and facilitating team conversations about systemic oppression including (but not limited to) racism, misogyny, ableism, and transphobia prior to the festival.
 - This looks like:

- Being the first to challenge young people to be accountable for their words and actions.
- Having conversations about what it means to be accountable for your speech before and during BNV. Having conversations about the context of our poems in the wider world and how they can resist rather than replicate -isms and oppression. Having conversations about appropriation and its harms, so that their art furthers conversations rather than speaks for or over others who are already silenced.
- Encouraging poets to speak from their own experiences, serve as a voice of their communities, and find their part in larger cultural dialogues.
- Asking questions of my team's poets like: What is the purpose of this poem? Does this poem replicate harm or transform it? What is your place in this poem? Can you help me understand x? Would you be open to sharing more about y? How are we telling this story in a way that includes our part/ responsibility? How do we make sure we're not taking someone else's story and telling it FOR them?

**In Loco Parentis* is a legal term which means: In the place of a parent; instead of a parent; charged with a parent's rights, duties, and responsibilities.

Accountability Process:

- We believe that culture is kept by community, not an institution. For this reason, we want to encourage folks to help hold each other accountable to the responsibilities above, as well as to the values of the greater Brave New Voices culture. Let's encourage dialogue with each other and make a commitment to listening to and evolving with each other.
- If at any time during the festival, the community agreements above are violated and the harm cannot be mended amongst young people or coaches themselves, festival participants should inform a Youth Speaks staff person, who will follow up with a conversation to determine next steps.
- If at any time during the festival, individuals on a team (or the team as a whole) act in a way that appears unsafe to themselves or others, festival participants should complete a report via the digital form provided; there will also be a number provided for concerns that must be addressed immediately.
- Youth Speaks staff will investigate and collate these reports; in some cases these situations will need to be handled at the festival (i.e individuals may be counseled, teams may be dismissed); in others, the data will be used to look for patterns with safety concerns and with individual organizations. This information will guide future training sessions and can be used as a factor when deciding which teams are invited to participate in future festivals.
- Reports can be made anonymously; if a team is reported, that team will receive a copy of the report in the interest of providing feedback for self-growth and to continue this dialogue about the climate we want to create for the youth.

I understand and agree to uphold the above responsibilities in order to coach a team at the 20th Annual Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival.

Signed: _____ Print Name: _____

Team Name: _____ City: _____