

RESPECT ON EVERY SET

PGA AND THE HOLLYWOOD COMMISSION HAVE COLLABORATED TO PROVIDE INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS THE TOOLS AND RESOURCES THEY NEED TO ENSURE A PROTECTED, RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE.

Independent filmmaking has always carried both magic and risk. Tight budgets, fast schedules, and intimate crews can foster extraordinary creativity—as well as conditions where blurred boundaries, stress and power imbalances thrive.

For independent productions without HR departments or the compliance staff of larger studios, this gap is especially stark. And yet these are the very spaces where new voices, urgent stories, and diverse talent often break through—spaces that require the most protection.

The Producers Guild and the Hollywood Commission are both dedicated to creating an ecosystem of accountability, offering their own independently developed training and resource materials.

The Guild and Commission have recently collaborated to connect the dots between training, prevention, policy and access. They are harmonizing documents and definitions, removing

barriers to entry for smaller productions, and pledging to amplify each other's resources so that every set, regardless of budget, can uphold a standard of respect.

Their efforts are built on a simple belief: every producer has the opportunity to lead the way.

Both the PGA and the Hollywood Commission now operate within a unified framework, sharing a Code of Conduct, using a common set of definitions, and offering easy-to-adapt policy templates. The result is a resource package tailored not only to protect but to empower so that independent producers set the proper tone from preproduction rather than scrambling to react after issues emerge.

SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP

"Producers are the first people on a production and the last off. The culture of the set flows directly from their leadership," says Producers Guild

CEO Susan Sprung. "The Set Etiquette Training program was created for producers to give the entire producing community tools they can actually use in the fast-paced, high-pressure environment of a shoot."

The program is designed to bridge the gap for independent producers who don't have the resources of a studio behind them. "It's a practical and powerful resource that was built with that reality in mind," Sprung adds. "When you have a tool like this, you're not just avoiding problems, you're setting the expectations and culture of your production."

That leadership begins before the shoot even starts. By using the Set Etiquette tools and following up with the Set Etiquette Training, producers make respect part of the production design itself. This sets a professional, clear baseline for every department from day one.

"When crews feel protected, when

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they know the culture is respectful, they do better work. It's not just the right thing to do for people; it's the right thing to do for the production," says Malia Arrington, executive director of the Hollywood Commission.

"As workers move from gig to gig, they have no way of knowing if they are on a safe or an unsafe set," she adds. "It's up to producers to set the tone."

Arrington emphasizes that real change flows from the top. "Harassment and bullying thrive in environments of generalized disrespect. Producers are in a unique position to change that. This program equips them with the tools to make safety and respect lived values."

In Arrington's view, the collaboration between the Producers Guild and the Hollywood Commission shows what's possible when leadership, data and values align for the benefit of the entire creative community.

"Respect on set is not just the right thing to do—it's good business," she says.

Training programs reduce risk, retain top crews, and help productions avoid costly grievances and delays. For producers, the benefits are clear. Protecting people means protecting the project itself, supporting everything from creative breakthroughs to on-schedule wraps.

BRINGING THE TRAINING TO SET

The PGA's Set Etiquette Training program (producersguild.org/set) provides participating productions with virtual or in-person interactive harassment-prevention training conducted during preproduction with producers, cast and crew. Led by an experienced attorney, the training is flexible in scope and length, tailored to your production's needs. Tools provided by the training include:

- Guide for Independent Production Companies: Practical steps for production leadership to follow.
- Guidelines for a Safer Workplace:



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What you need to know to maintain a safe and professional work environment.

- Code of Conduct: A template Code of Conduct that can be tailored and shared with cast and crew before training.
- Guidelines for Set Responders: Clarifies the roles and responsibilities of designated set responders.
- Incident Log for recording and addressing complaints.
- Glossary of Terms: The shared definitions and industry language developed jointly by the Producers Guild of America and the Hollywood Commission.

Set Etiquette Training is available to any U.S.-based production—including features, documentaries, series and more—regardless of PGA membership.

To be eligible, productions must have at least 20 cast and crew members or be a signatory to the I.A.T.S.E. Low Budget Theatrical Agreement. Productions must also be independent; that is, not directly financed or produced by a major studio/streamer, and typically without a dedicated HR department.

Productions must be able to schedule Set Etiquette Training during preproduction and select two designated individuals to act as set responders. Finally, the production must agree to distribute a Code of Conduct—which the training can help tailor to the specific production—and agree to follow program guidelines.

Productions will also receive legal

support that includes access to up to two hours of free legal consultation in order to discuss questions or issues related to topics covered during Set Etiquette Training. Additional legal support is available at the attorney's standard rates.

A COMPREHENSIVE PARTNERSHIP

The Hollywood Commission complements PGA's approach with its own Respect On Set™ Program, a practical framework and resource hub designed to help film and television productions build safe, respectful and accountable workplaces. Developed by the Commission in collaboration with industry partners, Respect On Set provides producers, department heads and crew with actionable tools—including guidance, sample policies, training, reporting pathways and on-set support resources—tailored to the realities of entertainment production.

Unlike generic workplace compliance approaches, Respect On Set is built for the unique structures, pressures, and culture of the production ecosystem, especially independent and low-budget projects that often lack dedicated HR or legal infrastructure. The initiative combines prevention and response tools, entertainment-specific education, and implementation support to help productions meet their obligations, respond effectively to concerns, and foster environments where everyone—particularly the most vulnerable workers—can do their jobs with dignity and safety.

A 2025 survey conducted by the Hollywood Commission reported that 58% of producers believe programs like Respect on Set make it more likely that harassment or abuse will be addressed on low-budget sets, and 75.7% of producers believe programs like this are essential to implementing safety and accountability standards across all productions, not just studio-backed ones.

The suite of resources includes two types of training: Bystander Intervention, focused on providing accessible strategies and skills to address unwelcome behavior; and Respectful Sets and Harassment-Free Workplaces, a scalable harassment-prevention and bystander intervention training that integrates bystander intervention techniques and unconscious-bias training through the study of real-life scenarios and case studies.

The Hollywood Commission also offers the MyConnex Resources and Reporting Tool for safer workplaces. Users can connect with the commission's ombuds office to get neutral, independent, confidential guidance on their options at myconnex.org/about.

Also available is the Entertainment Industry Helpline, a noncrisis helpline to help entertainment workers address workplace harassment, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse. Details can be found at hollywoodcommission.org/helpline.

HOW RESPECT TRANSFORMS SETS

The measure of any program is its real-world impact. Producers who have rolled out these initiatives credit them for changing both the mood and the outcomes of their shoots.

"This program gives indie productions easy, cost-free access to carefully designed training and support. It is an invaluable resource," say producer Paula Manzanedo and executive producer Amy Jarvel. "It sets the right tone from the very start of prep, and shows our crews that respect matters on this set."

FIVE REASONS TO USE SET ETIQUETTE/RESPECT ON SET RESOURCES

- They're free.
- They help set the tone early. One short session during prep changes the atmosphere.
- They fill the HR gap. Independent sets get clear Codes of Conduct, sample policies, and documentation tools.
- They're built for production. Trainers use real on-set examples, not abstract lectures.
- They make better films and TV. Crews that feel safe are more creative and committed.

"Making *Happy Hours* was one of the best experiences of my career," says Celine Rattray, producer and co-CEO of Maven Screen Media. "The atmosphere on our set was joyful and collaborative, and the team felt safe and protected. The training we did contributed to this."

The experience of these producers underscores a central message: Effective training doesn't just respond to problems—it prevents them and fosters a sense of shared commitment.

"The idea of dedicating part of a production meeting to this training was brilliant," says Derek Bishe of Box Seven, who intends to use Set Etiquette Training on every one of his productions. "It immediately sets a professional tone."

The PGA and the Hollywood Commission continue outreach not only to producers and crew, but also to financiers, regional commissions, insurance providers and festivals. Their advocacy is clear: Every indie production should be aware that these resources exist, and every responsible

producer should consider these programs a new industry baseline.

Independent film is built on trust, improvisation and collaboration. Producers are at the helm, and without their leadership, no story gets told, no set truly runs smoothly, and no emerging talent thrives. The best producers use every tool at their disposal to keep their production on track. By embracing Set Etiquette Training and Respect On Set training and resources, today's indie leaders make a statement: Respect is nonnegotiable.

In a moment when audiences demand more, when emerging professionals are watching for role models, and when every set can make a mark for better or worse, the message is clear: Respect is not a luxury. It is the foundation of creativity, trust and staying power. And it can be built into every production well before the first shot. ■