MASSACHUSETTS
SPEECH & DEBATE LEAGUE

MSDL BELONGING AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

The Massachusetts Speech and Debate League (MSDL) is dedicated to providing a safe and equitable space for all of our members. To that end, we maintain a Belonging and Inclusion Committee.

The Committee is made up of a group of MSDL member coaches who have volunteered to serve as Belonging and Inclusion Advocates (BIA). Belonging and Inclusion Advocates are chosen based on previous experience with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in relation to human resources or educational settings. Some of the sought after qualifications or characteristics our Advocates have are:

- Prior speech and debate experience
- Ability to gain the trust of the speech and debate community
- Committed to a safe and equitable environment
- Skilled at deescalation
- Trained on cultural competence and sensitivity
- Trained on harassment and discrimination, especially in the context of adolescent school environments
- Prior experience working with K-12 students and educators
- Experience with counseling or trauma-informed teaching practices
- Understanding and experience with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Experience as a Title IX investigator
- Experience in human resources
- Empathy, empathy, and more empathy

Our Belonging and Inclusion Advocates will work to make all MSDL members and guests feel seen, heard, and valued. They will also work to ensure that our MSDL Community Standards are upheld. If concerns regarding violation to our Community Standards arise during MSDL Tournaments, our Belonging and Inclusion Advocates will focus on listening to all involved parties and having conversations with members that help us reach our shared goal of creating a safe and equitable speech and debate experience for all.

Our Belonging and Inclusion Committee is a resource offered to all MSDL sanctioned tournaments to ensure a consistent approach and an unwavering commitment to our Community Standards.

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COMMUNITY STANDARDS

The Massachusetts Speech and Debate League (MSDL) affirms and upholds the following values and standards and expects those who take part in our tournaments to do the same:

Inclusivity and Equity

We, the MSDL community, welcome people associating with any intersection(s) of identity and uphold that all members of our community deserve respect. We are made stronger by embracing the differences of our members.

Dignity and Safety

We believe that the welfare and dignity of our community members must be protected and preserved. In practice, this means that all community members (coaches, students, judges, and observers) will be mindful of the impact and consequences of their words and actions. We share responsibility to act with the intention to protect the well-being of others, even when engaging with conflicting ideas and opinions.

Integrity and Honesty

All members of our MSDL community must conduct themselves honorably, and must scrupulously compete within the rules of our events while promoting our community standards.

Collegiality and Fun

We aim to support each other and create camaraderie even while being serious about competition.

PRE-TOURNAMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Statement in Tournament Invitation**. Your tournament invitation is the first sign of your commitment to maintaining a safe environment for attendees. (see “Suggested Communications” section below)
- **Statement in Pre-Tournament Email & Live Doc**. Dedicating space to announcing the BIC in a pre-tournament email and on your tournament live doc will serve as a consistent reminder to the MSDL as the season progresses. (see “Suggested Communications” section below)
- **Identify Belonging and Inclusion Committee spaces**. It is important for all attendees to have a visual marker as to the existence of the Belonging and Inclusion Committee.
    - **Identifiable Intake Location**. The Info Table and BIC Intake can occupy similar spaces of importance, or share space.

    - **Private Inquiry Location**. Should a BIC concern require inquiry, it is imperative that a private space be made available to the committee to conduct conversations of a sensitive nature.
- **Identify Gender Inclusive Restrooms**. Schools typically have single-user restrooms, though they are often designated to binary genders rather than as gender inclusive. Identifying gender inclusive restrooms (or re-assigning restrooms to be gender inclusive) go a long way to making all participants feel safe.
- **Identify a Prayer Space**. It is advantageous to accommodate students who may require a quiet space for personal prayer.
- **Land Acknowledgement Statement**. Crafting a land acknowledgment to include in both the Opening Meeting and Awards Ceremony. For more information on the importance of Land Acknowledgements, please see NativeGov.org. For guidance in constructing your Land Acknowledgment, please see NEEFUSA.org.
- **Signage**. As the existence of a BIC and inclusive spaces are relatively new to our league, we highly suggest posting signs in common spaces which remind attendees of their availability and location. Inclusive spaces identified for tournament use should be well labeled and their locations should be included in building signage and on the Tournament Live Doc.

DURING A TOURNAMENT

- If concerns regarding violations of the MSDL Community Standards arise during a tournament, participants should go to the tournament's Info Table and ask for a BIC intake form to complete.
- The tournament staff at the Info Table will provide the intake form to the participant and alert that day's BIA. If the reporter is a student (regardless of their age), the reporter will be asked to identify a coach or other trusted adult to be present for the conversation.
- If the student does not identify a trusted adult to be present for the conversation, an additional BIA or adult will be made available for the conversation.
- The BIA will contact that coach as soon as feasible to inform them that the student reported a concern.
- Once the intake form has been completed, the BIA will quickly review the intake form to ensure it is a perceived violation of our Community Standards, and not a rules violation or protest. If the BIA determines it is a rules violation or protest, they will inform the reporter about the difference, and pass the matter along to the Tournament Director.
- If the BIA determines the incident is regarding a perceived violation of our Community Standards, the BIA will speak with the reporter about the violation.
- Belonging and Inclusion Advocates are mandated reporters and are required to take action and notify authorities if students engage in behavior that presents clear and imminent

danger to themselves or others, in the case of known or suspected child abuse or neglect, or in the case of known or suspected sexual violence.

- The BIA may not be directly connected to the situation being reported. For example, if they were the judge in a round where a violation took place, they are affiliated with the school of the person reporting the incident, or affiliated with a school or person the incident is about they must find another BIA to handle the incident.
- The BIA should do their best to make the reporter feel safe and heard during the intake conversation. At the end of the conversation, the BIA will inform the reporter of the next steps in the process based on their assessment of the violation and the most appropriate follow up.
- If a follow-up conversation with another attendee is required, the BIA will first contact that attendee's coach on record and explain the incident that has been brought forward.
- The BIA may then offer to have an additional conversation with that coach and the attendee to gain their perspective of what happened and engage in a discussion about upholding our Community Standards.
- As an educational organization it is imperative that follow-ups focus on listening to all involved parties and having conversations with members that help us reach our shared goal of creating a safe and equitable speech and debate experience for all.
- Once all follow-up is completed, the BIA will log a brief, de-identified summary of the incident in the BIC's shared file and shred or otherwise confidentially dispose of the intake form. This log will be reviewed with the MSDL Board twice a season (mid-year and before the State Tournaments) in order to identify trends that may need to be addressed with the full community and monitor the volume of work to determine if additional resources may be needed.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- BIA's will need to attend an initial training session with the MSDL President and Belonging and Inclusion Committee Chair (and others as deemed necessary), to ensure that all committee members are aligned with the goals and expectations of this committee and understand the responsibilities and protocols associated with this critical role.
- A BIA guide will be created to provide guidance, talking points, and suggestions of how to approach intake and follow-up conversations, how to escalate if/when needed, additional resources BIA's can reference, and details for mandated reporting.
- The Belonging and Inclusion Committee is a resource for all MSDL tournaments to ensure our Community Standards are upheld and that we are all working together to create a safe and equitable tournament experience. We know some Tournament Directors and Hosts may have additional protocols and/or standards they plan to use to enhance their tournament experience, which we encourage. We will share this document with all

Tournament Directors and Hosts at the beginning of the season so that we can best partner with them on these efforts.

- Guidance from external DEIJ / Belonging and Inclusion experts may be brought in from time to time to ensure that the MSDL's efforts in this space are aligning with current best practices and that our Advocates continue to get the resources they need to carry out this very important work.

SUGGESTED COMMUNICATIONS

- **Statement in Tournament Invitation:**

  The [Name] Tournament is committed to providing a safe and equitable speech and debate competition. In order to do so, we ask that all attendees be aware of and follow the MSDL Community Standards:

  Inclusivity and Equity

  We, the MSDL community, welcome people associating with any intersection(s) of identity and uphold that all members of our community deserve respect. We are made stronger by embracing the differences of our members.

  Dignity and Safety

  We believe that the welfare and dignity of our community members must be protected and preserved. In practice, this means that all community members (coaches, students, judges, and observers) will be mindful of the impact and consequences of their words and actions. We share responsibility to act with the intention to protect the well-being of others, even when engaging with conflicting ideas and opinions.

  Integrity and Honesty

  All members of our MSDL community must conduct themselves honorably, and must scrupulously compete within the rules of our events while promoting our community standards.

  Collegiality and Fun

  We aim to support each other and create camaraderie even while being serious about competition.

Violations of the MSDL Community Standards may be brought to the attention of our Belonging and Inclusion Committee. For full details on bios and procedures, please visit [URL/location].

- **Statement in Pre-Tournament Email & Live Doc**

  Belonging and Inclusion at [Name] Tournament

  The [Name] Tournament is committed to providing a safe and equitable speech and debate competition. In order to do so, we ask that all attendees be aware of and follow the MSDL Community Standards.

  The Belonging and Inclusion Committee provides a first point of contact for tournament attendees with concerns related to violations of the MSDL Community Standards at the tournament. If you have a concern to report, please visit [location]. You will be asked to complete a brief intake form describing the violation before having a discussion with a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate.

- **Belonging and Inclusion Committee Logo**



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MSDL Belonging and Inclusion Committee Incident Report

Any person who believes they have experienced behavior in violation of the MSDL Community Standards may complete this form to report the incident. After completing the form, a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate will discuss your experience with you and your coach or trusted adult. Belonging and Inclusion Advocates will keep the information shared as confidential as possible, but are required to alert your coach that you have brought forward a concern. They also must take action and notify authorities if students engage in behavior that presents clear and imminent danger to themselves or others, in the case of known or suspected child abuse or neglect, or in the case of known or suspected sexual violence. By completing this report you are certifying that you understand these rules and that the description below accurately represents your experience.

Your Name & Phone Number	
Your School	
Your Role at the Tournament (coach, competitor, judge, etc.)	
Your Coach's Name (if student)	

Location of incident (include room, event, and round number)	
Names or codes of involved person(s):	

Please provide us with a summary of the incident (beginning, middle, end). How did this feel like a violation of Community Standards? What is your desired outcome?