

WACFL Harassment & Discrimination Policy

The Washington Arlington Catholic Forensic League (WACFL) is committed to providing participants, judges, coaches, and volunteers the opportunity to pursue excellence in their endeavors. This opportunity can exist only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. WACFL prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination. Accordingly, all forms of harassment and discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by any applicable federal, state, or local law are prohibited, whether committed by participants, judges, coaches, volunteers, and/or observers. WACFL reserves all rights to subject violators to the full range of sanctions, up to and including removal from the tournament premises and referral to appropriate authorities. Any individual or group of individuals who believe they have been a victim of harassment and/or discrimination should report it to the Tab room or a tournament official immediately.

Any tournament participant, including students, coaches, judges, and observers, who believe they have been the subject of harassment and/or discrimination in violation of the above policy are encouraged to report the alleged violation to tournament officials in the Tab room.

Open-Door Policy at WACFL Tournaments

WACFL is committed to providing safe performance spaces for all competitors and judges. We acknowledge the art of advocacy through performance and debate may be a healing process and/or opportunity to speak on important topics. It is impossible to know all the ways in which content or a performance or debate may unintentionally harm or trigger members of the audience. To better serve our competitors, we will be honoring an open-door practice during all rounds.

The open-door policy means competitors and other audience members may choose to leave or stay in a room when a performance negatively impacts their wellbeing. Competitors may discreetly leave the room (e.g., before, during, or after someone's performance) without question or penalty. Judges may also take steps to protect their well-being by contacting the Tab room or a tournament official before or after a performance.

We recognize that putting mental and physical well-being above community norms is imperfect but important work.

A Note on Content Warnings

Over the last few years, there have been many important and necessary conversations in our activity about the role content warnings (sometimes called "trigger warnings") should play in the speech and debate space. These conversations are still ongoing as the community works toward developing norms, standards, and best practices to make speech and debate the most educational, productive, and safe space it can be for all members of our community.

Please note that at this time, the WACFL does not have any policy mandating content warnings in any of our events.

That said, we recognize that words are powerful and can impact our audience in ways we do, and sometimes do not, intend. If competitors would like to optionally give content warnings, that is permitted and encouraged as a thoughtful good practice.

As a best practice, content warnings should:

- Be relatively short (1-2 sentences), and highlight the potentially sensitive content appropriately.
- In debate, before the beginning of the speech in any off-time roadmap.

- In speech, at the start of the performance. Note, content warnings in speech should count as part of the timed performance.
- Deployment should be similar to what we are used to with TV Parental Guidelines prior to the start of a show on network TV. For example: "Today's presentation involves discussion of gun violence in schools and coarse language." The intent is to allow audience members who cannot listen to these types of arguments for their own personal reasons to be able to remove themselves as appropriate prior to the presentation beginning.

In the event that there is a concern about the content of a speech, please refer to the Open Door Policy or contact the Tab room or a tournament official.