

Health and Safety Policy

Overview

The NOBTS Church Music Department affirms and embraces the stewardship of student health and safety concerns for Church Music students and other NOBTS students who might be engaged with the Church Music Department through ensembles or other musical activity. Our philosophy is rooted in scripture as God has granted to humans the responsibility of stewarding the creative order, with a priority on the care and well being of fellow humans, particularly those granted to communal care.

The primary Health and Safety Concerns as expressed in the NASM Handbook fall within the following three categories: Aural Health and Safety, Vocal Health and Safety, and Musculoskeletal Health and Safety. Every music major at NOBTS is required to watch videos related to these three topics in the NOBTS Learning Management System: Canvas. Every music major is also required to take a test related to the videos and score an 80% or higher on the test before graduating. Students must affirm that they have watched the videos before the end of their first semester at NOBTS.

The area of Aural Health is a critical concern for amateur and professional musicians world-wide. While consistent loud music making has been a concern in modern history (e.g., the emergence of increasingly powerful brass instruments in the Romantic period), a greater 21st century concern is the degree of volume that can be generated by electronic devices. Although no music class at NOBTS requires listening through headphones (e.g., one can access music history listening examples through computer speakers and not headphones), in reality most young adults spend a fair to substantial amount of time listening to music with headphones. Too often, this occurs at rates that are dangerous for students. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publishes very clear guidelines for safe listening. Students are encouraged to be familiar with this website: [CDC Hearing Guidelines](#). Not only are students encouraged to recognize that exposure to a “gas-powered motor,” which is 80 and 85 decibels can cause damage after two hours of constant exposure, they are encouraged to make the transfer to the reality that although headphones may look much less dangerous, the device connected to the headphones has the power to produce decibels at the same level. Furthermore, the Church Music Department expects our students to be ambassadors for aural health, which means we encourage students to teach students in their youth groups and adults in the worship bands about these critical issues. Our expectation for students is that we would create a culture of aural health for our students. Additionally, NOBTS Church Music Ministries provides the following document as an additional resource for aural health and safety concerns: [NOBTS Church Music Health And Safety Supplement](#)

Regarding vocal health, decades of research are now available pertaining to this critical area. NOBTS Church Music Department affirms the various lines of research that have contributed to our current understanding of vocal health. For example, Alexander Technique is

an often-cited area of pedagogy that pertains to vocal health, as the originator of this technique was most concerned about his vocal health as an actor. Although primarily anecdotal, his relaxing techniques for preserving vocal health are still used world-wide by vocalists. In more recent decades the medical community has conducted substantial research to determine vocal problems and to provide both prevention and care for the damaged voice. Information related to vocal care emanating from the research-based health community may be found on the following website: [National Institute on Deafness and Other Communicative Disorders](#). This website reminds the reader of critical take-aways from the past several decades of research. For example, the following items are listed on the government website as ways one would know they have a vocal health issue:

- Has your voice become hoarse or raspy?
- Have you lost your ability to hit some high notes when singing?
- Does your voice suddenly sound deeper?
- Does your throat often feel raw, achy, or strained?
- Has it become an effort to talk?
- Do you find yourself repeatedly clearing your throat?

Furthermore, the government website offers suggestions for improving vocal health and safety:

- Drink plenty of water, especially when exercising.
- If you drink caffeinated beverages or alcohol, balance your intake with plenty of water.
- Take vocal naps—rest your voice throughout the day.
- Use a humidifier in your home. This is especially important in winter or in dry climates. Thirty percent humidity is recommended.
- Avoid or limit use of medications that may dry out the vocal folds, including some common cold and allergy medications. If you have voice problems, ask your doctor which medications would be safest for you to use.

Lifestyle and diet are included among the suggestions from the National Institute on Health and other Communicative Disorders:

- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke. Smoke irritates the vocal folds. Also, cancer of the vocal folds is seen most often in individuals who smoke.
- Avoid eating spicy foods. Spicy foods can cause stomach acid to move into the throat or esophagus, causing heartburn or GERD.

- Include plenty of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables in your diet. These foods contain vitamins A, E, and C. They also help keep the mucus membranes that line the throat healthy.
- Wash your hands often to prevent getting a cold or the flu.
- Get enough rest. Physical fatigue has a negative effect on voice.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise increases stamina and muscle tone. This helps provide good posture and breathing, which are necessary for proper speaking.
- If you have persistent heartburn or GERD, talk to your doctor about diet changes or medications that can help reduce flare-ups.
- Avoid mouthwash or gargles that contain alcohol or irritating chemicals.
- Avoid using mouthwash to treat persistent bad breath. Halitosis (bad breath) may be the result of a problem that mouthwash can't cure, such as low grade infections in the nose, sinuses, tonsils, gums, or lungs, as well as from gastric acid reflux from the stomach.

Practical advice is offered as well regarding daily use of the voice and other activities that affect the voice:

- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke. Smoke irritates the vocal folds. Also, cancer of the vocal folds is seen most often in individuals who smoke.
- Avoid eating spicy foods. Spicy foods can cause stomach acid to move into the throat or esophagus, causing heartburn or GERD.
- Include plenty of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables in your diet. These foods contain vitamins A, E, and C. They also help keep the mucus membranes that line the throat healthy.
- Wash your hands often to prevent getting a cold or the flu.
- Get enough rest. Physical fatigue has a negative effect on voice.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise increases stamina and muscle tone. This helps provide good posture and breathing, which are necessary for proper speaking.
- If you have persistent heartburn or GERD, talk to your doctor about diet changes or medications that can help reduce flare-ups.
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Additionally, NOBTS Church Music Ministries provides the following documents as an additional resource for aural health and safety concerns: [NASM Resource for Vocal and Musculoskeletal Health and Safety](#) and [NOBTS Church Music Health And Safety Supplement](#).

Regarding musculoskeletal issues, once again NOBTS affirms and seeks to communicate the large body of research that has emerged regarding such issues, particularly as pertaining to the musician. Once again, Alexander Technique has proven to be an effective approach to care of the physical body and preventative care. In addition to an emphasis on Alexander Technique, the Church Music Department also seeks to communicate research-based techniques emerging from the last several decades. Once again, the CDC provides a helpful review of musculoskeletal issues common to musicians: [CDC Review of Musculoskeletal Issues](#). For example, this CDC website provides an entire section on carpal tunnel syndrome:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome may affect as many as 1.9 million people, and 300,000 to 500,000 surgeries are performed each year to correct this condition
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 26,794 CTS cases involving days away from work in 2001, representing a median of 25 days away from work compared with 6 days for all nonfatal injury and illness cases. Most cases involved workers who were aged 25–54 (84%), female, and white, non-Hispanic (75%)
- Two occupational groups accounted for more than 70% of all CTS cases in 2001: operators, fabricators, and laborers; and technical, sales, and administrative support

Regulations for workers encouraged by the CDC are as follows:

- Reducing shift length or limiting the amount of overtime
- Changes in job rules and procedures such as scheduling more breaks to allow for rest and recovery
- Rotating workers through jobs that are physically tiring
- Training in the recognition of risk factors for WMSDs and instructions in work practices and techniques that can ease the task demands or burden (e.g., stress and strain)

In the video on musculoskeletal health, the faculty member helps students transfer these government regulations to their practice habits. For example, the students are told in the video that “reducing shift length” or “limiting the amount of overtime” translates into spreading practice on piano or organ out so that injuries do not occur (i.e., the student may not be able to practice for the number of hours he or she wishes to practice). Of course, this can sometimes create tension between what is best for the student long range versus the applied teacher’s education, so the rule when such a conflict might occur is to open a dialogue between a music faculty member, the applied teacher, and the student. In some cases, a recital may need to be postponed so as not to bring permanent damage to the student. Certainly other types of musculoskeletal issues may emerge such as back injuries. Additionally, NOBTS Church Music

Ministries provides the following documents as an additional resource for aural health and safety concerns: [NASM Resource for Vocal and Musculoskeletal Health and Safety](#) and [NOBTS Church Music Health And Safety Supplement](#).

Regarding “instruction on the use, proper handling, and operation of potentially dangerous materials, equipment, and technology as applicable to specific program offerings or experiences” (*NOBTS* II.f.1.i) no other concerns pertain to current NOBTS academic programs or practices associated with NOBTS Church Music.

Regarding equipment purchases, a range of electronic instruments are currently owned by NOBTS and continue to be purchased. All guidelines above pertaining to concern over aural health and safety pertain to the use of these instruments. The most consistent exposure to these instruments occurs through chapel band. Each semester the music faculty member in charge of chapel band provides access to this document and provides a review of the document information. Most students participating in chapel are also music majors and are thus required to observe this information, including videos on the three primary topics above, as well as take a test on the topic before graduating from NOBTS. While some musculoskeletal issues could emerge in use of equipment, these are primarily related to standard concerns for keyboard addressed above, in the [NOBTS Church Music Health And Safety Supplement](#), and in videos provided in Canvas. Instruments are rarely moved for student use as rock band instruments are primarily used in chapel. In cases where a back injury might occur, students are readily encouraged to report such an incident to the Dean of Students office and seek medical help immediately.

Regarding use of facilities because there are no orchestral or band rehearsals in Sellers music building that occur as part of a class or on a regular basis, there are no concerns for such rehearsals. That is, only in rare instances would a rehearsal occur that involves orchestral or band instruments (e.g., dress rehearsal for a choir performance). Again, as noted above, worship band rehearsals occur primarily in the chapel under the supervision of both an NOBTS faculty member and a media director, who is an NOBTS MMCM graduate, and thus quite acquainted with NOBTS Church Music policy regarding aural health and safety. Furthermore, use of acoustic pianos or voice are the primary applied instrument sounds emanating from practice areas. The relatively small number of students taking voice, piano, and/or organ is more than amply supplied by the historic Sellers Music building, with healthy distance between practice areas to accommodate any reasonable concern regarding aural health and safety.

Regarding provision of resources, the primary resource for urgent concerns is the Dean of Students office. For example, if a student had a concern regarding carpal tunnel syndrome, he or she would contact the Dean of Students office for assistance in determining a good choice for medical care. New Orleans Baptist Health Care also provides a location on campus. Students may avail themselves of this care as a starting point for concerns that may ultimately require specialist care (e.g, vocal health concerns). The New Orleans Baptist Health Care physicians and nurse practitioners are well connected to the larger health care system in New Orleans and capable of making sound recommendations. However, the Church Music faculty consistently

seek to communicate their accessibility for students to express concerns regarding health and safety in any of the areas reviewed above. As noted above, any of the music faculty are readily available to serve as liaison between students and applied faculty to determine a healthy course of action should a concern arise in any of the three primary areas of concern for Church Music students.

Emotional/Psychological Health and Safety

The NOBTS family is concerned about your mental and emotional health needs. The following practices can substantially emotional/psychological health under normal circumstances:

- 1) Get plenty of sleep
- 2) Find community
- 3) Cultivate a consistent devotional Life
- 4) Seek to cultivate a prayerful and thankful spirit (Colossians 4:2)
- 5) Have trusted people you can reach out to for difficult conversations
- 6) Don't be hesitant to reach out for professional help if needed

While the campus does not offer medical or psychiatric care, we do offer access to the Leeke Magee Christian Counseling Center, where students can receive free and confidential counseling for many mental and emotional health needs provided by counseling students in supervised training. If you are experiencing symptoms of mental or emotional health problems you may contact the Leeke Magee center at 504.816.8004 or lmccc@nobts.edu, or just stop by the center in the LifeSongs building on the front corner of the campus to make an appointment.

Health and Safety Policy for Non-Music Majors, Office Workers, and Custodial Staff

The policy for non-majors participating in music classes is to provide an orientation for all ensembles at the beginning of each semester regarding aural, vocal, musculoskeletal and emotional/psychological Health and Safety. The concise review provided above is used as a guide for this orientation: [Music Student Handbook](#), p. 36. Moreover, NOBTS Church Music only offers ensemble instruction in choral music, thus decreasing the likelihood of aural exposure leading to damage based on the CDC guidelines provided above. However, to encourage a culture of health and safety regarding aural, vocal, musculoskeletal health, and emotional/psychological Health and Safety, all ensemble syllabi include a link to this document as well as the [NOBTS Church Music Health And Safety Supplement](#). Although not a class, because chapel band could expose students to relatively high decibel levels and because a range

of students sing in chapel band, all worship band members are provided with a Health and Safety Policy review, using the same concise review as used with choral ensembles noted above, [Music Student Handbook](#), p. 36. Furthermore, all applied instructor, whether full-time or adjunct, are expected to make students aware of these two critical documents and review the primary points related to their applied area from these documents with their students (e.g., keyboard applied teachers are encouraged to review the primary health and safety concerns related to musculoskeletal issues). Applied teachers are encouraged to recognize that this review of Health and Safety standards is particularly important for non-majors, as all majors are required to watch the full set of videos and complete the NOBTS Health and Safety Test, as noted above. However, applied faculty are made aware that students are encouraged to raise concerns with applied teachers and the Church Music office, if necessary or helpful, regarding concerns with aural, vocal, musculoskeletal, and emotional/psychological Health and Safety concerns. Furthermore, the policy for all classes including non-music students is to provide access to and encourage the use of both the concise review of vocal, aural, and musculoskeletal Health and Safety Policies ([Music Student Handbook](#), p. 36) and the [NOBTS Church Music Health and Safety Policy](#).

The policy for full-time faculty is that the Church Music Coordinator ensures that all full-time faculty are aware of the four critical areas of Health and Safety required as NASM standards: aural, vocal, musculoskeletal, and emotional/psychological Health and Safety. Furthermore, the Coordinator makes new faculty aware of the [NOBTS Church Music Health and Safety Policy](#) and the concise review of vocal, aural, and musculoskeletal Health and Safety Policies ([Music Student Handbook](#), p. 36). Furthermore, the Church Music Coordinator works with faculty to ensure that all adjuncts are provided with orientation to the [NOBTS Church Music Health and Safety Policy](#) and the concise review of vocal, aural, and musculoskeletal Health and Safety Policies ([Music Student Handbook](#), p. 36). The record of provision and orientation to these documents is maintained by the Church Music office.

The policy for workers in the music building, including administrative assistants and custodial staff, is to provide an orientation for vocal, aural, musculoskeletal, and emotional/psychological health. The primary area of emphasis is aural, musculoskeletal, and emotional/psychological health as NOBTS does not require office workers or custodial staff to sing in ensembles. As is

the case for ensemble orientation and chapel band orientation to NOBTS Health and Safety Policies, the document used for orientation is the concise review of vocal, aural, musculoskeletal, and emotional/psychological standards provided in the [Music Student Handbook](#), p. 36.