



**West Virginia**  
Thespians

**STATE THESPIAN OFFICER  
HANDBOOK**

UPDATED Nov 10, 2025

**Questions about this handbook should be directed to STO Advisor:  
Kelli Cooper at [kelli.cooper@k12.wv.us](mailto:kelli.cooper@k12.wv.us)**

### **Who We Are**

The West Virginia Thespians is the state chapter level of the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA). The EdTA is the home of the International Thespian Society, the honor society for educational theatre. On the state level we strive to support educational theatre in all aspects.

### **Purpose of this Handbook**

The purpose of *This Handbook* is to provide a collective document for all of the activities in which West Virginia State Thespian Officers engage. As our activities may change from year to year, this is a living document, and items may change at any time. However, we will clearly communicate changes to our members as they occur.

## **STO Job Description**

State Thespian Officers (STOs) serve as the student voice for West Virginia Thespians. They are strong leaders in their troupes who positively impact West Virginia Thespians for their peers across the state. They work hand in hand with the Adult Board (AB) to plan, implement, and serve during all conferences and events. They promote creativity, collaboration, respect, and artistry in everything they do. STOs can be expected to travel throughout the state to various conferences or to attend virtual meetings, so STOs need to be reliable and flexible with their schedules.

## **STO Officers**

STO Officers will be voted on by the STO Election Committee. Once the board is elected, STO officers will then serve of the following committees:

- Outreach Committee
- Opening & Closing Ceremonies Committee
- Attendance Committee
- Thespy Showcase Committee

## **STO Code of Conduct**

- STOs are model students. They display the utmost amount of respect for their peers, adults, and surrounding facilities. STOs should model appropriate behavior at all Thespian events.
- STOs are leaders and collaborators beyond their troupe's requirements. STOs work with their fellow Thespians and troupe directors on various projects with deadlines. STOs are expected to make all deadlines for their responsibilities. If they cannot, they are expected to communicate their impending late completion to the STO Advisor with ample time for adjustments to be made.
- STOs are expected to be in good standing with their home Thespian troupe and school. A STO can be removed at any time based on behavior or failure to complete duties for their troupe or school. West

Virginia Thespians honors the individual school and Thespian troupe expectations and consequences.

### **STO Duties**

- STO members are required to attend STO planning meetings, Area Festival, and the State Festival. Attendance is mandatory. No more than one absence is excused in advance by the STO Advisor. Inconsistent attendance will be treated as a resignation. Excused absences are considered to be an absence for illness, death in the family, or school related event.
- STO members must secure their own transportation to and from all of the STO events listed in the above duty. STO members must understand that these events occur all over the state of West Virginia. Also, STO members must have adequate internet connection to be able to attend virtual events.
- STO members must act as the student ambassadors at the area, state and international level, encouraging troupe participation.
- STO members must advise the Adult Board (AB) about student concerns and seek input in our State organization.
- STO members must serve their term beginning at the State Thespian Festival and conclude at the State Thespian Festival the following year.

### **STO General Calendar**

STO will meet monthly between August and the State Festival (April-March). The meetings below are those that coincide with adult board (AB) meetings. Meetings are usually held mid-state as a central location for all board members. STOs should be aware that this means there is a travel commitment.

- Fall STO/AB Meeting (Sept)
- Winter STO/AB Meeting (January)
- Area Festivals (Usually in February)
- State Festival (Usually in April-March)
- Spring STO/AB Meeting (May)

## **STO Applicant Guidelines**

- Applicants need to be inducted Thespians in order to apply.
- There is no set amount of “involvement” or “experience” or Thespian Points that a student needs to have in order to apply or be selected as a State Thespian Officer.
- The applicants must be in high school during the year they apply.
- The STO board does not have a minimum or maximum amount of students. Students are selected based on their leadership abilities regardless of the total number.
- Schools can submit as many applicants as they wish. The best applicants will be selected regardless of what school they attend.
- STO members serve one term after being elected; however, STO members may reapply to be elected the following year.

## **Application Process**

- Applicants will submit a digital application through a Google Form process. This application includes general information, short answer responses, and long answer responses.
- A recommendation letter from their teacher should be sent to [kelli.cooper@k12.wv.us](mailto:kelli.cooper@k12.wv.us)
  - ◆ It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that their Troupe Director has been given enough time to write the recommendation letter and send it to the STO Advisor by December 31, 2025. West Virginia Thespians highly suggest applicants communicate their pending application so Troupe Directors can plan accordingly.
- Applicants must submit a video to the STO Advisor prior to December 31st. The video must consist of the applicant’s name, school, and why they would like to be a STO.
- Applicants may be narrowed down by the STO Election Committee. After the winter meeting, the applicants will receive an email stating if they have been elected.
- Applicants are encouraged to “shadow” the current STOs at Area Festival to get a better understanding of the position. All interested applicants need to make arrangements to shadow through the STO

Advisor via email. However, if a virtual festival is to take place, applicants should be prepared to help with all virtual duties, such as but not limited to, performing an etiquette skit via virtual platform, virtually announce shows, promote virtual festivals via social media and word of mouth, and help with technical support.

- The new STOs are announced via email, and online.

### **Area Festival**

- STOs must attend their respective Area's Festival if one is held
- STOs are expected to arrive at the Area Festival early so they can welcome the troupes as they arrive. STOs should spread themselves out between performances and during lunch to interact with other troupes.
- STOs will introduce each play with an introduction provided by the director.
  - ◆ The STOs are expected to review these passages so they confidently and accurately present them to the audience.
- The STOs help hand out awards at the end of the festival.

### **State Festival**

- STOs are required to attend all of State Festival whether it be a live event or virtual event.
- STOs are welcome to be in their school's play, bring tech projects, perform in IEs, audition for scholarships, etc. STO weekend duties are planned around STOs' performance times.
- STOs are expected to attend the STO meeting prior to State Conference to help finalize plans and jobs.
- STOs create an Opening Ceremony skit that explains the rules and expectations for the delegates.
- STOs will take attendance at every workshop and play during a live event. They will also count attendance and award attendance prizes. During a virtual event attendance is not counted, but should be encouraged. There will still be randomly awarded attendance prizes.
- STO will plan and host student activities for Friday night.
- STOs introduce each play with an introduction provided by the director.
  - ◆ The STOs are expected to review these passages so they confidently and accurately present them to the audience.

## **International Thespian Festival**

- Attending the International Thespian Festival is not required to be a STO, but it is highly encouraged.

## **Dress Code**

In the interest of presenting the STO as community role models students must adhere to a simple dress code. Students can wear casual clothing; however, students must look neat and clean. Students should not wear clothing that represents gang activity, drugs or alcohol, or any other illegal activities. Clothing should cover the students body respectfully.

## **Online Presence**

West Virginia Thespians are committed to providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for all meeting participants, and so in turn STOs are vital to make this happen. STOs are expected to abide by this Virtual Programs Code of Conduct. This Policy applies to all West Virginia Thespians meeting-related events, including those sponsored by organizations other than West Virginia Thespians but held in conjunction with West Virginia Thespian events, on public or private platforms. West Virginia Thespians has zero-tolerance for any form of discrimination or harassment, including but not limited to sexual harassment by participants or out members at our meetings. If you experience harassment or hear of any incidents of unacceptable behavior, West Virginia Thespians asks that you inform Martha Loudon, Chapter Director ([mbloudon@yahoo.com](mailto:mbloudon@yahoo.com)), so that we can take the appropriate action. STOs, like all festival attendees, are required to fill out the Online Events Consent Form and Social Media Guidelines and Acceptable Use Policy. Again, STOs are to represent themselves as respectable, responsible leaders.

## **STO Removal Process**

- If a STO fails to comply with any of the aforementioned expectations and code of conduct, the following procedures will take place based on a 3 Chances model.

- ❖ STO receives a formal warning from the STO Advisor in hopes to rectify the situation and move forward with positive results.
- ❖ STO and Troupe Director receive a formal warning stating that the problem has not been resolved or a new one has surfaced.
- ❖ STO is removed from the board. The now former STO is welcome to attend any and all West Virginia Thespian Conferences, but is not considered a member of its leadership team.

### **Liability in regards to travel**

- STOs, their parents/legal guardians, and their Troupe Director understand that all STOs are required to provide their own transportation to and from all Thespian Conferences. West Virginia Thespians hold no liability in regard to damage and/or injury to self and/or personal vehicle.
- STOs are welcome to ride with their troupes on school buses to conferences when possible.
- STOs and parents/legal guardians are to sign a permission slip for STOs to travel in the STO Advisor's personal vehicle when possible.
  - ❖ STO Advisor does her best to assist with travel by car pooling when possible.
  - ❖ Parents/Legal guardians are welcome to decline the offer.
- Incidents of unsafe weather will be taken into consideration for STO travel. In the event that the roads are not deemed safe for young drivers, the STOs will not be required to attend that particular Thespian event in person but may have to attend a meeting online. Those decisions will be made by the STO Advisor at that time.

### **Communication**

The STO Advisor communicates with STO Board Members via email and Slack. STOs must be willing to provide an email address that is accurate and checked regularly. STOs are expected to check, read, and respond to emails within a timely manner (less than 3 days). Board members are expected to stick to due dates. Because of the nature of STO Board Members living across the whole state of West Virginia proper planning is conducted through email/Slack. Lack of response is lack of planning, which is not acceptable. As with all aspects of being a Board Member, lack of communication will also follow a 3 Chance model.