



**Public Statement - March 18, 2025**

**To Our Supporters, Families, and the Community,**

The C.R.O.W. Board of Directors is pleased to share an independent review of recent concerns regarding Children's Repertory of Oregon Workshops, Inc. ("C.R.O.W.") has been completed.

Gunderson Services, LLC was hired by the C.R.O.W. Board of Directors to conduct an impartial review and investigate oral and written complaints received at a Board Meeting held on December 11th, 2024.

Gunderson Services, LLC investigated any claim for which criminal or civil action could be brought.

The Board takes all concerns seriously and responds appropriately in accordance with our policies and applicable law.

**The investigator's findings fully reaffirmed the integrity of our organization and the dedicated individuals who make our work possible.**

Excerpts from the final report provided to C.R.O.W. by Gunderson Services, LLC on March 13th, 2025:

*"On February 10th, 2025, Gunderson Services, LLC was contracted by [C.R.O.W.'s legal counsel] to conduct a limited and targeted investigation into specific allegations made against Children's Repertory of Oregon Workshops, Inc. (C.R.O.W.), its staff, and volunteers regarding inappropriate conduct related to its programs and services. This investigation was limited to the time period beginning on or about March 1st, 2019, to the present day."*

*"Gunderson Services LLC: This Firm has an extensive background and experience working with the entertainment industry. Ranging from being on set for major productions, including but not limited to Sony Studios, filming on distant locations for major feature films, off Broadway shows, Junior National Dance competitions; private protection services for members of the entertainment and professional sports industry as well as for international corporate executives, national news outlets and people in governmental positions; locating missing, exploited and/or runaway children; interviewing 100s of youth in relation to family law and criminal cases where they are listed as victims or witnesses. Gunderson Services, LLC, for over 20 years, has investigated 1,000s of cases and testified often for the prosecution or for the defense of individuals involved in criminal and civil cases in the United States. Gunderson Services LLC does not attempt to hold itself as a legal resource center or Human Resource Services firm. Gunderson Services LLC provides services in investigation, safety, security and threat management."*

## **Complaint about an alleged inappropriate phrase said to a minor:**

*“The investigator for OTIS closed at screening. Previous investigations showed Gunderson Services, LLC that there were no additional investigative services needed. This had already been closed and found to be false or lacking consistency in the telling of events, times, places, people involved.”*

## **Investigator’s Summary:**

*“After studying the case file provided to Gunderson Services LLC and taking the appropriate investigative steps it deemed necessary, many of the specific allegations made against C.R.O.W., its staff, and volunteers appeared to be of non-criminal acts or complaints that allowed for no follow-up or path to investigate as they were made anonymously. For the claims that are of the possibility of a criminal act or activity, Gunderson Services, LLC investigated those claims through electronic and physical research, interviews of potential witnesses and further consultations with Client. Gunderson Services, LLC found that through the investigation, it was unable to find that the complaints made are substantiated, accurate or at times trustworthy.”*

The full report is available for review by appointment with C.R.O.W.’s Board President, subject to appropriate confidentiality agreements and privacy considerations.

To schedule an appointment to review, please contact Lori Grimmett: [lgrimmnett@crowkids.com](mailto:lgrimmnett@crowkids.com).

## **Context:**

The C.R.O.W. Board of Directors provided Gunderson Services, LLC with an audio recording of a Board meeting held on December 11th, 2024, at which five presenters expressed various minor and major concerns and had the opportunity to openly ask questions. Questions were recorded by the Board Secretary and a written response was sent by email to the five individuals on January 8th, 2025.

It is imperative to note that the Board provided these five individuals with a clear timeline of 30 days for the written response. Prior to receiving (and also after receiving) the written response, certain information was disseminated across various public platforms that did not accurately reflect C.R.O.W.’s operations or practice.

## **Evidence and Scope of Investigation:**

In addition to the audio recording of the December 11th meeting, the Board provided Gunderson Services, LLC with a large case file of evidence including additional audio recordings, screenshots, emails, photos, videos, documents, and a packet of written testimonials entitled “stand for justice” which contained several anonymous testimonials. In spite of the presenters’ request that the Board keep the “stand for justice” testimonials confidential, the presenters themselves emailed “stand for justice” to many people in the community.

The investigator’s findings did not substantiate the claims made in the “stand for justice” testimonials.

Two allegations regarding inappropriate words/actions around minors were both closed at screening by authorities at the Office of Training, Investigations, and Safety (OTIS/OR Child Abuse Hotline). Please see Gunderson Services, LLC's investigatory statement above.

The Board and members of C.R.O.W. staff are properly educated on child safety and mandatory reporting requirements. Our organization takes child safety extremely seriously.

Continuing safety training and education for new staff and volunteers is planned.

The Board has taken action on several constructive comments and suggestions for operational improvement, including the completion of the items below.

The Board and C.R.O.W. leadership maintained appropriate confidentiality during the course of the investigation to ensure its fairness. The Board felt that silence was the best course of action to fully protect the integrity and neutrality of the investigatory process. We recognize that this may have caused some public speculation.

### **Organizational Improvements:**

While the investigation was underway, the Board thoroughly evaluated policies and procedures to ensure the highest standard of operations, including frequent, ongoing communication with legal counsel.

C.R.O.W.'s policies were found to be more than sufficient, but where there were opportunities to strengthen and improve, the Board took action including but not limited to:

1. Revamped and strengthened participant handbook, general policies, code of conduct, youth protection policy, and incident reporting procedures.
2. Clarified safety protocols and training for staff and volunteers.
3. Updated communication pathways for the general public, to assure prompt response to any questions or concerns.
4. Strengthened internal record keeping.
5. Sought legal review of organizational due process.
6. Held a meeting with the City of Florence, Florence Events Center, and Last Resort Players to seek a better solution for gender-neutral dressing room space in the publicly owned facility that we rent for our major productions.

C.R.O.W. will continue to assess best practices to strengthen our ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability, and, most importantly, the safety and well-being of our young performers.

The youth and families we serve will always remain our top priority.

## **Comprehensive Review of C.R.O.W.'s Executive Director, Melanie Heard:**

The C.R.O.W. Board of Directors expresses its absolute confidence in Melanie Heard, whose leadership continues to be instrumental in guiding C.R.O.W. forward. Based on the comprehensive review conducted by both the Board and Gunderson Services, LLC, the Board maintains complete support for Melanie Heard, and fully recognizes that several attempts to discredit and/or damage her reputation were made. The Board recognizes that not all of the complaints fall into this category.

### **Conclusions:**

Recent events have deeply impacted C.R.O.W. on many levels including financial, operational, and reputational.

All allegations received have been thoroughly investigated. This investigation has provided important clarity regarding all claims presented to the C.R.O.W. Board.

C.R.O.W. remains committed to constructive dialogue but clearly states that gossip, slander, libel, defamation, and bullying will never be tolerated by our organization.

C.R.O.W. is completely committed to our non-profit organization's mission statement:

"C.R.O.W. aims to inspire, educate, and empower youth through professional caliber arts education and performance opportunities."

C.R.O.W. will resume regular operations starting in Summer of 2025, and we eagerly look forward to welcoming back the incredible children and families we serve.

The C.R.O.W. Board deeply appreciates the support of our community and all those who believe in the important work we do.

The C.R.O.W. Board, Leadership, Staff, and Volunteers are excited to move forward stronger than ever, focused on the bright future ahead.

### **Our children need us.**

Please visit [www.crowkids.com](http://www.crowkids.com) for events and opportunities to be shared soon.

**Sincerely,**

**Board of Directors**

**Children's Repertory of Oregon Workshops, Inc. (C.R.O.W.)**