



OKLAHOMA YOUTH ORCHESTRAS

Outstanding Students. Amazing Music.

Family Handbook

2026-27

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General Information

Office and Contact Information

OKYO operates with a hybrid staff, with team members working both remotely and in the office while also supporting rehearsals, performances, and meetings throughout the community. We recommend calling ahead before visiting our office to ensure someone is available to assist you.

If you reach our voicemail, please leave a message and we'll return your call as soon as we can. Email is typically the fastest and most reliable way to reach our team.

General Inbox: Info@okyomusic.org

Phone: 405-232-1199

Website: www.okyomusic.org

Mailing Address: Oklahoma Youth Orchestras – 2501 North Blackwelder – Oklahoma City, OK 73106

Visiting Our Office: Our office is located on the 3rd floor of the Kirkpatrick Fine Arts Building on the campus of Oklahoma City University. Visit www.okyomusic.org/contact for more information on how to find our office – please call ahead before visiting.

Office Hours are Monday from 10am to 4pm and after 4pm, staff will be onsite at the Bass School of Music for rehearsal. Tuesday through Friday hours are from 9am to 4pm – please call ahead before visiting. The office operates on modified hours during the summer.

Communication Policy

OKYO communicates with students and parents **primarily via email. This includes all concert information and membership dues billing/statements.** Please be sure to keep the OKYO office updated with any email address changes. If you feel you are not receiving regular communications from our office, please be sure to check your junk/spam email and add us to your safe sender list.

In addition, OKYO uses a direct group messaging app to share more timely communications. Information on signing up for ensemble specific messaging groups will be available in August.

Our website is your best resource for the most up-to-date and helpful information. This information includes:

- [Artistic Team and Administrative Team](#)
- [Ensembles](#)
- [Calendar of Rehearsals and Concerts](#)
- [Special Scholarships](#)
- [Membership Dues](#)

OKYO Mission

Through quality instrumental music education programs for students and accessible cultural offerings for the community, Oklahoma Youth Orchestras provides opportunities for artistic excellence to central and western Oklahoma.

Our organization is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit supported by a combination of sources including membership dues, volunteerism, concert admission, grants, sponsorships, and individual donations.

Core Values

1. Music benefits everyone

We provide musical opportunities for students regardless of personal, family, or financial background. While our programs are dedicated to advancing musical knowledge for students ages 8 to 18, we believe a person can be neither too young nor too old to benefit from learning something new. Additionally we believe exploring music and attending live concerts brings value to people of all ages.

2. Commitment to excellence

There is room for a variety of ensembles and musical styles within this commitment, and OKYO Artistic Team are highly trained educators to navigate this. While we do hope our work and our students' concerts inspire people of all ages to get involved with music, we provide pathways to excellence for students who have already begun their musical journey, specifically students who can read music and have been playing for at least one year. This commitment to excellence means that, by participating in OKYO, our students are already above average, choosing to pursue greatness through hard work and dedication.

3. Music education is valuable

We expect a lot from our families as our highly-trained team provides pathways toward excellence. Our students and families are dedicated and hard-working in pursuit of the numerous proven benefits of music education. Likewise, our students' concerts are valuable, representing many hours of individual and collective preparation. Most of our concerts have a modest ticket fee to help cover costs.

4. Playing It Forward

We believe in the power of music to bring people together and lift up those who are struggling. Our OKYO team leads by example and encourages students to get outside the practice and rehearsal rooms and engage in outreach and community service. This includes mentoring younger students and seeking out opportunities to meet the needs in their communities by giving their time and talents. Music can unite people across generations and backgrounds and opens up doors to new opportunities.

Eligibility Requirements

All public, parochial, private, and homeschool students are eligible to participate in OKYO. **Members are required to participate in their school's instrumental music program, if available.** OKYO is not a substitute for the daily (we hope) school music experience, and we work with local directors to be certain this requirement is fulfilled. Exceptions due to

school scheduling conflicts will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the OKYO team in communication with the school's ensemble director. Students who are concurrently enrolled in their high school and a local college/university are required to participate in an instrumental music ensemble at either institution, if available. It is strongly encouraged that concurrently enrolled students continue with their high school ensemble unless an unavoidable scheduling conflict occurs.

Acceptance of placement in OKYO is a season-long commitment (August/September through May). **Attendance at all rehearsals and performances is expected.** The 2026-27 Calendar is available [here](#) and will be updated as changes occur. Additional performances may be added throughout the season with significant notification. Any student's decision to terminate their membership mid-season will be reviewed by the OKYO team on a case-by-case basis and may result in ineligibility to re-audition for the following year.

All membership dues paid are non-refundable and payment plans must be paid in full by May 1. Refunds will NOT be granted to families who fail to comply with our Code of Conduct. A family's account with OKYO must be in good financial standing before enrolling.

Families should have a clear understanding of the time and financial commitments required by participation in OKYO before accepting and enrolling. If there are any questions or concerns, please contact our Program Manager of Students and Families.

Code of Conduct

All participants of OKYO, both students and families alike, represent the organization through their behavior and actions. It is important to respect the rights and property of others. We expect each student to use common sense in avoiding situations and behavior that would put themselves or others at risk. The following expectations are required of all students and families participating in OKYO. Violation of this Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action including, but not limited to, financial responsibility for any misconduct resulting in damage, immediate removal from a rehearsal, ineligibility to perform on a concert, reseating within the section, expulsion from the organization and/or inability to re-audition for the organization in the future.

Behavioral Expectations

1. Students/Families will treat all OKYO staff members, conductors, volunteers, visitors, and other students/families with respect. All accusations of harassment and bullying will be investigated.
2. Students will be under the general supervision of OKYO staff and conductors, and they will follow all verbal, posted, and written instructions given by OKYO. Failure to follow instructions will be cause for disciplinary action.
3. Students will turn off and put away all electronic devices during rehearsals, with the exception of tuners. OKYO reserves the right for team members to confiscate electronic devices that are being used improperly and return them at the end of rehearsal.
4. Students will respect and treat with care all property of OKYO and its partners used during rehearsals and performances. If a student intentionally or willfully damages or steals any property of OKYO or its partners, the organization will seek restitution from the student and parent/guardian for such property.

5. Students found to be using, selling, or in the possession of tobacco, alcohol, or controlled substances will be immediately removed from rehearsal, expelled from the organization without refund, and turned over to the proper authorities.
6. Any threat or act of physical harm toward any OKYO team members, volunteers, visitors, or other students will result in immediate removal from rehearsal and expulsion from the organization without refund. If necessary, the proper authorities will be contacted.
7. Any harassment by the family of a student toward OKYO team members, volunteers, or other families will result in the dismissal of the student from the organization without refund.
8. Violation of any local, state, or federal law will result in immediate removal from rehearsal or performance, expulsion from the organization without refund and turned over to the proper authorities.

Health and Safety Policy

It is a privilege to be able to rehearse music together, especially in the state-of-the-art facilities at Oklahoma City University. OKYO Leadership looks to the policies set forth by the CDC and Oklahoma City University to help us mitigate the risks of public health threats for our students and our team. OKYO has a responsibility to protect the health of our students and staff, and in doing so, we also protect our ability to safely make music together in person.

What happens if I am not feeling well?

If a student is feeling ill, please complete an [Absence Report Form](#) and do not attend rehearsal.

Background Check Policy

For the safety and security of our families, all employees of OKYO are subject to a background check.

Communication

OKYO communicates with students and families primarily through email and a weekly newsletter, the OKYO Weekly Update. The Weekly Update is typically launched in August of each year, and should arrive in your inbox on Thursday of each week. The newsletter will contain important information about upcoming events, rehearsal reminders and other relevant information that is important to each student's success in OKYO. The most recent Weekly Update can also be found linked in the footer of our website: okyomusic.org under "Current Students."

In addition, OKYO uses a direct group messaging app to share more timely communications. Information on signing up for ensemble specific messaging groups will be available in August.

Attendance Policy and Check-In

A musical ensemble is a unique team requiring faithful attendance by every one of its members. Any absence has an adverse impact on the quality of preparation and performance. Check your calendar before the first rehearsal of each

concert cycle and notify the office staff (info@okyomusic.org) if you are unable to meet the requirements. To help you plan, please review the [Season Schedule](#) posted on the website.

Reporting an Absence

Attendance at all rehearsals is expected. In the event an absence is necessary, the student is responsible for filling out an **Absence Report at least one week prior** to the expected absence. Absences due to illness or family emergencies can be excused, but should still be reported as soon as possible.

A link to the [Absence Report Form](#) can be found in the footer of our website as well as in the Current Students page (okyomusic.org/current-students).

Examples of excused absences: conflicts with a *required* school event, illness, attendance of funeral, car trouble

Examples of an unexcused absence: 'too much homework', a difficult test at school coming up, birthday party, any absence that is not reported through an absence request form or reported and approved by email

If a student's absence will be counted as unexcused, an email notification will be sent to both the parents and the student.

Concert & Sound Check Attendance

Attendance at all concerts and concert-day sound check is required. Please schedule college visits or other extra-curricular activities accordingly. Sound checks are the final rehearsal before the concert and are crucial for the ensemble to give their best performance at the concert. If a student must miss a sound check, it is at the discretion of the conductor if the student can perform at the concert. Please communicate with your conductor and submit an Absence Report if you know you will miss the sound check.

If for an unexpected reason a member cannot perform at a concert, it is up to the conductor to decide whether the member may continue to rehearse during that particular concert cycle.

Excessive Absences

If a musician reaches **two excused absences (or one unexcused absence) in a concert cycle**, the musician's conductor will consider specific reasons for their previous absences, and the student may be notified that an additional absence can result in one or more of these actions:

- 1) change in seating (moving to the back of a string section or being taken off a principal part in winds or brass, e.g.)
- 2) removal from the orchestra for the concert cycle
- 3) require a playing test

OKYO has a proud record of being one of the leading youth orchestras in the country, and excellent attendance is essential to keep our quality high.

Any student with excessive absences (excused or unexcused) may be asked not to play the remaining rehearsals or the corresponding concert. Additionally, the musician's participation in future concert cycles in the season is at the conductor's discretion.

Tardies

If you know you will be late for rehearsal, fill out an absence report as soon as possible! Excessive tardies (3+) will be reviewed by the musician's conductor and OKYO staff and can result in any of the consequences listed under 'Excessive Absences.' Arriving late to rehearsal, leaving a rehearsal early, returning late after rehearsal breaks, or failing to check in can also be counted as 'tardy.'

Repeated violations of the attendance policy can result in a member being dismissed from the organization without a membership dues refund. Students may contact the office to appeal, and a decision will be made in consultation with the conductor about the consequences for excessive absences.

Student Check-In

Students participating in OYO, OYP, OYW, Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia, Studio Rockestra, Festival Winds, and Festival Strings OKC are required to check in before each rehearsal at the concession stand in the Bass School of Music. All students are to check in with plenty of time to be in their rehearsal space, in their seat and ready to begin at least five minutes before rehearsal begins.

Students participating in Festival Strings Norman and Edmond will check-in with their teacher or a volunteer at rehearsal.

Musician's Guide to Success...Rehearsal Expectations:

- Arrive at least 10 minutes before your rehearsal start time to check-in, unpack, tune, & warm-up.
- Always bring a pencil, your music, and any necessary accessories.
- Please respect the rehearsal rooms by picking up around your chair. This includes your belongings and all trash.
- No food or beverages, except bottled water, are allowed in rehearsal spaces.
- All musicians are expected to help break-down the rehearsal space at the conclusion of rehearsal, i.e. stack chairs, pick-up trash, etc. and to clean-up their own space.
- Arrive at least 15-20 minutes before sound checks to check-in (if necessary), find your green room, tune, & warm-up.

Membership Dues

Participation in OKYO is a season-long commitment (August/September through May). We encourage you to talk as a family about this commitment as membership dues refunds ARE NOT available to students who choose to leave the program without completing the year. Please evaluate your yearly schedule in order to be sure that you will be able to fulfill this time commitment. In very rare cases will a refund of membership dues be granted to families withdrawing from the program. Prorated dues may be offered to students who enroll after the season has started based on the number of concerts completed. **Failure to complete registration and payment of membership dues for any ensemble will result in expulsion from the program.**

Discounts*

Multiple Students: Families with more than one student participating in OKYO ensembles receive a 15% discount on membership dues for each additional student. The discount will be taken from the less expensive dues. This discount does not apply to an individual student participating in multiple ensembles.

**additional programs made available are not subject to these discounts. Additional fees, rentals and purchases such as merchandise must be paid in full at the time of rental/purchase. Students receiving Special Scholarships are not extended these additional discounts. Multiple students and multiple ensembles are taken into consideration when awarding Special Scholarships.*

Policies

For those placed in auditioned ensembles, please be sure that your [Placement Acceptance and Enrollment form](#) is submitted NO LATER than **July 15, 2026**, or 30 days after enrollment if you are joining us in the middle of the season.

Check Policy

OKYO does not hold or accept post-dated checks. Checks received during business hours will be deposited no later than the end of the following business day.

Credit Card Policy

OKYO does not hold credit card information. We are happy to assist you with making your payments should you have any trouble but please do not send us your credit card information.

Membership Dues Refunds for Extenuating Circumstance

Participation in OKYO is a season-long commitment (August/September through May). A family's decision to terminate their membership must be submitted in writing to our Executive Director should they feel that there are extenuating circumstances which may warrant a refund. These circumstances often include medical issues or family relocation. Requests for membership dues refunds will be reviewed by OKYO and members of the Board of Directors. It may take up to 60 days from receipt of the request to receive a reply and/or refund. Membership Dues refunds are prorated based on a variety of factors.

Delinquent Accounts

Families with delinquent accounts may not enroll in future seasons until the remaining balance is paid in full. If multiple attempts by OKYO to contact the families of a delinquent account fail, OKYO reserves the right to subject any delinquent account to collection.

Special Scholarships

One of OKYO's Core Values is that music is for everyone. OKYO staff and the Board of Directors desire that no student or family walk away from OKYO due to financial hardship. We fundraise year-round to be able to provide scholarships for families in need.

More information can be found at www.okyomusic.org/scholarships.

Instrument and Equipment Liability

Members of OKYO and their families are responsible for their instruments. OKYO, its team and volunteers are not liable for lost, stolen, or damaged instruments. We strongly encourage all families to have their instrument insured.

Instruments and equipment loaned to a student during their participation in our programs is the responsibility of the student. Any damage should be reported immediately to the conductor. Students and their family are responsible for any damage resulting from apparent neglect or misuse of the loaned instruments and/or equipment and will be charged a fine for its repair and any related servicing and/or labor. Students using an instrument for personal use from OKYO will be required to complete a form. Failure to return an instrument will result in billing for a replacement cost and a hold on enrollment for the following season. Individual instruments are loaned for use in OKYO ONLY. Any use outside of OKYO activities must be requested and approved in writing.

Inclement Weather Policy

The safety of our students and families is of utmost importance to OKYO. We understand that our students come from all over the region and ask that families use their best judgment when considering traveling to rehearsal based on their specific weather situation. In such cases, families should contact the office regarding their absence.

Guidelines

Rehearsals will likely be canceled if Oklahoma City University is closed due to inclement weather or if there are district/building closures that impact other ensembles. Families should check their email or OKYO social media for the most up-to-date information. It is not uncommon for some rehearsal sites to be closed while others remain open due to specific building closures. No membership dues refunds will be given for canceled rehearsals. Note that decisions are typically made by 3pm.

Notification

Due to the number of students involved in OKYO, individual phone calls will not be made should rehearsals be canceled. OKYO will work to the best of their ability to email all families, post cancellations on the OKYO website and social media resources to reflect the cancellation. Please check our various resources before calling the office.

Emergency Procedures*

The safety of our students and families is of utmost importance to OKYO. Our team members use their best judgment to protect students when handling emergencies according to the emergency procedures in place.

Severe Weather Procedure

In the event that tornado sirens sound during rehearsal, conductors will immediately lead their students to the assigned shelter area using a designated path. All instruments will be left in the rehearsal hall and only small personal items will be taken. Team members will notify conductors of the siren and be certain that rehearsal halls are vacated. All students, team members, and volunteers must remain in the identified location until an all clear sign is received. **Parents may not remove their student from the shelter until an all clear is received.** Upon receipt of an all clear, the senior-most administrative staff member will announce that rehearsals will be canceled for the evening and students will be

instructed to contact their parents for an early ride. OKYO will also reach out to families using electronic methods. Staff on-site will remain until all students are picked-up. Should destruction occur, OKYO will follow the instruction of the University Police Department or local law enforcement.

Illness or Injury Procedure

If a student is complaining of oncoming illness or minor injury, the student will be sent to the office. In the case of minor onset illness, staff will contact the student's family according to the emergency form to pick up their student. In the case of minor injury, after assessing the situation, staff members will either offer minor first aid for small injuries or contact the University Police Department for assistance and provide any information contained on the emergency form. Next, team members will contact the students' family according to the emergency form to inform them of the situation and next steps. If a student is injured in a manner that they should not be moved (head injury, broken bone) or that the student becomes severely ill or has a medical emergency, the conductor will clear the area around the student and notify the administrative staff with known information of what has happened. Staff will contact University Police to join them at the room if necessary for an emergency. OKYO will follow the instructions of the University Police regarding the situation and will contact the parents once more information is known to give instructions. The conductor will resume the rehearsal after the situation is addressed if feasible.

Fire Procedure

In the event that fire alarms sound during rehearsal, conductors will immediately lead their students to the assigned gathering area using the designated path. All instruments will be left in the rehearsal hall and only small personal items will be taken. Staff will notify conductors of the alarm and be certain that rehearsal halls are vacated. All students, staff, and volunteers must remain in the identified location until an all clear sign is received. All students, team members, and volunteers must remain in the identified location until attendance is taken. **Students will not be released to parents until permission is granted from the senior-most administrative member on-site. No one will be allowed back in the building unless given permission by the University Police Department or local law enforcement.** Upon receipt of an all clear, OKYO will determine whether rehearsals will continue based on the amount of rehearsal time remaining. Should destruction occur resulting in cancelation of rehearsal for the evening, students will be instructed to contact their parents for an early ride. Social media and email will be sent as well. Staff will remain on-site until all students are picked up.

Intruder/Active Shooter Procedure

In the event that an active shooter or alerted intruder is in the building, all staff, volunteers, and students will follow organizational and University procedures. For the safety of the procedure, it is not published for public knowledge

***Festival Strings Norman and Edmond may have alternative procedures according to their rehearsal space.**