



Lori Loftus, Founding Director

Member Handbook

2026 – 2027 Season

Congratulations on being accepted into the Southern California Children's Chorus (SCCC)!

This handbook explains SCCC's structure and procedures. Please read it carefully; it contains information important to every parent and member. We hope you enjoy your year of music and are challenged to achieve your full potential as a chorister.

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Mission and Guiding Principles

The mission of the Southern California Children's Chorus is enhancing children's lives through distinguished choral music education and world-class performance.

Guiding Principles

In carrying out its mission, SCCC adheres to several important guiding principles:

- SCCC is open to and encourages the participation of children throughout Southern California regardless of racial or ethnic background or economic status.
- SCCC provides children with a unique and important educational, social, and artistic musical experience, in the belief that music education and choral performance greatly enhance a child's development in academic and social arenas.
- SCCC believes children possess a tremendous capacity for knowledge and growth. By striving for excellence in a disciplined and encouraging atmosphere, children can achieve their full potential in choral artistry.
- SCCC believes that educating children in the best choral repertoire from the past and the present preserves an important part of our culture for future generations.

Contact Information

Rehearsal location: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 600 St. Andrews Rd., Newport Beach, CA 92663

Office (mailing): 2102 Business Center Drive, Irvine, CA 92612

Email: admin@sccchorus.org

Phone: 949-336-7115

Administration hours: Monday – Friday, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Artistic staff: <https://www.sccchorus.org/directors>

Website: <https://www.sccchorus.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SouthernCaliforniaChildrensChorus/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/sccchorus/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@southerncaliforniachildren6530>

Calendar: <https://www.sccchorus.org/calendar>

- It is the chorister family's responsibility to check the calendar and stay current with rehearsal and performance scheduling and other important information. SCCC rarely uses hard-copy handouts; updates and communication are sent by email, so please read all SCCC emails carefully.

Chorus Levels

SCCC comprises sequential choral levels, each with its own rehearsal time and directors. Each level has a page on the SCCC website (for example, www.sccchorus.org/concert-chorus).

Level	Rehearsal (Tuesdays)	Directors	Level email
Concert	4:45 – 6:45 pm	Lori Loftus (Founding & Concert Director); Tina Peterson (Co-Director)	concert@sccchorus.org
Boys' Ensemble	6:45-7:30 pm	Jayna Jones (Director)	ensemble@sccchorus.org
Advanced	4:45 – 6:45 pm	To Be Announced (Director)	advanced@sccchorus.org
Intermediate	4:45 – 6:15 pm	Dr. Ricardo Soto (Co-Director); Jayna Jones (Co-Director)	intermediate@sccchorus.org
Apprentice	4:45 – 5:45 pm and 5:15 – 6:15 pm	Sara Littlefield Cooke (Co-Director); Tzipora Khodzhayev (Co-Director)	apprenticeEB@sccchorus.org; apprenticeLB@sccchorus.org
Primary	5:15 – 6:05 pm	Marga Gargantiel (Co-Director); Noelle Nielsen (Co-Director)	primary@sccchorus.org
Kinder	4:45 – 5:30 pm	Marga Gargantiel (Co-Director); Noelle Nielsen (Co-Director)	kinder@sccchorus.org

Concert Chorus may tour to a domestic or foreign location in the summer, approximately every other year. Tour costs are not covered by tuition.

Tuition

Tuition is based on the budgeted number of choristers for each level and covers only about half the cost of SCCC's programs. The fundraising activities SCCC administers throughout the year are therefore vital to its continued existence, and every chorister is expected to participate in one or more of them.

Tuition is paid by cash, check, or credit card, and is a full choral-year (September – June) commitment. Every chorister has a short window at the start of their participation in which a family may withdraw and receive a refund; see Withdrawal below. Otherwise tuition is not refunded if a chorister discontinues participation for any reason, including removal at the decision of the director; for example, a chorister who drops mid-year still owes full tuition.

Full tuition is due and payable at the time of registration, unless a scholarship application, accompanied by the required payment of ten percent of tuition, is submitted within seven calendar days of registration. Registration is not complete, and a chorister may not participate in rehearsals or performances, until tuition is paid in full. Late fees apply if tuition is not received as scheduled. The tuition fee includes instruction and the use of published music, and Concert and Advanced Chorus tuition includes the mandatory fall retreat fee.

Additional costs may include, but are not limited to, tuition late charges, concert tickets, fundraisers and social events, tours, wardrobe fees, performance attire, and some uniform items such as shoes or accessories.

Current Rates

Rates for the 2026 – 2027 choral season (September – June):

Level	Annual tuition
Kinder Chorus	\$690
Primary	\$690
Apprentice	\$890
Intermediate	\$965
Advanced	\$1,040
Concert	\$1,280
Boys' Ensemble (supplemental)	\$890

Boys' Ensemble is a supplemental ensemble. Its tuition is charged in addition to the tuition for the chorister's primary chorus level. Choristers enrolling for the half season beginning in January are charged fifty percent of the annual tuition for their level.

Scholarships

SCCC provides financial assistance to families who might otherwise be unable to afford their chorister's participation. A limited number of scholarships are available each year, based on demonstrated financial need.

To request a scholarship application, contact the SCCC office at admin@scccchorus.org during the registration period. Applications are reviewed in confidence and awarded on a need basis, and decisions are communicated to parents as soon as possible. To qualify, applications must be received within seven calendar days of registration, accompanied by a non-refundable payment equal to ten percent of tuition; late applications will not be considered. Because the maximum award is ninety percent of tuition, that payment is the minimum any scholarship family owes, and it is credited toward tuition. Any balance remaining after an award is due within ten days of notification of the decision. Scholarship families are strongly encouraged to participate in fundraising activities and to volunteer.

Membership and Behavior

Membership

The Southern California Children's Chorus reserves the right to dismiss from its membership any chorister at any time for conduct or behavior that jeopardizes the safety or well-being of any chorister, volunteer, or staff member, or that reflects negatively on SCCC as an organization. The determination to dismiss a chorister is made at the sole discretion of the music director in consultation with Lori Loftus, without prior notice to the chorister.

While we seek to accommodate every child with a sincere desire to sing, including children who face medical, psychological, or other behavioral challenges, the best interests of each chorus supersede individual or special needs. SCCC will endeavor to provide encouragement and reasonable accommodation for children with special needs, but behavior that distracts the director and other children, inhibits the progress of the rehearsal, or jeopardizes the safety of any participant may be grounds for dismissal.

Behavior Standards

Consistent with its mission, SCCC requires very high behavioral standards of its members.

- Choristers shall be respectful of their director and one another at all times.

- Choristers shall obey directions from SCCC directors, staff, and choir assistants at all times.
- Unless specifically instructed otherwise by their director, choristers may never use cell phones during a rehearsal or performance for any reason other than to respond to or report a personal emergency.
- A natural, healthy appearance is required during all public appearances. For example, and without limitation:
 - Choristers may not attend rehearsals or performances with hair dye or nail polish in other than a natural color.
 - Piercings other than a single, simple, traditional earring are not permitted.
- Choristers should be mindful of personal hygiene and use deodorant and mouthwash when necessary.

Placement and Enrollment

Level Placements

Level placements are scheduled for prospective choristers from the Apprentice through Concert levels. Dates are set at the end of the season, in the summer months, or during the choral season as the directors allow and space permits. No level placement is required for Kinder or Primary, though membership is at the discretion of the director, who considers maturity level.

Choristers are invited to return each year, and the director places them in the appropriate level. Choristers are often eager to be promoted, and the directors are sensitive to the importance of promoting a singer when ready, and not before. Each singer develops at their own rate, and the time spent at each level varies widely. Most promotions are made at the end of the choral season at the discretion of the music staff. See Appendix I for more information.

Registration

Registration forms must be completed and returned to SCCC as soon as possible. A chorister cannot participate in rehearsals or performances until SCCC has received the following by the due date:

- all registration paperwork;
- full tuition, or a scholarship application submitted within seven calendar days of registration;
- a copy of the current, approved Entertainment Work Permit.

The registration period begins before the choral season. A courtesy email reminder is sent to parents who are out of compliance.

Withdrawal

To withdraw from the SCCC program, parents must contact the SCCC office in writing. A refund of tuition paid, less a cancellation fee equal to ten percent of tuition plus \$50, is available only if written notice is received by the earlier of the end of the day of the chorister's second scheduled rehearsal, or the closing date for the chorister's enrollment period. That closing date is September 30 for full-season enrollment, January 31 for half-season enrollment, and thirty days after enrollment for a chorister admitted at any other point in the season. Every chorister therefore has two rehearsals in which to decide, whenever in the season they join. A refund will never exceed the amount actually paid, and once the applicable window has closed tuition is

fully non-refundable. All SCCC property must be returned by the requested date or upon withdrawal from the program; otherwise, replacement costs will be charged.

Entertainment Work Permits

California law requires an individual Entertainment Work Permit (EWP) for each chorister. Every chorister must obtain an EWP as a condition of participating in all SCCC performances. It is the responsibility of the minor or the parents (8 CCR 11752) to apply for and renew the EWP every six months.

Instructions: on the SCCC website (see the calendar page)

Application website: cadir.my.site.com/registrations/s/login

See Appendix II for more information.

Music, Participation, and Attendance

Music Assignments

Each chorister is assigned a numbered music folder to bring to weekly rehearsals; it contains the repertoire for that semester. The chorister is responsible for the folder and its contents during the year, including financial responsibility. Kinder and Primary Chorus do not use SCCC folders. A replacement fee equal to the cost of replacement plus \$50.00 is charged if music is lost or not returned at the end of the season.

Please observe the following guidelines:

- Music or folders that are lost or damaged must be replaced by the chorister or parent.
- Never write on or tear the music folder.
- Never fold or bend a piece of music.
- Mark your score in pencil only.
- Always return music to your folder carefully.
- Music may be loaned for study at rehearsal only if checked out with the chorus parent; the loaner folder must be returned at the end of that rehearsal.

All music and folders must be returned by the requested date at the end of the season. The final return date is the Awards / End-of-Year Party.

Participation

SCCC is meant to be a positive and enriching learning experience for all choristers, and commitment and responsibility are important to a successful year. Choristers are expected to remain active and committed to the entire program, and it is important that members regard chorus as a top priority in personal scheduling.

Attendance

Choristers are required to attend weekly Tuesday rehearsals as well as any other mandatory performances or activities. While we understand that conflicts arise, we expect choristers to make SCCC a priority in their weekly schedule. Any conflict should be reported as soon as possible to the chorus-level parent volunteer, so the director knows who will be absent before each rehearsal or activity.

Tardiness is disruptive to rehearsals and other events. Arriving late or leaving early should be approved as far in advance as possible and is at the discretion of the director.

Absences

Should a chorister's attendance become a concern, the chorister may be placed on probation.

- Two absences without notice will warrant a call from the director to the family and may result in performance restrictions or dismissal.
- Unnotified absences or lack of preparedness can warrant dismissal.

Rehearsals and Performances

Rehearsals

A vast amount of repertoire must be learned each season in a short period of rehearsal time, so it is essential that every minute be used wisely. Before each rehearsal:

- Arrive at least 10 minutes before the scheduled start time.
- Use the restroom and have a snack before arrival.
- Wear a choir shirt.
- Bring your assigned music folder (Apprentice through Concert).
- Wear your nametag upon entering rehearsal.
- Have a sharpened pencil ready (Intermediate through Concert).
- Arrange your music as instructed and be in your seat, ready to begin, at the start time.
- Bring a labeled water bottle.

All food and drink are to be left outside the rehearsal rooms; water bottles are acceptable.

Choristers are responsible for their personal belongings. At the end of rehearsal, choristers should make sure they have all belongings and that all music is in their folder. The director will dismiss choristers when rehearsal has ended.

Performances

Performance is a primary goal of SCCC, and choristers are encouraged to sing at all performances. Performance expectations include:

- Arrive at least 10 minutes before the scheduled call time. This is extremely important; plan for traffic and other delays so your chorister is not late. Park in designated spaces only.
- Use the restroom, and feed and hydrate your chorister before attending.
- Wear the correct and complete performance attire for the event; hair and jewelry should be concert-ready.
- Know the repertoire; music folders are usually not allowed in performance.
- Bring a labeled water bottle.

At the end of a performance, choristers should make sure they have all belongings, and the director will dismiss the group. Choristers must be picked up promptly. SCCC does its best to communicate ending times, but these are approximate given the nature of performing, and SCCC prefers parents to be waiting for an efficient, timely pick-up.

Some concerts are for volunteer ensembles of only a few singers. In these cases, the director invites individual choristers depending on the exact voice parts and colors needed, and only those invited or who agree to sing are expected to attend.

Performing is very demanding physically, mentally, and emotionally. Please avoid over-scheduling your child on the day of a major rehearsal or performance.

Health and Safety

- Parents, singers, and staff agree not to attend rehearsal if they are experiencing any symptoms commonly associated with COVID or other contagious illness.
- Families agree to follow CDC guidance regarding quarantine and isolation when necessary.
- Do not share music folders or other personal items.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer as needed.

Safety is our priority. SCCC is responsible for the chorister during scheduled rehearsal times while in the rehearsal room. Parents are responsible for delivering the chorister to, and picking the chorister up from, the rehearsal room, and choristers must be picked up promptly.

Visitors, Carpooling, and Events

Visitors

During rehearsal, space permitting, parents are welcome to quietly observe from the parent seating area. Whether a child is a chorister or a visitor, a parent or guardian must supervise all children on site before, during, and after rehearsal. Siblings and other visitors must be accompanied by a parent, and younger children must be kept quiet and under control.

All choristers and families must show respect for the rehearsal facility's property at all times; lack of respect is grounds for dismissal or for asking family members to leave during rehearsal. At various times of year, visitors such as funders or music students observe our rehearsals, usually accompanied by a staff member or hosted by the chorus parent. For public performances, parents are usually invited, and there may be a cost depending on the venue. Chaperones assist the choral group at public and private functions.

Carpooling

Due to liability concerns, SCCC will not be responsible for establishing carpools for any event, including rehearsals and performances.

Retreats and Other Social Events

Advanced and Concert Choruses hold a mandatory retreat each fall to strengthen musicality, relationships, and teamwork. This time is spent learning repertoire and enjoying camaraderie in a different rehearsal setting, with intensive study of repertoire, musicianship skills, vocal development, theory, and sight-singing. It also gives veteran and new choristers a chance to get acquainted early in the year.

From time to time, an individual level may hold a social event such as a pizza party or ice cream social, and choristers are encouraged to attend; these gatherings nurture friendships and deeper relationships.

Parent Information

Volunteers

Parent volunteers are a precious and vital part of SCCC. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the SCCC office and consider helping when you are able. Parent chaperones are necessary and appreciated, and special events, concerts, tours, and camps run most efficiently with parent volunteers. At the conclusion of concerts or other special events, two

chaperones must remain until all choristers have been picked up. Volunteers require fingerprinting and a background check, as well as additional training including, but not limited to, mandated-reporter training.

Funding and Fundraisers

A variety of fundraising programs are necessary to keep SCCC in a solid financial position and to keep tuition as low as possible. Information about general fundraisers will be communicated separately. These events offset the costs of SCCC that are not covered by tuition, and we appreciate the participation of all chorister families in this vital area.

Promotional Materials

SCCC prohibits the distribution of outside promotional materials. This includes distributing flyers or other promotional materials among choristers or parents at the rehearsal or performance site, and using any SCCC email list for the same purpose.

Recognition and Awards

Recognizing choristers is a top priority for our directors, so that choristers realize how much they are appreciated. Discipline, attitude, and hard work are highly encouraged at SCCC. The chorus levels hold an annual awards ceremony at the conclusion of the season; awards are given at the discretion of the directors and are based on attitude and attendance.

Director's Award

The highest honor bestowed by SCCC, recognizing special achievement beyond expectation in attitude, attendance, leadership, and influence on other choristers to excel.

Exemplary Attendance

Attendance is considered exemplary when a chorister attends all weekly rehearsals, arrives on time, and attends all SCCC concerts. Other scheduled performances count toward exemplary attendance when the chorister is present and on time. Any retreat dates for any level are considered mandatory.

Honor Attendance

Attendance is considered honor when a chorister has very few absences from weekly rehearsals and scheduled performances. Any retreat dates for any level are considered mandatory.

Chorus Pins and Year Bars

Although not an award, chorus pins and year bars have become very important to choristers, commemorating each year of participation. A year bar denoting the completed year is given to the chorister at the end of the season, and pins are available for purchase. Choristers are encouraged to wear the pin and year bars on their concert uniforms.

Dress Code and Uniforms

All SCCC events require choristers to conform to the SCCC dress code, including retreats, tours, and other activities. Choristers must dress modestly to project the image SCCC requires. You are responsible for your own uniform during the season; it must be clean, neat, and in good

repair. Individual alterations to uniforms or items owned by SCCC are not permitted. If a uniform becomes soiled, please have it dry-cleaned as needed.

Wardrobe Instructions

Hair and jewelry requirements for all levels, and wardrobe information for each level, are available on the SCCC website (see the calendar page).

Casual (Rehearsal) Uniform

Rehearsal attire must be in keeping with the dress code:

- All choristers must wear their SCCC polo shirts, purchased separately at rehearsal.
- Long pants are preferred; shorts are acceptable but must be long enough to cover half the thigh (no “short shorts”). Full-length pants are not required for weekly rehearsals.
- No tight-fitting pants such as yoga pants, leggings, or sweats.
- No backless tops, bare midriffs, or visible cleavage.
- No hats and no pajamas.
- Shoes must be worn; no flip-flops or slippers.

The casual uniform is worn at some other events; see the wardrobe requirements for each event.

Appendix I – Promotion Criteria and Goals

General Criteria

Required musical skills increase at each level. In general, promotion considers:

- Voice quality and vocal health.
- Vocal skills: breath management, tone production, and diction.
- Intonation: singing in tune and listening keenly.
- Theory skills: proficiency in theory and sight-singing, the ability to follow a score, and the ability to sing in harmony.
- Knowledge of the choral literature at the current level.
- Personal growth and self-discipline, including regular and prompt attendance, demonstrated commitment and dependability, an excellent attitude, performing skills, and positive peer interaction in rehearsals, performances, camp, and tours.

Apprentice to Intermediate

Promotions from Apprentice to Intermediate are generally made when a member's maturity is such that the singer can adapt to a longer rehearsal and a more academic teaching approach, and has acquired the musical skills to participate at a performing level. This generally occurs around age ten, or fourth grade. An audition before the music staff is required, in which the singer may be asked to perform a solo or sing from current repertoire and to sight-read.

Intermediate to Advanced

Promotions from Intermediate to Advanced are generally made at the end of a performing season. An audition before the music staff is required (a solo or current repertoire, and sight-reading), and a careful assessment is made of the chorister's ability, commitment, theory aptitude, rehearsal and performance abilities, and attendance record.

Advanced to Concert

Promotion from Advanced to Concert includes the same requirements as promotion to Advanced. In addition, singers qualify to audition for Concert Chorus when they are vocally and musically prepared; the audition is extensive, with sight-singing required.

Sight-Singing and Theory Goals

Sight-singing, ear training, and theory are considered crucial to the quality of the choirs and are incorporated into rehearsals. At times, practice of the music, text, and memorization may be required outside of rehearsal. Diagnostic exams and evaluations may be given during the year and contribute to the promotion evaluation. Any chorister may be required, at the director's discretion, to take additional music lessons, including sight-singing and vocal coaching, at the chorister's expense.

- Level One: solfege; treble-clef note names; notation; rhythmic values (whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, dotted notes, and rests); simple meters and beat placement; introduction to intervals; rhythmic and melodic dictation; vocabulary.
- Level Two: all previous skills; diatonic solfege melodies; major and minor scales; key signatures; augmented and diminished rhythms; compound meters; intervals; primary triads; two-part sight-singing; vocabulary; dictation.

- Level Three: all previous skills; solfege modulations; dictation; ties and syncopation; reinforced meters; major and minor triads; perfect intervals; relative and parallel key signatures; two- and three-part sight-singing; vocabulary; chromaticism.
- Level Four: all previous skills; thirty-second notes and triplets; key signatures; mixed and complex meters; modes; all intervals; oral and written identification of triads in all positions; seventh chords; bass clef; three- and four-part sight-singing; vocabulary.

Appendix II – Entertainment Work Permit Information

Entertainment Work Permit renewals may be submitted online or in person; SCCC strongly recommends online processing.

Issuing office: California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE), 6150 Van Nuys Blvd. #100, Van Nuys, CA 91401-3308, (818) 901-5484

An EWP is valid for only six months and must be renewed every six months to remain current. Because of delays in the renewal process, SCCC strongly recommends renewing online as soon as permitted before the current permit expires. We are happy to help with any questions; please do not call the EWP office, as it slows the process for everyone.

A copy of the school record should be sent to the SCCC work-permit email to be reviewed for errors before submitting online. Once approved, permits are emailed or mailed to parents promptly, though the approval process can take up to eight weeks. Keep the original for your files and provide an emailed or printed copy to SCCC.

A current EWP must be on file with SCCC. Any child who does not have a current EWP on file will not be permitted to perform at SCCC concerts or any affiliated performance.

Labor Code section 1308.5(b) provides that “Any person employing either directly or indirectly through third persons, or any parent or guardian of a minor who permits any minor to be employed in violation of any of the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor. Failure to produce the written consent from the Labor Commissioner is prima facie evidence of the illegal employment of any minor whose written consent is not produced.”

Common Questions

Why does my child need an EWP? Don’t they have to be 16 years old?

It is the law. The California Code of Regulations provides that “A minor desiring to be employed in the entertainment industry must obtain an Entertainment Work Permit” (8 CCR 11752). Entertainment work permits differ from ordinary work permits: entertainment permits are specifically for minors in the entertainment industry, while ordinary work permits are obtained by students to work in retail or other industries while in school.

Why is SCCC in the “entertainment industry”?

The regulations broadly define “entertainment industry” to include “any organization, or individual, using the services of any minor in: musical performances; and any other performances where minors perform to entertain the public” (8 CCR 11751). Thus, each chorister who performs in SCCC concerts must obtain an EWP.

Where are the instructions to obtain an Entertainment Work Permit?

Detailed instructions are on the SCCC website (see the calendar page).