

PREMIERE ISSUE

FALL 2025

HOLDING SPACE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR ENTERTAINMENT PROFESSIONALS

POLICY & PRACTICE

GUIDELINES &
ADVOCACY

VERTICAL VISION

ALL THINGS VERTICAL

FRIENDS OF HOLDING SPACE

TOOL BOX EXCHANGE

RESOURCES & TIPS

INDUSTRY VOICES

PERSPECTIVES
& STORIES

CLIPS & QUIPS

*ICS IN PRINT,
PIXELS, AND PRESS*

ON THE HORIZON

RESOURCES & SPECIAL EVENTS

THE ART OF COLLABORATION

FROM THE INTIMACY COLLECTIVE LOS ANGELES

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NEWSLETTER

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HOLDING SPACE

WELCOME

Welcome to the very first issue of Holding Space! We are thrilled to share this resource with you and grateful to everyone who made it possible. Our goal is to create a community hub where best practices, real experiences, and practical tools come together to support safer, healthier collaboration across our industry. Whether you're an intimacy coordinator, performer, crew, creative, or advocate for well-being, there's a place for you here. Thank you for joining us as we continue to speak in draft and launch this new chapter. Let's keep building a culture of respect, care, and connection together.



Thank you,
Intimacy Collective Los Angeles (ICLA)

[Camera slate, film reel, unspooling 35 mm film strip, two vintage film cameras together against a smoky background.]

POLICY & PRACTICE

GUIDELINES & ADVOCACY

AI & BODY DOUBLES IN INTIMATE SCENES: THE DIGITALIZATION OF CONSENT

by Ariel Leigh Cohen

AI and digital body doubles are reshaping how intimacy is shown on screen, and not always in ways that center around consent. With current technology, an actor's face, body, or performance can be manipulated to create intimate moments they never actually performed. The latest SAG-AFTRA agreements address this, but in practice, the ethics are murky and the safeguards are thin. Consent isn't just about signing off once. It's a living process that requires context: what's the scene, who's it for, how will it be used, and how might that change over time? AI shortcuts risk--bypassing that process entirely, turning bodies into digital assets that can be reused, remixed, or reimagined without ongoing permission from the performer. For intimacy coordinators, this isn't a side issue: it's the next battleground. Our work is about maintaining safe environments, as well as dignity and autonomy. That doesn't disappear when intimacy goes digital. In fact, it becomes even more urgent. AI can recreate flesh, but it can't recreate trust, vulnerability, or choice: the core of what makes an intimate scene real.



[A vertical camera monitor shows a person's wrists bound with a shiny maroon tie.]



[A redhead's wrists are bound above their head with a striped navy and red tie. They are lying down on a bed with their head on a green fuzzy pillow. Their face is not shown.]



PEPPER, you were fantastic to work with--professional, reliable, and attentive to both talent and production needs. You maintained a high standard throughout, balancing responsibilities while ensuring a seamless workflow for the team. I'd be happy to work with you again in the future.

Mr. Vanda Lee, Producer
Keke Palmer "I Wanna Know"
(Music Video)

"On fast-moving sets like commercials and music videos, where things change by the hour, an intimacy coordinator brings essential structure and clarity. They create space for consent and comfort, which elevates the creative process for everyone involved. It's also a critical safeguard from a legal standpoint, ensuring documentation, boundaries, and best practices are clearly defined and followed."

Megan Gutman, EP/Producer
Mega G Productions

[Keke Palmer, a woman with long, red wavy hair and medium-dark skin sings, her mouth open as her shadow is cast against the wall behind her.]



ARIEL, I want to lean on the people on my crew and your presence not only made the actors feel heard, supported and respected but also extended into the general culture on set. Your work breathes life into the entire space. We LITERALLY could not have made this movie without you.

Jaala Alston, Director
A Minuit (Short Film)

"You hear some of these old-school people complaining about the intimacy coordinators. But the intimacy coordinator was my best friend for the days that we were shooting that orgy because it really allowed us to just do whatever we wanted and be really comfortable with it and make sure that everyone was on the same page."

James Gunn, Director
Peacemaker (Season 2)

[Film equipment records a scene set in a middle-class dining room. A woman with medium-dark skin stands as a Black man with glasses sits at the table, writing and looking at forms. Their clothes are mid-century, the decor is slightly older.]



INDUSTRY VOICES

HAILEY, you're the ultimate collaborator. The way you're able to gather input and ideas from each collaborator and cleanly and succinctly formulate a plan of action that combines safety and repeatability with effectiveness and precision is second to none. You're a warm presence in the room, a deeply researched storyteller, and one of my favorite collaborators.

Rory James Leech, Theatre
Director, Misfit Toys
Collective

JASMINE, working with you was a total dream. You not only created a safe environment for the actors, director and DP, but a wholly creative space where everyone's voices and imagination were heard. Our footage is better because of you. You are a consummate professional and I would work with you again in a heartbeat.

Bailey Castle, Filmmaker &
Actor
Delicate Condition (Mini-Series)

[Three young women with light skin stand close together, smiling slightly. A logo with a pregnancy test is below them.]



AT THE HEART OF INTIMACY COORDINATION IS CARE

By Pepper Humphrey

Intimacy Coordinators center care in every moment: safeguarding performers, honoring the story, and supporting the creative process. Increasingly, this work overlaps with Mental Health Coordinators (MHCs), whose expertise strengthens emotional sustainability and psychological safety across productions.

Together, ICs and MHCs form a collaborative model of care: ICs guide choreography, container practice, and protocols for intimate or sensitive material; while MHCs offer non-clinical support through check-ins, wellness guidance, and restorative approaches to conflict. MHCs also provide content consultation, collaborating with creatives to ensure mental health is portrayed with authenticity and care in storytelling. Side by side, they create productions grounded in trust, sustainability, and creative freedom.

Amanda Edwards, President and Co-Founder of the Association of Mental Health Coordinators (AMHC), embodies this bridge as both a certified intimacy coordinator and therapist. She explains: “I see the value in our collaboration across departments and the magic that happens when we work together to support the storytelling and the safety of cast, crew, and even audiences.”

As this model of care continues to evolve, it sets a new standard for artistry rooted in respect, proving that when care is collaborative, creativity can truly thrive.

Next issue: ICs + Stunts! We will highlight the partnership between ICs and Stunt Coordinators, where trust and safety meet high-intensity storytelling.

[Two medium-dark skinned people with curly black hair embrace, showing only heads, hands, and bare shoulders; one wears large hoop earrings.]

The Art of
Collaboration

FRIENDS OF HOLDING SPACE



ASSOCIATION OF MENTAL HEALTH COORDINATORS

By Pepper Humphrey

We're thrilled to feature the Association of Mental Health Coordinators (AMHC) in our circle of friends in our premiere issue. Amanda Edwards, President and Co-Founder of AMHC is a certified intimacy coordinator, therapist, and pioneer in bringing highly trained MHCs to the entertainment industry. AMHC is a global community of experts, advocates, and artists working to transform the entertainment industry for the better.

AMHC and their certified MHCs specialize in supporting productions and educational spaces of all sizes, including TV and film to theatre, dance, and music. Their work centers on fostering emotional sustainability and psychological safety through best practices, organizational consulting, on-deck wellness support, and

comprehensive training. By equipping creative environments with these tools, AMHC empowers teams to navigate emotional intensity, conflict, and wellness needs with clarity and care.

The association's mission is to connect industry professionals with resources, increase awareness of mental health needs in entertainment, and provide accessible education and training. As a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit, AMHC is dedicated to ethical, sustainable, and compelling storytelling, ensuring everyone on set feels seen, supported, and able to bring their full selves to the work.

Discover more or get involved with AMHC at <https://www.associationmhc.com/>

Want to be featured as a Friend of Holding Space in a future issue?

Let's Connect- newsletter@intimacycollectivela.com

[A single rust-colored carnation lies on orange fabric.]

TOOLBOX

EXCHANGE



Smart Bites

1. Silent Check-In

At the close of the safety meeting, invite everyone to take ten seconds to silently notice one word that captures how they're feeling. No need to share aloud, just the pause builds presence and grounds the group.

2. Naming Needs

When giving direction, frame it as a need instead of a critique.

Instead of: "You're not focused."

Try: "We need focus here so this scene feels safe."

This shift keeps communication clear and collaborative.

3. Micro Reset

If tension rises, offer: "Let's all take one breath together." One collective inhale/exhale takes less than 15 seconds and can reset energy without slowing production.

Golden Nuggets

SAG-AFTRA Unveils Sexual Harassment Reporting Tool, Standards for Training and Qualifications of Intimacy Coordinators.

- Quick Guide: https://www.sagaftra.org/quickguide_intimscenes.pdf
- Sex, Nudity & You: https://www.sagaftra.org/sites/2024-Sex_Nudity_Booklet.pdf

CSATF Safety Bulletins: Recommended by the Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee for the Motion Picture and Television Industry

<https://www.csatf.org/production-affairs-safety/safety-bulletins/>

The Exchange Post

Have a favorite resource, tool, or technique that changed how you work? Send it to us using the email below to be featured in a future issue. Let's keep this toolbox growing together.

newsletter@intimacycollectivela.com

CLIPS & QUIPS

INTIMACY COORDINATION
IN PRINT, PIXELS, AND PRESS

DiDi (2024) - A Sundance and festival award-winning dramady set in 2008, following a 13-year-old Taiwanese American boy as he learns to skate, navigate first crushes, and deepen his love for his mom.

Intimacy Coordinators: **Maya Herbsman & Heather Ondersma**

Just Between Us (2025) - Winner of Best Short Film at the Honolulu Rainbow Film Festival. This short follows a gay couple as they explore the space between connection an intimacy, open marriage, and sexy hijinx with a cute himbo.

Intimacy Coordinator: **Tori McJunkin**

Water Angel (2025) - A powerful short film that shines a light on reproductive rights, medical racism, and the harsh realities of Black maternal health. Produced by MTV Staying Alive Foundation, Karlie Kloss, Phoebe Gates, and available on Paramount+.

Intimacy Coordinator: **Olivia Ku**

Find Your Friends (2025) -A female-led thriller selected for Toronto International Festival Industry Selects 2025. Young, wild, and free: this college girls friend group lives unapologetically to party and enjoy life- no matter the drama.

Intimacy Coordinator: **Morgan Smith**

Obsession (2025) - A selected feature in the Toronto International Film Festival, this horror film follows a hopeless romantic whose desperate wish for his long-time crush to fall in love with him, a sinister enchantment ensues.

Intimacy Coordinator & Stunt Coordinator: **Jen Albert**



[Still from Water Angel, TIFF Logo & DiDi Poster.]

VERTICAL VISION

What is a Vertical? The 9:16 vertical frame is redefining how stories are told—built for audiences watching on smartphones.

Vertical dramas have grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry, with platforms like Candyjar, Dramabox, FlexTV, Goodshort, KalosTV, Reelshort, Shorts, Sereal+ and more competing to capture global viewers while their productions consistently utilize intimacy coordinators onset.

Industry Highlights

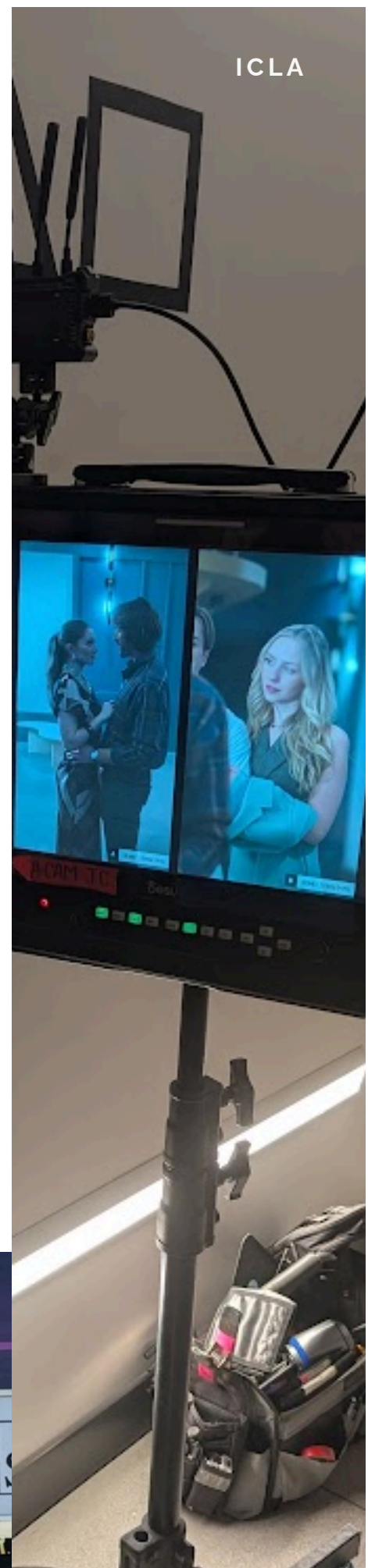
- Vertfest – First digital convention where fans met actors and creators; intimacy coordinators featured as guest speakers.
- Verticon – Upcoming in-person convention which will also feature intimacy coordinators.
- DramaBox x Disney – DramaBox joined the 2025 Disney Accelerator to create groundbreaking entertainment for Disney fans.
- ReelShort – Launched a bold billboard campaign across Los Angeles, bringing vertical dramas to mainstream visibility.

Check out our ICLA guide for both producers and ICs about:

Intimacy Coordination for Verticals



ReelShort Billboard in LA for True Heiress vs. Fake Queen Bee



Vertical Monitors On Set

ON THE HORIZON



Premiering Thursday October 16th, 2025

CINTIMA's FLICKER Festival is a first-of-its-kind curated international festival celebrating short films on intimacy.

Cintima is bringing together Filmmakers, Writers, Directors, Actors and Intimacy Coordinators to highlight authentic, dynamic, and diverse representations of intimacy on screen.

Venue: The Culver Theater, 9500 Culver Blvd, Culver City, California 90232

Submission fee \$35 - details at:

<https://filmfreeway.com/FLICKERFestival> and www.cintima.co/blog/flicker-launch

Intimacy Professionals Education Collective (IPEC) (est. 2023) proudly announces the launch of their Certification Board. Focused on radical accessibility and a dynamic education model that tailors itself to each student individually, this Certification Board is the latest opportunity for intimacy professionals seeking certification. **IPEC supports certification of people whose training may span multiple organizations.** Someone may apply for certification who may have fully trained with IPEC, never trained with IPEC & meets recommendations, and people who may hold other certifications as well. IPEC-sponsored Certification is a lifetime certification with yearly membership & continued certification recommendations for continued practice & education. Membership covers Accountability Pods, continued education, & support from the company.



Certification launches publicly October 1st. To find out more: <http://ipecintimacy.com/>



NSIP
NATIONAL SOCIETY OF INTIMACY PROFESSIONALS

The National Society of Intimacy Professionals is looking for international members! Founded in Canada as a non-profit (est. 2020), NSIP has participated in national and international policy development at industry and government levels, created cutting-edge workshops, established a free online resource hub and built a dynamic community of IC/IDs from a wide range of training backgrounds. NSIP is open to IC/IDs from all countries. If you desire a place of empowerment, knowledge exchange and/or leadership opportunities, we encourage you to apply.

Special offer for Holding Space readers: initiation fee waived thru January 2026.

Annual membership fees are on a sliding scale ranging from \$75-\$120 CAD (approx. \$60-\$95 USD). Register on Eventbrite for our **free online Community Conversation Cafe** (non-members welcome), held every last Tuesday of the month at 5pm PT/8pm ET. We look forward to meeting you. <https://intimacysociety.com/>

THANK YOU

FOR

HOLDING SPACE

WITH US

Thank you for reading the premiere issue of Holding Space!

We are honored to grow alongside this inspiring community, now over one hundred members strong.

We are grateful for your ongoing care, collaboration, and commitment.

Holding Space is your quarterly resource for industry updates, community spotlights, practical tools, and mental health resources, all centered around the evolving world of intimacy professionals.

Be the first to receive our next issue, coming Winter 2025/2026.

Sign up here: [**Holding Space**](#)

Feel free to share the link with friends and colleagues.

Submissions are always kept confidential.

Thank you for helping us give voice to this important work and extend its reach across the industry.

In community & with care,

The Intimacy Collective Los Angeles

Co-founders & Newsletter Team: Olivia Ku & Jasmine Nicole

Newsletter Team: Pepper Humphrey, Heather Ondersma

Ariel Leigh Cohen, Hailey Mashburn, Tori McJunkin

[**intimacycollectivelosangeles.org**](https://intimacycollectivelosangeles.org)

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