

StoryArk Adult Code of Conduct & Guidelines for Working with Youth

*****This policy and related policies do not govern employees of StoryArk school partners who are involved in StoryArk and interacting with StoryArk youth participants as part of their job duties with the school partner. Such individuals should follow the policies and procedures of their employers. It is the responsibility of the school to adopt policies for its employees and to train its employees on those policies.*****

ADULT CODE OF CONDUCT

StoryArk is a youth-serving, community-based organization dedicated to helping students who love storytelling to write, develop and produce their narratives through their chosen medium - whether that be film, novel, poetry, songwriting or podcast.

Participation in the organization's programs is subject to the observance of the organization's rules and procedures. The activities outlined below are strictly prohibited:

- Abusive language towards an employee, contractor, volunteer or youth participant.
- Possession or use of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or marijuana on StoryArk's program locations or reporting to the program while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol.
- Bringing onto StoryArk's program locations dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives, firearms, weapons or other similar items.
- Discourtesy or rudeness to a youth participant, employee, contractor, or volunteer.
- Harassment of a youth participant, employee, contractor, or volunteer, including, but not limited to, harassing verbal, visual, physical, or sexual conduct.
- Actual or threatened violence toward any individual or group.
- Conduct endangering the life, safety, health or well-being of others.
- Bullying or taking unfair advantage of any youth participant, staff employee, contractor, or volunteer.
- Failure to follow any StoryArk policy or procedure.

Any employee, contractor or volunteer who violates this code is subject to discipline, up to and including removal from the program.

StoryArk has zero tolerance for the behaviors listed above or any other disrespectful, abusive, harassing, violent, or retaliatory conduct.

GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR WITH YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

As someone representing StoryArk, it is our duty to prevent harm towards youth participants in our care. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a safe environment for youth participants, staff members, and volunteers, and to raise awareness of how to manage risk with regard to youth participants.

Definitions

- "Youth participants" includes any minor participating in StoryArk's program who is under the age of 18 years old.
- "Affiliated Adults" includes any employees, independent contractors, or volunteers of StoryArk.

- “Designated Affiliated Adult” refers to an employee, independent contractor, or volunteer who has responsibility for the supervision of youth participants during a program or event.
- “Parent” refers to both parents and legal guardians.

Reporting Procedures

If you are the victim of any inappropriate behaviors or you see others acting inappropriately, please speak up.

1. If you are comfortable doing so, tell the individual that the behavior is inappropriate and ask them to stop. If you are not comfortable approaching the individual or speaking to the individual does not resolve the issue, notify the Executive Director of StoryArk about the situation so prompt and appropriate action may be taken.
2. As an Affiliated Adult, you should take all threats of self harm or suicide by youth participants seriously and report them to the Executive Director.
3. As a matter of policy as an Affiliated Adult, if you have reason to believe that a youth participant is experiencing bullying, harassment, or any other inappropriate behavior (other than physical or sexual abuse or neglect) as a result of their participation in StoryArk’s programming, you must immediately report the information to the Executive Director . Any questions regarding bullying and harassment may be directed to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is the subject of the report, the Chair of the Board should be contacted in lieu of reporting to the Executive Director.
4. As a matter of policy as an Affiliated Adult, if you have reason to believe that a youth participant is being abused physically or sexually, or neglected, by anyone, you must immediately report the information to the Executive Director and either the local child protection office, the local police department, or the county sheriff’s office. In the event that the youth participant is attending a StoryArk program in conjunction with a local school district, the information must also be reported to the school district. Any questions regarding abuse or neglect may be directed to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is the subject of the report, the Chair of the Board should be contacted in lieu of reporting to the Executive Director.

Best Practices for Safely Working with Youth Participants

1. Avoid being alone with a single youth participant where you cannot be observed by staff or other adults. Unless you are a Designated Affiliated Adult, you should not be alone with a group of youth participants under any circumstance, and even if you are a Designated Affiliated Adult, you should not be alone with a single youth participant except in an emergency situation.
2. Do not discipline youth participants by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
3. Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of youth participants is unlawful and is prohibited by state law and StoryArk policy.

4. Do not have physical contact with youth participants, unless you must restrain or otherwise have contact for safety-related reasons.
5. Do not have contact with youth participants outside of the program environment, such as inviting youth participants to your home or to social activities or transporting youth participants except with explicit, written authorization of StoryArk and the youth participant's parent/guardian .
6. Understand and respect the boundaries set by youth participants regarding sharing personal information.
7. In sensitive situations and in case of injury, involve another Affiliated Adult or parent.
8. Allow youth participants to opt-out of distribution of contact information (except to Designated Affiliated Adults as needed).
9. Youth participants are not allowed on program premises without a Designated Affiliated Adult present.
10. No Internet social networking with youth participants for personal reasons or through personal profiles is allowed by Affiliated Adults. Networking through approved program sites/profiles may be used when the contact is related to programming.
11. Understand the program emergency plan for responding to a crisis situation.
12. Communicate to the Executive Director all situations that may be questionable or a possible breach of these guidelines.

Preventing Harmful Relationships with Youth Participants

The following are specific actions affiliated adults can follow in order to avoid harmful relationships with youth participants:

1. Establish clear boundaries with youth participants, *i.e.* stating what are or are not appropriate conversation topics.
2. Treat all youth participants equitably, *i.e.* fairly and consistently. Avoid showing favoritism.
3. Do not discuss your personal life with youth participants.
4. Follow appropriate professional attire guidelines and do not wear provocative or revealing attire.
5. Do not swear or tell off-color jokes.
6. Do not discuss anyone's sex life or activities, including yours or a youth participant's.

7. Do not share sexually explicit literature, magazines, books, music, or videos except those in the context of a sanctioned, appropriate activity that relates to the educational objective of your program.
8. Do not smoke, vape, or drink alcohol in the presence of youth participants.
9. Do not have physical contact with youth participants, unless you must restrain or otherwise have contact for safety related reasons.
10. Seek support from lead staff for high risk situations, such as discussions of very personal stories.
11. When in doubt, seek assistance from the Executive Director.

Educating Youth Participants

Youth participants may be informed in a manner that is age appropriate of their right to set their own physical limits for personal safety. They will be encouraged to tell an adult if someone is abusing or neglecting them. They will also be encouraged to tell an adult if they are in a situation or observe something that makes them uncomfortable.

Consequences of Behaviors that Harm Youth Participants

StoryArk takes these matters seriously. In the case of suspected abuse or neglect of a youth participant by Affiliated Adults, StoryArk will adhere to existing policies and procedures for corrective action, which may include disciplinary action up to and including termination of the employee, contractor, or volunteer status. Actions taken will first and foremost consider the need to ensure the safety of youth participants participating in the program.

Acknowledgment of StoryArk Adult Code of Conduct Guidelines

I have read the StoryArk Adult Code of Conduct & Guidelines for Working With Youth and I agree to abide by the program rules and boundaries for staff relationships with youth participants as stated.

I UNDERSTAND VIOLATIONS OF STORYARK GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH PARTICIPANTS MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION UP TO AND INCLUDING TERMINATION OF EMPLOYEE, CONTRACTOR, OR VOLUNTEER STATUS. I ACKNOWLEDGE I AM AWARE OF MY RESPONSIBILITIES AND I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THE ADULT CODE OF CONDUCT.

Print Name _____

Date _____

Signature _____