

StoryArk Youth Protection Policy

StoryArk is committed to providing a safe, secure, respectful environment for youth participating in its programs. The organization does this by following these practices:

- Screening of all employees, contractors, and volunteers who work with youth participants.
- Education of staff, contractors, volunteers, parents and youth about the code of conduct, abuse prevention, and the responsibility to report inappropriate behavior.
- Prompt response to inappropriate behavior and allegations of abuse.
- Enforcement of policies, including consequences for violations.

Screening & Selecting Staff and Volunteers

Prior to working with youth participants, all employees, contractors, and volunteers are required to:

- Undergo a background check which includes a search of federal and state criminal records and a name-based search of the National Sex Offender Registry.

Education about Codes of Conduct and Responsibility to Report Inappropriate Behavior

It is the responsibility of every employee, contractor, and volunteer to act in the best interest of all youth participants in the program. Youth participants are also expected to act appropriately with employees, contractors, volunteers and fellow participants.

All Affiliated Adults, as defined in the Adult Code of Conduct, and all youth participants are required to review and agree to the Adult and Youth Code of Conduct respectively:

- Affiliated adults must sign the Adult Code of Conduct prior to working with youth, and re-sign the agreement every 2 years.
- Youth participants are required to sign the Youth Code of Conduct at the beginning of each new session.

All Affiliated Adults will also attend an orientation session to review the Adult and Youth Codes of Conduct. Among the topics included in the training will be:

- Youth sexual abuse, which involves any sexual activity—including but not limited to sexual penetration, sexual touching or non-contact sexual acts such as exposure or voyeurism—with youth under the age of 18 where consent is not or cannot be given.
- Harassment is conduct that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work, learning, or social environment; has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's program performance; or otherwise adversely affects an individual's opportunities within the program. (Please see the Employee Handbook for the definition of harassment for employment purposes.)
- Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among youth that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

Prompt Response to Inappropriate Behavior and Allegations of Inappropriate Behavior

Physical or Sexual Abuse or Neglect: In the event that an Affiliated Adult has reason to believe that a youth participant is being abused physically or sexually, or neglected, by anyone, the Affiliated Adult must immediately report the information to the Executive Director (or the Chair of the Board of Directors if the Executive Director is the subject of the report) 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.

StoryArk will first ensure the safety and protection of the youth participant who is believed to be experiencing bullying, harassment, or other inappropriate behavior. StoryArk will also conduct a prompt and thorough investigation based on the circumstances, as well as cooperate with any law enforcement investigation. StoryArk will also take appropriate corrective action, which may include disciplinary action up to and including termination of employee, contractor, volunteer or youth participant status for any Affiliated Adult or youth participant who is found to have engaged in bullying, harassment, or any other inappropriate behavior.

Bullying, Harassment, or Other Inappropriate Behavior: In the event that an Affiliated Adult has 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, the Affiliated Adult must report the situation to the Executive Director (or the Chair of the Board of Directors if the Executive Director is the subject of the report).

StoryArk will first ensure the safety and protection of the youth participant who is believed to be experiencing the bullying, harassment, or other inappropriate behavior. StoryArk will also conduct a prompt and thorough investigation based on the circumstances and take appropriate corrective action, which may include disciplinary action up to and including termination of the employee, contractor, volunteer or youth participant status for any Affiliated Adult or youth participant who is found to have engaged in bullying, harassment, or any other inappropriate behavior.

The confidentiality of the reports made under this policy shall be maintained to the extent possible consistent with ensuring the safety and protection of youth participation, StoryArk's legal obligations, and the conduct of a prompt and thorough investigation under the circumstances.

Enforcement of Policies and Consequences for Violation of Policies

Affiliated Adults are charged with the diligent enforcement of StoryArk's policies, including this policy, the Adult Code of Conduct, and the Youth Code of Conduct. Violations of these policies are grounds for disciplinary action, including immediate termination of employee, contractor, or volunteer status. Additionally, failure to report a prohibited act as required by StoryArk's policies is also grounds for disciplinary action, including immediate termination of employee, contractor, or volunteer status.

Final decisions related to policy violations will fall within the purview of the Executive Director.