

## INCLUSION & EQUITY POLICY - MENTORING

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### PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- ensure all participants are treated equitably and with respect, regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle
  - promote inclusive practices and ensure the successful participation of young people and mentors with Sparkways Mentoring.
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### POLICY STATEMENT


#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Sparkways is committed to:

- acknowledging and respecting the rights of eligible young people to be provided with and participate in a quality mentoring program
- creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
- creating a sense of belonging for all young people, families, volunteer mentors and staff, where diverse identities, backgrounds, experiences, skills and interests are respected, valued and given opportunities to be expressed/developed
- ensuring that programs are reflective of, and responsive to, the values and cultural beliefs of families using the service, and of those within the local community and broader society
- working to ensure young people and volunteers are not discriminated against on the basis of background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of ability or additional needs, family structure or lifestyle
- ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, young person, volunteer or student at the service is discriminated against on the basis of having or being suspected of having an infectious disease or blood-borne virus
- providing all young people with the opportunity to be referred to our mentoring programs, and recognising that all families are unique and that young people referred to our programs have different needs, and reserving the right to assess their suitability/eligibility
- consistently updating and supporting the knowledge, skills, practices and perspectives of staff to encourage and ensure inclusion and equity
- complying with current legislation including the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, *Disability Act 2006* and *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to Sparkways Mentoring Staff and all Volunteer Mentors and is read in conjunction with the Sparkways Equal Opportunity, Gender Equity and Discrimination Policy

 <b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	Sparkways Mentoring Staff – including Students	Volunteer Mentors	Young People	Parents / Guardians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that programs are available and accessible to young people from a variety of backgrounds</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using family-centred practice and working collaboratively, to implement the program and provide individualised support</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing young people and families with information about the role of inclusive practice in achieving positive outcomes for all eligible participants</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with individual families to determine the needs of their child and facilitating their inclusion</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that the application and referral process is fair and equitable, and facilitates access for all eligible people</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>considering barriers to participation in service programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these, or on-referring young people or volunteers who are not eligible for this service</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that staff have access to appropriate and accredited professional development activities that promote a positive understanding of diversity, inclusion and equity, and provide skills to assist in implementing this policy</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that all staff and volunteer mentors are aware of expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with young people and families (refer to <i>Code of Conduct Policy</i>)</li> </ul>	X	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing service information in various community languages wherever possible</li> </ul>	X			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using language services to assist with communication where required, considering the employment of a multilingual worker/s to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementing appropriate practices to support vulnerable young people and families, including working co-operatively with relevant services and/or professionals (e.g. Child FIRST), where required</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing support and guidance to volunteers in their role as mentors to vulnerable young people</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, young person, volunteer or student at the service is discriminated against on the basis of having or being suspected of having an infectious disease, blood-borne virus, illness or medical condition</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner (refer to <i>Complaints and Grievances Policy</i>)</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring that all policies of Sparkways Mentoring, including the <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i>, are adhered to at all times</li> </ul>	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding and respecting different cultural parenting and social practices</li> </ul>	X	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussing any concerns regarding individual young people or Volunteer Mentors with Sparkways Mentoring staff, and notifying them of any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice</li> </ul>		X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adhering to the policies of Sparkways Mentoring, including the <i>Young Person Safety Policy</i>, and <i>Code of Conduct</i> at all times.</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communicating with Sparkways Mentoring staff to ensure awareness of their own or the young person's specific needs</li> </ul>		X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raising any issues or concerns regarding their own or the young person's participation in the program</li> </ul>		X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being involved in, keeping fully informed about, and providing written consent for any individualised intervention or support proposed/provided for the young person</li> </ul>		X	X	X



## BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

### LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006,*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010,*
- *Disability Act 2006*
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001.*
- *Victorian Child Safe Standards*
- *Victorian Human Services Standards*

**The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:**

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: [www.legislation.vic.gov.au](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)  
Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: [www.legislation.gov.au](http://www.legislation.gov.au)



## SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### RELATED POLICIES

- Equal Opportunity, Gender Equity and Discrimination Policy
- Young Person Safety Policy
- Code of Conduct



## EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, Sparkways will:

- seek feedback from people affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required



## AUTHORISATION

This policy was endorsed by Sparkways on 07/03/2024

**REVIEW DUE:** March 2025