

## SCREENING POLICY – MENTORING

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### PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- Ensure that each volunteer mentor application and young person referral received, is processed with a consistent and professional approach and that a fair and equitable process is undertaken when assessing suitability
- Prior to matching, ensure that volunteer mentors and young people meet the compliance requirements of the program and successfully complete the relevant screening procedures.
- Ensure Mentoring staff are knowledgeable of and understand the screening requirements for volunteer mentors and young people.

*Note: Sparkways staff members are NOT eligible to be a mentor whilst employed by Sparkways*



### POLICY STATEMENT

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Sparkways is committed to:

- the provision of quality services to vulnerable young people and children in a safe environment
- ensuring that Mentoring staff, mentors, young people and parent/guardians understand and follow procedures to ensure the safety of the volunteer and young person
- protect and maintain privacy in accordance with the Sparkways *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- ensuring that volunteer mentors and young people satisfactorily complete the screening process which forms part of the eligibility criteria. (*refer Eligibility Policy*)
- reviewing the information gathered throughout the screening process to decide the participant's suitability for the program.
- advising volunteer mentors and referral agencies by phone and/or email, in a timely manner, when the volunteer mentor or young person has not successfully completed the screening process.
- complying with current legislation including the Privacy Act 1988(Cth) and Information Privacy Act 2000(Vic) and will protect personal information in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles (Commonwealth) ("APPs") and Information Privacy Principles (Victoria) ("IPPs")

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all Volunteer Mentors, young people, parents/guardians (where applicable) and Sparkways Mentoring Staff

 <b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	Sparkways Mentoring Staff	Volunteer Mentors	Young People	Parent/Guardians
Ensure that all Mentoring Staff are aware and understand the requirements of this policy	X			
Advise and ensure that Mentoring staff, volunteer mentors, young people and parent/guardians are aware that Sparkways is a Child Safe Organisation, underpinned by the <i>Child Safe Standards</i>	X	X	X	X
Prior to commencing any screening, review the young person referral and volunteer mentor application to ensure that the initial eligibility criteria have been met. ( <i>refer Eligibility Policy</i> )	X			
Setting the Mentor Training dates for screening volunteers. Frequency of Mentor Training is determined by the Mentoring team to adequately meet the funding requirements	X			
Advise all participants that all information gathered during the Screening process will be protected and maintained in accordance with the Sparkways <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i>	X			
Contact volunteers and young people, identified for a potential match, invite to commence screening and enquire regarding availability of the volunteer to attend the next Mentor Training day.	X			
Complete the screening process ( <i>as listed below</i> ) in a timely manner to determine if a candidate is suitable to participate in the Mentoring program	X	X	X	X
Document and record all screening process outcomes and upload all paperwork to the volunteer mentor or young person's record.	X			
Consider the information gathered throughout the screening process and decide the participant's suitability for the program	X			
When an applicant is deemed unsuitable, the volunteer mentor or young person, referring agency and parent/guardian (where required) will be contacted by phone and/or email and advised of the reason they were not suitable. ( <i>as listed below</i> )	X			
Remove and securely destroy all personal information gathered for the volunteer and young person, during the screening process, within 30 days of notification of unsuitability.	X			



## PROCEDURES

### Volunteer Mentor Screening

Safety checks are an important part of our volunteer screening and assessment procedure, therefore all prospective volunteer mentors must successfully complete the Screening process in order to be accepted into the mentoring program and be matched with a young person.

Each volunteer mentor must successfully complete the following screening requirements:

- Participate in an interview with up to two Mentoring Staff members. Interviews can be conducted online or in person.
- Undertake a Working with Children Check and National Police Check, using the information provided by Mentoring staff
  - Staff will determine whether an International Police Check will be required as part of the screening process (*refer International Police Check Policy*)
- Two character references provided by the volunteer, to be contacted by Mentoring Staff. Referees cannot be a partner/spouse or direct family member and have preferably known the applicant for a minimum of 12 months.
- Attend the next Mentor Training and actively participate. Prior access will be given to training day resources, workbooks and policies and all required documentation will be required to be completed by the end of training. These documents consist of:
  - Young Person Safety Acknowledgment
  - Code of Conduct Acknowledgment
  - Photo Consent Form
  - Social Media Agreement
  - Training Evaluation Form
- If deemed necessary, allow staff to conduct a Home Visit.  
*Note: A Home Visit is not necessary in order to successfully complete screening. A Home Visit will only be conducted if the mentor has advised that the young person would like to do an activity which will be required to be conducted in the home, ( i.e. cooking, playing board games etc). A Home Visit will be arranged with Mentoring staff and an additional permission form completed by the parent or guardian BEFORE the activity can occur. (refer Attachments).*

The volunteer mentor's ability to undertake and complete the screening and training process, in a timely manner, with open communication will be taken into consideration when determining suitability for the mentoring program.

### Young Person Screening

As the mentoring program is dependent on the availability of volunteer mentors, there may be a delay before a young person is identified for a potential match with a mentor and commences the screening process.

Screening for each identified young person is conducted by completing the following steps:

- Participate in an in-person Intake Interview with the young person, their parent or guardian (where appropriate) and the referrer (if necessary)
  - An Interpreter Service can be used if required.

- Staff to provide the young person and their parent/guardian with the Mentoring Handbook, outlining the program and the rights and responsibilities of all participants
- Provide and complete the required documentation, which includes:
  - An Authority & Consent form
  - Photo Consent Form
  - Social Media Agreement
  - Medical Consent & Release Form

Young People aged 16 and above can elect to sign their own permission forms and not have a parent or guardian present at the Intake Interview. All young people under the age of 16 must have an adult present (parent, guardian or referrer) at the Intake Interview and sign all relevant documentation of behalf of the young person.

### Mentor Training

Each volunteer mentor must attend the Mentor Training in order to successfully complete screening.

Training will be conducted on a Saturday for the duration of up to 6 hours or broken into two sessions run over two evenings if preferred. Topics covered include but are not limited to organisational and program policies and guidelines, safety issues (including mandatory reporting), effective communication, relationship building skills, active listening, scenarios, group discussions and provides an understanding of strengths-based language and positive youth development.

### Reasons for Non-Progression

Where a volunteer or young person is unsuccessful during the Screening and training process, their record will be securely stored following the date of notification and destroyed within 30 days.

Reasons for a *volunteer* being unsuccessful may be due to, but are not limited to:

- Inability to commit the required time and availability
- History of Violence
- Significant personal or health issues that indicate it would not be an appropriate time to participate
- Inappropriate reasons for wanting to take on the role
- Current or recent illegal drug use or excessive use of alcohol
- Negative references or unwillingness of a referee to complete reference report
- Lack of engagement or inappropriate behaviour or responses during the training program
- Lack of communication with Mentoring Staff with relation to completing the screening process

Reasons for a *young person* being unsuccessful can be factors relating to themselves and/or their parent or guardian, particularly if the young person is under the age of 16. As Sparkways relies on being able to communicate and relate to the parent or guardian sometimes these factors can impede the ability to match a young person.

Reasons for being unsuccessful may be due to, but are not limited to:

*(relates to both young person and parent/guardian)*

- Inability to commit the required time and availability
- History of Violence
- Significant personal or health issues that indicate it would not be an appropriate time to participate
- Inappropriate reasons for wanting to take on the role
- Current or recent illegal drug use or excessive use of alcohol
- Lack of communication with Mentoring Staff with relation to completing the screening process

In this instance the volunteer or young person's referrer, parent/guardian or young person (if over 16) will be advised that their application was unsuccessful and Sparkways will not be progressing with their screening.

Sparkways reserves the right to withdraw an application during the screening process with regards to meeting the suitability for the program.

Volunteer mentors, young people and parent/guardians may also withdraw from the screening process at any time.



## BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

### LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Privacy Act 1988(Cth)
- Information Privacy Act 2000(Vic)
- Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)
- 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

- Eligibility Policy
- Young Person Safety Policy (also known as Child Safe Policy)
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Privacy & Confidentiality Policy
- Complaints Policy



## 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



## LINKS

- Link 1: [Young Person Safety Acknowledgment](#)
- Link 2: [Code of Conduct Acknowledgment](#)
- Link 3: [Photo Consent Form - Mentors](#)
- Link 4: [Photo Consent Form - Mentees](#)
- Link 5: [Social Media Agreement](#)
- Link 6: [Training Evaluation Form](#)
- Link 7: [Authority & Consent form](#)
- Link 8: [Medical Consent & Release Form](#)
- Link 9: [Home Visit Form](#)
- Link 10: [High Risk Activity Consent & Waiver Form](#)



## AUTHORISATION

This policy was confirmed by Sparkways on 12/02/2024

REVIEW DUE: February 2025

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