

Youth Services

Mentoring Handbook



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We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as Australia's First Peoples and as the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



We celebrate diversity and value the lived experience of people of every ethnicity, faith, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Who we are

Since 1883, Sparkways has been supporting children, young people, and families, through Early Learning, Mentoring and Social Enterprise opportunities all across Victoria.

We are a social purpose organisation working alongside our communities to ensure every child and young person is given every opportunity to reach their full potential.

Sparkways has zero tolerance for child abuse and holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility.

What we do

For over a hundred years, we've seen first hand the powerful impact a mentor can have for young people, families, and the community at large.

At Sparkways our mentoring program aims to provide young people aged 7-20 with positive experiences. Our program is designed to help young people flourish by connecting them with a positive role model, who they can trust to provide social support, friendship and life skills so they may take their place in the world with confidence and pride.

The program is made up of fortnightly one-to-one catch ups over a 12 month period. During this time, our young people are supported and encouraged to play an active role in decisions, to set goals, try out new things and, most importantly, have fun.

This handbook will provide you with information about our program, what to expect from the mentor, how as a Parent or Guardian you can support the relationship, guidelines to follow and ways to provide feedback to us.

We are a Child Safe Organisation and are guided by policies and procedures to keep young people safe. We've included some of them in the handbook for your reference.



How our program works:

Young People are referred to our program by a professional service such as a social worker, child protection worker, psychologist, or school representative. Referrals are lodged with the knowledge and approval from the Young Person and Parent/Guardian if applicable.

We recruit, screen and train suitable volunteer Mentors and introduce them to the Young Person at our Match Meeting Day – a group event where our Young People and Mentors meet and start their 12 month journey together.

Regular contact and support will be provided by our Coordinators throughout the 12 months and reviews will be conducted at 3, 6 and 9 months with the Young Person and their Mentor to track their progress.

At the end of the 12 months the Young Person will graduate from the program and cease contact with the Mentor.

Support and guidance will be provided on navigating the end of the mentoring relationship.



Match tips

When a young person joins our program the following is agreed to by the Volunteer Mentor, Young Person and their Parent/ Guardian (where applicable):

- ▶ Mentors will have weekly communication with the Young Person, as well as face to face contact, for a minimum of 2 or more hours, twice a month for a 12-month period
- ▶ Plans for catch ups should be made in consultation with all parties.
- ▶ No overnight stays are permitted during the match.
- ▶ Approval for high risk activities and/or day trips is required in the form of written consent from the parent/guardian and the Program Coordinator.
- ▶ For Young People under the care of a Parent/Guardian, a parent/guardian will be at home when the Mentor picks up and drops off the Young Person, or alternative arrangements will be made and communicated.
- ▶ Contact with the Program Coordinator must be maintained for the duration of the match, with regards to the progress of the match and for any feedback or concerns.
- ▶ The Mentor and Parent/Guardian or, where appropriate, the Young Person, must contribute equally to the cost of match activities.

Please contact the Program Coordinator if you have any concerns regarding this summary of the Match Agreement.

The support we provide

At Sparkways Mentoring we're here to support the Young Person and the Parent/Guardian (where applicable) in having an enjoyable, fun and rewarding experience in our program. We are here to assist the match and help out if any concerns pop up along the way.

The Sparkways Program Coordinator supports the match by:

- ▶ Regular phone calls / contact with the Young Person, Parent / Guardian (where applicable) and Mentor.
- ▶ At first fortnightly contact and then monthly contact as the match grows and develops.
- ▶ Conducting reviews of the match at 3, 6 and 9 months. Goals for the match are reviewed and we celebrate how far you've come!
- ▶ Prepare for graduation and discuss if you need additional supports once the program ends
- ▶ Graduation from the program at a Match Graduation Day

In some circumstances, we can continue to provide support to a match for a further three month period beyond the 12 months. This decision is made on a case by case basis.

Young people's rights as part of our program

At Sparkways Mentoring we support the rights of Young People by ensuring that Young People have a voice in how their match looks, what their goals are and to let us know if they are happy with their Mentor.

We continue to support Young People and their family throughout the match, checking in regularly to see if the program is going well and to support any issues that may arise that impact upon the match.

We follow the Child Safe Standards and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



"I'VE GOT RIGHTS!"



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
In Youth-Friendly Language

1 Everyone under 18 has these rights.

2 ALL CHILDREN have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor.



3 When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

4 The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family to protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.

5 Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.

6 You have the right to be alive.

7 You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

8 You have the right to an identity – an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.

9 You have the right to live with your parents), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a **FAMILY** that cares for you.

10 If you live in a different country than your parents do, you have the right to be together in the same place.

11 You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.



12 You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

13 You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

14 You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

15 You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

16 You have the right to privacy.

17 You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.

18 You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.

19 You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

20 You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.



21 You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.

22 You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

23 You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life.

24 You have the right to the best **HEALTH** care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

25 If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have those living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

26 You have the right to **HELP** from the government if you are poor or in need.

27 You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

28 You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.



29 Your **EDUCATION** should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

30 You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion - or any you choose. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

31 You have the right to play and rest.



32 You have the right to protection from work that harms you, and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

33 You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

34 You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

35 No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

36 You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

37 No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way.

38 You have the right to **PROTECTION** and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

39 You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

40 You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.

41 If the laws of your country provide better protection of your rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

42 You have the right to know your rights! Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.

43 to 54 These articles explain how governments and international organizations like SOS Children's Villages and UNICEF will work to ensure children are protected.

SOS Children's Villages thanks UNICEF for kindly permitting the use of their youth-friendly test for this educational poster.



For more information visit
www.sos-childrensvillages.org



Rights and responsibilities – young person

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The Young Person:

- ▶ Has the right to feel safe at all times
- ▶ Has the right to an advocate to support them if they choose
- ▶ If they feel hurt or unsafe they can tell their Mentor, Parent/ Guardian or the Program Coordinator
- ▶ Will choose activities together with the Mentor. Free or low-cost activities should be chosen, for most outings, however if there is an expense for the match outing, they will cover their own costs
- ▶ Can talk about what's on their mind, however the Mentor will not get involved in arguments at home.
- ▶ Understands the activity is primarily between them and their Mentor
- ▶ Will listen and follow any safety instructions from the Mentor. The Mentor is responsible for their safety.
- ▶ Will be ready on time when the Mentor comes to pick them up
- ▶ Understands friendship with their Mentor is supposed to be fun. If this is not happening, or they have any worries about the match, call their Sparkways Coordinator or speak to their Parents/Guardian or Carer



Rights and responsibilities – parent/guardian

The Parent/Guardian:

- ▶ Has the right to feel safe and comfortable when the Mentor visits and to have a say in the match and how it progresses
- ▶ Has a right to a quality service and can inform us if there are improvements we can make or complaints to share
- ▶ Are responsible for communicating with the Mentor to organize times for them to spend with the Young Person
- ▶ Will be at home when the Mentor picks up and drops off the Young Person, or make alternative arrangements and notify the Mentor
- ▶ Will support the Young Person to be ready to be picked up by the Mentor at the agreed time.
- ▶ Will not prevent the Young Person from seeing the Mentor, unless there are safety or health concerns
- ▶ Will contact the Sparkways Coordinator of any concerns with the match or the Young Person, or if their family situation changes in a way that will impact the match
- ▶ Will, where possible, contribute to the cost of activities when planned/arranged



Compliments, feedback & complaints¹³

Sparkways values all feedback from parents, carers, young people and mentors, as well as stakeholders and referring agencies.

- ▶ Sparkways handles all disputes and complaints with fairness and equity and maintains confidentiality at all times.
- ▶ When a complaint is received all relevant details will be recorded and the Sparkways Team Leader will be informed immediately. The Team Leader will be responsible for investigating the matter and taking appropriate action.
- ▶ Anyone wishing to provide feedback or make a complaint is encouraged to contact Sparkways on tel: 1300 677 275 or email: mentoring@sparkways.org.au
- ▶ Alternatively, families, young people, mentors and stakeholders are also welcome to contact the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) with any concerns.

The DHHS State Switchboard can be contacted on **1800 783 783** and will direct you to the appropriate service.



Volunteer mentor screening

All of our volunteer mentors undertake a comprehensive screening process to ensure the safety of Young People while in their care.

Mentor Screening includes:

- ▶ A completed application, followed by an interview with Sparkways staff
- ▶ Undertake Police, Working with Children, and reference checks
- ▶ Complete Volunteer training and Home safety check

We ensure volunteers pass all of these requirements before they are accepted into the program. Staff are trained in child safe practices, including how to ensure the safety of young people when making a match.

Sparkways ensures compliance with privacy legislation to protect the confidentiality of participants and their families.

Sparkways is committed to ensuring individuals are fully informed regarding the collection, storage, use, disclosure and disposal of their personal information, and access to that information. Please see our Privacy Policy for further details.

“Be strong, be fearless, be beautiful. And believe that anything is possible when you have the right people there to support you.”

– Misty Copeland



Speak up - it's your right

Victoria's Child Safe Standards are designed to keep you safe.

Why the standards came about

In 2013, the Victorian Government looked at how safe organisations are for children and young people.

It found that sometimes children and young people have not been kept safe by organisations and the adults who work in them.

More needed to be done to keep children and young people safe in the future.



What are they for?

Out of home care providers, schools, churches, sports clubs, dance schools and other organisations have to keep you safe.

This means:

- Only choosing adults who are safe to work with you.
- Listening to you about what makes you feel safe.
- Acting to protect you if someone hurts you or makes you feel unsafe.



What they mean for you

You can expect to be safe and to feel safe, wherever you go and whatever you do.

You can expect that adults that work with you know how to keep you safe.

You can tell an adult if you don't feel safe and they have to help you.



Get in touch with us

www.coyv.vic.gov.au

(03) 8601 5281

  [coypvictoria](https://www.facebook.com/coypvictoria)

The child safe standards and reportable conduct scheme

The **Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)** recognises, respects and defends the rights of children and Young People. They promote improvement in policies that affect the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and Young People and administer the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Child Safe Standards

The Child Safe Standards work by changing organisational culture to embed child safety in everyday thinking and practice. They aim to:

- ▶ Promote the safety of children
- ▶ Prevent child abuse
- ▶ Ensure organisations have processes in place to respond to and report all allegations of child abuse.

The Child Safe Standards apply to all organisations that provide services for children and Young People.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme seeks to improve organisations' responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their workers and volunteers. The scheme is established by the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

It has been designed to ensure that the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) will be aware of every allegation of certain types of employee misconduct involving children in relevant organisations that identified in the schedules below

- ▶ sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- ▶ sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- ▶ physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- ▶ any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- ▶ significant neglect of a child

Key policy information

At Sparkways our Code of Conduct outlines acceptable behaviour to ensure that all interactions are respectful, honest, courteous, sensitive, tactful and considerate. We are a Child Safe Organisation and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children, families, mentors and staff.

Transport

Mentors are able to transport Young People in their own private vehicle as long as it is reliable, insured and Mentors possess a valid driver's license and obey all traffic laws.

Overnight Visits and Out-of-Town Travel

Sparkways encourages Mentors to keep activities with their Young Person local and avoid out-of-town or long distance trips. However, if an out-of-town trip is planned a permission slip signed by the Parent/ Guardian must be completed and Mentors must provide the Parent/Guardian with a detailed itinerary.

Overnight visits ARE NOT permitted during participation in the program.

Use of Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco products is prohibited whilst engaging in mentoring activities.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Unacceptable behaviours will not be tolerated and will result in a warning and/or disciplinary action. This may include suspension or termination from the program

*All policies are available upon request by contacting Sparkways



Young person safety policy

Sparkways staff are committed to delivering programs that are inclusive, and meet the changing needs of Young People. Sparkways is committed to cultural safety for Aboriginal Young People and Young People with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability, and with diverse gender identities.

Sparkways has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that all young people are safe while involved in our programs. All staff and volunteers must report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the agency immediately. Staff and volunteers are provided with training, resources, information and guidance to do this.

In order to ensure the safety of young people,

Sparkways will be responsible for:

- ▶ Identifying the signs of child abuse and ensure that reporting procedures are in place
- ▶ Screening, training and educating staff and volunteers on child safety
- ▶ Offering support and protecting the rights of the young people, their families, volunteers and staff
- ▶ Maintaining confidentiality in line with the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- ▶ Conducting a home assessment of the volunteer before a young person visits the volunteers home

Sparkways mentors will be responsible for:

- ▶ Ensuring no young person is left unsupervised
- ▶ Ensuring their home is safe
- ▶ Ensuring the safe delivery and collection of young people

Parent/Carers will be responsible for:

- ▶ Reading and complying with this policy
- ▶ Providing any relevant information regarding the young person
- ▶ Reporting any concerns to Sparkways

If there are significant concerns for a child's safety or well-being, Sparkways is required to:

1. For life threatening concerns: call the Police on **000**
2. For immediate risk of harm call the Child Protection Crisis Line on **13 12 78**
3. For general wellbeing concerns: Make a referral to **Child FIRST**

Please note: at any time all participants are encouraged to speak to their Coordinator if there are any concerns.

From the 27 October 2014 it is an offence for adults to not disclose child sexual abuse to police. The new offence applies to all adults, not just professionals who work with children.

Further information can be found at:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection>



Additional resources

This list of Organisations is available should you need additional information or support.

Would you like the support of an advocate?

- ▶ **Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVIC)**
Advocate for young people and represent the youth sector to uphold the rights of all young Victorians
W/ <https://www.yacvic.org.au/>
P/ (03) 9267 3700
- ▶ **Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)**
YDAS works with disabled young people who are aged 12 to 25, to make sure they can speak up and are being treated fairly.
W/ <https://www.yacvic.org.au/ydas/about>
P/ 0438 638 734
- ▶ **Action On Disability Within Ethic Communities (ADEC)**
ADEC specialises in helping people from diverse cultural backgrounds who are living with a disability, assisting people to understand their rights, access information and services, and to speak up for what is needed to improve their situation
W/ <https://adec.org.au/advocacy-support/>
P/ (03) 9480 7000

- ▶ **Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS)**
YSAS provide youth alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment as well as extensive experience in providing young people and families with services that support improved mental health and improve meaningful community participation.
W/ <https://ysas.org.au/>
- ▶ **YGender**
YGender is a peer led social support and advocacy group for trans/gender diverse young people
W/ <https://www.ygender.org.au/>

Would you like the support of an aboriginal organisation?

- ▶ **Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)**
VACCA is a state-wide Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) servicing children, young people, families, and community members. The largest of its kind in Australia.
W/ <https://www.vacca.org/>
- ▶ **Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)**
VACCHO is the peak body for Aboriginal health and wellbeing in Victoria
W/ <https://vaccho.org.au/>
- ▶ **KOORI Youth Council (KYC)**
KYC is a dedicated representative organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in policy and advocacy.
W/ <https://korieyouthcouncil.org.au/>



Other support agencies

- ▶ **Commission for Children & Young People (CCYP)**
Child Safety and Reportable Conduct Scheme enquiries
W/ <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/>
P/ (03) 8601 5281
- ▶ **The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)**
W/ <https://www.cmy.net.au/>
- ▶ **Minus 18**
We're leading change, building social inclusion, and advocating for an Australia where all young people are safe, empowered, and surrounded by people that support them.
W/ <https://www.minus18.org.au/>
- ▶ **Headspace - Mental Health support**
W/ <https://headspace.org.au/>

Contact numbers

Police, Ambulance, Fire:	000
Police- Non urgent crimes and events	131 444
Parentline– Phone counselling for parents:	13 22 89
DFFH Child Protection (Children 0-17 years old at risk of serious abuse) Crisis Line- 24 Hrs:	13 12 78
Kids Help Line: W/ https://kidshelpline.com.au/	1800 55 1800
LifeLine Australia(crisis support)	131 114
Safe steps (for women and children who have experienced family violence)	1800 015 188
Sexual Assault Crisis Line:	1800 806 292
Men's Referral Service (for people at risk of using family violence, free, confidential)	1300 766 491
National Relay Service (for the hearing impaired) Voice Relay number	1300 555 727
TTY number (teletypewriter)	133 677
SMS Relay number	0423 677 767



Contact and Connect with us

If you have a query or concern, please don't hesitate to speak with your Coordinator or our customer service team.



mentoring@sparkways.org.au



1300 677 275



<https://sparkways.org.au/mentoring>