



Child Safety Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

SparkPath has a commitment to ensure not only the quality of its programs, but to provide safe, respectful, and healthy environments for students who participate in our programs. We make every effort to ensure this. Upon approval of the SparkPath Board, each staff member and SparkPath Board member receives a copy of this policy and is asked to familiarize themselves with its contents. SparkPath as an organization also ensures that all staff, SparkPath volunteers and non-staff contracted personnel at SparkPath-sponsored events have a functional knowledge of issues pertaining to sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and comprehension of this policy.

II. DEFINITIONS

Child Safety

“Child Safety” is a condition that exists in an environment in which every child is treated with respect and is safe and protected from sexual, physical, and emotional harm. Organizations offering services to children and youth are expected to keep the participants in their programs safe from harm within the context of reasonable standards of care.

Sexual Abuse

“Sexual abuse” means the subjection of a child to any act that constitutes criminal sexual conduct by a person responsible for the child’s care, a person who has a significant relationship to the child, or a person in a position of authority. Sexual abuse includes any act that involves a minor that constitutes a violation of prostitution offenses. Sexual abuse also includes threatened sexual abuse. (Minnesota Citation: Ann. Stat. § 626.556, Subd. 2)

Sexual Abuse includes any contact or interaction between a child and another person in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator and/or any additional person. This contact or interaction can include rape, molestation, forcing a child to look at or fondle the sexual parts of another person, and exploitation of a child through pornography and prostitution.

Physical abuse

“Physical abuse” is any intentional physical injury to a child.

Emotional abuse

“Emotional abuse” is a pattern of behavior attacking a child’s self-worth. It includes belittling, terrorizing, isolating, rejecting, ignoring, and corrupting the child. When continued over a period of time, these activities affect the child’s emotional development.

SparkPath-Sponsored Event

“SparkPath-Sponsored Events” include only those events in connection with SparkPath programs at which SparkPath staff is present.

SparkPath Volunteer

“SparkPath Volunteers” include persons recruited by SparkPath to perform unpaid program assignments related to a SparkPath-sponsored event. SparkPath Board Members are volunteers.

SparkPath Non-Staff Contracted Personnel

“SparkPath Non-Staff Contracted Personnel” are persons who are contracted by SparkPath and paid to perform program assignments related to SparkPath-sponsored programs such as presenters and photographers.

III. SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. From the date of the approval of this policy by the SparkPath Board, all SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel and volunteers at SparkPath-sponsored events are required to complete an application and consent to a background check prior to participating in children/youth programs or activities (see appendix for Background Check Procedures). The application includes a request for personal information (name, address, phone number, email, date of birth) and permission to run a background check. References are checked if necessary. SparkPath volunteers and non-staff contracted personnel must consent to an annual background check to continue participating in SparkPath events each year.
2. Volunteer and contracted staff applications include this question: “Have you ever been convicted of any crime or offense against the law, or are there any charges pending against you including felonies and misdemeanors?”
3. Individuals who have been convicted of crimes of violence including, but not limited to, sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse are not eligible for board membership, SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel, or volunteer service in any SparkPath-sponsored activity or program for minors. There is no limit on time passed since the offense.

IV. EXPECTATIONS & GUIDELINES AT EVENTS

1. **Open doors rule** - All classrooms and other spaces at SparkPath-sponsored events are open to visiting adults who may be SparkPath staff, parents, SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel, or volunteers at any time.
2. **Supervision** - SparkPath is responsible for providing adequate supervision at SparkPath-sponsored events. SparkPath staffing always provides for ongoing supervision with staff that move from place to place at the site during the event. Staff supervision is maintained before, throughout, and after all SparkPath-sponsored events until the children and youth are in the custody of parents, guardians, school personnel, or off the premises.
3. **Two-person rule** - This requires that staff, SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel, and volunteers make every effort to never be alone or secluded with a child or children without at least one additional adult present. If a staff person, SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel,

or volunteer and student are left alone, move to an area of public view, such as the doorway or hallway. When escorting children to a restroom, volunteers should wait in the hallway outside the restroom.

4. **Co-responsibility** - Each SparkPath-sponsored event has an established start/end date and time during which SparkPath is co-responsible for the safety and well-being of students attending. SparkPath staff present share this responsibility with school chaperones, teachers, SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel and volunteers at SparkPath-sponsored events. Event times typically are listed on the paper program booklet provided for the event.
5. **Transportation** - SparkPath does not provide and is not responsible for transportation to/from SparkPath-sponsored events and programs.
6. SparkPath staff, volunteers, and non-contract staff personnel are required to wear name tags that identify their participation at the event.

V. VOLUNTEER AND CONTRACTED PERSONNEL TRAINING & COMMUNICATIONS

1. Volunteers and SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel at SparkPath-sponsored events have specific assignments related to event operation. In addition, all volunteers are instructed on their general role in helping students behave in a safe and respectful manner and how this role is integral to SparkPath's efforts to provide a healthy environment for students.
2. Volunteers and SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel are instructed in the definition of sexual abuse and the identification of signs of sexual abuse in children. Volunteers and SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel are instructed in the definitions of physical and emotional abuse.
3. Volunteers and SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel are responsible to learn SparkPath's guidelines for preventing and recognizing sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. Information provided to volunteers, non-staff contracted personnel, and school contacts before SparkPath events/programs includes reference to these guidelines with links to the SparkPath website.
4. Volunteers and SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel are responsible to gain awareness of the contents of the SparkPath Child Safety Policy.
5. Volunteers and SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel are instructed to report any suspicion of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse to SparkPath staff immediately.

VI. RESPONSE & REPORTING PROCEDURES

In the event of any serious incident of injury, illness, or abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) at a SparkPath event, the steps below will be implemented:

1. SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel and volunteers are required to immediately report suspicion of any sexually abusive or sexually inappropriate behaviors to SparkPath staff.

2. SparkPath non-staff contracted personnel or volunteers are required to immediately report any suspicion of physical or emotional abuse to SparkPath staff.
3. The SparkPath Program Coordinator for the event will determine if contact with emergency responders is necessary. This will be done in accordance with any procedures set by the venue.
4. Whenever possible, the involved parties will be escorted to SparkPath event headquarters.
5. Staff reports the incident to the Director of SparkPath immediately.
6. If the Director of SparkPath is unavailable at the time of the incident reported, SparkPath Staff contacts a Director of BrightWorks.
7. The child's on-site teacher/chaperone is located and informed as soon as possible.
8. SparkPath will follow Minnesota state guidelines for mandatory reporting of the incident.
9. A written SparkPath Incident Report (see attached) is completed by SparkPath staff when a person knows or has reason to believe that a child has been sexually abused. Reference: Minnesota Statute Chapter 260E.06 MALTREATMENT REPORTING
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260E.06>
10. A written SparkPath Incident Report is completed by SparkPath staff when a person knows or has reason to believe that a child has been physically or emotionally abused. Reference: Minnesota Statute Chapter 260E.06 MALTREATMENT REPORTING
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260E.06>
11. The Director of SparkPath or BrightWorks reports the incident to the police or appropriate authorities. Reference: Minnesota Statute Chapter 260E.09 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260E.09>
12. In the case of sexual abuse, the name of the reporter is kept confidential while the report is under investigation by the authorities. After the investigation is complete, the subject of the report may compel disclosure of the name only upon the reporter's consent or a finding by the court that the report was false and made in bad faith. Reference: Minnesota Statute Chapter 260E.35 DATA PRACTICES <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260E.35>

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SparkPath
CHILD SAFETY POLICY
November 2023

APPENDIX

Contents:

1. Stop It Now! Prevention Tools 2018, “Behaviors to Watch for When Adults are With Children”
2. Stop It Now! Preventions Tools 2018, “Warning Signs In Children Of Possible Abuse”
3. SparkPath Incident Report



Have questions?
Need resources?

Get Help Now!

Call the Stop It Now! Helpline:
1.888.Prevent
or visit: <https://www.stopitnow.org/help>

Stop It Now![®] prevents the sexual abuse of children by mobilizing adults, families and communities to take actions that protect children before they are harmed.

Behaviors to Watch for When Adults Are With Children

We all have personal likes and things that make us uncomfortable. “Personal space” is the private area of control inside an imaginary line or boundary that defines each person as separate. Ideally, that boundary helps us stay in charge of our own personal space. It helps keep out the things that make us uncomfortable - unsafe and unwanted feelings, words, images, and physical contact. Solid social rules strengthen the boundary. Behaviors that routinely disrespect or ignore boundaries make children vulnerable to abuse.

Do you know an adult or older child who doesn't seem to understand what's acceptable when it comes to:

Personal space

- Makes others uncomfortable by ignoring social, emotional or physical boundaries or limits?
- Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits? Uses teasing or belittling language to keep a child from setting a limit?
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with or holding a child even when the child does not want this physical contact or attention?
- Frequently walks in on children/teens in the bathroom?

Relationships with children

- Turns to a child for emotional or physical comfort by sharing personal or private information or activities, normally shared with adults?
- Has secret interactions with teens or children (e.g. games, sharing drugs, alcohol, or sexual material) or spends excessive time emailing, text messaging or calling children or youth?
- Insists on or manages to spend uninterrupted time alone with a child?
- Seems “too good to be true, i.e. frequently babysits different children for free; takes children on special outings alone; buys children gifts or gives them money for no apparent reason?
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors?

Sexual conversation or behavior

- Frequently points out sexual images or tells dirty or suggestive jokes with children present?
- Exposes a child to adult sexual interactions or images without apparent concern?
- Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen (e.g., talks repeatedly about the child's developing body or interferes with normal teen dating)?

Good boundaries help prevent abuse. For more information and guidance about starting a conversation with someone who behaves in these ways, please visit our Online Help Center, www.stopitnow.org/gethelp.





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Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents of Possible Child Sexual Abuse

Any one sign doesn't mean that a child was sexually abused, but the presence of several suggests that you begin asking questions and consider seeking help. Keep in mind that some of these signs can emerge at other times of stress such as:

- During a divorce
- Death of a family member or pet
- Problems at school or with friends
- Other anxiety-inducing or traumatic events

Behavior you may see in a child or adolescent

- Has nightmares or other sleep problems without an explanation
- Seems distracted or distant at odd times
- Has a sudden change in eating habits
 - Refuses to eat
 - Loses or drastically increases appetite
 - Has trouble swallowing.
- Sudden mood swings: rage, fear, insecurity or withdrawal
- Leaves "clues" that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues
- Writes, draws, plays or dreams of sexual or frightening images
- Develops new or unusual fear of certain people or places
- Refuses to talk about a secret shared with an adult or older child
- Talks about a new older friend
- Suddenly has money, toys or other gifts without reason
- Thinks of self or body as repulsive, dirty or bad
- Exhibits adult-like sexual behaviors, language and knowledge

Signs more typical of younger children

- An older child behaving like a younger child (such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking)
- Has new words for private body parts
- Resists removing clothes when appropriate times (bath, bed, toileting, diapering)
- Asks other children to behave sexually or play sexual games
- Mimics adult-like sexual behaviors with toys or stuffed animal
- Wetting and soiling accidents unrelated to toilet training

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info@StopItNow.org
HelpLine: 1.888.PREVENT



Signs more typical in adolescents

- Self-injury (cutting, burning)
- Inadequate personal hygiene
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Sexual promiscuity
- Running away from home
- Depression, anxiety
- Suicide attempts
- Fear of intimacy or closeness
- Compulsive eating or dieting

Physical warning signs

Physical signs of sexual abuse are rare. If you see these signs, bring your child to a doctor. Your doctor can help you understand what may be happening and test for sexually transmitted diseases.

- Pain, discoloration, bleeding or discharges in genitals, anus or mouth
- Persistent or recurring pain during urination and bowel movements
- Wetting and soiling accidents unrelated to toilet training

What You Can Do If You See Warning Signs

- Create a Safety Plan (www.stopitnow.org/safety_plan). Don't wait for "proof" of child sexual abuse.
- Look for patterns of behavior that make children less safe. Keep track of behaviors that concern you. This Sample Journal Page (www.stopitnow.org/journal_entry) can be a helpful tool.
- See our Let's Talk Guidebook (www.stopitnow.org/guidebooks) for tips on speaking up whenever you have a concern.
- If you have questions or would like resources or guidance for responding to a specific situation, visit our Online Help Center at www.stopitnow.org/gethelp.

SparkPath Incident Report

Use this form to document incidents of illness, injury, and abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual). The form should be filled out by SparkPath Staff. SparkPath will maintain confidentiality of the source information within the limits of the law for those providing the information below.

Date _____ SparkPath program/event _____

Time of incident _____ Location _____

Primary Individual Involved _____

Role: student volunteer staff Other (specify) _____

School/Organization _____

This is a report of:

- injury abusive behavior (physical, emotional, sexual)
 illness other (please note) _____

Person reporting the incident _____

Role: staff Other (specify) _____

Contact information phone _____ email _____

Teacher/Chaperone on site (if applies) _____

SparkPath staff documenting the incident _____

Other person(s) involved and roles _____

Details	Action Taken