

Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation Child Protection Policy

Abuse and neglect adversely affect children's physical, emotional and social well-being and development. At the Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation (YTAR), we strongly believe that it is our responsibility that children and young people are provided with a safe and secure environment in which to develop and thrive. Our staff undertake training to ensure that they have an understanding of Safeguarding and Child Protection and they are required to report all concerns of potential child abuse, exploitation or neglect, so that these can be appropriately explored and addressed. In all of our work, we strive to put the best interests of children and young people at the centre of what we do.

Definitions and Terminology

Staff: Employees of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation who work on our programmes

Mentor: Adults who volunteer to take part in the Closing The Gap (CTG) mentorship and support their Mentees for the duration of the programme.

Volunteer: Adults who volunteer to support our programmes on an informal basis, providing one-off support relevant to participants in the programme.

Participant: Participants of any of the programmes in the Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation, who may be children or adults

Mentee: Children and young adults who join the Closing The Gap programme between the ages of 15 - 21 as a Mentee, who are under the duty of care of the Closing The Gap programme.

Child: Any individual who is under the age of 18.

YTAR: The Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation, which runs the Closing The Gap Programme

CTG: The Closing The Gap programme

1. Our values, principles and beliefs

- a. Child abuse is never acceptable.
- b. We have a commitment to protecting children and participants in our programmes.
- c. When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children in their programmes.
- d. In all of our work, we strive to put the best interests of the child and the Mentee at the centre of what we do.

2. What we will do

We will meet our commitment to protect children from abuse through the following means:

- a. **Training:** We will ensure that adults involved are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children. We will ensure that Mentees are aware of appropriate behaviour for adults in the programme and that all participants are aware of good conduct and how to avoid inappropriate behaviour. We will ensure that all staff members receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role in working with children upon their induction into the organisation and that senior staff take part in additional safeguarding training to ensure good practice.

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- b. **Prevention:** We will ensure, through training and good practice, that staff and participants minimise the risks to children. We will ensure participants follow recommended practices to ensure good conduct that benefits the young people we work with.
- c. **Reporting:** We will ensure that staff, volunteers and Mentors are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children to ensure that all disclosures are handled appropriately and promptly, with the best interests of the Mentee prioritised.
- d. **Responding:** we will ensure that appropriate action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse, with the best interests of the Mentee prioritised. We will respond to any concern raised to us within 24 hours and strive to provide an update to the concerned party within 14 days.

3. Code of Conduct for Staff and Mentors

All Mentors and staff should demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to ensure that their participation in the programme does not cause or risk causing harm to any Mentees. This Code of Conduct has been developed for the protection of Mentors, volunteers and Mentees. To this end, we expect all Mentors and volunteers to abide by this Code of Conduct and any other requirements of the team.

3.1 Mentors and volunteers in general:

- Will inform the CTG team of any relevant police record or other factor, or any change in his/her circumstances, which may bring into question their suitability as a Mentor/volunteer.
- Recognise that the role of Mentor/volunteer places him/her in a position of trust for Mentees, and undertakes to uphold that trust at all times.
- Will maintain the confidentiality of any information relating to other Mentors, volunteers, Mentees and employees made available to him/her in the course of the role as a Mentor/volunteer.
- Remember at all times that interactions between him/ herself and Mentees must be such that no reasonable person observing that interaction could construe its nature as abusive or concerning.
- Will not offer a child a lift in a car (unless necessary and agreed upon by the parents/guardians of the child as well as the written approval of a staff member) .
- Will not behave in any way, physically or verbally, that could be offensive to a Mentee.
- Will not make physical contact of any kind with a Mentee should it be misconstrued.
- Will behave as role models and be suitable examples for Mentees.
- Will not vape, smoke, drink or use any illegal substances in the presence of Mentees.
- Will use appropriate language when conversing with Mentees.
- Will keep the door open to protect themselves if meeting in a closed office/classroom space as the only adult present.
- Will treat Mentees and participants with dignity and respect.
- Where a Mentee or participant is displaying inappropriate behaviour, end the interaction. Immediately make a record of the behaviour AND notify the CTG team.

3.2 Good Practice Means:

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- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations) and encouraging open communication with no secrets.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with participants (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff, Mentors or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a participant or to share a private room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers participants to share in the decision-making process
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people - not pushing them against their will

3.3 Mentors and staff must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse participants
- Develop physical/sexual relationships with participants
- Develop relationships with participants which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a participant at risk of abuse or exploitation.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Sleep in the same home, room or bed as a participant
- Do things for participants of a personal nature
- Condone, or participate in behaviour of a participant which is inappropriate, unsafe, illegal or may cause harm to others.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade participant, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular participants to the exclusion of others
- Invite Mentees to their homes or visit Mentee's homes without the presence of the Mentee's parent(s) or guardian(s).

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

3.4 It is important for all Mentors and staff and others in contact with Mentees to:

- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- As far as possible, be visible when working with Mentees
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged

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- Talk to Mentees about their contact with Mentors, staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- Empower participants by discussing with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

3.5 In general it is inappropriate to:

- spend excessive time alone with Mentees away from others
- Develop or attempt to develop any personal relationship with a Mentee that is outside the scope of Mentor / Volunteer relationship with a Mentee

4. Process to report and escalate concerns

In addition to adhering to the Code of Conduct set out above, all Mentors/volunteers must escalate any concerns relating to the safeguarding of a young person involved with the programme in accordance with the following process.

- If a Mentee approaches you about an issue of abuse, you must **proceed with great caution and report this to the Safeguarding Team at the earliest possible moment.**
- If possible, do not place yourself in a situation where you are alone with a Mentee. However, it is possible that a Mentee will be unwilling to make disclosures of this nature in anything but a one-to-one situation.
- The Mentee's needs must take priority in this situation. Ask if the Mentee would like someone else to be present – another adult or a friend - for the conversation. If they decline, proceed as written below, taking extra care with your behaviour and body language.
- Before the Mentee goes into detail, explain the consequences of you knowing and the action you will take. Assure them that you will offer support but must pass any information to another professional who may take appropriate action.
- Keep calm and listen to the Mentee - do not have physical contact at any time. Allow the Mentee to speak without interruption, accepting what is said.
- Do not make judgements or offer opinions. Do not attempt to investigate the allegation. Ask questions only for clarification.
- Explain again what will happen next. Find out when the Mentee is next due to see the individual who is the subject of the complaint. (You will then be able to make a judgement as to the appropriate timing of your follow-up actions.)
- Even if the complaint concerns a situation not related to the programme (e.g. at home or at school), please report the complaint to the Safeguarding team (using the contact details at the end of this page). Try to make a detailed record of the conversation as soon as possible and pass on to the team all information disclosed to you by the mentee.

Should there be allegations made about yourself or other Mentors that are relevant to Mentorship, please inform the Safeguarding team immediately. The Closing The Gap team may need to conduct investigations, as detailed in section 5.1 of the [Mentor Policy and Agreement](#).

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5. Whistleblower Policy

The Foundation has put in place a whistleblower policy to encourage reporting by the YTAR Community, Related Parties and also the public of improper conduct, violations of the law or YTAR policies or disciplinary issues by members of the YTAR Community. **YTAR is committed to keep all informant's personal information confidential and exempt them from actions taken due to such disclosures.**

YTAR will ensure that several channels are available for reports to be made by the YTAR Community and the public, including and not limited to:

- Email channel to the CEO and/or Safeguarding Team
- Messaging platforms or form on the YTAR website
- Any verbal or written private disclosure of information to the YTAR Community and Related Parties or persons making official reports by another person

However, any staff or participant who provides information which they know is false may be subject to disciplinary action not limited to termination, suspension and dismissal by the Board of Trustees or any personnel duly appointed by the Board to manage the case.

6. Action to be taken

6.1 If you receive an allegation about yourself

- Keep calm. Do not get involved in an argument which is likely to make the situation worse.
- Immediately inform the Safeguarding team. The quicker that action is taken to investigate the allegations, the sooner the situation will be resolved.
- Record the facts as you understand them.
- Ensure that no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.
- Do not contact other people connected with the mentee, such as family members or friends.
- Await further contact from the Safeguarding team.

6.2 If you suspect an abuse of trust has occurred (but the mentee hasn't told you directly)

- Discuss your concerns with the Safeguarding team.
- Record the facts which support your concerns.
- Once your concerns have been passed on to the appropriate person, you should have no further involvement unless told otherwise.

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Whatever the nature of the complaint, it must be kept confidential. You must not discuss the disclosure or concerns with any individual or party other than those identified in the above procedure.

If any of the above situations should arise or you wish to discuss any aspect of this safeguarding policy contact one of the following individuals as soon as possible:

Safeguarding Team

Kularetnam Vijayakumar kularetnam@yayasantar.org.my +6010-226-0851	Celine Looi celine.looi@yayasantar.org.my +6016-335-0953
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Declaration

I have read and fully understood Closing The Gap's Child Protection Policy, and hereby declare that I will adhere to Closing The Gap's Child Protection Policy in line with policy statements and procedures contained therein.

Name:

Date: