

# Policies and Procedures

## Privacy and Confidentiality

It is the policy of *Hear For You* to protect the confidentiality of its participants and their families. With the exception of the limitations listed below, the Program Directors<sup>1</sup> will only share information about mentors, mentees, and their families with the Board of Directors on a need-to-know basis.

Further, all prospective mentors, mentees and parents/guardians should be informed of the scope and limitations of confidentiality by the Program Directors. Additionally, mentors are required to keep information about mentees and their family confidential.

In order for *Hear For You* to provide a responsible and professional service to participants, it is necessary to ask mentors, mentees, parents/guardians, and other appropriate sources to divulge extensive personal information about the prospective participants and their families, including:

- Information gained from mentors and mentees, written or otherwise, about themselves and/or their families, in Enrolment Applications and during program participation
- Participants' names and images gained from participants themselves, training programs, mentoring sessions and other events
- Information gained about participants from outside sources including confidential references, school staff, employers

## Limits of Confidentiality

Information from mentor and mentee records may be shared with individuals or organisations as specified below under the following conditions:

- Information may be gathered about program participants and shared with other participants, individuals, or organisations only upon receipt of signed "release" forms from mentors, mentees, or parents/guardians.
- Identifying information (including names, photographs, videos, etc) of program participants may be used in publications or promotional materials only upon written consent of the mentor, mentee, and/or parent/guardian.
- Members of the Board of Directors have access to participants' files only upon authorization by a resolution of the board. The resolution shall identify the person(s) to be authorized to review such records, the specific purpose for such review, and the period of time during which access shall be granted. Such members of the board who have been granted access shall be required to comply with the *Hear For You* policies on confidentiality and may use the information only for purposes stated by the approved action of the Board of Directors.
- Known violations shall be reported to the Board's Chairperson. A violation of the *Hear For You's* confidentiality policy by a Board member shall constitute adequate cause for removal from the Board.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Hear For You* Program Directors are the Chief Executive Officer and Chief of Operations.

- Information may only be provided to law enforcement officials or the courts pursuant to a valid and enforceable subpoena.
- Information may be provided to legal counsel in the event of litigation or potential litigation involving *Hear For You* or its officers, directors, employees or volunteer staff.
- If the Program Directors receive information at any point during the match process that a mentor or mentee is using illegal substances, has a criminal history of any kind, or is inappropriately using alcohol or other controlled substances, the Program Directors reserve the right to share the information with the parent.
- At the time a mentor or mentee is considered as a match candidate, information will be shared between the prospective match parties. However, the full identity of the prospective match mate shall not be revealed at this stage. Names and addresses are shared with match mates only after the involved parties have met and agree to be formally matched. Each party shall have the right to refuse the proposed match based on the information provided to them.

### Safekeeping of Confidential Records

*Hear For You* keeps all confidential records in a password protected computer or in a secure cabinet. It is the Program Directors' responsibility to supervise the management of confidential information in order to ensure safekeeping, accuracy, accountability, and compliance with Board policies.

### Requesting Confidential Information from Other Organisations

A mentor's or mentee's right to privacy shall be respected by *Hear For You*. Requests for confidential information from other organisations or persons shall be accompanied by a signed release from the mentor, mentee, and/or parent/guardian.

### Violations of Confidentiality

A known violation of the policy on confidentiality by a program participant may result in a written warning or disciplinary action such as suspension or termination from the program.

### Mandatory Reporting Policy

It is the policy of *Hear For You* that the Program Directors, mentors, and other representatives of the program must report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect of program participants immediately. All such suspected reports must be made to appropriate state and/or local authorities. The Program Directors must follow the mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect procedure.

All mentors of *Hear For You* are required to undergo training in mentoring and how to properly report such cases.

Any mentors accused of child abuse will be investigated by *Hear For You*. Contact with program youth will be restricted or constrained and/or the person in question suspended from employment or program participation per the decision of the Board of Directors until such investigation is concluded.

## **Use of Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, and Firearms Policy**

It is the policy of *Hear For You* to prohibit and discourage the use of drugs, alcohol, and firearms. Mentees and mentors are prohibited from using drugs or alcohol or possessing firearms while engaged in mentoring activities. Any suspected violations should be reported to the Program Directors.

### **Alcoholic Beverages**

No participant in the *Hear For You* program will possess or consume beer, wine, or other alcoholic beverages while actively engaged or prior to actively engaging in mentoring, nor shall any participant endorse the use of alcohol. Mentors and mentees may go to a location where minors are allowed and alcohol is served provided that the mentor and mentee do not consume any alcohol.

### **Drugs**

No participant in the *Hear For You* program will manufacture, possess, distribute, or use any illegal substance while engaged in mentoring or otherwise.

### **Tobacco**

The intent of *Hear For You* is to create a smoke- and tobacco-free environment. To that end, smoking and the use of all tobacco products is prohibited on the premises of *Hear For You* and those involved with the program must refrain from the use of such products while engaged in mentoring. The use of tobacco products includes but is not limited to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, snuff, or other matters or substances that contain tobacco.

### **Weapons, Firearms, and Other Dangerous Materials**

The possession or use of firearms, firecrackers, explosives, toxic or dangerous chemicals, or other lethal weapons, equipment, or material while participating in mentoring activities is strictly prohibited.

Any violation of this policy will result in the immediate suspension and/or termination of the mentoring relationship. In addition, violations of this policy may result in notification being given to legal authorities that may result in arrest or legal action, and may be punishable by fine and/or imprisonment.

## **Code of Conduct**

It is the policy of *Hear For You* that unacceptable behaviours will not be tolerated on the part of mentors, mentees and/or mentees' parents/guardians while participating in the program. This policy is in addition to behavioural requirements stipulated in other policies or procedures within this manual. This policy in no way is intended to replace or take precedence over other policies or procedures including, but not limited to, the following:

- Confidentiality Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Use of Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, and Firearms Policy

A number of behaviours are regarded as incompatible with the *Hear For You* goals, values, and program standards and therefore are considered unacceptable and prohibited while participants are engaged in mentoring activities:

- Unwelcome physical contact, such as inappropriate touching, patting, pinching, punching, and physical assault
- Unwelcome physical, verbal, visual, or behavioural mannerisms or conduct that denigrates, shows hostility, or aversion toward any individual
- Demeaning or exploitive behaviour of either a sexual or nonsexual nature, including threats of such behaviour
- Display of demeaning, suggestive, or pornographic material
- Known sexual abuse or neglect of a child
- Denigration, public or private, of any mentee parent/guardian or family member
- Denigration, public or private, of political or religious institutions or their leaders
- Intentional violation of any local, state, or federal law
- Drinking while driving under the influence of alcohol
- Possession of illegal substances

Any unacceptable behaviour, as specified but not limited to the above, will result in a warning and/or disciplinary action including suspension or termination from participation in the mentoring program.

## **E-Mentoring**

Parents/guardians must make sure adequate measures are taken to ensure the mentees are protected when online. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to supervise their child's use of the Internet and enforce safety guidelines such as StaySmartOnline, an Australian Government initiative. There are many sources of information about how to keep children safe online.

For further information, visit [www.staysmartonline.gov.au/kids\\_safe\\_online](http://www.staysmartonline.gov.au/kids_safe_online)

## **Background Checks**

Mentors will be asked to provide their resume and to include the following information:

- Personal details
- Professional achievements and experience
- Education qualifications
- Skills gained
- Employment history
- Career goal and ambitions

Mentors will be asked to provide the name and contact details of two referees – a current or recent supervisor(s) and/or a current or recent colleague. Referees are asked to provide information on their work behaviour and performance and can be asked to verify or comment on claims made by them.

All mentors must undergo "Working With Children" background checks in the states in which they will be mentoring as well as specialist mentorship training. They should cover any relevant criminal records, apprehended violence orders or disciplinary proceedings.

## **Mentor / Mentee Agreement Form**

At the first meeting, both mentors and mentees must sign the "Mentor/Mentee Agreement Form" and return it to the Program Directors. This contract outlines the responsibilities that each party agrees to undertake, and provides for a no-fault termination of the partnership at any time, for any reason.

## **Use of Workshop Manuals**

Both mentees and mentors will receive a copy of the Workshop Manual. The Manual provides detailed information for activities/tasks for each of the four workshops, as well as providing space to keep a journal recording relevant information. Participants are not bound by these procedures, and can jointly negotiate alternative activities or tasks.

It is suggested however that any alternatives are designed in a way that provides a range and diversity of tasks and activities that will allow the mentees to gain a broad knowledge of the social environment and its requirements. The Workshop Manuals and any material distributed during the mentoring program remain the intellectual property of **Hear For You**.

## General Publicity Consent

At all times, **Hear For You** will work within Child Protection Protocols. Parents/guardians are asked to grant permission for **Hear For You** to use appropriate photographs of their child and understand that these may be shown locally, nationally and internationally on the website or for publicity. **Hear For You** will not use the mentee's first name, surname or age to accompany the photograph and/or video. Parents/guardians reserve the right to withdraw permission in which case a Photo Non-Consent Form will be sent upon request.

## Evaluation

To further develop and refine the **Hear For You** program, it is imperative that both mentors and mentees provide feedback on their views about the benefits of the program, or suggestions for its improvement.

Self-evaluation forms are to be filled out by the mentees before and after the program to measure the success of the program. They also provide a measure for individual mentors and mentees themselves to judge the benefits of the relationship for the mentees participating in the program. A Program Evaluation sheet should also be filled out by both parties to provide feedback to the Program Directors about the success of the program. All of these forms should be filled out in the Workshop Manual and returned to the Program Directors at the end of the program.

## Further Information

Visit our website: [www.hearforyou.org.au](http://www.hearforyou.org.au)

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