

Arts Ignite – Child Safeguarding Policy

I. Introduction:

As a child-focused organization, Arts Ignite creates circumstances in which children and adults regularly come into contact with each other. To that end, this policy is intended to guide the organization and individuals associated with it (staff members, teaching artists, volunteers, board members, interns, partners, and others, hereafter referred to as *associates*) on appropriate interactions with children. The goal of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of children participating in Arts Ignite programs and activities and to provide clear guidance to Arts Ignite associates on safer ways of working with children. We have a responsibility to promote the protection and safety of children while they are in contact with staff. A child or minor is defined as a person under 18 years of age.

Arts Ignite will pursue its commitment to protect children through:

- **Awareness:** Ensuring that all staff and associates are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children and of Arts Ignite's proactive approach to promoting child safety.
- **Prevention:** Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that associates minimize the risk to children.
- **Reporting and Responding:** Ensuring that associates and children participating in programs are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children and that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

II. Awareness:

Arts Ignite will take proactive measures to ensure that staff members and associates are aware of the problem of child abuse, the potential for child abuse through the organization's activities/programs, and the organization's commitment to child safety. Specific activities include, but are not limited to:

- Briefings about the Child Safeguarding Policy during staff meetings, teaching artist trainings, board meetings, discussions with partners, etc.
- Briefings with children so that they are aware of who to contact if they or someone they know are at risk of abuse

III. Prevention:

While recognizing that it cannot eliminate all risks to children, Arts Ignite will take proactive measures to prevent child abuse and maltreatment with staff members and associates.

1. **Recruitment checks and procedures:** Recruitment to all Arts Ignite jobs, contractual positions, and volunteer positions will include specific checks and procedures. The staff member overseeing recruitment will be responsible for adhering to these procedures.
 - a. **Interview Procedures:** The initial interview will include specific questions relating to the applicant's approach, attitude and experience of working directly with children; these questions will be tailored to the post applied for. Subsequent interviews may involve follow up questions where appropriate.
 - b. **Reference Checks:** It is our policy to contact references at the point at which applicants are invited for a final selection interview or before an unconditional offer of employment is made. The reference check includes specific questions about the applicant's suitability for work involving children; Arts Ignite will ask for at least one referee who has experience in either a professional or a voluntary capacity of the candidate's capability in this area. Arts Ignite's policy is to automatically follow up all reference checks by telephone in order to check the validity of the referee and ask

specific questions about the referee's opinion of the candidate's suitability for work with children.

- c. **Identity Check:** As proof of identity, candidates are required to submit your passport or driver's license where applicable, which they will be asked to bring when they attend their final interview. A copy of the passport/license will be made and held on file, and the original will be returned to them on the day of the interview. The offer of employment will be subject to satisfactory proof of identity. Should candidates have any difficulty with this request, they should discuss this issue with the recruiting staff member who will inform them whether any other form of verification is acceptable for the post.
- d. **Criminal Records Check:** candidates successful in their application will be subject to a criminal records check. A satisfactory records check is a condition of employment or volunteer placement and failure to agree to the criminal records check will preclude candidates from consideration for the position. This criminal records check will be carried out in line with partner requirements. Where the results of a criminal records check are unacceptable to Arts Ignite, no further follow up will be required. The candidate will be informed immediately in writing of the outcome of an unsatisfactory check and of their right to appeal. An offer of employment or of a volunteer position will not be made until satisfactory clearance has been obtained from a criminal records check.

2. **Code of Practice:** The Arts Ignite Code of Practice is included in Annex A and is an integral component of this policy. All prospective associates are educated in Arts Ignite's Child Safeguarding Policy, Code of Practice, and related child protection issues. The Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Practice are part of the orientation procedure for all new associates, who must sign an acknowledgement form stating that they have reviewed, understand, and will comply with Arts Ignite's Child Safeguarding Policy.

Failure to follow the Child Safeguarding Policy, protocols, and guidelines is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment, volunteer/internship, or Board/advisory membership.

3. **Engagement with Partners:** Arts Ignite will proactively discuss its Child Safeguarding Policy with all partners hosting teaching artists. Together, Arts Ignite and partners will develop site-specific guidance for associates on appropriate interactions with children. However, in all sites, the Arts Ignite Code of Practice must adhere. Arts Ignite will also work with partners to ensure that reporting and response procedures are in place for all sites so that prompt action can be taken when abuse is suspected.

Arts Ignite will also engage in conversations with partners about potentially harmful practices that may seem "culturally appropriate" in context so that guidance is clear for Arts Ignite and partner associates who encounter these forms of child protection issues during the implementation of programs. Examples of past issues that have prompted discussion and guidance to Arts Ignite associates include corporal punishment and the placement of children in residential care facilities.

IV. Reporting and Responding:

In order that standards of reporting and responding are met, Arts Ignite will ensure that it:

1. Takes seriously any concerns raised;
2. Takes positive steps to pursue the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns;
3. Supports children, associates, or other adults who raise concerns;
4. Acts appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation;

5. Is guided through the child safeguarding process by the principle of “best interests of the child”;
6. Listens to and takes seriously the views and wishes of children at all steps of the process; and
7. Works in partnership with parents, caregivers, and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

Procedure for Reporting Concerns:

Associates could have their suspicion or concern raised in a number of ways, the most likely of which are:

1. Witnessing inappropriate or harmful conduct of an Arts Ignite associate;
2. A child disclosing abuse;
3. Bruising or evidence of physical hurt; which may or may not be accompanied by;
4. Unusual behavior by a child.

If a member of staff or associate has such concerns they should be reported to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point using the form as set out in Annex C. The concerns should be reported in writing within 24 hours. If the concerns relate to the conduct of a member of staff, these should be reported to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point immediately. Steps will be taken to fully support anyone who in good faith reports his or her concerns about a colleague, and every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality for all parties whilst the allegation is considered.

Concerns in relation to a member of staff may indicate unsuitability to continue working with children in their present position, or in any capacity. Consideration will need to be given to whether:

1. Someone has behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child,
2. Someone has possibly committed a criminal offense against or related to a child; or
3. Someone has behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The Child Safeguarding Focal Point will work with the partner organization and the Child Safeguarding Policy board representative to determine necessary action which may include:

1. Referral to the relevant local authorities for investigation of a possible criminal offense;
2. Inquiries and assessment by children’s social worker or care worker about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services; and
3. Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

V. Designated Child Safeguarding Focal Point:

Arts Ignite has appointed a Child Safeguarding Focal Point who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children. The Focal Point will be supported by the designated Board Member, to whom allegations can also be brought. The contact information for these people are:

Lindsay Roberts Greene (Focal Point)

Phone: 215.292.2627

Email: lindsay@artsignite.org

Mark Canavera (Designated Board Member)

Phone: 212.470.7915

Email: Mark.Canavera@gmail.com

The role of the Child Safeguarding Focal Point is to:

1. Know which outside child protection agency to contact in the event of a child protection concern coming to the notice of Arts Ignite and working with partners to determine these contacts;
2. Provide information and advice on child protection to associates within Arts Ignite in collaboration with the designated board member;
3. Liaise with local children’s social care services and other agencies, as appropriate;

4. Keep relevant people within Arts Ignite informed about any action taken and any further action required, for example, disciplinary action against any associate;
5. Ensure that a proper record is kept of any referral and action taken and that this is kept safely and in confidence;
6. Advise Arts Ignite of safeguarding and child protection training needs;
7. Review this policy annually in collaboration with the designated board member and update as needed.

Note: Portions of Arts Ignite's Child Safeguarding Policy have been adapted from other organization's child protection policies. Arts Ignite understands that those organizations bear no responsibility for activities undertaken by representatives or individuals acting on behalf of Arts Ignite.

Annex A: Arts Ignite Child Safeguarding Code of Practice

All Arts Ignite associates are required to abide by the following code of practice. As a reminder, a child is defined as a person under 18 years of age.

- A. All associates must comply with the Code of Practice. As a reminder, associates include staff, teaching artists, volunteers, board members, and any other individual who has come into contact with children because of their involvement with Arts Ignite.
- B. All representatives of Arts Ignite must:
 - a. Report concerns that a child is a victim of child abuse or sexual exploitation immediately (within 24 hours) to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point;
 - b. Fill out the Form for Reporting Child Protection Concerns in the Child Safeguarding Policy within 24 hours of encountering a case of suspected abuse or sexual exploitation;
 - c. Report concerns of child abuse or sexual exploitation to the designated Board Member when the suspected perpetrator of the abuse is the Child Safeguarding Focal Point;
 - d. Identify and avoid potential situations which may lead to staff behavior being misinterpreted; and
 - e. Use respectful language in all communications about children. Children must consent to the taking of photos, videos, and other images.
- C. Arts Ignite associates must never:
 - a. Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children;
 - b. Have sexual intercourse, or engage in any sexual activity with anyone under 18 years of age. Mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defense;
 - c. Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive;
 - d. Use language, make suggestions, or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive;
 - e. Behave physically in a way that is inappropriate or sexually provocative;
 - f. Sleep in the same room as a child with whom they are working;
 - g. Find themselves alone with a child (including in vehicles). Where possible and practical, the two-adult rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where children are involved, should be followed;
 - h. Do things for children of an intimate, personal nature that they can do for themselves (help to dress or undress children, help children in the bathroom, etc.);
 - i. Make images (photos, videos, or other) of a child without the child's consent;
 - j. Make images or other recordings of a child in which the child is not adequately clothed or in which there are sexually suggestive poses;
 - k. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse;
 - l. Discriminate against, show unfair differential treatment to, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others;
 - m. Place themselves in compromising, or what could be interpreted as compromising or vulnerable positions or situations;
 - n. Disclose children's personal information that could be used to identify the location of children in their setting;
 - o. Engage with children (under 18 years) on Facebook or any social media sites. This includes but is not limited to becoming "friends" with a child on Facebook. The internet and social media continue to be a new frontier as it relates to the workplace and child protection, please proceed with caution when engaging with children on social media of any kind.

Annex B: Responding appropriately to a child making an allegation of abuse

1. Stay calm
2. Listen carefully to what is said.
3. Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
4. Tell the child that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.
5. Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace.
6. Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
7. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
8. Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared.
9. Record in writing what was said, using the child's own words, as soon as possible – note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.
10. It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies, following a referral from the Child Safeguarding Focal Point in the organization.

Annex C: Form for reporting child safeguarding concerns

When completed, this form should be submitted to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point Lindsay Roberts Greene at lindsay@artsignite.org (215.292.2627). If the Child Safeguarding Focal Point is the person suspected of abuse, please send to board member Mark Canavera at mark.canavera@gmail.com (212.470.7915). You can also report your concerns to any other Arts Ignite board member if you are not comfortable bringing your concerns to one of these two people.

Name of child _____ Age if known _____

Date of Incident(s) _____

Venue of Incident(s) _____

What prompts your concerns? Please be as specific as possible

Were there any physical or behavioral signs? Any other causes for concern?

Have you spoken to the child? If so, what was said?

Have you spoken to the child's parents/caretakers? If so, what was said?

Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, give details.

Please give your name and contact details.

Name (print) _____

Signature _____

Address _____

Phone number _____ Date _____

This form must be completed and given to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point or Arts Ignite board member, as indicated above, within 24 hours of encountering suspected child abuse or exploitation.