



SAFE AND ACCOUNTABLE SERVICE

Volunteer & Mentor Transparency Policy

Guidelines governing screening, relationship boundaries, data protection and organizational accountability for all Hope Valley mentors and volunteers.

VERSION	POLICY OWNER	EFFECTIVE DATE	REVIEW CYCLE
1.0	Board of Directors and Program Leadership	01/01/2026	Annual

Hope Valley Scholars Inc. places scholar safety, personal dignity, fairness and accountability at the center of every volunteer and mentoring relationship.

OUR TRANSPARENCY COMMITMENTS

Applicants will know what screening may occur and why. Volunteers and mentors will know the boundaries of their roles. Scholars and families will know how to raise concerns. Hope Valley Scholars Inc. will document decisions, protect confidential information and respond to concerns without favoritism or retaliation.

Transparent screening	Safe relationships	Responsible data use
Clear consent, role-related checks and fair review.	Approved communication and firm personal boundaries.	Limited access, secure handling and lawful retention.
Prompt reporting	No retaliation	Documented oversight
Immediate escalation of safety concerns.	Good-faith reporters are protected from retaliation.	Leadership reviews placements, incidents and controls.

SCOPE AND SCREENING**1 Purpose and Scope**

This policy applies to every applicant, volunteer, mentor, employee, contractor, Board member or partner representative who may serve, supervise, communicate with or access information about Hope Valley scholars. It applies to in-person, online and cross-border activities.

It supplements the Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy, Mentor Code of Conduct, Volunteer Agreement, Privacy Policy and other applicable Hope Valley policies. The higher legal or safeguarding standard controls when requirements differ.

2 Transparent Recruitment and Eligibility

Hope Valley Scholars Inc. will provide applicants with a clear role description and explain:

- The role's duties, expected time commitment, supervision and scholar contact
- The selection criteria, training, references and screening that may be required
- How application and screening information will be used and protected
- That submitting an application does not guarantee acceptance or placement

General volunteers must normally be at least 18 years old. Mentors must be at least 21 years old. No donor, Board member, employee, family member or referral source may bypass the same role-related screening and conduct requirements.

3 Informed Consent and Screening

Before obtaining references, identity verification or background information, Hope Valley Scholars Inc. will tell the applicant what will be checked, why it is relevant and whether a third-party provider will be used. Required consent and notices will be obtained before screening begins.

Role-appropriate screening may include:

- Application review, interview and identity or age verification
- Professional, community or personal reference checks
- Conflict-of-interest, safeguarding-readiness and prior-conduct questions
- Lawful criminal-history, child-protection, sex-offender or equivalent registry checks
- Verification of licenses, qualifications or driving records when required by the role

**SECURE
COLLECTION**

The public application will not request Social Security numbers, passport copies, police certificates, financial-account data or full screening documents. If needed after preliminary review, sensitive information will be requested separately through an approved secure process.

4 Placement Before Scholar Contact

An applicant may not begin service, represent Hope Valley Scholars Inc., access scholar records or communicate privately with a scholar until required screening, acknowledgments and training are complete and written placement has been issued by an authorized Hope Valley representative.

FAIR REVIEW AND DATA RESPONSIBILITY

5 Fair and Proportionate Decisions

Screening information will be assessed consistently, confidentially and in relation to the actual role. A record will not automatically disqualify an applicant unless the law requires exclusion or the conduct is fundamentally incompatible with scholar safety or the duties of the role.

When legally permitted and relevant, the review may consider:

- The nature, seriousness and circumstances of the conduct
- The time that has passed and evidence of rehabilitation or responsible conduct
- The applicant's age at the time and the accuracy or completeness of the record
- The degree of access to minors, confidential information, funds, transport or unsupervised settings
- Whether safeguards, supervision or a different role can responsibly address the risk

An arrest or allegation alone is not treated as proof of misconduct. Where law permits, an applicant affected by potentially adverse screening information will be given a reasonable opportunity to identify errors, provide context and submit relevant documentation before a final decision.

THIRD-PARTY REPORTS

When a consumer-reporting or screening company is used, Hope Valley Scholars Inc. will provide the authorization, report access, pre-decision and final notices required by applicable law.

6 Ongoing Disclosure and Re-Screening

Volunteers and mentors must promptly disclose any material change that could affect role suitability or scholar safety, including a relevant criminal charge, protective order, professional restriction, driving restriction, conflict of interest or safeguarding investigation.

A disclosure does not automatically establish wrongdoing. Hope Valley Scholars Inc. may temporarily restrict duties or scholar contact while conducting a fair risk assessment. Role-appropriate re-screening may occur periodically, after a significant role change or when credible safety information arises.

7 Data Protection and Confidentiality

Application and screening information will be handled according to these principles:

- Purpose limitation - use information only for assessment, screening, placement, supervision, safety and lawful administration
- Data minimization - collect only what is necessary for the role and risk
- Restricted access - provide access only to authorized people with a legitimate need to know
- Accuracy - take reasonable steps to verify material information and correct confirmed errors
- Security - use approved systems, strong access controls and secure transmission
- Retention - keep records only for the approved retention period or as lawfully required
- No sale or trade - never sell, rent or trade applicant, volunteer, mentor or scholar information

Information about children requires heightened protection and appropriate parent or guardian consent.

Cross-border access or transfer will use approved safeguards and will be limited to legitimate program needs.

RELATIONSHIP BOUNDARIES**8 Professional Relationship Standards**

Every interaction must serve an approved educational, mentoring or program purpose. Volunteers and mentors must maintain a position of trust without using it for personal, financial, religious, political, romantic or sexual influence.

The following are prohibited:

- Romantic, sexual, exploitative, coercive or otherwise inappropriate relationships with current applicants, scholars or program participants
- Pursuing a romantic or sexual relationship with a former scholar who was a minor during the mentoring or volunteer relationship
- Sexualized comments, harassment, grooming, favoritism, threats, humiliation or physical discipline
- Private social-media contact, secret messaging, disappearing-message tools or unapproved communication channels
- Promises of secrecy when a scholar discloses abuse, danger, self-harm or another safeguarding concern
- Using the Hope Valley role, name, records or relationships for personal business, fundraising or private benefit

9 Meetings, Communication, Transport and Media

Volunteers and mentors must:

- Use approved accounts, platforms, schedules and recordkeeping methods
- Keep interactions observable and accountable through open settings, authorized supervision or approved virtual safeguards
- Obtain written organizational approval for any one-to-one arrangement, transport, overnight activity or off-site meeting
- Keep parents, guardians and authorized program staff appropriately informed when a scholar is under 18
- Never share a scholar's private contact details, location, records, story, image or video without required authorization and consent
- End or report communication that becomes unsafe, secretive, manipulative or outside the assigned role

10 Money, Gifts, Favors and Conflicts

Volunteers and mentors may not give or lend money, request money, provide private employment, arrange housing, transport a scholar, offer lodging, exchange high-value gifts or provide private services without advance written approval. Approved assistance must be documented and provided through the organization or another authorized channel.

Any family, financial, business, romantic, school, donor or other relationship that could affect impartiality must be disclosed promptly. The affected person must not participate in a placement, award, complaint or disciplinary decision until the conflict is reviewed.

REPORTING AND ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

11 Reporting Safety and Conduct Concerns

Anyone who knows, observes or in good faith suspects abuse, exploitation, boundary violations, retaliation, fraud, data misuse or other serious misconduct must report it promptly. A volunteer or mentor must not conduct a private investigation, confront a suspected offender or delay an external report required by law.

IMMEDIATE DANGER

Contact the local emergency, child-protection or law-enforcement authority first. Then notify Hope Valley Scholars Inc. as soon as it is safe to do so. An internal report never replaces a legally required report.

Reports may be made to the designated Safeguarding Lead, Program Lead, Board Chair or through the contact information in Section 14. A person may bypass anyone involved in the concern. Anonymous information will be reviewed to the extent reasonably possible.

12 Non-Retaliation and Fair Response

Hope Valley Scholars Inc. prohibits retaliation against anyone who makes a good-faith report, participates in a review, refuses an unsafe instruction or supports a person raising a concern. Knowingly false or malicious reports may result in corrective action, but an unsubstantiated good-faith report is not misconduct.

The organization will use a conflict-free reviewer when practicable, preserve relevant records, limit information to those who need it, provide procedural fairness consistent with safety, and document the concern, interim safeguards, findings and action taken. Absolute confidentiality cannot be promised.

13 Corrective Action and Oversight

Depending on the facts and risk, action may include coaching, additional training, closer supervision, a change of duties, removal of data access, temporary suspension, termination of service, referral to authorities or other appropriate measures. Safety-based interim action is not a final finding of wrongdoing.

Program leadership will maintain placement, training, screening and incident records. The Board or an authorized committee will periodically review aggregate information about completed screening, active placements, reported concerns, corrective actions and data incidents. Public reporting, if any, will use totals or de-identified information and will not expose confidential screening details or identify scholars.

14 Questions, Complaints and Related Policies

Applicants, volunteers, mentors, scholars, parents, guardians and community members may ask questions or raise concerns using the contact information below. Screening information, complaint records and individual outcomes will not be disclosed publicly except as required by law.

HOPE VALLEY SCHOLARS INC.

Email: info@hopevalleyscholars.org
Phone: +1 (302) 898-6006
Website: hopevalleyscholars.org

RELATED POLICY

[Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy](#)
Safeguarding duties, reporting and protective action.

RELATED POLICY

[Mentor Code of Conduct](#)
Role-specific conduct, communication and mentoring standards.

RELATED POLICY

[Privacy Policy](#)
Collection, use, protection, retention and rights relating to personal information.