



## ASHOKA'S ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

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Young changemakers play a critical role in Ashoka's strategy and global movement to tip society to an *everyone* a changemaker world—a world where each person can contribute fully to positive change. They serve as examples for our partners and larger community of the new definition of success in growing up: having an idea, building a team, and changing your world. They also act as ambassadors and spokespeople to help organizations and institutions create and foster a culture that supports young changemaking.

As we engage young people<sup>1</sup> across Ashoka's work, we have two objectives: (1) Enable them to individually and as communities be powerful in a safe environment and (2) Promote through our partners a culture that enables young people to be powerful contributors to positive change, countering forces that increasingly disempower young people. As an Ashoka team member,<sup>2</sup> you are a core part of this societal shift, so all of your interactions with young people across Ashoka's work must reflect and honor that commitment.

This policy represents a system that promotes powerfulness as a key element for supporting safety within Ashoka's community and is guided by the following considerations. First, enabling young people as changemakers means supporting their ability to understand and navigate risks along the way. Beneficial risk-taking is a natural and critical part of growing up that is increasingly undermined by societal norms that overstate fears. Ashoka's goal is to promote a safeguarding framework for working with young people that prioritizes young people's development and positive growth as changemakers. Second, we recognize that young people may be at different stages of their own journey as changemakers and savviness around the kinds of risk inherently involved in changing the world for the better. While our overall principles for engagement are consistent, specific program guidance will differ for young people at different levels of their journey and include resources for young people themselves to understand and mitigate risk. Third, we recognize the important role of the guardians and families of young people to understand the value of their young person leading in this movement and commit to work closely with them to support their child/young person. Fourth, this policy ensures careful vetting and capacity building for team members working with young people to ensure mutual respect and safety. Finally, this policy establishes clear pathways for communication if these values and principles are not upheld.

### Scope

We expect all Ashoka programs that involve young people to align with this policy.

### Our Principles

We expect all Ashoka programs to respect the following principles:

We value the time and ideas of the young people we work with as equal partners and collaborators.

We value young people as they are now, and not as future Ashoka Fellows or the adults they will become.
We ensure young people we work with are given a safe and supportive community to participate in.
We create a safe, respectful, and open pathway for communication about Ashoka’s goals and opportunities regarding young people
We let young people speak for themselves and aim to not speak for them.
We trust, promote, and allow young people to design and redesign initiatives meant to encourage their changemaking.
We respect a young person’s right to change their mind about their participation and involvement.
We promote peer connections among young people to foster mutual help networks.
We pay attention to young people’s needs and wellbeing and will encourage them to speak with family or other support networks when facing difficulties.
We work to build strong relationships with the parents and guardians of young people we work with to further support young changemakers in our network.
We empower Ashoka peers, community members, and partners, particularly those that constitute the communities that the young people we work with are part of, to see young people as powerful changemakers and adopt measures for an everyone a changemaker culture to flourish in their own organizations.
We treat all young people equally, providing them with equal opportunities, taking into considerations their special circumstances, and without discriminating against demographic, socioeconomic, or any other factors (including but not limited to race, creed, color, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, or social/economic standing).
We have systemized safeguarding and protection procedures in our Engaging Young People Handbook for the interest of the young people in our network.
We help young people develop an understanding of risks and mechanisms to mitigate them.

**How We Create a Safe and Empowering Environment for Young People**

We believe young people must be allowed to take risks in order to thrive. We also recognize our responsibility as an organization to help ensure they can do so safely when they engage with us and our partners. We have put the following safeguards in place to ensure an environment in which young people can learn, grow, and be changemakers.

*Recruitment, Background Checks, and Training*

Ashoka has a rigorous selection process for all team members, including an assessment of ethical fiber. Additionally, all Ashoka team members undergo a criminal background check and participate in training before interacting with young people. Any consultants, interns, or

volunteers who may be in unsupervised contact with young people, including via e-mail, phone, or in person, on behalf of Ashoka shall also undergo criminal background checks. Training includes what to do if a team member learns that a young person is at risk of neglect, abuse, or self-harm.

### *Consent of Young People and Their Guardians*

Before a young person can participate in an Ashoka program, we obtain their informed consent and that of a guardian (if the young person is under the legal adult age in their location of residence) to ensure alignment of expectations. Young people or their guardians can withdraw their consent at any time.

### *Reporting Mechanisms*

Ashoka maintains a designated Safeguarding Team ([safeguarding@ashoka.org](mailto:safeguarding@ashoka.org)). We encourage all young people participating in Ashoka programs to alert the team to any inappropriate or concerning behavior that they experience or witness while engaging with Ashoka or our partners. We require all Ashoka team members to report any inappropriate or concerning behavior that they witness by colleagues or partners and provide them with a safe way to do so.

### *Partners and Network Members*

We do not share young people's contact information with network members<sup>3</sup> or external partners without consent from the young person and a guardian (if the young person is under the legal adult age in their location of residence). Ashoka's collaboration agreements require partner organizations to have a youth engagement policy that aligns with Ashoka's policies relating to young people when the partnership involves young people.

### *Data Privacy*

We expect each Ashoka office to comply with applicable youth data protection laws and regulations, such as the GDPR, U.S. data privacy laws, and local privacy laws.

### *Media*

We ensure Ashoka's communications regarding young people portray them as powerful individuals and active contributors to positive change. We require written permission from the young person and a guardian (if the young person is under the legal adult age in their location of residence) to use photos or videos of them for promotional purposes or to share any personal information about a young person with members of the media.

### *Engagement Guidelines*

The [Engaging Young People Handbook](#) and team member training include detailed guidelines for how to ensure the safety of young people when it comes to communications, transportation, events, emergencies, and sensitive topics. We do not tolerate, under any circumstance: any illicit, discriminatory, disrespectful, sexual, exploitative, or violent language or conduct; any form of harassment or abuse, including bullying; or the promotion or performance of any act of violence.

## *Non-Compliance*

Ashoka may take any action, to the extent permissible by law and in its sole discretion, to address a Team Member's noncompliance with this Policy. Failure to comply with this Policy will result in disciplinary action including restricted access to internal platforms and data, youth partners, and programs. Serious cases of noncompliance may result in termination and/or subject the Team Member to law enforcement action.

For questions and concerns about this policy, please contact [safeguarding@ashoka.org](mailto:safeguarding@ashoka.org).

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<sup>1</sup> **"Young people"** means participants in any of Ashoka's youth-focused or standard Programming that are under the age of twenty-one (21) (such as Ashoka Young Changemakers, Changemaker Pioneers, or Youth Venturers).

<sup>2</sup> **"Team member"** means any employee, temporary employee, consultant, volunteer with an Ashoka email address, contractor, intern, or other person that is formally employed or affiliated full or part time by Ashoka where such individual's actions are within the scope of their employment or other formal ties to Ashoka's legal, financial, or criminal liability.

<sup>3</sup> **"Network member"** means any Ashoka Fellow, volunteer for limited engagements, contractor, panellist/presenter, partner, or other third party not formally employed full or part time by Ashoka but who may be otherwise engaged or contracted by Ashoka.