

How to Use This Manual

These policies were written for ThisAbility and reflect how we operate our nonprofit center, community programs, off site events, partner activities, fundraising efforts, volunteer opportunities, and other work connected to our mission. They apply to the people and activities identified in each policy, including directors, officers, employees, contractors, volunteers, interns, and authorized representatives.

Our goal is to protect the people we serve and the organization while leaving room for practical judgment, changing circumstances, and the realities of a community based nonprofit. Not every situation will fit a single rule. When a question is not clearly answered here, the Founder & CEO, Executive Director, Board Chair, or Board of Directors may use reasonable judgment that is consistent with our mission, governing documents, funding requirements, insurance requirements, and applicable law.

These policies apply both inside and outside the ThisAbility center, including virtual activities, transportation arranged by ThisAbility, community events, fundraisers, and activities held with partner organizations. Independent partners remain responsible for their own operations unless a written agreement says otherwise.

Questions, concerns, accommodation requests, or reports about these policies may be shared with the Founder & CEO, Executive Director, or Board Chair. A person may use whichever contact is most appropriate and is not involved in the concern.

Responsibilities

- The Board approves these policies and may revise them as ThisAbility's needs change.
- The Founder & CEO and Executive Director implement the policies within their respective roles and delegated authority.
- The Treasurer supports financial oversight but does not replace the Board's collective responsibility.
- Each person is expected to understand and follow the policies that apply to their role.
- Questions should be directed to the Founder & CEO, Executive Director, Board Chair, or another appropriate officer.

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These policies provide organizational guidance. When a matter requires legal, accounting, insurance, employment, safety, or other professional advice, ThisAbility may seek help from a qualified professional.

Policy 1: Board Governance and Meetings

Purpose. To define the Board's governing role, meeting schedule, decision making responsibilities, and relationship to organizational leadership.

Governing Authority

The Board of Directors is the governing body of ThisAbility. The Board is responsible for protecting the mission, charitable assets, legal standing, financial health, long term direction, and public trust of the organization.

- Directors must act in good faith and in the best interests of ThisAbility.
- Directors must use independent judgment, review available information, ask questions, and disclose conflicts.
- The Board approves the annual budget, material organizational policies, major commitments, and other matters reserved to it by the bylaws or law.
- The Board monitors organizational performance and provides appropriate oversight of executive leadership.
- Delegating work to an officer, committee, employee, or contractor does not eliminate the Board's oversight responsibility.

Regular Meeting Schedule

The Board will hold a regular meeting every other month, normally totaling six regular meetings during each calendar year. The specific dates, times, locations, and virtual participation options will be adopted or distributed annually. Special meetings may be called when permitted by the bylaws and applicable law.

Board members are expected to attend at least 70% of regular meetings. With six regular meetings per year, a member should attend at least five. Approved virtual participation counts as attendance. A member who cannot attend should notify the Board Chair, Secretary, Founder & CEO, or designated contact as soon as reasonably possible.

Meeting Practice

- An agenda and available supporting materials should be distributed with reasonable advance notice.
- Only directors identified as voting directors under the governing documents may vote or count toward quorum.
- Quorum and voting requirements are controlled by the bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, and applicable Virginia law.
- No official Board action will be represented as approved when quorum or the required vote is absent.
- Directors may not vote by proxy unless expressly allowed by controlling law and governing documents.
- Actions taken outside a meeting must follow the governing documents and applicable law and must be preserved with the corporate records.
- The minutes must record attendance, quorum, motions, votes, recusals, decisions, assignments, and important follow up items without creating an unnecessary transcript of confidential discussion.

Board and Operational Roles

The Founder & CEO and Executive Director manage organizational operations according to their respective roles, Board approved budgets and policies, and authority delegated by the Board. Individual directors do not direct employees or volunteers, make purchases, enter contracts, promise services, or speak for ThisAbility unless authorized.

Terms, Resignation, and Removal

Terms, election, appointment, vacancies, resignation, and removal are governed by the Articles of Incorporation, bylaws, and applicable law. Failure to meet expectations may lead to a discussion, corrective plan, request for resignation, or consideration of removal through the proper governance procedure. This manual does not create an automatic removal process.

Policy 2: Board Code of Ethics and Conduct

Purpose. To establish standards of integrity, accountability, inclusion, respectful behavior, and responsible representation.

Standards

- Act honestly, responsibly, respectfully, and in the best interests of ThisAbility.
- Protect the dignity, choices, privacy, safety, and rights of participants and families.
- Prepare for meetings, participate in decisions, and complete accepted assignments.
- Avoid misuse of organizational funds, property, accounts, records, contacts, opportunities, or reputation.
- Do not seek special treatment, personal benefit, or influence because of a Board position.
- Do not engage in harassment, intimidation, bullying, threats, retaliation, exploitation, or discrimination.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries with participants, families, employees, volunteers, donors, and community partners.
- Raise concerns through appropriate channels and cooperate honestly with authorized reviews.

Disagreement and Board Decisions

Directors may question proposals, request additional information, vote against a motion, or ask that a dissent or abstention be recorded. Once a lawful decision is approved, directors should not undermine implementation. This does not require silence about suspected wrongdoing or prevent protected reporting.

Accountability

Concerns may be addressed through coaching, training, clarification of duties, reassignment, a corrective plan, removal from an officer or committee role, a request for resignation, or Board action consistent with the bylaws and law. Serious safety, financial, harassment, retaliation, or confidentiality concerns may require immediate restrictions while facts are reviewed.

Policy 3:

Conflict of Interest and Related Party Transactions

Purpose. To make sure ThisAbility's decisions serve the organization while allowing fair and properly reviewed business relationships.

Covered Interests

A conflict may exist when a director, officer, employee, key volunteer, or a member of that person's household or close family could receive a financial, professional, personal, or organizational benefit from a decision. A conflict may also arise through ownership, employment, contracts, gifts, close relationships, competing duties, or involvement with another organization.

Required Disclosure

- Directors and officers will complete a separate annual conflict disclosure form.
- A new actual, potential, or perceived conflict must be disclosed promptly, even if it was not listed annually.
- Material facts must be disclosed before discussion or action whenever possible.
- The person with the potential conflict may provide factual information when requested but must not control the review.

Recusal and Approval

- The interested person must refrain from attempting to influence the decision.
- The interested director must leave the deliberation when requested and must not vote on the matter.
- Directors without an interest in the matter determine whether a conflict exists and whether a proposed transaction is fair, reasonable, consistent with our mission, and in ThisAbility's best interests.
- Approval must follow the bylaws and Virginia law and may not be authorized by a single disinterested director when the law requires more.
- The minutes must identify the disclosure, recusal, persons present for the vote, decision, and basis for determining that the arrangement was appropriate.

Related Party Payments

A director or officer may not approve their own compensation, stipend, reimbursement, contract, purchase, or other financial benefit. When ThisAbility considers paying a related person for services that are separate from Board service, directors who do not have an interest in the decision will review the arrangement. They may consider the work, price, experience, availability, relationship with ThisAbility, available funding, and other information that helps them decide whether the arrangement is fair and beneficial to the organization. The decision and the interested person's absence from the vote will be recorded.

Gifts and Favors

Covered persons may not accept gifts, favors, discounts, loans, or hospitality that could improperly influence an organizational decision. Modest items of ordinary appreciation may be accepted when they do not affect judgment and do not violate a grant, contract, or other policy.

Policy 4:

Whistleblower and Protection From Retaliation

Purpose. To provide safe reporting options for suspected misconduct and protect people who raise concerns in good faith.

Reportable Concerns

- Fraud, theft, misuse of funds, falsified records, or improper financial activity
- Abuse, neglect, exploitation, harassment, discrimination, or serious safety risks
- Conflicts of interest, private benefit, or unauthorized commitments
- Violation of law, grant restrictions, governing documents, or organizational policy
- Retaliation, concealment, destruction of relevant records, or interference with an investigation

How to Report

A concern may be reported verbally or in writing to the Founder & CEO, Executive Director, or Board Chair. A reporter may choose whichever contact feels safest and most appropriate. If a report concerns one of those individuals, it must be directed to one or both uninvolved contacts. If all three are involved, unavailable, or conflicted, the report should go to another disinterested officer or director designated by the Board.

Reports should include known facts, dates, persons involved, available documentation, and immediate safety needs. Anonymous reports will be considered when received, although anonymity can limit follow up. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent reasonably possible, but it cannot be promised when disclosure is necessary for safety, fairness, insurance, legal compliance, or investigation.

Response

- The recipient will promptly assess immediate safety, preservation of information, reporting, insurance, and conflict concerns.
- An uninvolved person will coordinate a fair review or obtain appropriate outside assistance.
- The subject of a report will not control the investigation or retaliate against participants.
- Findings and corrective actions will be documented and shared only with persons who need the information.
- Nothing in this policy prevents a person from contacting law enforcement, regulators, protective services, funders, or another lawful authority.

Protection From Retaliation

Retaliation against a person who makes a report in good faith, seeks help, participates in a review, or refuses to participate in suspected misconduct is prohibited. A concern does not have to be proven for the report to have been made in good faith. Knowingly false or malicious statements are not protected and may result in corrective action.

Policy 5: Financial Controls and Stewardship

Purpose. To safeguard charitable funds, maintain reliable records, honor restrictions, and provide appropriate operational and Board oversight without relying on fixed dollar thresholds.

Roles and Authority

- The Board approves the annual budget and retains fiscal oversight.
- The Board authorizes bank accounts, account signers, major debt, and other actions reserved by the governing documents.
- The Founder & CEO and Executive Director may authorize ordinary expenses within the approved budget and within their assigned operational authority.
- The Treasurer reviews financial information and supports Board oversight but should not be the sole creator, approver, reconciler, and reviewer of the same transaction.
- Unbudgeted, unusual, related party, or significant commitments should receive additional review appropriate to the circumstances and governing documents.
- No person may approve their own payment or reimbursement.

Documentation and Separation of Duties

- Every transaction must have a legitimate organizational purpose and adequate supporting documentation.
- Invoices, receipts, reimbursement forms, grant records, contracts, and approval evidence must be retained.
- Blank checks, checks signed in advance, shared passwords, and undocumented cash withdrawals are prohibited.
- When staffing permits, initiating, approving, paying, recording, depositing, and reconciling should be divided among different people.
- When full separation is not practical, a second authorized person should review the activity when reasonably possible.

Banking, Cards, Cash, and Electronic Payments

- Organizational funds must be kept in accounts titled to ThisAbility and may not be mixed with personal or unrelated funds.
- Online banking access, cards, payment platforms, and check stock are limited to authorized users and reviewed when roles change.
- Cash and checks received should be logged, counted by two people when reasonably practical, secured, and deposited promptly.
- Electronic transfers and recurring charges require the same documentation and approval as other payments.
- Lost cards, suspected fraud, unauthorized transactions, or compromised credentials must be reported immediately.

Reconciliation and Reporting

- Bank and payment accounts will be reconciled regularly by a qualified person.
- A person who did not perform the primary transaction processing should review reconciliations when reasonably possible.
- The Board will receive financial information at each regular meeting, which is held every other month. Reports may include available comparisons to budget and information about important restricted funds.
- Material irregularities, cash flow concerns, grant compliance problems, or suspected misuse will be shared promptly with appropriate leadership and the Board.

Supporting the People Who Support ThisAbility

ThisAbility values the people who contribute their time, skills, services, and support to our mission. When we need routine materials or services, we may first invite qualified Board members, volunteers, families, supporters, or businesses connected to them to be considered. This gives our community an opportunity to work with us, but it does not guarantee a purchase, contract, or payment.

ThisAbility may consider quality, price, availability, reliability, experience, mission fit, past support, and the needs of the program or event. If a director, officer, or related person could benefit financially, that interest will be disclosed and the interested person will not take part in choosing or approving the purchase. Requirements attached to grants, public funds, contracts, insurance, or competitive purchasing will always be followed.

Restricted Funds and Grants

Restricted contributions and grant funds must be identified and used only for permitted purposes. Time records, receipts, procurement documentation, participant information, match records, reimbursement requests, and reports must meet the controlling award requirements. The stricter grant, contract, or funder rule controls when it exceeds this policy.

Contracts and Commitments

Only persons authorized by the Board or governing documents may sign contracts or commit ThisAbility. Contracts should be written, reviewed for cost, duration, cancellation, insurance, privacy, accessibility, ownership, and grant compliance, and stored with organizational records.

Policy 6:

Compensation, Stipends, and Expense Reimbursement

Purpose. To separate unpaid Board service from approved payment for other work and to keep payments reasonable and properly reviewed.

Volunteer Board Service

Service on the Board is voluntary and unpaid. Board appointment, attendance, voting, committee work, event support, or signature of an annual Board agreement does not create employment or guarantee wages, salary, stipend, benefits, reimbursement, a contract, or future paid work.

Separate Paid Services

ThisAbility may consider compensation or a stipend for operational, professional, program, event, or contracted services that are separate from Board service. An arrangement depends on available funding and appropriate approval. The work and payment should be documented in a way that fits the circumstances. No payment is guaranteed until it is approved and funds are available.

Approval and Documentation

- A person may not participate in setting or approving their own compensation.
- Decision makers who do not have a financial interest should consider the duties, time, skills, funding restrictions, organizational capacity, and other reasonable information.
- Minutes must record the conflict disclosure, recusal, decision, and basis for approval when a director or officer is affected.
- The arrangement must identify the work, period, rate or amount, payment terms, classification, supervision, deliverables, and required tax documentation.

Expense Reimbursement

Reasonable and necessary organizational expenses may be reimbursed when authorized, documented, and submitted within the established process. A receipt or equivalent documentation and business purpose are required unless an exception is documented. Personal expenses, undocumented charges, fines, and unauthorized purchases are not reimbursable. The recipient may not approve their own reimbursement.

Policy 7:

Gift Acceptance and Donor Stewardship

Purpose. To accept and use charitable gifts responsibly, honor lawful restrictions, protect donor privacy, and decline gifts that create unacceptable risk.

General Standard

ThisAbility may accept cash, checks, electronic contributions, sponsorships, event revenue, grants, useful goods, professional services, and other gifts that advance its mission. Acceptance does not require ThisAbility to accept every proposed condition, item, service, or relationship.

Review Considerations

- Consistency with the mission, charitable purpose, values, and inclusion commitments
- Donor restrictions, administrative burden, storage, maintenance, disposal, safety, accessibility, and insurance
- Ownership, title, environmental, tax, legal, reputational, and financial risk
- Whether the donor expects improper influence, personal benefit, exclusivity, endorsement, or control
- Whether a grant or sponsorship creates deliverables ThisAbility can realistically fulfill

Authority

Routine unrestricted gifts may be accepted and acknowledged by authorized staff or officers. Unusual, restricted, complex, or higher risk gifts may receive additional review by appropriate leadership, the Board, or a qualified professional when the circumstances call for it.

Valuation and Acknowledgment

ThisAbility will provide accurate acknowledgments but will not assign a donor's tax deduction value to donated property or services. Donors are responsible for obtaining tax and appraisal advice. Benefits provided in exchange for a contribution and any required disclosures will be handled appropriately. Donor restrictions accepted by ThisAbility will be documented and honored.

Fundraising and Event Revenue

Fundraising messages should be honest about the purpose of a campaign, event, or request. Money collected at the center or at an outside event should be handled through authorized organizational processes and recorded in a reasonable manner. ThisAbility may work with community partners, sponsors, volunteers, and vendors while keeping clear records of who is collecting funds and how proceeds will be used.

Declining or Returning Gifts

ThisAbility may decline, redirect, dispose of, or seek modification of a gift that is unsafe, unusable, excessively burdensome, inconsistent with the mission, unlawfully restricted, or damaging to the organization. A gift will not be returned after acceptance unless authorized and legally appropriate.

Policy 8:

Document Retention, Destruction, and Legal Holds

Purpose. To preserve reliable organizational records, protect confidential information, meet legal and grant requirements, and prevent improper destruction.

Record Ownership and Formats

Records created or received for ThisAbility business are organizational records regardless of whether they are stored on paper, personal devices, email, cloud systems, text messages, or other platforms. Important records should be transferred to an organizational location that can be accessed by the appropriate people.

Retention

ThisAbility will maintain a practical administrative schedule for keeping financial, tax, grant, participant, personnel, volunteer, donor, insurance, contract, and governance records. Governing documents, IRS determination records, Board minutes, major resolutions, and final annual tax filings should generally be kept permanently. Other records will be kept for a period that is reasonable for the type of record and any legal, grant, insurance, audit, safeguarding, or contractual requirement.

Legal and Investigation Holds

No person may destroy, alter, conceal, backdate, or remove a record relevant to an actual or reasonably expected audit, investigation, complaint, claim, subpoena, protective services report, insurance matter, litigation, or government inquiry. The Founder & CEO, Executive Director, Board Chair, or legal counsel may direct that records be preserved until the matter is resolved.

Secure Destruction

At the end of the approved retention period, records may be destroyed in a manner appropriate to their sensitivity, such as shredding paper and securely deleting electronic files. Destruction should be routine and documented for significant record groups. Personal and confidential information must not be placed in ordinary trash or abandoned accounts.

Departing Personnel

Departing directors, employees, contractors, and volunteers must return organizational records, devices, keys, funds, passwords, and access. They must not retain unauthorized copies of confidential information.

Policy 9:

Confidentiality, Privacy, and Information Security

Purpose. To protect participant, family, employee, volunteer, donor, financial, and organizational information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure.

Confidential Information

- Participant and family identities, diagnoses, support needs, contact information, benefits, photographs, and personal circumstances
- Employee, applicant, volunteer, contractor, and complaint information
- Donor details, nonpublic grant information, banking, budgets, passwords, and financial records
- Confidential Board discussions, legal advice, investigations, strategic plans, and internal communications

Minimum Necessary Access

Access is limited to persons who need information for an authorized organizational purpose. Curiosity, friendship, family relationship, Board status, or volunteer status does not create a right to access records.

Information Handling

- Use approved accounts and secure methods whenever reasonably available.
- Do not share passwords or leave confidential records visible or unattended.
- Verify recipients before sending messages, records, photographs, payment information, or links.
- Avoid placing sensitive participant details in group texts, public calendars, social media, or personal cloud folders.
- Use sign in methods that respect privacy and do not publicly display diagnoses or benefits information.
- Report lost devices, misdirected messages, suspicious account activity, or unauthorized disclosure immediately.

Breach Response

Leadership will promptly secure affected accounts or records, preserve evidence, assess who and what were affected, notify the Board or insurer when appropriate, and obtain legal guidance concerning required notices. No person may conceal a privacy or security incident.

Continuing Duty

Confidentiality continues after a person's service or relationship with ThisAbility ends. Confidentiality does not prevent safety reports made in good faith, protected whistleblower reports, legally required disclosures, or lawful cooperation with authorities.

Policy 10:

Nondiscrimination, Accessibility, and Harassment Prevention

Purpose. To provide inclusive, respectful, and accessible programs, employment, volunteering, leadership, and community engagement.

Equal Treatment

ThisAbility does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy or related conditions, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, military status, socioeconomic status, or any other status protected by applicable law. This policy applies to programs, services, employment, volunteering, Board service, partnerships, and organizational activities, subject to lawful role qualifications.

Accessibility and Accommodations

- ThisAbility will seek to provide meaningful access to programs, communications, facilities, meetings, and digital information.
- A person may request a reasonable modification, communication aid, alternative format, dietary accommodation, sensory support, mobility access, or other disability related assistance.
- Requests should be considered individually and promptly through an interactive, respectful process.
- Medical information will be limited to what is reasonably needed and handled confidentially.
- No person will be charged for an auxiliary aid or service when law requires the organization to provide it.

Harassment and Retaliation

Harassment based on a protected characteristic, sexual harassment, bullying, intimidation, humiliation, unwanted sexual conduct, threats, and retaliation are prohibited. Conduct may violate this policy even when it does not meet the legal standard for unlawful harassment.

Reporting and Response

Concerns may be reported to the Founder & CEO, Executive Director, or Board Chair. Reports involving one of those persons must go to an uninvolved contact. ThisAbility will review concerns promptly, protect privacy as reasonably possible, prohibit retaliation, and take appropriate corrective action.

Policy 11:

Participant Safeguarding and Appropriate Boundaries

Purpose. To reduce the risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, boundary violations, and avoidable harm to children and adults with disabilities.

Safeguarding Principles

- Treat every participant as a person with rights, preferences, dignity, and a voice.
- Use approaches that are person centered, aware of trauma, accessible, and as respectful of individual choice as reasonably possible.
- Never use humiliation, threats, punishment, coercion, retaliation, sexualized conduct, financial exploitation, or unnecessary force.
- Do not provide medical, behavioral, transportation, personal care, financial, or legal services beyond the person's authorized role and competence.
- Honor consent, privacy, communication needs, sensory needs, mobility needs, and reasonable accommodations.

Prohibited Conduct

- Abuse, neglect, exploitation, grooming, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation
- Sexual or romantic conduct with a participant when a power imbalance, service relationship, age, capacity, or policy makes the conduct inappropriate
- Borrowing from, lending to, soliciting personal gifts from, or controlling a participant's money or benefits without formal authorization
- Private promises, secret communications, favoritism, or isolating a participant from appropriate supports
- Posting or sharing participant information or images without appropriate authorization
- Transporting, visiting, or meeting a participant privately outside authorized activities without approval and appropriate safeguards

Supervision and Personal Assistance

Programs should use staffing, visibility, check in, transportation, bathroom, medication, food, elopement, emergency contact, and personal assistance practices that fit the activity and participant needs. Assistance with intimate personal care, medication administration, physical restraint, or behavioral intervention is not permitted unless it is specifically authorized, lawful, supported by appropriate training, and covered by organizational procedures and insurance.

Mandatory and Protective Reporting

Anyone who suspects abuse, neglect, or exploitation must prioritize immediate safety and report internally without delay. A person who is a mandated reporter must also report directly to the appropriate authority as required by law; an internal report does not replace that duty. Any person may contact protective services or law enforcement in good faith.

- Emergency danger: Call 911.
- Virginia Child Protective Services hotline: 800-552-7096 (24 hours).
- Virginia Adult Protective Services hotline: 888-832-3858 (24 hours).

The organization will not investigate in a way that delays an emergency or legally required report. Preserve relevant information and do not confront an alleged offender when doing so could increase danger or interfere with authorities.

Policy 12: Incident Reporting and Response

Purpose. To ensure prompt, consistent, and documented responses to injuries, safety events, missing persons, suspected abuse, privacy incidents, financial irregularities, and other serious concerns.

Reportable Incidents

- Injury, illness, medical emergency, medication concern, fall, or hospitalization connected to an activity
- Elopement, missing participant, unsafe transportation, threat, violence, weapon, or law enforcement contact
- Suspected abuse, neglect, exploitation, harassment, discrimination, or boundary violation
- Privacy breach, lost records, compromised account, unauthorized photograph, or inappropriate disclosure
- Theft, fraud, cash discrepancy, property damage, grant compliance problem, or suspected misuse of funds
- Any event likely to result in an insurance claim, government report, significant complaint, or material reputational risk

Immediate Response

- Protect life and safety; call 911 when needed.
- Provide only assistance within the responder's training and role.
- Contact protective services, guardians, emergency contacts, leadership, insurer, funder, facility, or authorities when required and appropriate.
- Do not promise secrecy, admit organizational liability, speculate publicly, or alter evidence.
- Preserve relevant messages, photos, video, receipts, sign in records, witness information, and other evidence.

Internal Documentation

Use ThisAbility's current incident report or another method approved by leadership as soon as reasonably possible. Record facts rather than blame, rumor, or unnecessary personal detail. Leadership will limit access, assign follow up, track needed actions, and retain the information according to the record retention policy.

Review After an Incident

Serious or recurring incidents should be reviewed for contributing factors, accessibility needs, supervision, training, facility conditions, procedures, insurance, and prevention. Follow up actions should identify who will handle them and a reasonable time for completion.

Policy 13: Volunteer Management and Screening

Purpose. To welcome volunteers while using a thoughtful selection, orientation, and supervision process that fits each role.

ThisAbility's Screening Process

ThisAbility is selective when accepting and assigning volunteers. Our current process may include a conversation or interview, review of interests and experience, identity confirmation, references when appropriate, orientation, observation, and review of publicly available Virginia sex offender and court or criminal justice records. These searches are not the same as a formal criminal background check and may not identify every concern.

No screening process can guarantee that a person will always act safely. Screening is one part of our approach, along with careful selection, clear expectations, supervision, attention to concerns, and limits on access based on the volunteer's role.

Screening Based on the Role

Before assigning a volunteer, leadership may consider the duties, level of supervision, contact with participants, transportation, money handling, keys, records, technology, and ability to act alone. ThisAbility may use additional screening, including a formal background check, when resources allow or when a law, funder, insurer, partner, facility, contract, or Board decision requires it.

Until a volunteer is known and authorized for a particular responsibility, ThisAbility may use visible or supervised duties and limit access to participants, funds, transportation, confidential records, keys, or organizational accounts. Leadership may adjust these safeguards based on the person, activity, location, and level of risk.

Orientation and Supervision

- Volunteers receive role instructions and relevant safety, confidentiality, accessibility, conduct, and incident reporting information.
- Volunteers must work within assigned duties and follow the direction of an authorized supervisor.
- Volunteers may not promise services, collect money, drive participants, administer medication, provide private personal care, access records, or post participant images unless specifically authorized.
- Supervision may be increased or an assignment changed when participant needs, volunteer experience, or risk requires it.

Ending Volunteer Service

Volunteer service may be paused, changed, or ended for safety, conduct, reliability, confidentiality, performance, role fit, funding, program, or operational reasons. When safe and appropriate, the volunteer will be informed of the decision. Ending ordinary volunteer service is separate from removal of a director, which must follow the governing documents and law.

Policy 14:

Communications, Social Media, Photography, and Public Representation

Purpose. To protect participants and the organization while supporting accurate, respectful, and authorized public communication.

Authorized Representation

Only authorized persons may issue official statements, respond to media, use organizational accounts, sign public commitments, or present a position as ThisAbility's official view. Others must make clear that personal opinions are their own.

Content Standards

- Communications should be truthful, respectful, consistent with our mission, accessible when reasonably possible, and protective of privacy.
- Do not publish confidential Board, personnel, financial, donor, participant, complaint, investigation, or grant information without authorization.
- Do not identify a diagnosis, hardship, benefit status, address, school, guardian, or personal history merely to make a story more compelling.
- Correct material errors promptly and preserve records of significant official communications.

Photography and Media Consent

Obtain and document appropriate consent before publicly using an identifiable participant's photograph, video, voice, name, story, artwork, or testimonial. Consent must be voluntary, specific enough for the intended use, and respected when withdrawn to the extent reasonably possible for future use. Consent from a parent, guardian, or authorized representative does not eliminate the need to respect the participant's expressed refusal or distress.

Political Activity

ThisAbility will not use organizational resources to support or oppose a candidate for public office. Education, advocacy, and permitted lobbying may be conducted in a manner consistent with ThisAbility's tax exempt status. Personal political activity must not be presented as organizational activity.

Account Security

Official accounts should use access that fits the person's role, strong passwords, multifactor authentication when available, and prompt removal of access when duties end. Credentials may not be shared through insecure or public channels.

Policy 15:

Complaints, Grievances, and Conflict Resolution

Purpose. To provide an accessible, fair process for resolving concerns from participants, families, volunteers, employees, directors, donors, and community members without retaliation.

Making a Complaint

A complaint may be made verbally, in writing, with communication assistance, or through a representative. It may be directed to the Founder & CEO, Executive Director, or Board Chair. A concern about one of those individuals should be sent to an uninvolved contact. Emergency, abuse, financial misconduct, discrimination, and whistleblower concerns must also follow the applicable specialized policy.

Accessible Process

- Provide a reasonable communication method or accommodation when requested.
- Use plain language and explain the next step.
- Do not require a person to confront the subject of the complaint when doing so would be unsafe or inappropriate.
- Allow a support person when appropriate and consistent with privacy.
- Protect the complainant from retaliation.

Review

The recipient should acknowledge the complaint, assess immediate safety and conflicts, identify an appropriate reviewer, gather relevant information, and communicate the outcome or next step to the extent privacy allows. Complex matters may require involvement from the Board, insurer, legal or employment professionals, protective services, licensing authorities, law enforcement, or a funder.

Informal Resolution

When safe and appropriate, concerns may be resolved through clarification, apology, coaching, accommodation, correction, mediation, or an agreed action plan. Informal resolution is not required for serious misconduct and may not be used to conceal a reportable event.

Policy 16:

Policy Administration, Training, and Annual Acknowledgment

Purpose. To keep policies current, ensure adoption is documented, and provide practical training and accountability.

Adoption and Amendment

This manual and material amendments require Board approval unless the bylaws lawfully delegate a limited administrative update. The minutes must record approval. Leadership may correct typographical errors, update contact information, or make minor formatting changes, but material changes should return to the Board.

Annual Review

The Board will review these policies periodically, generally once each year, and may review them sooner when laws, insurance, grants, programs, staffing, incidents, or organizational structure change. The review should confirm that roles, reporting contacts, meeting practices, and actual operations still match the policies.

Training

Directors receive orientation and periodic governance training. Employees and volunteers receive training appropriate to their responsibilities, which may include participant safeguarding, incident reporting, confidentiality, accessibility, financial controls, harassment prevention, and emergency procedures.

Acknowledgment

Covered persons may be required to sign an acknowledgment confirming that they received, understood, and agree to follow applicable policies. The annual Board Member Agreement remains a separate acknowledgment and does not replace this manual.

No Contract or Guaranteed Compensation

These policies do not guarantee employment, continued volunteer service, a contract, compensation, stipend, reimbursement, benefit, or future work. Board service remains voluntary and unpaid. Any separate paid arrangement depends on appropriate approval, documentation that fits the circumstances, available funding, and compliance with applicable requirements.