

## SPJA Youth Protection Policy

### 1. Purpose and Goals

The Society for the Promotion of Japanese Animation (SPJA) recognizes the importance of protecting youth participants in SPJA events and activities, including online activities. SPJA has adopted a zero tolerance policy with regard to actions or behaviors that threaten the safety of young people, including violence, bullying, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other inappropriate or potentially harmful actions or behaviors. SPJA views the safety and security of all participants—especially young people—as a top priority.

All participants at SPJA events and activities (including online activities) are encouraged to report any unsafe or inappropriate behaviors, conditions, or circumstances, including any violation of this Youth Protection Policy or violation of any other policy or rule intended to promote a safe environment.

This Youth Protection Policy has been developed with sensitivity to the unique cultural aspects of SPJA’s mission, events, and other activities.

The goals of this policy include:

- Increasing awareness about potential risks and recognizing each individual’s ability to help protect SPJA’s youth participants;
- Inspiring confidence and competence in identifying dangerous situations and behaviors; and
- Creating a safe and fun environment for SPJA’s youth participants.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all SPJA-managed facilities and venues and to SPJA events and activities (including online activities), as well as to all individuals involved with or participating in SPJA events and activities, including employees, volunteers, panelists, performers, Guests of Honor (GOH), members of a GOH’s or performer’s entourage, Artist Alley participants, exhibitors, vendors, press (including reporters, photographers, and videographers), and others.

SPJA encourages everyone to:

- RECOGNIZE that each individual can help protect youth;
- IDENTIFY harmful actions and report them to an SPJA representative immediately;
- CREATE a safe and fun environment for youth.

### **3. Prohibition of Attendance or Participation in an SPJA Event or Activity**

SPJA may refuse to admit or may prohibit the participation of any individual who refuses to comply with SPJA policies, including this Youth Protection Policy. Any person who provides inaccurate or misleading information, or who is disqualified from participation pursuant to Section 5 (Disqualifying Criteria) below, will not be allowed to provide services on behalf of SPJA at that year's events and activities, and may be permanently disqualified from working with SPJA in the future.

Those desiring to provide goods or services at SPJA events must comply with the following requirements, and not be disqualified under Section 5 (Disqualifying Criteria).

#### *a. Employees & Volunteers*

All individuals applying for an employee or volunteer role at SPJA must:

- complete an online application
- provide appropriate and accurate information, including full legal name
- complete SPJA's online youth protection training at [www.youthprotectionportal.org/SPJA](http://www.youthprotectionportal.org/SPJA)
- agree to SPJA's Code of Conduct for employees and volunteers
- consent to a criminal history background check conducted by a third party vendor retained by SPJA, and
- provide truthful information as required by the background check provider in order to facilitate the background check.

#### *b. Panelists, Performers, Guests of Honor, Guest of Honor or Performer Entourages, and Artist Alley Participants*

- Each panelist, performer, Guest of Honor (GOH), GOH or performer entourage member, and Artist Alley participant who will attend SPJA events is strongly encouraged to complete SPJA's youth protection training available at [www.youthprotectionportal.org/SPJA](http://www.youthprotectionportal.org/SPJA). The training provides information and tips to help you contribute to a safe and comfortable event or activity environment for all attendees and participants, especially youth.
- Although panelists, performers, Guests of Honor (GOH), GOH or performer entourage members, and Artist Alley participants are not required to complete a background check, they are strongly encouraged to do so, and may do so at SPJA's expense through its third party vendor. They are also strongly encouraged to discuss internally and with SPJA how to use carefully focused background checks to disqualify people with known histories of misconduct involving youth, as part of an industry-wide conversation about youth protection.

*c. Exhibitors, Vendors, and Members of the Press and Industry*

- Each exhibitor, vendor, member of the press, or member of industry who will attend SPJA events is strongly encouraged to complete SPJA's youth protection training available at [www.youthprotectionportal.org/SPJA](http://www.youthprotectionportal.org/SPJA). The training provides information and tips to help you contribute to a safe and comfortable event or activity environment for all attendees and participants, especially youth.
- Although exhibitors, vendors, members of the press, and members of industry are not required to complete a background check, they are strongly encouraged to do so. They are also strongly encouraged to discuss internally and with SPJA how to use carefully focused background checks to disqualify people with known histories of misconduct involving youth, as part of an industry-wide conversation about youth protection.

**4. Code of Conduct**

To promote a safe environment and protect the many young participants at SPJA events and activities, SPJA has adopted a Code of Conduct which specifies behavioral expectations for SPJA employees and volunteers.

**5. Disqualifying Criteria**

*a. Employees and Volunteers:*

Any SPJA employee, volunteer, or applicant for an employee or volunteer position will be deemed ineligible for service or participation at SPJA if the individual:

- fails to complete a required screening process or fails to provide necessary information required to complete the check.
- otherwise provides information that is false or intended to be misleading;
- was previously terminated from a paid or volunteer position due to misconduct involving a youth; or
- was previously found or determined by SPJA to have engaged in misconduct involving youth at or around an SPJA event or activity; or

*b. Panelists, Performers, Guests of Honor, Guest of Honor or Performer Entourages, and Artist Alley Participants:*

In addition, and although they are not required to complete background checks, any performer, guest of honor, GOH or performer entourage member, panelist, Artist Alley participant, press, exhibitor, or vendor position will be deemed ineligible for service or participation at SPJA events if the individual:

- provides information that is false or intended to be misleading;
- was previously terminated from a paid or volunteer position due to misconduct involving a youth; or
- was previously found or determined by SPJA to have engaged in misconduct involving youth at or around an SPJA event or activity.

In addition, reportable convictions or disclosures of registrations, for any of the following criminal offenses or registrations will prompt a determination that an applicant for an employee or volunteer role does not meet SPJA's criminal background screening criteria:

- a. Any reportable felony conviction (crimes punishable by confinement greater than one year) involving violence, sexual activity, or harm to children, including distributing alcohol or drugs to minors:
  - Defined on the basis of exposure for the offense for which the defendant was convicted, pled guilty or pled nolo contendere. If pled down, then the crime to which the defendant ultimately pled.
  - Defined as all crimes punishable by greater than one year in jail or prison, regardless of how characterized by jurisdiction. If range, alternate sentencing, or indeterminate sentencing with an outer range greater than one year.
- b. Any reportable lesser criminal conviction involving force or threat of force against a person
- c. Any reportable lesser criminal conviction of a sexual nature or classified as a sex offense including but not limited to 'victimless' crimes of a sexual nature such as prostitution, pornography, indecent exposure, and crimes in which sexual relations is an element
- d. Any reportable lesser criminal conviction involving cruelty to animals
- e. Any reportable lesser criminal conviction involving harm to a minor, including distributing alcohol or drugs to minors
- f. Any Sex Offender Registrant
- g. Any prior allegations of behavior at an SPJA event or activity that is inconsistent with our Youth Protection Policy.

*Appeals Process:* Any person for whom a background check is required who does not meet SPJA's background check criteria will be given the opportunity to: (1) withdraw the application, or (2) dispute the accuracy of the background screening report through an appeals process with the third party background checking firm retained by SPJA.

Any decision regarding disqualified person will be documented and kept in an internal database of persons deemed ineligible for employee or volunteer roles at SPJA.

## **6. Responsibilities & Expectations**

### *a. Youth Participants*

Youth participants are present throughout SPJA events. Because of the crowded nature of SPJA events, children aged 13 years and younger must be chaperoned by an adult at all times. All SPJA representatives must be aware of their surroundings. If you notice an unaccompanied child who you believe to be aged 13 years or younger, contact your supervisor, or an SPJA representative who will notify Security or the Appropriate Supervisor. If the situation requires

immediate intervention, engage another SPJA representative to assist you in approaching the child and contacting your supervisor.

SPJA representatives are prohibited from caring for children while providing services on behalf of SPJA. All SPJA representatives should ensure that their own children are under the care of an adult while at SPJA events, and should not agree to watch or take care of another person's child or children for any amount of time, even momentarily.

*b. Lost Child Policy*

Unaccompanied children aged 13 years and younger are of an especially vulnerable age and are deemed *critical missing*. Children aged 14 years and older are not considered *critical missing* unless the child has a preexisting medical condition such as autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, an intellectual disability, or another similar condition.

When a child deemed *critical missing* is reported missing, SPJA will use all available resources to find the child. A security officer and/or a designated SPJA staff member will stay with the parents or guardians at all times until the child has been found and reunited with their caretaker.

*c. Found Child Policy*

When an unaccompanied child aged 13 years or younger is found, the child should be escorted to the Event Operations office by two SPJA representatives or security officers—one male and one female. If the child is uncooperative or emotionally distraught, refrain from forcing the child to comply, and remain with the child in the current location. Request additional support if needed. If the child's parents or guardians have not come forward to claim the child after 20 minutes, notify your supervisor and an SPJA director will contact the police.

When reuniting a child with their parent or guardian, ask for identification before releasing the child back into the custody of the parent or guardian. Document the identification information and a contact number for the parent or guardian.

*d. Safety Concerns and SafeSpace Locations*

Any SPJA event attendee who feels unsafe or concerned is encouraged to seek assistance from an SPJA representative, or to proceed to a *SafeSpace* location. Messaging about *SafeSpace* locations will be featured during SPJA events, and locations will be clearly marked. As an SPJA representative, one of your important responsibilities is to make sure you know where the *SafeSpace* locations are located, so that you can properly and compassionately assist any attendee who needs to find a *SafeSpace*.

*e. Social Media*

Social media is an important part of the SPJA's events and activities. In most cases, social media sites and accounts are used to celebrate and promote culture. Young people may be more susceptible to negative experiences on social media sites, more likely to fall victim to harmful behavior, and more likely to engage in risky behavior. Some youth use social media to 'try on'

alternative versions of themselves, behaving more boldly online than they would in person. Adding to the risk is the fact that youth may not have spoken with their parents or guardians about social media safety. SPJA is committed to providing a safe experience for young fans of culture, including on social media sites sponsored or supported by SPJA.

SPJA will not tolerate any conduct, including online activity, that puts young event participants at risk of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or bullying. Under no circumstances may any content of a sexual nature be transmitted to an underage attendee. Any SPJA attendee or representative who violates this strict policy concerning social media is subject to immediate dismissal. In addition, the transmission of any sexual content or requests for sexual contact made to an underage attendee will be promptly reported to law enforcement.

*f. Photography & Video*

Photography is generally allowed and encouraged at SPJA events. However, photography is prohibited in certain areas and all SPJA event participants and representatives have the right to privacy. Thus, permission should be obtained before a photograph is taken, and if an individual indicates that they prefer not to have their photograph taken, this should be respected in all cases, including by professional and amateur photographers. Additionally, no youth attendee should be photographed in private, either on-site or off-site, without a parent or guardian.

If you become aware of a situation where a person has been unwillingly photographed, or an inappropriate photograph has been taken, it is your responsibility to notify your supervisor right away. Persons taking inappropriate photographs or photographs of an unwilling subject are subject to discipline, up to and including immediate dismissal from an SPJA event.

*g. Costuming & Cosplay*

Cosplay is generally allowed and encouraged at SPJA events. However, inappropriate cosplay is prohibited. All SPJA event participants have the right to an expectation of a family-friendly environment. Thus, if you notice someone who is dressed or is behaving inappropriately, it is your responsibility to notify your supervisor right away.

## **7. Prohibited Activities**

*a. Abuse and Physical Force*

All SPJA representatives are strictly prohibited from engaging in violent behaviors while at SPJA events, including but not limited to abusive or offensive language, hitting or shoving. If you become aware of violent behaviors involving youth, notify your supervisor right away.

This policy does not apply to official demonstrations of martial arts or other performances.

*b. Sexual Contact or Communication*

All SPJA representatives are strictly prohibited from engaging in sexual activity or contact or discussing sexual activity with any under-age participants. If you become aware of prohibited sexual contact or sexual communication involving youth, contact your supervisor right away.

Some SPJA events and activities feature adult programs that include discussions or displays of content that is sexual in nature. This content is restricted to adults 18 years of age and older. Any SPJA representatives who witness youth participants entering, participating in or attempting to gain access to adult-only programs should contact their supervisor right away.

*c. Bullying and Harassment*

In addition to the avoidance of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and inappropriate contact, SPJA representatives and participants are strictly prohibited from engaging in bullying or harassment of other participants or SPJA representatives. If you become aware of a bullying or harassment situation, notify your supervisor right away.

*d. Inappropriate Photography*

Photographs may not be taken in restrooms, dressing rooms, or from an angle intended to expose or reveal a participant's undergarments or any part of the body intentionally covered by a costume.

## **8. Reporting**

*a. Child Abuse Definition*

SPJA defines child abuse as any action or inaction that injures or creates the possibility of injury to a child or youth. Injury may be physical, psychological or emotional in nature.

*b. Suspected or Actual Child Abuse or Injury*

Under California law, SPJA representatives are not mandated reporters of suspected or actual child abuse. However, if you suspect that a child or youth is being injured or abused by anyone—including a parent, guardian, caretaker, unrelated adult, or another child—SPJA requires that you notify your supervisor right away. Your supervisor will be able to help you assess the situation and determine the appropriate steps to take to resolve your concerns.

*c. Escalation Process*

If you witness an incident, or you are approached by an SPJA attendee who has been a victim or who has witnessed an incident of abuse or misconduct, notify your supervisor right away. Your supervisor will be able to help you assess the situation and determine the appropriate escalation process.

*d. Anonymous Report*

The SPJA Youth Protection Portal, [www.youthprotectionportal.org/SPJA](http://www.youthprotectionportal.org/SPJA), contains a reporting form through which anyone can report an unsafe or concerning situation or incident. Although employees and volunteers are required to report incidents to their supervisors directly without delay, please make sure you are also familiar with the online reporting form.