

Welcome



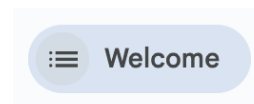
Welcome to TotalLink's Program Policies & Guidelines

We believe that clear and transparent policies help everyone, including individuals, families, and staff, understand expectations and support a positive experience for all. Our Program Policies & Guidelines outline the expectations and procedures that support a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all participants and their families.

This document is organized into multiple tabs for easy reference, including:

- **New to TotalLink: Getting Started Process**
- **Registration Process**
- **Wellness & Safety Guidelines**
- **Attendance Guidelines**
- **Prosocial Behavior Guidelines**
- **Picture Use & Social Media Policies**
- **Invoices & Financial Assistance**
- **Service Plan Agreement**
- **Zoom Etiquette & Support**
- **Financial Responsibility**
- **Incident & Feedback Form**
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To view tabs, click this icon (three dots with lines) in the upper left.



New to TotalLink: Getting Started Process



Getting Started with Services

Plan for about 4 weeks

1

First Phone Call

Learn about TotalLink's services and share about you and what you're looking for.

2

Questionnaire

A questionnaire will be emailed to you. Fill out the questionnaire as detailed as possible.

3

Consent for Release

Share reference information for current or previous programs, services, and employers. Return the signed form via email.

4

1-Hour Meeting

You and TotalLink collaborate about your questionnaire responses. The references provided may be contacted before the meeting for more information.

5

Trial Program

TotalLink may ask you to trial a program to learn more.

6

Register for the social and learning programs of your choice. There may be a waitlist.

SOCIAL & LEARNING
PROGRAMS

5

Observation

TotalLink may ask to observe you while working or volunteering to learn more.

6

Join our employment services! There may be a waitlist. You may need to open a case with the Department of Rehabilitation Services.

EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES

Director of Programs & Employment Services
Lauren Feldman
lfeldman@totallink2.org

Registration Process

TotalLink to Community – Registration Process

Registration Process:

1. Registration is released via email at noon between 5 and 6 weeks before the start of the next session. The registration release date is emailed 6 and 7 weeks before the start of the next session.
2. The registration link will allow you to register for multiple programs simultaneously (you will check the boxes for ALL of the programs you'd like to register for). This will take about 10 minutes to complete.
3. You will use the same link to register for all of your programs. If you would like to register for additional programs at a later date, please email Jade Andrews at jandrews@totallink.org and she will help get you registered.
4. If you register for a program with a waitlist, we will notify you. Program registration is not monitored during the weekend, so we will communicate any updates with you during business hours the following week.

Wellness Safety Guidelines

TotalLink to Community – Wellness Safety Guidelines

Our Commitment

With our community members' health and well-being in mind, TotalLink to Community recommends (but does not require) that all individuals follow the guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Click here to view "[Respiratory Virus Guidance: What to Do When You Are Sick](#)."

Wellness Safety Guidelines

The **core prevention** guidelines from the CDC include: staying up to date on your vaccinations & staying home when you are sick.

Additional prevention guidelines to protect yourself include wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing, and getting tested for COVID-19 if you have been exposed or are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms.

Stay home if you are experiencing symptoms of illness, such as cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, headache, runny nose, sore throat, stomachache, or loss of taste or smell.

If we notice that you are not feeling well or if you come to the program with any symptoms, we will ask you to go home.

Attendance Guidelines

TotalLink to Community – Attendance Guidelines

To get the most out of our programs, we ask that you commit to attending all classes. This helps grow friendships, stay current with program content and routine, decrease internal office work, and plan for staffing. We understand that schedules change and that, occasionally, you may need to miss a class unexpectedly.

We appreciate you reviewing your schedule before registering for programs, as we have a waitlist for many of our programs. If you miss more than two classes in a row, we will contact you to learn more.

If you are experiencing illness and cannot attend a program, please contact your facilitator. For more information, please see our Wellness Safety Guidelines [here](#).

Weekly & Bi-monthly Programs & Services

If advance notice of 72 hours before a class is given, we can provide credits for 20% of the classes in a program. Advance notice should be given to TotalLink's Office Manager, Stacy Merrigan smerrigan@totallink.org and Program Facilitator, Jade Andrews jandrews@totallink.org

Monthly Programs & Services

100% of the program session (i.e., 4 out of 4 classes). Credits are not provided.

Prosocial Behavior Guidelines

TotalLink to Community: Safety Guidelines and Expectations for Prosocial Behavior

At TotalLink, we believe everyone deserves to feel **safe, respected, and included**. To support a healthy, welcoming environment for all, we are establishing clear safety guidelines and behavioral expectations. These guidelines help everyone understand how to interact respectfully and what will happen if someone engages in behavior that makes others feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Our Commitment

It is our responsibility as facilitators, managers, and supervisors to **lead with clarity and consistency**. We will model respectful, prosocial behavior and make our expectations explicit. While we encourage participants to reflect and contribute to our culture, safety expectations come from TotalLink first.

Behavioral Expectations

Each participant is expected to follow these community agreements during all programs:

- **Keep hands to self** – Respect others' personal space and physical boundaries.
- **Use respectful language** – Avoid offensive, threatening, or sexually explicit words.
- **Follow the program structure** – Participate as directed and stay on task.
- **Honor others' boundaries** – Ask for permission before initiating physical contact or taking photos.
- **Use problem-solving strategies** – Ask for help, take a break, or use calming tools when needed.
- **Maintain a safe environment** – Behaviors that intimidate, threaten, or harm others will not be tolerated.

Defining Intimidating Behavior

Intimidating behavior doesn't always look aggressive. It can be **direct or subtle, verbal or nonverbal**, and still make others feel uncomfortable, excluded, or unsafe. We take all forms of intimidation seriously, including patterns of behavior often associated with peer dynamics.

Examples of intimidating behavior include:

- **Excluding someone intentionally** from a group or activity and encouraging others to do the same
- **Whispering, eye-rolling, or smirking** to mock or isolate another person

- **Using sarcasm or “jokes”** to belittle, embarrass, or target someone repeatedly
- **Gossiping** or spreading rumors that harm a person’s reputation or relationships
- **Giving someone “the silent treatment”** to punish or control them
- **Forming cliques** or power dynamics that lead to exclusion or manipulation
- **Repeated negative comments** about someone’s appearance, choices, or identity
- **Any behavior that causes someone to feel watched, judged, unsafe, or unwelcome**

These behaviors, even if subtle, can create a culture of fear, anxiety, or withdrawal. At TotalLink, we **name these behaviors clearly** and **intervene consistently** to protect our community’s safety and emotional wellbeing.

If Someone Feels Unsafe

If a participant makes others feel unsafe or uncomfortable, the following **natural consequences** may apply:

1. **Verbal Reminder** – Staff will redirect the behavior and remind the participant of the guidelines.
2. **Private Check-In** – A conversation will take place to reflect on the behavior and explore solutions.
3. **Removal from Activity** – If unsafe behavior continues, the participant may be asked to leave the program for the day.
4. **Follow-Up Plan** – A meeting may be arranged with the participant, their support team, and staff to create a plan moving forward.
5. **Ongoing Disruption** – Continued unsafe behavior may lead to a temporary or permanent pause in participation.

Repeated Unsafe Behavior

When a participant's behaviors regularly make others feel unsafe or threatened—for example, **more than once or twice per session**—or if the level of the unsafe behavior reaches a risk threshold we have a responsibility to safeguard the wellbeing of the full group. In these situations, the following steps may occur:

- The participant may be **asked to skip the next class** to allow space for reflection and regrouping.
- They may be asked to **work through a plan** with their counselor, therapist, and/or parent or guardian that helps them understand how their behavior impacts others—even

if they were having a hard day or going through a difficult time.

- The participant may be asked to **attend with a personal support worker** to help manage and redirect behavior.
- When appropriate and possible, they may be **asked to change classes** to find a better fit.

As a **small agency**, TotalLink does **not have additional staff on hand to increase one-on-one support**. Because of this, we rely on shared responsibility and proactive collaboration with families and external support teams to ensure a safe, respectful environment for all.

Acknowledgement

Participants will be asked to review and sign an agreement confirming their understanding and commitment to TotalLink's safety guidelines. This agreement reinforces mutual accountability and supports a caring, inclusive community.

Picture Use Guidelines

TotalLink to Community – Picture Use Guidelines

At TotalLink to Community, we operate from a foundation of **trust and mutual respect** among participants, families, staff, and volunteers. As part of our commitment to inclusion and community celebration, we share photos from our programs to:

- Highlight learning, creativity, and accomplishments
- Offer insight into the day's activities
- Encourage conversations at home
- Celebrate individual and group successes

Photos may be shared in private family communications (like newsletters or program recaps), organizational materials, and occasionally on TotalLink's social media—with prior consent.

To maintain a safe, respectful environment, we ask **everyone involved with TotalLink to follow these guidelines for picture use:**

Guidelines for Participants, Staff, Volunteers, and Families

1. Respect Privacy and Consent

- Only share photos that have been provided directly by TotalLink.
- Do not take or share photos of others during programs without express permission from staff.
- If someone asks not to be photographed or for a photo to be removed, that request must be honored immediately.

2. Use Photos in Positive, Supportive Ways

- Use pictures to celebrate involvement, success, and inclusion.
- Do not use photos in ways that are **mean-spirited, intimidating, or shaming**, including creating memes, sharing in group chats to make fun of others, or posting with negative or sarcastic captions.

3. Protect Program Integrity

- Do not use photos to misrepresent TotalLink or its participants.

- Photos should not be edited or posted in ways that could reflect negatively on the people in them or the organization.

4. Keep Sharing Spaces Private

- Photos shared through internal program updates or emails are meant for personal use and family discussion only.
- Do not repost on public platforms (e.g., personal social media) unless specifically approved by TotalLink.

Why This Matters

We believe in celebrating our community and sharing moments of joy, growth, and connection. But with that comes responsibility. Misusing photos—even unintentionally—can cause harm, embarrassment, or break trust. **Everyone deserves to be seen in a way that honors their dignity.**

Acknowledgement

By participating in TotalLink programs, you agree to follow this picture use policy and help us protect a respectful and uplifting environment for all.

Social Media Guidelines

TotalLink to Community – Social Media Guidelines for Participants

At TotalLink to Community, we believe everyone deserves to feel **safe, respected, and included**—both in person and online. As a participant in TotalLink programs, your words and actions, including on social media, help shape our community.

These guidelines are in place to ensure that social media use supports our shared values of kindness, dignity, and belonging.

What is an Intimidating or Harmful Social Media Post?

An intimidating or harmful social media post directed at a **TotalLink participant, staff member, volunteer, or TotalLink as an organization** includes any of the following:

- **Hate speech** – any post that targets someone based on their race, disability, gender, religion, sexuality, or identity
- **Threats** – statements that suggest or encourage harm (emotional or physical)
- **Making fun of someone** – mocking, ridiculing, or posting hurtful memes, jokes, or captions about others
- **Offensive or sexually explicit content** – using inappropriate, graphic, or sexual language or images
- **Spreading rumors** – sharing false or harmful information that damages someone's reputation or relationships
- **Negative comments about someone's appearance, choices, or identity**
- **Posts that make others feel unsafe, excluded, or unwelcomed** in TotalLink programs

Even if it's meant as a joke, if it makes someone feel unsafe or targeted, it is not acceptable.

Our Expectations

- Treat others with respect on and off social media.
- Do not post pictures or videos of other participants without their permission.
- Be mindful that what you post reflects not only on you, but also on the TotalLink community.

Natural Consequences

If an intimidating or harmful social media post is brought to our attention, **TotalLink will take action to protect the safety and wellbeing of our community**. This may include:

1. **A private conversation with staff** to understand what happened
2. **A required reflection period**, which may include skipping a class
3. **A family or support team meeting** to create a plan to repair trust and move forward
4. **Requiring additional support**, such as a personal support worker or counseling involvement
5. In repeated or serious situations, **temporary or permanent removal from a program**

Why This Matters

Our community is built on trust, care, and the belief that **everyone belongs**. Social media is a powerful tool—we ask that you use it with kindness, maturity, and awareness of others.

If you ever feel hurt or unsafe because of a post, please speak to a staff member. You matter, and we are here to listen and support you.

Outstanding Invoices & Financial Assistance

TotalLink to Community – Invoices & Financial Assistance Guidelines

Guidelines for Invoices

Outstanding Invoices

We value your participation in our social programs and are willing to structure a payment plan that fits your budget.

- Outstanding invoices must be paid in full before you can register or attend any additional classes or programs in the next session.

Credit Card Service Charge on Invoices

TotalLink to Community's **invoices include a 3% service charge on all credit card payments for all services and programs.** *ACH, Debit card, or checks are no-charge payment options.* All families will be invoiced for programs at a later date. For any questions regarding invoicing, please contact Stacy at smerrigan@totallink.org.

Guidelines for Financial Assistance

Effective Starting Session 2, January 2025

Due to increased applications and limited resources, we have refined our process to help us extend support to as many members as possible.

At TotalLink, we remain committed to making our programs and services accessible. Currently, the fees collected for our programs cover about 40% of the actual cost, with the remainder funded by grants, donations, and fundraising events. In exchange for financial assistance, we kindly expect participants and their families to contribute their time to support our events, fundraisers, or other community activities.

Financial Assistance Options

We are offering two types of financial assistance to support your participation. You may receive one or both of these options.

1. **Sliding Fee Scale:** Adjusted fees based on individual needs and circumstances.
2. **Payment Plans:** Allows for monthly payments instead of requiring full payment upfront.

Decision-Making Process & Guidelines

Our financial assistance program operates under the following updated guidelines:

- Assistance of up to 50% may be granted for up to **two programs** per individual.
- Financial assistance is **not available** for programs with a waitlist.
- The assistance percentage may vary depending on program resources, including staffing and materials, and is capped at 50%.
- In exchange for financial assistance, recipients are required to contribute volunteer hours within the TotalLink community.

Application Process

To apply for financial assistance, please follow these steps:

1. Submit your application **at least one week before the start of a new session** (unless you are new to TotalLink).
2. Complete the financial assistance application using [this link](#). Once submitted, our team will follow up if any additional information is needed.
3. After submission, you should receive a confirmation email. If you do not, please reach out to Emily Raming at eraming@totallink.org.

Please Note:

- Each financial assistance request is reviewed individually for each program.
- Volunteer opportunities will be discussed during the application process.
- A new application is required for each program session.
- Before registering for the next session, TotalLink requires for any outstanding balance be paid in full.

We deeply value your commitment to TotalLink and appreciate your understanding and support as we work to make our resources available to as many people as possible. Thank you for being an integral part of our mission to create a supportive, inclusive community for all.

Service Plan Agreement

TotalLink to Community – Educational & Social Programs Service Plan Agreement

This agreement is by and between

1. The TotalLink Participant
2. The “Family” or Legal Guardian(s)
3. TotalLink to Community, hereafter known as the “service provider”

TotalLink to Community will

Communicate

- Notify the participant and family about changes in facilitators.
- Email summary about the previous class and information about the next class.
- When a participant does not follow or agree to community agreements (ex., not staying with the group).

Provide

- Choices within programs.
- Opportunity to provide TotalLink feedback.
- Time for intake to learn about interests, skills, and ideal conditions for success and collect all required documents.

Partner with Participant and family to

- Identify any long-term support needs or accommodations.
- Identify programs that match participants' interests, skills, and goals.
- Problem-solve ways to support participants in programs according to needs and community agreements.
- Include a 1:1 support person provided by the family.
- If TotalLink has already covered a participant's cost more than twice, we will support the participant in contacting someone from home to help cover their bill moving forward.

Wellness & Safety

- Respect the participant's rights and choice if they express not wanting to be in a program.
- Foster self-advocacy and independence in programs.
- Encourage participants to try new things.
- Create and follow community agreements in programs that focus on wellness and safety.
- Help keep our community safe by requesting pickup when illness symptoms are shown in programs and services.
- Model respectful, prosocial behavior, name intimidating behaviors clearly, and intervene consistently to protect our community's safety and emotional well-being.

The Participant will

Communicate

- Give TotalLink feedback about programs.
- Share ideas about program activities.
- Notify TotalLink about attendance and advocate for needs.
- Write a personal bio with TotalLink support for facilitators to use as a learning and reference tool.

Participate

- Want to attend the program.
- Treat others, including facilitators, volunteers, participants, and community members, with respect by listening when others are talking and taking turns when talking.
- Arrive on time, be prepared for programs, and take responsibility for personal belongings.
- Be flexible and try new things.
- Be kind to others.
- Include other members of TotalLink and the community.
- Ask for help when needed (i.e., breaks, walking, water)
- In order to build independence and understand financial responsibility, TotalLink expects participants to pay for only themselves.

Partner with Family & TotalLink

- Openly share information about goals, hopes, dreams, skills, and interests in the intake.
- In creating strategies of support.

Wellness & Safety

- Respect personal boundaries, including physical, emotional, and material (i.e., keep my hands and body to myself).
- Ask and get consent before taking pictures of others.
- Be respectful of TotalLink employees and facilitators (i.e., contact during working hours and in a professional manner).
- Keep themselves safe by independently staying with the group and following the structure and safety guidelines of the program (e.g., during Artlab, using materials safely, etc.).
- Following the rules and guidelines of each program location (i.e., safety rules, emergency procedures, smoking guidelines, etc.)

The Family will

Communicate

- Information that may be helpful for facilitators to provide the best support, i.e., changes at home, in medication, etc.
- Communicate absences within 72 hours of the program to receive credit.
- Give TotalLink feedback about programs.
- Stay up to date with program emails and information.
- Answer phone calls / be available when the participant is in a program.

Provide

- Required documents, including support strategies, emergency contact information, allergies, and contact information.
- Information about the participant's history, skills, and interests.
- Personal support worker if and when necessary.
- The family will support the participant in planning and preparing for any financial needs associated with participating in programs.

Partner with Participant & TotalLink

- Participate in the Support Intensity Scale to identify support needs, if needed.
- Support the participant in preparing for programs.
- Provide transportation as needed or agreed upon.
- Participate in supporting TotalLink to Community.

Wellness & Safety

- Be respectful of TotalLink employees and facilitators, i.e., contact during working hours and professionally.
- Stay home when ill (i.e., active COVID, flu, or cold symptoms) and pick up when needed.

Given challenges with the agreement, the TotalLink team, young adults, and family may have a meeting to problem-solve and discuss increasing levels of support.

The participant, family, and/or service provider may, within ten calendar days, give written notice of their intention to terminate this agreement. This notification requirement may be waived for cause, such as allegations of abuse or neglect, non-performance, fraud, or unsatisfactory performance. In such cases, cancellation may be immediate.

Zoom Etiquette & Support

TotalLink to Community – Zoom Etiquette & Support

We are available to provide technical support. If you would benefit from a Zoom tutorial, please reach out to Jade Andrews at jandrews@totallink.org. We can provide you with step-by-step directions and/or a personal tutorial via phone.

ZOOM ETIQUETTE

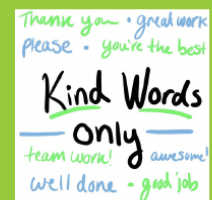
Thank you Julia Hagen for the illustrations.
Julia is on our Junior Board and
a Chicago-based artist.
www.juliahagenartist.com

Listen to others.



Use kind words.

Do not use obscene, offensive, or sexually explicit language.



Wear appropriate clothing.

We can see you!



Be on time!



Raise your hand.



Find a quiet space.

Find a space that is free of distractions and background noise - we can see and hear everything going on behind you.



Use the mute.

Turn your microphone ON and OFF when asked.



Ask your family for support.

Family support often compliments our virtual programming. We welcome family members to help you participate.



Financial Responsibility

TotalLink to Community – Financial Responsibility

At TotalLink, we are committed to supporting people as they grow in independence and learn essential life skills, including financial responsibility.

Individual Financial Responsibility During Outings

- **Participants are responsible for covering their own expenses** during community outings (e.g., meals, activities, entry fees).
- If a participant is unable to pay and asks TotalLink staff to cover the cost more than **two times**, we will request that the participant **call a family member or guardian** to assist with payment.
- These real-life decisions, such as planning ahead and managing personal spending, are important skills that contribute to greater independence.

New Guideline: Paying Only for Yourself

- We've observed instances of individuals asking other people in the program for money, which can lead to uncomfortable pressure among friends.
- To ensure a respectful and inclusive environment for all, **participants are expected to pay only for themselves.**
- This guideline is designed to reduce awkward social situations and help all participants feel confident and empowered in their choices.

Incident & Feedback Report Form

TotalLink to Community – Incident & Feedback Report Form

This report form can be used to submit a grievance, incident, or any type of feedback. You may also submit feedback over the telephone, by email, by mail, or in person.

Participant name: _____

TotalLink staff (optional): _____

Today's date: _____

Date of event: _____

Description of event or complaint, including persons involved, witnesses (if any), and any attempts to resolve the problem. Use additional sheets if necessary.

Waiver of Confidentiality (optional): *For the limited purpose of this grievance, I*

waive my right to confidentiality. Yes No

Participant name (print)

Participant signature

Date

Legal guardian signature (if applicable)

Date

Received by (Total Link Staff)

Date

Release of Liability & Waiver Agreement

TotalLink to Community – Release of Liability and Waiver Agreement

By signing below, I acknowledge that participation in TotalLink to Community programs is voluntary and may involve activities with inherent risks. I, the participant and/or legal guardian, release and hold harmless TotalLink to Community, its staff, volunteers, board members, and partner organizations from any and all claims, liabilities, or damages for injuries, losses, or other incidents that may occur during participation in any program, on or off site. I understand that TotalLink does not provide one-on-one supervision unless otherwise arranged and approved. I assume full responsibility for the participant's safety and behavior during participation. My signature indicates that I have read, understand, and agree to this waiver and release of liability.

Note: This form must be read, understood, and signed unaltered before the participant is permitted to participate in any function. By signing this agreement, the participant acknowledges that they have read, understood, and agree with its contents.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature (if applicable): _____ **Date:** _____

Legal Guardian Name: _____

Legal Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____