

Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Contract with Sportable – Background

Grant Period:

Year 1: October 1, 2022-September 30, 2023: **\$95,960.00**

Year 2: October 1, 2023-September 30, 2024: **\$96,830.00**

Context: Sportable has a fundamental obligation to protect the athletes we serve. We do this by hiring good staff, training our volunteers, purchasing great equipment, and prioritizing the physical safety of athletes during our programs and events. While these measures are effective and necessary, the organization has encountered situations where female athletes have been sexually harassed by other athletes in our organization.

There are only a handful of instances we know of – but we also know these situations are significantly underreported for a variety of reasons. Critically, people with disabilities are more than three times more likely than nondisabled people to experience serious violent crime such as rape and sexual assault. We also know technology makes it much easier to access and harass people, regardless of the perpetrator’s physical ability.

Around the time we were dealing with one specific issue, a former colleague approached Laura – a contact who now works at VDH as the Violence Prevention Coordinator and Rape Prevention & Education Director. They were interested in partnering with Sportable to address the prevention of sexual-related violence and harassment in the context of sports.

After a lot of discussion about mission creep, the strategic direction the organization is pursuing both in health and wellness and partnerships, and the duty the organization has to protect our athletes, we developed a proposal that we thought could fit with VDH’s goals while still carrying out our mission.

Deliverables:

- ✓ Review and update organizational policies, protocols, and training to reflect proactive and reactive responses to help ensure the safety of our athletes in relation to sexual violence.
- ✓ Promote a culture of transparency and healthy relationships through education and peer support.
- ✓ Provide leadership development opportunities for coaches, athletes, and volunteers.
- ✓ Be a model for peers across the country

Sportable will be **the only organization in Virginia** working with VDH on the prevention of sexual violence in the adaptive sports field and in delivering and customizing their evidence-based, CDC funded curricula:

- ✓ Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM): trains and motivates coaches to teach their young male athletes healthy relationship skills and that violence never equals strength

- ✓ Athletes As Leaders (AAL): aims to empower student athletes to take an active role in promoting health relationships and build leadership skills – focus will be on female athletes.

How does the VDH contract further Sportable's mission?

- ✓ Strengthens Sportable's protections for athletes (policies, protocols, training, culture, education).
- ✓ Creates a strategic relationship with VDH, a funder we hope to partner with for years to come as we expand into health and wellness and identify opportunities to rely less heavily on individual and corporate giving and more on multi-year, service-driven government contracts.
- ✓ Provides leadership development opportunities for coaches, athletes, and volunteers (two areas: coaching boys into men and female athletes as leaders).
- ✓ Aligns with and expands holistic focus on health and wellness related to healthy relationships and leadership development for youth athletes in particular.
- ✓ Expands public awareness about Sportable in Virginia – we will have seats at different tables with a new VDH relationship.