



## **Vendor Neutrality & Non-Endorsement Policy**

### **Article I – Scope of Policy**

This policy applies to: the Chief Executive Officer, members of the Board, staff and contractors, and volunteers.

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### **Article II – Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the relationship between NEXTSTEP: Unlocked Potential (the “Corporation”; “NEXTSTEP”) and the third-party vendors (including but not limited to restaurants, retailers, transportation providers, and service establishments) whose e-gift cards, gift cards, vouchers, or products are distributed to program participants.

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### **Article III – Statement of Non-Endorsement**

NEXTSTEP provides e-gift cards, gift cards, vouchers, or products solely as a means of providing immediate, flexible support to survivors of domestic violence. The distribution of services for a specific brand or establishment:

- Does **not** constitute an endorsement, sponsorship, or recommendation of that vendor, its products, its corporate policies, or its business practices.
  - Does **not** imply a formal partnership or affiliation between the vendor and NEXTSTEP
  - Is based primarily on vendor accessibility, geographical proximity to the survivor, the practical utility of the services provided by that vendor, and the choice(s) made by the survivor(s).
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#### **Article IV – Limitation of Liability**

While NEXTSTEP strives to provide access to reputable services, the organization does not exercise control over the operations, safety, or conduct of third-party vendors.

- **Safety & Service:** Participants use the third-party e-gift cards, gift cards, vouchers, or products at their own discretion. NEXTSTEP is not responsible for the quality of goods or services received or for any incidents that may occur on the vendor’s premises.
  - **Vendor Conduct:** The actions of a vendor’s employees or the vendor’s corporate affiliations do not reflect the values or opinions of NEXTSTEP.
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#### **Article V – Freedom of Choice**

Whenever possible, NEXTSTEP aims to provide a variety of vendor options to ensure survivors have the agency to choose services that best meet their personal needs and safety requirements.

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#### **Article VI – Public Communication**

This non-endorsement disclaimer shall be made available to program participants upon receipt of assistance and may be published on the organization’s website and within annual reports to ensure transparency with donors and the public.

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#### **Article VII – Policy Violations**

Violations of this policy may result in:

- Disciplinary action (up to and including termination of and/or removal of employment, Board position, volunteer status, etc.);
  - Legal consequences if applicable laws are breached.
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## **Article VIII – Policy Review**

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Board and updated as necessary to reflect:

- Changes in law;
  - Best practices in victim advocacy.
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This policy was reviewed and approved by the NEXTSTEP: Unlocked Potential Board of Directors.

**Date Approved:** 18 Apr 2026

