

[Dealing with Sexual Abuse and Family Violence](#)**A Lesson Plan from [Life Planning Education: A Youth Development Program](#)**

Purpose: To discuss what to do in situations of sexual assault/abuse or family violence

Materials: Newsprint and markers or board and chalk; the handout, "[Options and Consequences](#),"(pdf) for each participant; Leader's Resources, "[Sexual Abuse and Family Violence Scenarios](#)"(pdf) and "[Suggested Actions and Responses](#)"(pdf)

Time: 45-55 minutes

Planning Notes:

- This activity is designed to allow participants to discuss the options teens have when they are experiencing sexual or physical abuse, and assertiveness may have no impact, or may even result in dangerous consequences.
- By addressing these topics in your program, you may be opening a much needed door for one or more of your participants to seek release from an abusive situation by disclosing their experience. Young people who are or have been victims of physical or sexual abuse/ assault often are desperately looking for an opportunity to tell a trusted adult what is happening. If you do become the trusted adult, try to see the circumstance as an opportunity rather than a burden: You may provide a special service that is valuable beyond measure. Be sure to know what your reporting responsibilities are, in your state, as a program leader, teacher or other youth serving worker.
- It is essential that participants understand your legal obligation to report suspected abuse. Stress that you and other adults in the school/agency, are always available to someone who wants to disclose abuse, but if your state law requires you to report the abuse, let the participant know.
- Obtain the local telephone number for a teen crisis counseling line in your community for use in Step 2. If none exists, use the National Sexual Assault Hotline (1-800-656-HOPE) or the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE). Modify Steps 2, 3 and 4 accordingly.

Procedure:

1. Explain that sometimes violence occurs in the family or in a relationship. Behaving assertively or trying to negotiate with the other person may not stop the violence, but there are things that can help. Ask for examples of situations where being assertive or standing up for your rights does not get the person out of a dangerous situation.
2. Write the telephone number for a local teen hotline or crisis line on newsprint or the board. Ask volunteers to explain what a crisis telephone line is and how it works. The answers should cover this outline:

A crisis line is a telephone number teens and/or adults can call for immediate and confidential advice, often day or night. Crisis lines are usually staffed by volunteers who have training in counseling skills. They deal with most crises, such as rape, family violence, suicide, problems with drugs and addiction, pregnancy and so on.

3. Clarify how **confidentiality** works on a crisis line, versus when a teen reports abuse to a person who is mandated by law to report the abuse:
 - When a teenager calls a crisis line and does not give identifying information (name, age, etc), the teen's situation remains confidential. She or he can get advice and talk with someone over the phone, but no one will be sent to their home or school unless they ask for someone to come.
 - When a teenager tells a teacher, counselor or health practitioner directly about abuse or sexual assault/incest, that person is obligated by law to tell a legal authority. That person will try to help in every way, but she or he cannot protect the teen's secret.

Caution participants that if they know teens who only want to talk with someone and are not sure they are ready for someone to change the situation, they should call a crisis line rather than tell a teacher, counselor or health practitioner directly about their problem.

4. Explain that participants will pretend they are staffing a telephone crisis line and advising teens in crisis situations. Go over instructions for the activity:
 - Small groups will work on real situations that have happened to teens. In each, the teenager is trying to assert herself/himself against unwanted behavior but needs help.
 - Imagine that the teen in your situation has called the crisis line to talk and ask for help. Evaluate the situation and use the handout, "Options and Consequences," to list the options and possible consequences.
 - Decide how you would advise the teenager and prepare to share your decision with the group.
5. Divide participants into groups of four or five and give each group a situation from the Leader's Resource and a copy of the handout.
6. Tell groups they have about 10 minutes to work.
7. When the groups have finished working, ask a reporter from each to share their situation and their advice. Allow discussion but **caution teens not to give any information about an actual person or family whose story is similar**. Use the Leader's Resource, "Suggested Actions and Responses," to supplement the discussion, if necessary.
8. Conclude the activity using the Discussion Points.

Discussion Points:

1. What did these stories have in common? (Answer: A pattern of violence and abuse; an adult blaming the child, who was really the victim; the teenagers' fear, either for themselves or a family member; not knowing what to do to stop the situation.)
2. Is the child or adolescent who is being abused or sexually assaulted ever at fault? If so, in what situations? (Answer: NO! It is very common for adult abusers to blame their victims, but it is never the fault of the child or victim. It is always the fault of the adult or perpetrator. In the case of physical abuse, even when a child does something wrong and angers a parent, it is never cause for abuse. In the case of sexual abuse, even if a child or teen is behaving inappropriately or seductively, abuse or incest is still not their fault. The adult is responsible for keeping things under control and not allowing inappropriate sexual conduct.)