



## **PREVENTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS: THE MY LIFE MY CHOICE CURRICULUM**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

#### **How was the curriculum created?**

Preventing Sexual Exploitation Among Adolescent Girls: The My Life My Choice Curriculum was developed in 2002 in response to the death of a young woman who was being commercially sexually exploited while living in a group home. The perspectives and input of survivors of exploitation were utilized in developing, writing, and reviewing the curriculum, led by My Life My Choice's Co-Founder and Executive Director. The curriculum was piloted at a residential program for adolescent girls in early 2003 and feedback from these sessions was incorporated.

#### **Who is the intended audience for the curriculum?**

The curriculum is gender specific, for girls, who are between the ages of 12 and 18. The group is beneficial for all adolescent girls but especially impactful to girls who are at disproportionately high risk to be victims of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) (for example, girls who have a history of childhood sexual abuse or who are involved in the child welfare system), as well as girls who have been victims of exploitation.

#### **Where do My Life My Choice Prevention Groups take place?**

Groups may be facilitated in congregate care settings, middle and high schools, juvenile justice facilities, child welfare offices, and community based programs. An appropriate setting includes a safe, comfortable space and allows for adequate support and follow up as needed. It is imperative that hosting agencies have a comprehensive CSEC protocol in place to appropriately support youth who might disclose this experience.

#### **How long is the curriculum?**

The curriculum has 10 sessions. Each session is written to be 75 minutes long. There are modified versions of the curriculum available for use in shorter term settings.

#### **How would you describe the content of the curriculum?**

Each session includes a variety of activities including: icebreakers, discussions, role plays, hands-on activities, as well as more introspective opportunities such as journaling. Sessions address issues including: myths and facts about commercial sexual exploitation, how to identify a pimp, recruitment tactics, substance abuse, self-esteem, sexual health, healthy relationships, and local and national resources to support youth at risk of exploitation.

#### **Who can use the curriculum and facilitate My Life My Choice Prevention Groups?**

It is required that groups are run by two trained facilitators. It is best practice that one facilitator is a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation, who is comfortable talking about her personal experience, and one facilitator should have advanced clinical training. We recognize that survivors may also have a clinical background, but there should always be two facilitators at every group.

#### **What sets the My Life My Choice Prevention Curriculum apart?**

- Developed in 2002, the My Life My Choice Prevention Curriculum was the first comprehensive prevention curriculum in the country.
- While the curriculum can be used as primary prevention, it was designed for secondary and tertiary

levels of prevention in order to reach the most vulnerable girls - those who are disproportionately at risk for victimization and youth who are involved with the child welfare system.

- The curriculum is gender specific and gender responsive.
- The curriculum was developed, written, and reviewed by survivors of exploitation.
- Best practice is that the curriculum be co-facilitated by a survivor of exploitation.
- The curriculum provides an in-depth look at participants' vulnerabilities and helps girls shift behaviors if they are already on the path towards exploitation.
- It is an appropriate fit for youth in congregate care settings.
- The curriculum is available to facilitators in English and Spanish.
- Recently evaluated through a National Institute of Justice-funded grant with promising preliminary results. Published results will be available soon.

### **Can men facilitate My Life My Choice Prevention Groups?**

Based on the trauma that the participants in group may have survived, it is best practice for groups to be co-facilitated by women. The groups are meant to provide a safe space for young women to talk about their experiences, not only with possible exploitation but also many other issues that they face on a day-to-day basis. It is critical that these young women have positive adult men in their lives; however, we believe that an increased sense of psychological safety is created if women are facilitating the groups.

### **Can I run these groups out of my church ministry?**

The curriculum is a secular curriculum and is intended to be used as such in congregate care settings, middle and high schools, child welfare offices, juvenile justice facilities and community-based agencies. We acknowledge that faith may be part of one's journey to safety and healing and, while you may host a group in a church, it is not permissible to incorporate biblical teachings or other religious practices in the group.

### **How can I access the curriculum?**

In order to receive the curriculum, you must be trained by a Certified My Life My Choice Trainer. As part of the training you will receive a copy of the curriculum as well as a membership to the My Life My Choice Online Community, a web-based platform for providers using the curriculum across the country. Each agency should send two facilitators to the training. There is an application process and a pre-requisite training (the My Life My Choice Understanding and Responding to Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation or an equivalent training).

### **What is the cost?**

The two-day training is \$700 per person, with an early registration discount (\$650) if you apply at least one month prior to the training date.

### **What is required of facilitators once trained?**

Once trained, we require facilitators and their Agency Administrator to agree to the terms outlined in the My Life My Choice Certified Facilitator Agreement. Facilitators are asked to facilitate at least one group per year and provide compiled group data on a quarterly basis. As part of the training, facilitators are required to take a pre- and post-test to ensure that they are ready to facilitate groups.

### **What are the additional benefits of becoming a My Life My Choice Certified Facilitator?**

Membership to the Online Community which provides ongoing support and contact with other facilitators across the country, access to My Life My Choice webinars, data collection reports, and continued support, consultation, and technical assistance from My Life My Choice staff.

### **What if I have more questions or would like more information?**

Please contact My Life My Choice Director of Prevention, Amy Corbett, at [acorbett@jri.org](mailto:acorbett@jri.org).