

# Overview

## *Introduction*

### **LEGALWAYS: Lessons on Everyday Law and the Legal System**

supports Law-Related Education for young women who are at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. In some cases, these young women might already be receiving services through the juvenile justice system; they might be abused or neglected, be status offenders, or delinquents. LEGALWAYS provides very practical information on the laws that are most important to them. Use of LEGALWAYS is not limited to this audience, however. The topics are important to a wide variety of people and can be helpful in the overall effort to develop young people, boys and girls alike, into effective, successful, law-abiding citizens.

Law-Related Education is:

- 1) A K-12 educational program that teaches non-lawyers about the law, lawmaking, the legal system, and the fundamental principles and values on which our constitutional democracy is based.
- 2) An educational program that promotes deference to legitimate authority, which means that children will choose law-abiding behavior when the laws are based on legitimate authority, and when the children believe that the laws are wrong, they will possess the civic participation skills needed to change the law.
- 3) Education that focuses on highly participatory teaching strategies including perspective taking, identifying alternative solutions, social problem solving, mock trials and service learning.
- 4) Education that involves members of the community (police officers, lawyers, judges) in meaningful, long-term partnerships with teachers in the classroom.
- 5) Education that has been empirically shown to reduce juvenile delinquency by focusing on positive youth development and the acquisition of citizenship skills. Law-related education has research to support its use in reducing delinquent behavior.

# Using LEGALWAYS

1. LEGALWAYS is organized around the questions that young people ask and the issues that concern them. There are five themes, or units:
  - The Legal System,
  - Juvenile Protection,
  - Juvenile Delinquency,
  - Criminal Law, and
  - Living.

The units can be used independently or sequentially. The lessons within the units support individual instruction as well as group learning.

2. LEGALWAYS teaches specific legal information in an engaging way. Activities that support different ways of learning are included
3. Presented in a flexible 3-ring binder format and on computer disk, LEGALWAYS encourages teachers to adapt the curriculum to fit their needs and the needs of the students, to supplement with additional material, and to update on a regular basis. (This is critical given the specific nature of the information provided.)
4. LEGALWAYS encourages the involvement of people who work in the legal system. Invite them to be part of the lesson. Most lessons are designed to be enhanced by the participation of community resource people.
5. LEGALWAYS presents the substance of law in an easy to identify format. Look for the Scales of Justice.



## LEGALWAYS on the computer

Because one of the goals of LEGALWAYS is to increase students' computer skills, the curriculum is available on computer disk. Students can complete the activities on the computer and create their own computer file of important legal information and a portfolio of their work to carry with them.

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# Components of Each Unit of Study

## 1. Teaching Guide

- **Students will:** lists objectives for the unit of study.
- **Lesson Grid:** lists the components of each lesson in the unit and whether it can be used as individual, small group, or large group activity. Large group designation refers to lessons that are primarily designed for large group. Many of the other lessons that start out as individual or small group activities can easily be used to conduct large group discussion.
- **Teaching Tips:** a summary of each lesson along with additional information, answers to more difficult students questions, quizzes, and recommendations for the use of outside resource persons.
- **Vocabulary:** words and definitions to know for the unit.

## 2. Lessons:

- **The Law:** pages marked with Scales of Justice on top right corner.
- **Questions** to guide reading, for individual or small group discussion, suggested for readers who have comprehension difficulties.
- **Activities**
  - **You Decide: You be the judge**  
Activities that ask the students to apply their new knowledge to cases as if they are judges
  - **Your Turn**  
Activities that call for writing, reflecting on their own experiences, more than simple responses
  - **Creative writing**  
Activities that ask for students to use their knowledge and other skills in the creation of items such as brochures, flyers, flow charts, etc.
  - **Case Studies**  
Activities that ask the students to analyze particular cases and answer a set of questions
  - **What do you think?**  
Activities that ask students for their opinions
  - **Mock Trials/Mock Appellate Arguments**  
Activities that have the students role-play lawyers, witnesses, judge and jury for hypothetical cases
  - **Role-play**  
Activities that provide students the opportunity to act out situations related to the topics. Mock Legislative Hearings, Youth Forums, Client Counseling simulation, and others are included.

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