

THE MY LIFE MY CHOICE CURRICULUM: PREVENTING THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

FOURTH EDITION, 2020



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW WAS THE CURRICULUM CREATED?

The My Life My Choice Curriculum: Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Adolescent Girls was first developed in 2002 in response to the death of a young woman who was killed by her exploiter while living in a group home. In developing the Curriculum, survivors were interviewed; their perspectives and input shaped the content of the Curriculum. 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 and gender responsive for girls age 12-18, including cisgender females, transgender females, and transgender males or nonbinary individuals whose experience of exploitation happened within a female body. The group is beneficial for all girls, but especially impactful to those who are at disproportionately high risk to be victims of commercial sexual exploitation (for example, youth who have a history of childhood sexual abuse, or who are involved in the child welfare system), as well as youth who have already 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.

HOW LONG IS THE CURRICULUM?

The curriculum has 10 sessions. Each session is written to be 75 minutes long.

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 including journaling. Sessions address issues including myths and facts about commercial sexual exploitation, how to identify an exploiter, recruitment tactics, trust, 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 facilitators who have been trained by My Life My Choice staff. It is best practice that one facilitator be 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 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.
- Published in 2019, a National Institute for Justice-funded three-year study of over 350 youth completing My Life My Choice prevention groups showed overwhelmingly positive outcomes and provided evidence of the Curriculum's effectiveness in preventing CSEC among female-identified youth age 12-18.
- 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 and a facilitator with clinical training.
- 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.

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 female youth 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 girls 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 in congregate care settings, middle and high schools, child welfare offices, juvenile justice facilities and community-based agencies. While we acknowledge that faith may be part of one's journey to safety and healing, 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 Licensed 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 a minimum of two facilitators to the training. There is an application process and a pre-requisite CSEC training (attendance at the My Life My Choice Understanding and Responding to Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation, or the equivalent training in your state).

WHAT IS THE COST, AND WHEN ARE FACILITATOR TRAININGS HELD?

The two-day Curriculum facilitators' training is \$700 per person, with an early registration discount (\$650) if you apply at least one month prior to the training date. We hold this training at least four times per year. Our training team is also available to train individual organizations with a minimum of 20 staff attending the training. Please contact us for additional information about cost and scheduling of private trainings.

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 group data following each group. As part of training, facilitators are required to take a post-test to ensure that they are ready to facilitate groups and receive certification.

WHAT ARE THE ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF BECOMING A MY LIFE MY CHOICE CERTIFIED FACILITATOR?

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

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

Please contact the My Life My Choice Director of Prevention, Kyle Mushkin, at kmushkin@jri.org.