

What Are My Reproductive Rights?

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 12th grade, students will be able to:

PR.12.CC.6 – Compare and contrast the laws relating to pregnancy, adoption, abortion and parenting.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 12
Lesson 1

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board and markers
- At least six laptops, desktop computers or tablets with internet access (students may use their own)
- Research Guide – one per student
- Scenarios 1-3: "What Are My Rights?" – two copies of each scenario
- Extra pencils in case students don't have their own

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Review the websites on the Research Guide, along with the scenarios, so you are prepared for the class discussion about them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Apply existing laws relating to reproductive decision-making and rights to scenarios in which teens face an unplanned pregnancy and are weighing their options. [Knowledge, Skill]
2. Describe at least three inherent rights teens have relating to their sexual and reproductive decision-making. [Knowledge]

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him", using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to "someone with a vulva" vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Say, "Today we are going to be talking about what your legal rights are, as teens, when it comes to pregnancy and pregnancy options. We're going to start by looking at some of the laws, and then we'll look at some implications of those laws."

Divide the class into six groups and have each group gather around one of the computers in the classroom.

Note to the Teacher: *The more computers the better for multiple students from each group to help with the research; feel free to ask students to bring in tablets or even use smart phones if it is permitted at your school.*

Give each group one of the scenarios, and each student in each group a copy of the Research Guide.

Explain that the scenario will have some guiding questions. Tell them that they will have fifteen minutes, as a group, to come up with the

What Are My Reproductive Rights?

*A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect,
Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

answers to their questions, which they will be able to find online on the sites listed on the research guide. Tell them that once they are done, they will need to discuss what they found as a group and be ready to present and defend their opinions with the larger class.

Answer any questions and ask students to begin their work. As they are doing their research, walk around the room to see whether they have any questions and are doing their work correctly. (18 minutes)

STEP 2: After 15 minutes, have the groups come back together. Go through the first scenario, discussing each of the questions. Ask students from both groups with the first scenario for their reactions to the legal aspect, and whether they agree. Ask who else can and should play a role in the situation, and why they should or should not do so.

Go to scenario two and go through students' responses, again asking what they thought about the situation and whether they agree with the law. After a few minutes of discussion, continue to the third scenario and do the same. (15 minutes).

STEP 3: Say, "All three of these scenarios demonstrated just some of the laws relating to reproductive rights. Some of you agreed with these laws, and some of you didn't. What I'm going to ask you to do now is pretend, in your same small groups, that you are members of Congress, and you want to create a bill of rights relating to teens and pregnancy, abortion and/or adoption. What would it look like?"

On the white board, write, "When it comes to pregnancy and parenting, teens have the right to..." Instruct students to write this same sentence stem on the back of their scenario, and together, come up with five rights that they think are critical for teens. Tell them they need to specify any important characteristics – is gender a factor? Age? Relationship status?

Say, "For example, you might decide that teens have the right to receive financial support from the government if they or their partner gets pregnant and chooses to carry the pregnancy to term and become a young parent."

Tell students they will have about 8 minutes in which to come up with this list. (10 minutes)

STEP 4: After about 8 minutes, ask volunteers from each group to share one response from their lists. As they read them, record responses on the board. As you go around the class, ask groups to indicate whether they had a similar right listed, and place a check mark for each time it was listed on another group's list.

Once you are finished, ask students to take a look at the list on the board, and the number of check marks. Discuss the outliers, or those that did not have many – or any – check marks next to them.

Say, "No matter how you feel about any of these rights, or the laws governing them, the fact is that laws exist relating to whether, when and sometimes even how we as human beings can reproduce. There are unique laws that specifically pertain to all of you who are under the age of 18. The best thing you can do is to hold on to this list of organizations as a reference, so that if you are in a situation where you need to choose what to do about a pregnancy, you know what your rights are." (7 minutes)

What Are My Reproductive Rights?

*A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect,
Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The computer-based activity will fulfill the first learning objective; the small group activity and subsequent discussion will fulfill the second.

HOMEWORK:

None.

What Are My Reproductive Rights?

Scenario One

Damien and Belinda are both 16 and live in Idaho. Belinda gets pregnant, decides she is too young to be a parent, and doesn't want to carry a pregnancy to term if she's not going to parent the baby. She doesn't want to place the baby for adoption because she doesn't think she'd be able to deal with knowing that her baby was out there if she isn't going to raise it. Damien is really against abortion and tells her he'd raise the baby if she didn't want to; she refuses. Things get heated, and they break up.

Using the following websites, please answer the questions listed below:

The Rights of Unmarried Fathers – <http://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/adoption-and-fathers-rights.html>

Sex, Etc. – <http://sexetc.org/action-center/sex-in-the-states>

Child Adoption Laws.com – <http://www.childadoptionlaws.com>

- 1) What are Damien's rights as the person involved in the creation of the pregnancy?
- 2) Can he stop Belinda from having an abortion?
- 3) What does Belinda need to do in order to get an abortion in her home state, Idaho?
- 4) How soon does Belinda have to decide whether or not to have an abortion?
- 5) If Belinda chooses to place the baby for adoption, can Damien stop her so he can raise the baby?

What Are My Reproductive Rights?

Scenario Two

Amanda is 14 and pregnant. Her mother and father know about the pregnancy and are willing to support their daughter, as does her boyfriend, Daniel, who is 16 and wants to be an active part in this baby's life. His parents are equally as supportive as Amanda's. Amanda's PE teacher tells her she cannot be a part of class because he is concerned about how exercise will affect the pregnancy. Instead, she has to sit in the gym and do homework. She also was also recently told by the assistant principal that if she continues missing school due to her pregnancy, she will be suspended and could even be required to repeat that year of school. Amanda has tried to explain that her pregnancy is challenging, and brings in doctors' notes every time she has to go to an appointment.

Using the following websites, please answer the questions listed below:

National Women's Law Center – <https://nwlc.org/issue/pregnant-parenting-students/>

https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/FactSheet_nwlc_PPToolkitAug2016.pdf

The Rights of Unmarried Fathers – <http://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/adoption-and-fathers-rights.html>

- 1) What are Amanda's rights in this situation? Does the state she live in matter?
- 2) Is the school right to be concerned about her safety?
- 3) Should she be shown special treatment because she is pregnant?
- 4) Daniel is the father – should he be allowed to miss school in order to join her at her doctors' appointments? Does he have a legal right to do so?

What Are My Reproductive Rights?

Scenario Three

Tammy has had several boyfriends, but has always been careful about pregnancy and STDs. She is on the pill, and she won't to have sex unless her partners use condoms. She was getting over being sick recently and was on antibiotics, and didn't know they can reduce the effectiveness of the pill. So when several of her partners said they didn't feel like they needed to use condoms with her anymore, she agreed – and found out a few weeks later that she was pregnant. But by whom? Tammy has decided she wants to keep the baby, and wants to be sure the biological father helps out financially.

Using the following websites, please answer the questions listed below:

Fathers' Rights and Abortion – <http://family.findlaw.com/paternity/fathers-rights-and-abortion.html>

The Rights of Unmarried Fathers – <http://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/adoption-and-fathers-rights.html>

Planned Parenthood – <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/teens/going-to-the-doctor/im-pregnant-now-what>

Questions:

- 1) How can Tammy legally find out who the father is?

- 2) Can that person refuse to pay child support if he never wanted to be a father, and assumed she was taking care of pregnancy prevention by being on the pill?

- 3) Can one of her boyfriends who is not the biological father claim paternity and take custody of the child?

- 4) If several weeks into her pregnancy Tammy changes her mind, even after finding out who the father is and getting him on board, can she still get an abortion? Can the father actually force her to have one, or keep her from getting one?

Research Guide

Guttmacher Institute – State Laws on Abortion

http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_OAL.pdf

Child Adoption Laws.com –

<http://www.childadoptionlaws.com/>

National Women's Law Center –

<https://nwlc.org/issue/pregnant-parenting-students/>

The Rights of Unmarried Fathers –

<http://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/adoption-and-fathers-rights.html>

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Planned Parenthood –

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/teens/going-to-the-doctor/im-pregnant-now-what>

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