

## Classroom/Youth Organization Exercises for a Prosecutor and Police Officer

### Ages 9–13

*These exercises are designed to provide a positive experience for young students through collaborative and educational exercises with a prosecutor and police officer. By starting a program in school or youth organizations, children will be introduced to Law Enforcement (LE) in a positive way at an early age.*

Programming at this age should begin with a program where prosecutors and LE visit classrooms (or other locations such as afterschool programs, camps, youth programs, etc.) monthly throughout the school year. Wherever possible, it should be the same prosecutor and LE member visiting the same classroom(s) over the course of the school year to build the relationship over the time. *Given time constraints, each exercise can be done as a “stand alone” one time exercise if the school/organization is unable to implement all segments. Note that some of the segments may continue to a second one. Additionally, Segment 9, the certificate ceremony, is designed for situations where multiple sessions were conducted.*

Try to identify in advance any children that may have an adverse reaction to seeing a police officer or prosecutor in their classroom. Make sure that child's parent or guardian is aware of the program and the goals of the program, and consents to the child's participation. Should consent be gathered from all parents/ guardians? This is something for each jurisdiction to figure out as some student populations may have been impacted by an event requiring police to respond and seeing police in the school again could be triggering/dysregulating and interrupt their entire school day.

#### Segment 1: Three Branches of Government

- Reintroduce the idea of rules (rules were covered with younger age group)—introduce new words for rules like “laws,” “policies,” and “regulation.” Ask students to share who they think makes the rules, laws, policies, and regulations?
- Describe the three branches of the federal government. They are explained [HERE \(www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/three-branches/three-branches-of-government\)](http://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/three-branches/three-branches-of-government).
- Hang up three posterboards, all representing a different branch of government; randomly provide the students with name tags with different professions on them such as “U.S. Senator,” “U.S. President,” “Federal District Court Judge,” “Member of President’s Cabinet,” “Circuit Court of Appeals Judge,” etc.; have the students stand under or near the branch of federal or state government their job falls under. Help students develop a vocabulary and understanding of who holds these positions and about these different roles in civic life.
- Host a discussion: Who gets paid to do their job? Where does that money come from? Taxes. Who pays taxes? (Everyone over 18; sometimes minors, may have to pay taxes depending on their income.)
- Who thinks they will enjoy paying taxes? What do taxes pay for? Firefighters come to house; roads are paved/fixed; streetlights work; EMT/police come in an emergency. Do these things help you in your day to day?

- Discuss civic engagement, how to be a positive, contributing member of the community by voting, paying taxes, jury service/showing up for jury duty (the role of juries will be discussed later on), helping others in your community, running for office, working in public service, serving the community in a number of ways.

## **Segment 2: What Happens When Laws Get Broken**

- Discuss how the accused would have the right to representation so that all of his/her rights are protected.
- Discuss the presumption of innocence which applies until a guilty finding or verdict (use juvenile terminology when discussing juveniles).
- Help kids understand that facts are not always black and white. There is usually more than one side to every story. The truth can often be found somewhere in between.
- Make sure the students learn what credibility is and who the judges of credibility are in the court of law. Discussion points: Who decides credibility outside the court of law? Can you tell when someone is lying? How? If you were not there, would you know for sure?
- Did someone get hurt on purpose? Did something get stolen? How do we as a community repair the harm? How do we prevent it from happening again? Stress the presumption of innocence.
- Break into small groups of 4–5 and brainstorm—if you were the first people here, creating a court system for the first time, what would it look like? Use a case example to facilitate the conversation, such as a theft from a store, or a person who punches another person in the face; some groups can brainstorm about a juvenile court system while others brainstorm about an adult court system.
- Ask each group to present what they came up with in their brainstorming sessions. Facilitate a conversation about the similarities and differences between the systems each group came up with.

## **Segment 3: What a Police Officer Does**

- Invite different officers into the classroom from different units to speak about what they do.
- Ask to see a show of hands of students who have seen TV shows or movies with police officer characters. What shows? What did they think about it? Discuss what parts of the show are real or made up for audience entertainment. Were they all good police officers, were there bad police officers? In what way?
- Ask the students to write down things a police officer does and ask for volunteers to read their answers to their class.
- Facilitate a conversation about what a police officer does, that incorporates the students' responses.
- Go over different assignments within a police department, having each officer describe a different assignment.
- Go over what the 911 system is and how it works.
- Go over how to call 911 in an emergency, such as a fire, accident, when someone is seriously injured.
- Incorporate a field trip to dispatch center, if possible.
- After the break, have the officers describe what TV shows they watch, whether there are youth in the show, what the officer thinks about youth.
- Ask the officers to write down things students do and have a volunteer read the answers to the class.

- Facilitate a conversation about when youth really do—what officers may not realize they do.
- Have students draw a picture of and show the officers a typical day in their life.
- Facilitate a group discussion on what things could be done to improve each other's perceptions.

#### **Segment 4: Roles in the Courtroom/Conducting Trial Exercises**

Allow additional time for this.

Roles in the courtroom: Have the classroom set up like a courtroom or go to the local courthouse if a courtroom is available.

- The NDAA video on the *Role of the Prosecutor* found [HERE \(www.youtube.com/watch?v=r\\_ZdbJVpeJQ&t=1s\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_ZdbJVpeJQ&t=1s) and the *Courtroom Tour for Children* video found [HERE \(www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_MCArcEr5Hk\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MCArcEr5Hk) can be utilized to explain the various roles of individuals in a courtroom. A discussion should follow regarding the differences between an adult prosecutor and a juvenile prosecutor, as well as a discussion about how the roles in your jurisdiction may differ from the roles in the video. Differences may include for example, whether you have a court advocate, whether juveniles are entitled to jury trials, whether audio or video recorders are used in lieu of court reporters, etc.
- Randomly assign roles to the students prior to this day and give them a factual scenario for a trial. Random assignments will avoid any appearance of labeling. Break the students up so that there is a prosecution team, defense team, judge, victim, accused, police officer, and jurors.
- Conduct a case discussion and trial exercises on a hypothetical cell phone theft case. Instructions can be found [HERE \(ndaa.org/wp-content/uploads/BR-YLE-Resource-1-Exercise-TCP-021225.pdf\)](http://ndaa.org/wp-content/uploads/BR-YLE-Resource-1-Exercise-TCP-021225.pdf). Two 45-minutes sessions are needed to complete this as written; it can be adapted to suit your jurisdiction's needs.

#### **Segment 5: Getting to Know the Police and Police Getting to Know Students**

- Review what police use to do their jobs: include the different types of vehicles officers may have: cars, vans, bikes, scooters, etc., how a body camera works and what officers like about them, how police radios and computers work, how police use dogs such as canines and how canines are taken care of. Review what officers do at parades, large sporting events, etc. and how they help keep people safe.
- Then let students ask questions—have students write down their questions and put them in a box.
- Take a break and review the questions. Decide how to answer the questions and answer them upon return from the break. Be prepared for students to ask about school shootings, drills, officer-involved shootings, racial inequities, whether officers are ever scared, police brutality, etc. Have some prepared answers in advance for these topics. Include what the local agencies are doing about these issues or in response to them. Explain how incidents are investigated and who in your jurisdiction is responsible for the investigation. Explain the relevant laws surrounding the situation they are asking about. Discuss what happens if an officer does something wrong that causes harm to a person; is that officer disciplined? How does that work? Make sure students understand that if they have a bad experience with an officer or a prosecutor, they can make a complaint about it; provide information to them about where and how to do that. Explain what services are available to anyone who has suffered trauma.

## Segment 6: Safety

- Review how to stay/how to be safe: Bicycle safety, crossing the street, carrying a phone, stranger danger, etc.
- Getting into a car with young drivers—youth may not be able to drive yet but perhaps older siblings or older friends can drive. Making sure they are licensed, insured, make sure they are old enough to drive. Making sure they are not impaired to drive—if they are acting strangely, or if their speech is not clear, they may have had an alcoholic beverage or ingested drugs; do not get in the car.
- On-line safety. Resource materials are available [HERE \(www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/resources#presentations\)](http://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/resources#presentations).

## Segment 7: Interact with the Students

- Play games with the students during recess or play games in the classroom with them.
- Work with the students to plan a clothing drive, book drive, or food drive them, and stress the importance of everyone working together to help communities and community members.

## Segment 8: Art Project

- Do an art project with the students in their classroom. Have them draw or paint pictures pertaining to laws/rules; staying safe; what a police officer does; what a prosecutor does; how youth and law enforcement interact, or what a safe world looks like to them. Offer an option for students to write a poem if they prefer that to drawing or painting.

## Segment 9: Careers in Law Enforcement/Certificate Ceremony

- Discuss careers in law enforcement and the law and all the positive aspects of those careers.
- Provide the students Certificates of Appreciation for participating in the program and let them know how much you enjoyed working with them. Invite parents/guardians to the certificate ceremony and have a celebration after the ceremony.

This project is supported by Grant #2019-MU-MU-K002 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.