# Background

**LegalWays: Lessons on Everyday Law and the Legal System** was designed to provide very practical information on laws that are important to young women who are at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. In some cases, these young women might be receiving services through the juvenile justice system; they might be abused or neglected, be status offenders, or delinquents. Although the development of the curriculum was funded by Grant No. 95-JS-FX-0300 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, use of LegalWays is not limited to this audience. 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.

In the development of this curriculum, girls from four residential programs in Minnesota ranked 23 factors determined by a review of the literature to be the most important factors in adolescent female lives. The 10 highest rated factors in descending order were: family, relationships, cultural issues, adult support, being provided with options and choices, pregnancy, “isms”, self-esteem, education, and voice. The design team of representatives from the four residential programs organized these factors into themes: personal relationships, legal issues around relationship, parenting, legal issues in general, and community reintegration issues. These themes became the inspiration for the organization and design of the curriculum.

**Design Team and Acknowledgments**

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* The [Minnesota Legal Services Coalition](http://www.mnlegalservices.org/publications/fs_index.shtml) materials

**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. LegalWays was originally presented in a flexible 3-ring binder format to enable 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.) LegalWays is now available online.

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: judges, lawyers, police officers.

**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.
1. **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 using 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.

**LegalWays Contents**

#### Unit 1: The Legal System

* Lesson 1: Source of Law
* Lesson 2: Juvenile Court
* Lesson 3: Your Right to an Attorney
* Lesson 4: Conciliation Court

### Unit 2: Juvenile Protection

* Lesson 1: Juvenile Protection and Services
* Lesson 2: Parenting
* Lesson 3: Paternity and Child Custody
* Lesson 4: Visitation and Child Support
* Lesson 5: Children in Foster Homes
* Lesson 6: Guardian Ad Litem and Child Intermediary
* Lesson 7: Living Away from Home
* Lesson 8: Runaways
* Lesson 9: Child Abuse and Neglect
* Lesson 10: Child Protection
* Lesson 11: Domestic Abuse and Order for Protection
* Lesson 12: Harassment and Restraining Orders
* Lesson 13: Termination of Parental Rights

**Unit 3: Juvenile Delinquency**

* Lesson 1: Introduction to Juvenile Delinquency
* Lesson 2: Juvenile Delinquency Process
* Lesson 3: Extended Jurisdiction Juvenile
* Lesson 4: Juvenile Certification
* Lesson 5: Juvenile Sentencing

**Unit 4: Criminal Law**

* Lesson 1: Criminal Law
* Lesson 2: Investigation and Arrest
* Lesson 3: Search and Seizure
* Lesson 4: Common Felonies
* Lesson 5: Steps in a Criminal Case
* Lesson 6: Self Defense
* Lesson 7: Plea Bargaining
* Lesson 8: Punishment
* Lesson 9: Sentencing

### Unit 5: Living

* Lesson 1: Working
* Lesson 2: Finding and Renting a Place to Live
* Lesson 3: Repairs
* Lesson 4: Moving Out
* Lesson 5: Eviction
* Lesson 6: Buying New Stuff
* Lesson 7: Returning New Stuff
* Lesson 8: Running Out of Money
* Lesson 9: Getting Help: Minnesota Families Investment Program
* Lesson 10: Getting Help: General Assistance
* Lesson 11: Getting Help: Social Security Disability Insurance
* Lesson 12: Getting Help: Food Stamps and Nutrition Program