

Understand the Law

1. What are laws?

Rules set up by our government.

2. Why is it important to have laws?

Laws keep order and protect people and property, laws keep the peace and control the way people behave. Without law and order, our society would be out of control. Laws are enforced by police, court and other agencies.

3. What is felony?

Felonies are serious crimes like murder, rape and stealing. These can result in a jail sentence of a year or more.

4. What is a misdemeanor?

Misdemeanors are crimes such as traffic violations, trespassing and disorderly conduct. These usually result in a fine, probation or a jail sentence of less than a year.

5. What is probation?

A given time period during which you are under the supervision of a probation officer who will monitor your activities.

6. What can happen if you are arrested and convicted more than once?

Your sentence will become increasingly more severe each time you are convicted. This could be a longer prison sentence or more restrictions on your probation. These restrictions could include: losing your driver's license, paying fines for court costs, subjecting you to searches without a warrant, or being held under house arrest.

7. What rights are we guaranteed by our Constitution when we are arrested?

Our Constitution protects everyone with the assumption that they are innocent until proven guilty. If you are arrested, you have rights.

8. What is the Miranda Warning?

When making an arrest, the police officer must read you your rights from the Miranda Warning before questioning you. These are: "You have the right to remain silent. If you talk to any police officer, anything you say can and may be used against you in court. You have the right to counsel with a lawyer before you are questioned. If you can't afford a lawyer, one will be appointed for you if you wish, before any questioning. If you wish to answer questions, you have the right to stop at any time. You may stop answering questions at anytime if you wish to talk to a lawyer and may have him with you during future questioning. Do you understand?"

Legal Responsibilities

Group Activity

Situation 1: Shoplifting

You and your friend were caught leaving the store with two DVD's you hadn't paid for. The owner called the police. You were arrested and went to court. Now you are on probation. Your friend tells you that everybody does it, but you just got caught. What would you say to your friend?

Situation 2: Driving while under the influence of alcohol

As you were leaving a party, a friend dared you to have one more drink. On the way home you were arrested for driving under the influence. You lost your license, had to pay a large fine, and now you are attending AA meetings. Somebody told you to sue your friend for daring you to drink and causing this trouble. What should you do?

Situation 3: Fighting

You got into a fight with another student at the mall over the person you are taking to the prom. You were arrested and now have to pay a fine. Your friends don't see why everybody made such a big deal about it because no property was damaged and nobody was hurt. What would you say to your friends?

Situation 4: Crashed party

You and a group of friends crashed a party. You were surprised when the police came and you were arrested. After all, everybody crashes parties. Why is it such a big deal? Why should you be arrested for doing something that other people apparently get away with?

Situation 5: Damaged property

You and a friend decided to break into a vending machine. You had only gotten two dollars from the machine before you were caught. You both were arrested and had to pay a fine of \$250 each. Why should you have to pay such a big fine when you took only two dollars out of the machine?

