Red Flags and Warning Signs – youth on youth

Preventing sexual abuse by intervening early

Many times when a youth is being targeted by another youth for abuse or already being abused by another youth, an alert person can notice behavior that is either a Red Flag or a Warning Sign for abuse. This exercise explores some common behaviors staff should look for, helps staff distinguish between Red Flags and Warning Signs, and identifies best practice for acting on a Red Flag or a Warning Sign.

A Red Flag is a strong indicator that a youth is being sexually abused or may be at risk for sexual abuse. A staff member should document the concern, act quickly to notify a supervisor of the concerns, file an incident report, if appropriate, report to the Justice Center if you believe you have reasonable cause to suspect a reportable incident, and take any actions necessary to ensure that the youth is safe.

A Warning Sign is a type of behavior that may indicate that a youth is being sexually abused or may be at risk for sexual abuse. A staff member should consult with a supervisor about the most effective way to respond to the behavior.

PART ONE

Below, you will find ten behaviors. Five of them are Red Flags and five are Warning Signs. Read the below behaviors and work with your team to identify which are Red Flags and which are Warning Signs. Write the letter associated with the behavior in the appropriate column.

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| 1. Either youth has a photo of the other in their possession (WS) 2. One youth exhibits a significant amount of control over another (RF) 3. Targeted youth’s demeanor changes significantly (WS) 4. Targeted youth begins to stay close to staff when possible (WS) 5. One youth is seen doing ongoing favors for another youth (RF) 6. Two youths begin to isolate themselves from other youth (WS) 7. One youth acts out in jealousy when another, particular youth spends time alone with staff or other youth (RF) 8. An older youth takes a noticeable interest in a younger youth (WS) 9. Targeted youth asks to be moved to a different hall (RF) 10. Targeted youth looks for ways to stay in room whenever possible (RF) |
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| Red Flags |  |  |  |  |  |
| Warning Signs |  |  |  |  |  |

PART TWO

It is important that staff respond appropriately to Red Flags and Warning Signs. In the chart below, pick one Red Flag and one Warning Sign from the previous exercise, write the corresponding letters inside the parentheses, and write down the steps a staff member who notices this behavior should take.

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| Red Flag (\_\_\_\_): |  | Warning Sign (\_\_\_\_): |
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PART THREE

Brainstorm additional Warning Signs and list them below (noting any that your group thinks may rise to the level of Red Flags):

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Exercise developed by Just Detention International