

## **SENSITIVE ISSUES GUIDELINES**

### **Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council**

*A sensitive issue is a topic of a highly personal nature, such as human sexuality, religious beliefs, and cultural and family values.*

Girl Scouting provides a wide variety of informal educational activities. The Girl Scout program is based on the interests and needs of girls and therefore should include the issues and concerns affecting young girls and teenage youth. Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council (GSSJC) supports the belief that Girl Scouting's role in responding to these needs is educational and preventative, not crisis intervention-oriented or curative.

The following guidelines should be used when planning projects or presenting materials addressing sensitive issues, including those based on the materials developed by Girl Scouts of the USA.

1. Sensitive issues often are brought up by girls in an informal setting. The need for consent from parents for planned programs should not discourage the leader from answering girls' questions/comments as they arise. Such interest from girls may lead to more formal programs.
2. The troop/group leader or event coordinator should be familiar with "Discussing Sensitive Topics" in *Volunteer Essentials* Chapter 3
3. The troop/group leader or event coordinator should be sensitive to the needs and concerns of the local community where programs will be presented.
4. For a planned activity on a specific subject, troop/group leaders or event coordinators who have attended a workshop or training on sensitive issues and who feel comfortable with the topic may proceed without a trained consultant.
5. Many troop/group leaders prefer to have a trained consultant assist with sensitive issues activities. Resource consultants who are trained community personnel should be used, when appropriate, to present sensitive issues programs. Criteria for selecting consultants include:
  - Willingness to present factual information rather than advocating a specific position.
  - Ability to present accurate and up-to-date information in a clear, interesting manner that is suitable to the age group.
  - Ability to be sensitive to emotions and attitudes related to the issue(s) being discussed.
  - Ability to be supportive and non-judgmental to all participants.
  - Willingness to follow GSUSA and GSSJC policies, standards, operating procedures, and guidelines. (Consultants should be given a copy of these guidelines and the parental consent form (GSSJC F-611), and must agree to follow them.)

6. The troop/group leader or event coordinator is responsible for determining the specific subject matter based on the maturity of the girls and the appropriateness in the community.
7. Written parental consent is required for activities that involve sensitive issues.
  - The program outline should be stapled to the parent consent form.
  - Girl attendance should be optional for all or part of the program and parents should be advised of this option.
  - If in doubt about the need for parental consent, it is wise to go ahead and use the parental consent form (GSSJC F-611).

References: GSSJC Volunteer Essentials