

## **OUR TOWN Family Center Youth Connection Theater**

OUR TOWN Family Center utilizes theater as the vehicle to educate, inform, and present the issues of date rape prevention education and sexual assault. Adolescent youth and young adults perform original productions.

The productions serve both the performers and the audiences it performs to. The actors are educated and trained in date rape prevention education and issues of sexual assault. This has proven to be "life altering" in that some actors, after having been educated, have left abusive relationships.

In addition to the production *One Voice*, Youth Connection has been creating new material to perform on the issue of sexual harassment in the schools. Youth Connection actors have been researching and receiving training and education on sexual harassment and are gearing the new and additional production and peer education training to include middle school age youth. At all performances, there are staff and counseling support to assist people who have emotions that surface from seeing the performances.

### **WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT SCHOOL?**

Sexual harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with a person's right to receive an equal educational opportunity. The Office of Civil Rights is in charge of enforcing a law called Title IX that requires schools to respond to cases (allegations) of sexual harassment.

If sexual advances make it difficult or unpleasant for a student to participate comfortably in school, to pay attention in class, walk through the halls, participate in sports or other activities at school, it's called "hostile environment harassment."

It can be difficult to differentiate between simply irritating behaviors and those that are formally considered to be harassment. For instance, telling one dirty joke isn't considered harassment, while grabbing a student's breasts definitely is. If there's a single incident that's really bad, for example, "titty-twisting", it's serious enough to be considered harassment. Asking someone out on a date isn't considered harassment. However, if they ask again and again or in a threatening way, then it is considered harassment.

Here are some other examples of behavior that could be considered harassment if they occur on a regular basis:

- leering
- wolf whistles
- comments about someone's body
- lewd & threatening notes or letters
- stories of a sexual nature
- graphic sexual descriptions or pornography
- pressure for dates
- sexually explicit gestures
- unwelcome touching and hugging
- sexual attacks, (e.g., grabbing breasts, buttocks, or other body parts)

- hostile put-downs
- hooting, sucking, lip-smacking, & animal noises
- pressing or rubbing up against someone
- invading a person's space

**Am I Being Harassed?**

What's the difference between harassment and flirting? If you're not sure if you're being harassed, ask yourself this question: Am I comfortable with this behavior, or not? The bottom line: flirting feels good; harassment feels bad. Many ask how one can tell whether questionable behavior is normal flirting, or when it is sexual harassment. Nan Stein, of the Wellesley Center for Research on Women and an expert on the sexual harassment of young women, suggests considering the following checklist:

<b>Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>Flirting</b>
feels bad	feels good
one-sided	Reciprocal
feels unattractive	feels attractive
is degrading	is a compliment
feels powerless	in control
power-based	Equality
negative touching	positive touching
unwanted	Wanted
illegal	Legal
invading	Open
demeaning	Flattering
sad/angry	Happy
negative self-esteem	positive self-esteem

**What you can do**

Sexual harassment can make people feel embarrassed and powerless. But you're not helpless, and you don't have to take it! Because of Title IX, schools have to take action if a student is being harassed. Tell the principal, or talk to a teacher or counselor or another adult whom you trust. It's also a good idea to keep track of the incidents by writing down when and where they occurred and noting whether or not there were any witnesses.

OUR TOWN is very proud and honored to have the ability to provide this service to the communities we serve. OUR TOWN is grateful to Arizona Department of Health Services, (ADHS), Office of Women's & Children's Health, Rape Prevention and Education for providing the funding to support our efforts.