



INTRODUCTION:

UNDERSTANDING **YOUR RIGHTS**



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

These gender-based violence awareness modules have been created in partnership with Women and Gender Equality Canada, YWCA Canada, Wisdom2Action, FOXY/SMASH, Platform, White Ribbon Canada, The Centre for Sexuality, GRIS-Montréal, Possibility Seeds and We Worthy Women.

INTRODUCTION

Life is a journey full of self-discovery, empowerment, and building relationships. And it all starts with understanding your rights and how they impact your everyday life.

You're a part of lots of different communities: your family, friends, school, hobbies, where you live, your culture, and many more. In each of these communities, you have a role to play, which comes with certain rights and responsibilities for you and others.

As a young person, you have specific rights that take your unique needs into account, as well as the same fundamental rights as adults. By knowing your rights, you can speak out against discrimination or injustice and live your life with respect and fairness.

In this introductory module, you will explore the rights you have as a Canadian and global citizen, and create your own Bill of Rights to recognize your personal boundaries.



RIGHTS, LAWS AND RULES

Canada's laws, like our criminal and human rights laws, give us a guideline of how to act to protect important rights for everyone. In other places, we have rules that protect other rights, like your school's code of conduct or family rules. Even communities have their own value systems and rules, like religious or cultural values.

While formal laws usually have more power than others, the importance of certain rules can change depending on the situation. For example, when you're at school, the school's rules – like a dress code — carry more weight than external laws — like your right to dress however you want.

But no matter what environment you're in, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees several rights for everyone in Canada. It makes sure we're all treated equally, no matter our:

- race
- national or ethnic origin
- colour
- religion
- gender identity and expression
- sexual orientation
- age
- physical or mental ability

This means that **everyone** has the right to be listened to, believed and treated with respect, regardless of who they are or what their circumstances are.

Sometimes, your rights may not be considered or respected, like when a law or rule is broken. In these situations, deciding what to do can be difficult. But by knowing your rights, you can decide whether, when and how to speak up for them.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A YOUNG PERSON

Young people have a specific set of rights, which are written in UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child. Take a look at these rights on the next page — some of them may surprise you!

In addition to your rights, the United Nations (UN) has written several rules that indicate who these rights apply to and whose responsibility they are. To put it simply:

- **Everyone** under the age of 18 has these rights
- All adults should do what's best for children
- The government is responsible for protecting your rights
- Your family is responsible for teaching you about and protecting your rights

To learn more about your rights as a young person, visit [UNICEF.ca](https://www.unicef.ca).



AS A YOUNG PERSON, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

Be alive

Have a name and nationality

Have an official identity

**Live with your family or a family
who cares for you**

**Have contact with your parents
if in another country**

Be protected from kidnapping

Have your opinion respected

Share your thoughts freely

Choose your religion and beliefs

Have friends and join groups

Have privacy

Access information

Be raised by your parents or guardians

Not be hurt or mistreated

Be looked after properly

Receive care and protection if adopted

Receive special protection as a refugee

**Receive special education and
care if living with a disability**





AS A YOUNG PERSON, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

Access healthcare, water, food
and a safe environment

Have your living arrangements checked
in on regularly if living away from home

Access social and economic help

Have food, clothing and a safe home

Receive an education

Receive an education that develops
your talents and abilities

Practice any culture, language and religion

Play and rest

Be protected from unsafe work

Be paid fairly

Be protected from harmful drugs

Be protected from sexual abuse

Not be kidnapped or sold

Be protected from exploitation

Not be punished in a cruel way

Be protected in war

Get help if hurt or mistreated

Access legal help and fair treatment

Have the best laws possible apply to you

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

ACTIVITY 1

MY RIGHTS, MY PRIORITY, MY POWER

WHAT SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT THE UNICEF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?

When we learn new things, it's important to understand where those ideas come from, what they're based on, and how they work in real life.

From there, we can question what's being said, if the ideas make sense, and point out any assumptions or generalizations in what we're hearing. It's an essential part of developing your skills and becoming an effective, thoughtful leader!

After reading the rights from UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child on pages 6–7, respond to the prompt above. Take a few minutes to reflect on the question. Then, write freely. Your answers won't be shared with others, so you're encouraged to be honest and dig deep!

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE YOURSELF

Not all rights are written as legal code. Some rights, like our personal rights, may not be as clear or obvious as others, especially when we feel pressure from our parents, teachers or friends.

PERSONAL BILL OF RIGHTS

I HAVE THE RIGHT..

The list to the right is an example of some of the rights you have as a person — even if there's no law saying you have them. Understanding these rights helps you recognize the power and responsibility you have in your relationships, and gives you the opportunity to reflect on what you might want to change in them.

to ask for what I want.

to say no to requests or demands I can't meet.

to change my mind.

to make mistakes and not be perfect.

to follow my own values and standards.

to express all my positive and negative feelings in a manner that will not harm others.

to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values.

to be in a non-abusive environment.

to determine my own priorities.

not to be responsible for others' behaviors, actions, feelings, or problems.



**YOU HAVE
THE RIGHT TO
BE YOURSELF**

PERSONAL BILL OF RIGHTS

**I HAVE
THE
RIGHT..**

to expect honesty from others.

to feel angry at someone that I care for and
to express this in a respectable manner.

to be uniquely myself.

to feel scared and to say, "I'm afraid."

to say, "I don't know."

to make decisions based on my feelings,
beliefs, and values.

to my own reality.

to my own needs for personal space and time.

to be playful.

to be healthy.



FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

[A Rights Guide for Girls, Young Women and Gender Nonconforming Youth \(YWCA Canada\)](#)

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(United Nations\)](#)

[Canadian Human Rights Act \(Government of Canada\)](#)

[Convention on the Rights of the Child: The Children's Version \(UNICEF\)](#)

[Convention on the Rights of the Child: Illustrated \(UNICEF\)](#)

SOURCES

These modules were developed using information from our partners and the following sources:

Canadian Women's Foundation

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Center For Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/facts.html#:~:text=Developmental%20disabilities%20are%20a%20group,last%20throughout%20a%20person%27s%20lifetime>

The Center for Nonviolent Communication

Equally Safe at School

<https://www.equallysafeatschool.org.uk/about-esas/>

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/vpi/information-about-violence/warning-signs-of-violence-and-abuse/>

Harvard University: Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Kansas State University

Kids Help Phone

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/how-overcome-obstacles-when-reaching-out/>

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/trauma-what-it-is-and-how-to-cope>

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/my-fill-in-the-blanks-safety-plan-for-any-time/>

Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children

<https://metrac.org/resources/are-you-cool-brochure/>

Planned Parenthood

Right to Be

Statistics Canada

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DEC&id=85010>

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DEC&id=103339>

United Way for Southeastern Michigan

<https://unitedwaysem.org/wp-content/uploads/2021-21-Day-Equity-Challenge-Social-Identity-Wheel-FINAL.pdf>

U.S Department of Health and Human Services: Office on Women's Health

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/get-help/how-help-friend>

Women's Centre of Calgary

YWCA Edmonton

YWCA Regina

YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin

YWCA Vancouver