

Class Exercise – My Words, Your Words

You will want to prepare for this exercise well before you conduct the exercise. You can select someone from the class to be a “plant”. You will tell them that when you give them a word, they will respond with a word, any word, that starts with the last letter of the word you gave them. But they should not tell anyone that they have been coached before the exercise. (Example, you say “Jump” they might say “play”).

1. Have the entire class stand.
2. Tell the class that this is a word association game.
3. You will be giving them a single word, and you want them to respond with a single word.
4. If they give you the word you want, then they can sit. If not, they must remain standing.
5. Continue this with about a 10-20 participants. They will eventually get tired of this if no one gets to sit down!

Here is a suggested list of words that you can use:

Inmate
Sergeant
Abuse
Sexual
Supervisor
Training
Lieutenant
Classification
Investigator
Criminal
Discipline
Security
Logbook
Evidence
Rape
Guilty
Exonerate
Staff
Volunteer

When you have finished, tell everyone to sit down and ask them if anyone figured out the response you wanted. Tell that you wanted a word that started with the last letter of the word you gave them.

The point of this exercise is to stress how critical clear and concise definitions are in policy and practice. Point out how many different responses you got – different people associate different things with different words. What one person thinks of when they think “sexual abuse” may be completely different than another person. Definitions also help prevent bias and judgment from entering into how we do business. For example, the first response in someone’s head when they think “Supervisor” might be different from another person.

This leads into the presentation of the definitions in the standards. It also stresses why it is critical for staff to have clear and thorough definitions of the prohibited behaviors in PREA.