



## Youth Sentencing Scenario

### Charge: carrying a concealed weapon, possession of a firearm

This activity is intended to get young people thinking about how sentencing works and why different kinds of sentences exist. Begin by introducing yourself and reading the scenario. Pose the first question and give the students a chance to respond before you begin to add facts as they are listed below.

Because this particular scenario deals with gun possession, sentencing options may include mandatory or minimum sentences. The scenario should be a useful springboard for discussions about the current political climate around handguns, gun laws and related sentencing.

This activity is designed to focus discussions on sentencing, however, the fact scenario may also bring up the questions about the validity of the search, policy actions or the trial process. If there is time after the sentencing discussion, we encourage you to address these other issues.

*At 6:00 p.m. a game of pick-up basketball is taking place on the outdoor court of the local community center. A large number of spectators are watching the game and heckling the players. A police car is making a routine patrol of the neighbourhood and stops near the game. The spectators start yelling and cursing at the police officers. The police officers get out of the car and walk over to the crowd. When one of the basketball players notices the officers, he grabs his knapsack and runs away. The police stop him and when they search his bag they discover a gun. They arrest the basketball player on the spot for carrying a concealed weapon.*

1. What should happen to the basketball player and why?
2. Add fact: *The basketball player is a 14-year-old boy.*

Does this change what should happen? Why?

3. Add fact: *The gun was not loaded.*

Does this change what should happen? Why?

4. Add fact: *The basketball player did not purchase the gun but found it in the bushes outside his school?*

Does this change what should happen? Why?

5. Add fact: *The basketball player is being bullied by another kid in the neighbourhood and he brought the gun to the basketball game in case his bully showed up.*

Does this change what should happen? Why?

6. Add fact: *The basketball player does not have a previous criminal record.*

Does this change what should happen? Why? Would things be different if he did have a criminal record?

Once the discussion has ended, describe the typical range of sentences for this type of situation.

Further discussion points:

- a) why do we punish offenders and what do we hope to accomplish?
- b) would diversion be appropriate in this case?