

# DISCUSSING SENSITIVE TOPICS

The TraffickSTOP approach is student-led and discussion-based. Students should feel informed and empowered to tackle big issues and to discuss their opinions and perspectives without judgment. The facilitator and students play an active role in creating a safe space for discussion. Remind everyone about the team member agreements that were defined during the first meeting at each subsequent meeting. It is important that all students, especially those who identify with marginalized groups, feel safe participating in TraffickSTOP team meetings. Here are a few things to keep in mind when talking through difficult topics.

During the first meeting, talk to team members about your role as a **mandated reporter**. Students should understand that part of a safe and welcoming space includes reporting unsafe or illegal behaviors to the appropriate authorities.

## Preparation



Review the meeting plans, resources, and references prior to each meeting. Proactively educating yourself can improve your own comfort level with difficult topics, while allowing you to provide information, help, and support during discussions.

## Cultural Humility



Practice **cultural humility**—a willingness to learn new information about any culture—as well as **cultural responsiveness**—making changes to our responses and actions after learning about a certain culture or group of individuals.

## Implicit Bias



Learn to recognize and challenge your own **implicit biases**—an attitude or stereotype that we hold subconsciously. Consider that team members will have their own individual biases, which can impact their viewpoints and levels of participation.

## Diversity



Celebrate **diversity**—recognize that team members' backgrounds may be quite different, validate their experiences, welcome unique perspectives, and encourage others to consider new ideas shared by their peers.

## Clarity



While it is important to support team members' points of view, you should gently correct misinformation and/or misconceptions that may arise. Provide access to evidence, facts, and valid sources of information. Where there is disagreement, make the point(s) of disagreement explicit. **Clarifying** exactly where the conflict is can help team members talk through it.

## Reflection



After each meeting, there is some time for reflecting and reviewing. Encourage students to ask questions. Ending with a group discussion on what was said and heard, and what is important for peers to know, will help unify their understanding of the topic and the subsequent design of their awareness week activities. You can also incorporate self-care when discussions are particularly tough.