

RESPONDING TO ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT DISCLOSURES



A **disclosure** is when someone tells you or shows you that they or someone they know is being hurt. If someone chooses to disclose abuse or neglect to you, it means they trust you. While it may be scary and upsetting to learn this information, remember that they chose to talk to you for a reason. There is no one “right” way to respond. It can (and should) differ based on your relationship with the person, their age, and your own reporting responsibilities.

DURING A DISCLOSURE

- **Listen with empathy:** Let them tell you at their own pace and give you the details they want to share. Talk to them in a way that is appropriate for their age and developmental level. Make sure your facial expressions and body language are open and nonjudgmental.
- **Be supportive:** Thank them for telling you and trusting you. Let them know that it was probably hard to talk about, but you are glad they did.
- **Keep questions to a minimum:** Don't ask for details or try to figure out if what they told you is true. Counselors and investigators will do that. They are trained to ask questions in a way that best supports the survivor and the investigation.
 - **Ask how you can help:** Offer confidential resources or other places where they can talk to a trained advocate. Give them the resources in writing (like our [Resources for Survivors](#)), unless this causes a safety concern for them.
- **Tell them what you will do next:** Let them know you need to report this. Tell them who you will make a report to and who else you will need to tell. Don't make promises about what will happen or what others will do. If you are a mandatory reporter, you must follow legal reporting requirements even if the child does not want the incident reported. Follow your organization's policies about notifying parents.

HELPFUL PHRASES TO USE

Thank you for telling me.

You are very brave.

What happened to you is not okay.

It is not your fault.

I want to help.

You are not alone.

You don't have to tell me anything that you don't want to.

Take your time. Tell me when you are ready.

Do you have any worries about your safety?

What can I do to support you?

Let me tell you what I am going to do next.

This is a serious situation. I need to report it to help you and others be safe.

RESOURCES

REPORTING ABUSE

If you know of or suspect abuse involving someone in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement, report to:

U.S. Center for SafeSport: uscenterforsafesport.org/report
1-833-587-7233 (Operator Available Mon-Fri 8-4 MST)

If the disclosure involves child abuse, including child sexual abuse, report it to law enforcement.

State Reporting Numbers: childwelfare.gov/state-child-abuse-and-neglect-reporting-numbers

24-HOUR HOTLINES

RAINN
(NATIONAL SEXUAL
ASSAULT HOTLINE)

rainn.org

1-800-656-4673

CHILDHHELP NATIONAL
CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE

childhelphelp.org

1-800-422-4453

NATIONAL DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE HOTLINE

thehotline.org

1-800-799-7233

988 SUICIDE
& CRISIS LIFELINE

988lifeline.org

988

FIND SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

- **Regional Child Advocacy Centers:** regionalcacs.org
- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center:** nsvrc.org/organizations
- **Domestic Violence Assistance Providers:** thehotline.org/get-help/directory-of-local-providers

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