

MANDATORY REPORTING COURSE



RESPONDING TO ABUSE DISCLOSURES

If a child chooses to disclose abuse or neglect to you, it suggests that they trust you. While it may be scary and upsetting to hear 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 factors that include your relationship with them, their age, and your own reporting responsibilities. Remember to talk to the child in an age and developmentally appropriate way.

KEEP THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES IN MIND:

- » **Listen with empathy:** Let them tell you at their own pace and give you the details they want to share. 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.
- » **Know your role:** You are not a counselor or investigator. Do not ask questions to find out more details. Do not try to assess whether information is true. Do not make promises about what will happen or what others will do.
- » **Remind them you are here to help** and that there are others who can help as well.
- » **Tell them what you will do next:** Let them know you are a mandatory reporter of child abuse, who you will make an official report to, and who else you will need to tell. Remember, 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 this—you are very brave.
- » What happened to you is not okay.
- » It is not your fault.
- » I want to help you.
- » 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.
- » Is there anything else you want to tell me?
- » I care about your safety. Let me tell you what I am going to do next.
- » This is a serious situation. I need to tell some other adults to help you be safe.

RESOURCES FOR REPORTING ABUSE

- » **U.S. Center for SafeSport** uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern, 1-833-5US-SAFE (833-587-7233)
- » **State Reporting Links** childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/reporting/how

RESOURCES FOR HELP AND SUPPORT¹: CHAT AND PHONE

- » **SafeSport Helpline:** safesporthehelpline.org, 866-200-0796
- » **National Sexual Assault Hotline:** rainn.org, 800-656-4673
- » **ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline:** childhelpline.org, 800-422-4453
- » **Teen Dating Violence Hotline:** loveisrespect.org, 866-331-9474
- » **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** suicidepreventionlifeline.org, 800-273-8255

COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

- » **Sexual assault services:** centers.rainn.org
- » **Domestic violence services:** thehotline.org/get-help/domestic-violence-local-resources
- » **Children's Advocacy Centers:** nationalcac.org/find-a-cac

¹ Note that these resources do not satisfy criteria for making a mandatory report.

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