



WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD TELLS YOU ABOUT ABUSE

If the abuse is life threatening, call your local law enforcement agency or 911.

An adult's reaction to a child's disclosure is very important. Children need to know that breaking the silence about abuse is the right thing to do. If a child's disclosure is handled with support and care, the child can learn to heal and feel safe again. In addition, taking action and reporting the abuse is critical to protect the child and possibly other children.

DO:

- Believe the child. Children rarely lie about abuse.
- Give the child all of your attention.
- Tell the child he/she has done nothing wrong. "It's not your fault."
- Praise the child's courage in telling you.
- Stay calm. It is important for a child to know he or she is not to blame and that telling you was the right thing to do.
- Be supportive. Tell the child you will do what you can to help.
- Ask limited, open-ended questions, like "What happened?" or "Who did it?"
- Let the child use his or her own words to tell the story.
- Report the abuse. You do not need "proof" to report abuse.

DO NOT:

- Do not show feelings of shock or horror to the child. This could make the child feel guilty or shamed. Share your feelings with a friend or professional.
- Do not interrogate the child. The child will have to tell the whole story to the authorities after a report.
- Do not correct a child's words about what happened or the names for body parts.
- Do not criticize the child, the family or the abuser. Remember, many children care about the abuser, but want the abuse to stop.
- Do not make promises you may not be able to keep, such as "I promise this will never happen again."



CHILD ABUSE REPORTING HOTLINE:

KANSAS: 1.800.922.5330

MISSOURI: 1.800.392.3738

MISSOURI (calling from out of state): 573.751.3448



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