

When a Child Comes Forward to Talk About Abuse

A Guide for Educators and Professionals

A teacher may be the only professional adult that an abused child comes in contact with on a daily basis. Teachers can be the vital link in an abused child's quest for help.



1. **Talk in Private** - Limit distractions and give the child your full attention.
2. **Explain Your Role** - Tell the child you will help them. Explain that in order to do that, you will have to tell someone else. Do not promise to keep it a secret.
3. **Stay Calm** - No matter how strong your feelings are, do not display them to the child. Maintain neutral body language and a calm voice throughout.
4. **Listen** - Be patient and allow the child to tell their story. Remember that you do not have to prove the abuse or verify it.
5. **Commend the Child** - Encourage the child that they did the right thing by telling and let them know the abuse is not their fault.

6. **Believe the Child** - Research shows that children who have experienced abuse, especially sexual abuse, have a better chance of making a healthy recovery if they are believed at the time of their original disclosure. Your support is the most valuable gift you can give a child.

7. **Record information using the child's words** - Take a few moments to make notes. Try to capture what the child said as accurately as possible in their own words.

8. **Report** - To your local Children's Aid Society. It is their job to investigate, to provide protection for the child and support for the family. When you call, have ready the child's full name, address, and family information such as the parent(s)' names.

9. **Respect the Child's Privacy** - This information is sensitive, so be judicious and use discretion in discussing it.

Understanding the Duty to Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect (Child and Family Services Act s. 72 (1))

1. Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk must report it to their local Children's Aid Society.
2. No one can do it for you, you must make the report yourself.
3. If you continue to suspect a child is at risk, keep reporting.
4. You do not have to verify the abuse, simply to report it.

