

What to do when a child discloses abuse

At the time of disclosure:

1. Be calm. Try not to act outraged or excited. The child has wisely chosen you to be a trusted adult.
2. Reassure the child that they did the right thing by telling you.
3. Act like you believe the child. Avoid saying things such as, "Are you sure that happened? They wouldn't do that."
4. You can tell the child that this is not their fault.
5. Do not ask for details about the abuse.
6. Do not make promises that you cannot keep. Do not promise to keep this a secret. Do not promise that you will keep the child safe or that they will never be abused again.
7. Do not say bad things about the alleged perpetrator.
8. Immediately after disclosure, tell the people that need to know about the disclosed abuse.
 - a. If you are a mandated reporter you must report the suspected child abuse to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). See page 11 (Appendix I) of Resources for a Safe a Healthy Church.
 - b. If you are not a mandated reporter, you are strongly encouraged to tell your priest or other member of ordained clergy of the suspected abuse whether the suspected child abuse occurred within the church or in another setting, and you are encouraged to make a report of the suspected child abuse to DCF.
 - c. Keep in mind that it is generally **not** your role to tell the child's parents of the disclosed abuse.
9. Seek out support for yourself.
10. Pray for all involved, including yourself.

Steps to help protect children and youth:

- a. monitor their activities: know where they are and with whom
- b. listen to what they say
- c. be alert to changes in their behavior
- d. warn against accepting gifts without their parents' knowledge
- e. teach them about potential threats and to seek help when necessary
- f. drop in unannounced at youth activities
- g. be aware of adults who exhibit predatory behavior
- h. conduct background checks on all who engage in ministry with children and youth
- i. make sure there are multiple adult supervisors at youth events
- j. be prepared for when/if a child discloses abuse to you
- k. be familiar with all aspects of ECCT's Policies for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults (see Appendix III) of Resources for a Safe and Healthy Church.