



How Schools May Respond to a Child Who Reports Abuse

If the child confides in a school staff member...follow your district policies...and *consider* these recommendations...

- If a staff member/members speak with the child, it should be done discreetly, without other children present.
- Do not touch the child without permission. Touch may be associated with the abuse.
- If an injury is observed, suspected, or reported by the child; the consent of the child to allow a staff member to observe the injury- if it is sought, depending on district policy- must be obtained.
- When the injuries are located in private body areas, the child should be referred to the school nurse or other appropriate person, as per district policy.
- Children should not be needlessly subjected to physical inspections in the school. The investigator from DYFS or IAIU will obtain any necessary medical examination of the child.
- Do not overreact emotionally. Remain calm and do not express your own discomfort... acknowledge that the injury, if there is one, looks like it would hurt or note how difficult it is to talk about things like this.
- If the child begins to tell you that abuse may have happened, allow the child to speak but do not press for details. Reassure the child that a “person who can help” will be called to come see the child and to listen and help. Remain with the child and continue to be an active listener.
- Avoid asking “why” questions. Children often feel they have done something wrong or must defend themselves when asked why. Asking a child why he/she didn't tell someone sooner, for example, makes the child think that he/she has done something wrong.
- If you choose to ask questions, use a level of language that is appropriate to the child. Avoid words he or she might not understand or might find embarrassing. To the extent that you talk with- or question the child, use the words that the child uses to describe what has happened or is happening.
- Recognize the child's method of relating what happened. If the child makes a disguised disclosure (for instance, claiming that the abuse happened to someone else), allow the child to tell speak in that manner. The child may later reveal that he or she is the actual victim.
- Reassure the child that telling you was the right thing to do. It is also important to tell the child what will happen next.
- Confirm the response time and location with SCR. If an investigator will see the child at school, communicate this to the child.
- Reassure the child that you will not share this information with other teachers or children. But, do let the child know that you may need to tell a “helping person.”