

What to do if a child tells you about abuse...

Listen. Then take action. Whether the child is your own or another child you know:

Make sure the child is safe

If you are worried about a child's immediate safety (or if a child is afraid to go home), call 911 or your local Department of Human Services. (Numbers to call are on the next page.)

Listen

Ask **only** these **four** questions:

- What happened?
- Who did this to you?
- Where were you when this happened?
- When did this happen?

Show that you understand and believe what the child tells you. Do not ask for details.

Show the child understanding

Tell the child they did the right thing by coming to you.

Control your emotions

Don't act shocked – instead, try to be calm and reassuring. Fear and anger are normal reactions, but they can scare a child.

Believe the child

Take the child seriously. Reassure the child that they did the right thing. For example, say, "I am sorry that happened to you. I'm glad you told me."

Be supportive

Reassure the child that this is not their fault. Explain that telling you about it was very brave and was the right thing to do.

Be honest

Don't make any promises – particularly if the child asks you not to tell anyone else. Let the child know that in order to help, you will have to tell another trusted adult who wants to help the child, too.

Respect the child

While you do need to report the incident, don't tell anyone about the abuse who doesn't need to know.

Help the child to know what to expect

Tell them what you will do to try to help. You might say something like: "I want to try to help you. I'm going to ask for help from another adult whose job it is to help kids with problems like this."

Consider any medical needs

They may need treatment for physical injuries. Know that law enforcement or human services may seek medical attention for the child.

If the child tells you about sexual abuse right after it happens, do not bathe the child or change their clothes because it may destroy evidence.

Report the abuse

Contact:

- State or county child welfare agency (#s on back)
- Local law enforcement
- 911 for immediate safety concerns

What if the person who commits the abuse is a relative?

- Be understanding of the child's feelings. They may have mixed feelings of love, anger, hurt and betrayal.
- Allow the child to express their feelings. Be sure to keep your personal feelings about the person who committed the abuse separate.
- Reassure the child. They may feel responsible for breaking up the family, for example. Reassure the child often that they are not to blame.
- Report the abuse and get the child immediate help from law enforcement and/or human services.

Resources for responding to, and helping to prevent, child abuse

Understanding and Helping to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: A Parent's/Caregiver's Handbook, Channing Bete Company, Inc.

Stop It Now: www.stopitnow.org

The Enough Abuse Campaign: www.enoughabuse.org

No Place Like Home: www.noplacelikehome.org

Joyful Heart Foundation: www.joyfulheartfoundation.org

To report suspected child abuse in any form, call the Colorado child abuse and neglect hotline: **1-844-CO-4-KIDS** (1-844-264-5437).

You may also call the child welfare reporting line in the county where the child lives:

Pitkin County: [970-429-2047](tel:970-429-2047) (24 hrs, 7 days)

Eagle County (Basalt/El Jebel area): [970-429-2047](tel:970-429-2047) (24 hrs, 7 days)

Eagle County (Eagle Valley area): [970-328-7720](tel:970-328-7720) or after hours call [970-479-2200](tel:970-479-2200)

Garfield County: [970-945-9193](tel:970-945-9193) or after hours call Dispatch at [970-625-8095](tel:970-625-8095) and ask them to page the on-call child welfare caseworker

Rio Blanco County: [970-878-9640](tel:970-878-9640) or after hours call [970-878-9600](tel:970-878-9600) and ask them to page the on-call child welfare caseworker

To learn more about preventing and responding to child abuse ~

- contact River Bridge Regional Center at 970-945-5195
- send an email to: info@riverbridgerc.org
- visit our website: www.riverbridgerc.org



520 21st Street, Glenwood Springs, Colorado 81601
970-945-5195