



Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

24 Hour Crisis Line:
MO (816) 531- 0233
KS (913) 642-0233
www.mocsa.org

Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Abuse:

To help you feel more comfortable with and prepared for the challenge of addressing sexual abuse, we offer these helpful tips.

If a child discloses abuse to you, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Believe him or her.** The most important thing is to believe the child. Children rarely lie about abuse; what is more common is a child denying that abuse happened when it did. Tell the child you believe him/her.
- **Do not make promises you can't keep.** Do not make promises such as the child will never have to see the abuser again, that nothing will change, or other such promises.
- **Reassure the child that the abuse is not their fault.** The child's greatest fear is that he or she is responsible for the abuse. Be sure to make it clear that what happened is not a result of anything they did or did not do.
- **Stay calm,** even though you may feel surprised or upset. Your calmness will reassure the child that he/she hasn't done anything wrong.
- **Do not interrogate the child.** It can be traumatic for the child to repeat their story numerous times. It is often in the interest of the child to wait for a Children's Division worker to conduct the interview.
- **Report the abuse immediately.** Record the child's name, classroom teacher, and a summary of what the child told you. Inform the counselor of the disclosure. Additionally, you will need to report the disclosure to the Project Aware Coordinator.

Believing and supporting the child are two of the best actions to start the healing process. Appropriate and helpful responses to disclosures are as follows:

- "I am glad you told me, thank you."
- "You are very brave and did the right thing."
- "It wasn't your fault."
- "I am proud of you for telling me."
- "I need to make a report to people who know how to stop the abuse so that we can help to keep you safe."

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