



Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

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

## Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Abuse:

### *Helpful Tips for School Employees:*

Sexual abuse occurs more often than we would like to think; **one in four girls** and **one in six boys** will be sexually abused before their eighteenth birthday. 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.
- **Reassure the child that the abuse is not his/her 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 he/she did or did not do.
- **Do not interrogate the child.** It can be traumatic for the child to repeat his/her story numerous times. It is often in the interest of the child to wait for a Children's Division worker to conduct the interview.
- **Seek resources for the child and their family.** A disclosure often poses serious challenges for the family of the victim. You can help by providing legal, medical and social services referrals.
- **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 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.
- **Protect the child from further abuse.** If a child discloses abuse to you, you are responsible for the well-being of the child. Assess the situation and take action to ensure the child's physical and emotional well-being.
- **Report the abuse immediately.** As an educator, legally you must report any disclosed or suspected abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline or the police.
  - *Missouri:* 800-392-3738
  - *Kansas:* 800-922-5330
  - *National:* 800-422-4453

**For more information on child sexual abuse or responding to disclosures, please visit [www.mocsa.org](http://www.mocsa.org).**

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