



GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING ABUSE/NEGLECT DISCLOSURES

Must be referred externally according to organizational policy
Child/youth survives the abuse or neglect; some may attempt to stop it
<p>Child/youth discloses to someone they trust; abusive incident is witnessed; third party discloses; abuse or neglect is suspected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If non-verbal, look for opportunities to engage the child in dialogue • Remain calm; do not react with shock, horror or disbelief • Be honest, up-front and don't make promises; <i>"I can't make any promises, because we may need to get you some help!"</i> • Reassure the child/youth; <i>"You have done the right thing by telling. It's not your fault!"</i> • Determine the need for immediate safety • Do not attempt to provide counseling but include the child/youth in the decision making process • Refer the child/youth to a parent/guardian (unless they are the alleged perpetrator) or an adult with whom they feel safe (e.g. relative, friend, coach)
<p>Report incident/suspicious to child protection agency or police based on guidelines discussed with child/youth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social workers determine child protection needs • Police determine criminality <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Note: 1. The person who hears the disclosure or suspects the abuse or neglect MUST make the report 2. Do not attempt to confront perpetrator</p>
Fully complete the <i>Incident Report</i> . Documents are very important if there is a criminal investigation.
<p style="text-align: center;">Organization protocol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete any organizational procedures required of you (e.g. filing a formal report to designated individuals in the organization) • If report involves organization's staff or volunteers, police may execute an internal investigation, with organization's help • The organization must never attempt to conduct their own investigation of abuse or neglect without first consulting the Child Protection Agency and/or Police • Organization must ensure that the alleged is prevented from having contact with children/youth until the investigation is complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that hearing a disclosure may be emotionally difficult • Maintain confidentiality but seek support for yourself from trusted friends, family or the organization
Continue support of child/youth as appropriate

Source: Fairholm, J., (2003) *Hearing the Hurt, Changing the Future, 2nd Edition – Preventing Child/Youth Maltreatment*, Canadian Red Cross