



What To Do When a Child Reports Abuse

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- Be calm and supportive. Put your own feelings aside, trying not to communicate shock, disgust, embarrassment, or disbelief.
- Never agree to a child's request that "if I tell you, promise you won't tell anyone?"
- Seek privacy so that the child is protected from disclosing in public.
- Assure the child that he/she did the right thing by telling and that you believe him/her
- Try not to lead the victim, even if he/she has difficulty in the telling. Let her/him tell the story in her/his own words as much as possible.
- Never blame the victim or make judgments about what happened
- Try not to say things that might make the victim feel guilty, such as "why didn't you say no?"
- Try not to speak badly of the abuser. Remember this could be the child's parent whom he/she loves nevertheless.
- Remember it is not up to you to investigate or elaborate on the child's story. You need only have suspicion to report.
- Tell the child that you want to help, but to do so you will need to tell others who can be of help. Tell the child that other professionals may also need to talk with him/her about it.
- Assure the child that someone will stand alongside them in the process of getting help...if not you, then another trusted staff member/parishioner.
- Report the abuse to appropriate individuals as specified in Episcopal Diocese of Texas Safe Church Policies: Rector or Head of School; Safe Church Minister. Concerns may need to be reported to CPS.
- The child's report should only be discussed with authorized "need-to-know" people and not with other children or uninvolved adults. The child has the right to confidentiality.
- Maintain a normally responsive interaction with the child after the disclosure, being sensitive to the child's need to talk.
- Recognize that this process may cause conflicted feelings in you. Be aware that you also may need to process your feelings. Be careful that who you choose to do this with maintains the child's confidentiality and yours.