

Do's and Don'ts When a Child Reports Abuse

If a child discloses he or she has been abused or neglected, you may feel outrage, shock, disgust or helplessness. These feelings are normal.

A trusted adult, it is important to keep your composure and focus on how the child is feeling. It's a huge step for a child to come forward and share what has happened.

DO:

- Find a private place to talk.
- Let the child speak. Listen without judgment.
- Tell the child that you believe him or her.
- Say the abuse was not his or her fault.
- Let the child know you will seek help to stop the abuse.
- Thank the child for trusting you with this sensitive information.
- Let the child know he or she did the right thing telling you.

Do NOT:

- Promise you will keep the information between the two of you.
- Press the child for details. Instead, respect his or her privacy.
- Put words in his or her mouth. Instead, listen to what the child says.
- Place blame or try to investigate. This is not the time for questioning.
- Share the child's information with anyone unable to directly help the child.
- Overreact. He or she may stop talking. You must control your emotions.
- Criticize the child or abuser.

Child abuse can be devastating.
Admitting it happened can be difficult, too.
Be respectful, attentive and supportive
when a child tells you about abuse.

*Reports of alleged abuse and/or neglect can be made to the
Virginia State Hotline for Child Abuse by calling 1-800-552-7096*