



## How to Respond to an Abused Child

It takes a great deal of courage and trust for a child to disclose that s/he is experiencing abuse or neglect. If a child confides in you, use the following guidelines to respond in a helpful and sensitive way.

- Stay calm and neutral. The child may retract information or stop talking if s/he senses a strong reaction from you.
- Believe the child and be supportive. Children rarely make up stories about abuse.
- Listen without interrogating the child or passing judgment. Most children know their abusers and often have conflicted feelings. Let the child tell the story at his/her own pace.
- Validate the child feelings. Tell the child you are glad s/he told you.
- Assure the child you care and that the abuse or neglect is not his/her fault.
- Find out what the child wants from you.
- Tell the child you must try to get help. You will have to tell someone whose job it is to help kids with these kinds of situations.
- Do not investigate on your own. Call the District hotline at **202-671-SAFE (202-671-7233)** as soon as possible to make a report to the DC Child and Family Services Agency.
- Do not discuss the disclosure with other children or adults other than to call in the report to CFSA.

