

DEALING WITH CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT DISCLOSURE TIP SHEET

(from a child's perspective)

Use words I will understand

Always use age-appropriate words.

Never say you'll keep this a secret

Never promise the child that you will keep what they tell you a secret. Explain to the child your role is to ensure she is safe.



Don't tell everyone

Although you cannot promise to keep the information a secret, you should assure the child that you will not share this information with her peers or anyone who really does not need to know about it to keep her safe.

Explain you still care about me

Reassure the child that what she told you will not change the way you feel about her. Children are often afraid that you will think they are bad, or that what happened to them was their fault.

Disclosure may be difficult for me

Always keep in mind how difficult it has been for the child to tell you this. Remember: They may have been threatened not to tell. They may feel embarrassed or ashamed. They may have tested others and decided it was not safe to disclose. They will be watching your reaction very carefully.

As often as possible, try to keep the child informed about what will happen next. She will likely be very anxious. If appropriate, let the child know you will be calling DCFS and explain that it is the job of DCFS to keep children safe.

Find out answers for me

The child will probably have lots of questions about what will happen that you cannot answer. Don't make up an answer. It's OK to tell the child that you don't know what will happen. It may help to tell the child that you know this is hard for her.

