**Guidelines for Disclosures**

* Do not let the child/youth swear you to secrecy before telling you something. You may need to report.
* If a child/youth asks to speak with you, try to find a neutral setting where you can have quiet and few interruptions.
* Do not lead the child/youth in telling their story. Just listen, and let them explain what happened in their own words. Do not pressure them for a great amount of detail.
* Respond calmly and matter-of-factly. Even if the story is difficult to hear, it is important not to register disgust or alarm.
* Avoid making judgmental comments about the abuser. It is often someone the child or youth loves or with whom they are close.
* Children/youth often feel (or are told) that they are to blame for their own maltreatment and for bringing “trouble” to the family; therefore, it is important to reassure children and youth that they are not at fault.
* Do not make promises to the child/youth that things will immediately get better. In reality, things may get worse before they get better, but conveying this to the child or youth may cause greater anxiety.
* Do not confront the abuser. This may cause more harm to the child/youth.
* Ask the child/youth if they feel safe going home. If they do not, or if you believe that it isn’t safe for the child/youth to return home, this should be considered an emergency and handled immediately by contacting DCF and/or the local police department. Do not take the situation into your own hands. Provisions for the child’s/youth’s safety should be made by an appropriate agency.
* Respect the child’s/youth’s confidence and limit the number of people with whom you share the information. The child’s/youth’s privacy should be protected.
* Explain to the child/youth that you must tell someone else in order to get some help. Try to let the child/youth know that someone else may also need to talk with them and explain why.
* Assure the child/youth that you or another staff member will be available for support whenever possible. [**6**](https://safekidsthrive.org/the-report/key-sections/section-5-recognizing-responding-to-and-reporting-allegations-and-suspicions-of-child-sexual-abuse#footnote-6)

Remember that children and youth who disclose are often frightened or anxious and will need reassurance, encouragement, and support throughout the weeks to come. DCF staff can help guide everyone concerned about how they might provide this support.