



# What to Do if Sexual Assault Occurs

## If Your Teen Discloses Sexual Abuse

### During a Disclosure:

Find a private place to talk with your teen.  
Do not express panic or shock.

- Reassure your teen that you believe her/him.
- Do not pressure your teen to tell you more than s/he is comfortable telling you.
- Ask limited questions.
- Listen.
- Reassure your teen that it is good to tell and that you are proud of him.
- Reassure your teen that it is not her fault and she is not bad or in trouble.
- Promise your teen that you will protect and support him.
- If your teen sees you are upset, explain you are upset with the *abuser*...not your teenager.

Report the abuse immediately to your local law enforcement agency.

### After a Disclosure:

After your teen has revealed abuse, you may be shocked, confused and/or angry. Regardless of what you are feeling or thinking, it is important to respond to your teenager appropriately.

- Remember that your teen is still a *child*, and treat her as such. Don't expect your teen to respond like an adult.
- Be supportive of your teen, but do not treat him differently.
- Keep to your regular routine as much as possible.
- Do not expect your teen to appear "changed."

- Do not question your teen about the assault; by doing so, you may compromise the police investigation. If your teen wishes to discuss the abuse with you, just listen and be supportive.
- Be prepared for depression or "let-down" weeks or months after the disclosure. Your teenager may become withdrawn or act out repeatedly over time.
- Do not advise your teen on what to do or say in a police interview beyond encouraging your teen to tell the truth.
- Sexually abused children may be susceptible to feelings of low self esteem. Help your teen nurture a positive sense of identity with positive messages.
- Explain what is happening throughout the police investigation (or as your teen has questions).
- Acknowledge any feelings of anger, guilt, frustration, sadness, etc. that your teen may experience. Let your teen know it is okay to feel anything. Teach him appropriate ways to express his feelings.
- Be aware of your own reactions and get support and help as you work through your own feelings.
- Don't discuss the abuse with others in your teen's presence. Respect their privacy.

Children often feel a sense of relief after disclosing abuse. Support from the parent or caregiver is one of the most important factors in your teen's healing process. By offering support, you play an important role in your teen's mental and emotional health.



### Important Local Phone Numbers

Police: \_\_\_\_\_ School Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency: **911** \_\_\_\_\_ Social Services: \_\_\_\_\_

Medical Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Victim's Advocate: \_\_\_\_\_