



SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Individuals in the community who are faced with a child abuse situation are legally required to report it to the authorities. Adults must recognize a child's need for help. All referral sources are kept strictly confidential.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Abuse, also called maltreatment, is the act of emotionally, sexually or physically hurting a child. It includes depriving a child of affection and acceptance, neglecting to meet their day-to-day needs or endangering them in any way. Maltreatment also includes sexual exploitation and exposing a child to sexual contact, activity or behaviour.

RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

Children may display physical or emotional signs of maltreatment. Signs may include:

- Sudden changes in behaviour or performance.
- Unexplained physical injuries or injuries that don't match the child's explanation.
- Extreme behavioural reactions such as aggression or withdrawal.
- Sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond their stage or development.
- Does not want to be at home or runs away.
- Always hungry, sick or not suitably dressed for the conditions.

BE AWARE OF YOUR INITIAL REACTION

- A child may come to a trusted adult because they believe you can help. Although it is common to feel fear, disbelief, anger or sadness, it's important to set aside personal feelings and stay calm.
- Initial reactions are critical for the child's path to healing.

LISTEN. BELIEVE.

- Allow the child to do most of the talking. If you need more understanding about the context, use an open-ended question or phrase such as "Tell me more."
- Once you have reasonable grounds to suspect abuse, or the child discloses, stop asking any further questions.
- Reassure the child that telling you was the right thing to do.
- Explain to the child that you believe them and will need to tell someone who can help them.

DOCUMENT ANY COMMENTS VERBATIM

This includes those made by the child, parent, caregiver, or anyone else relevant to the situation.

REPORT YOUR CONCERNS

CONTACT: Contact your local Children's Services / Children's Aid Society, your local Police department or RCMP detachment.

- It is your legal duty to report suspected child abuse. You do not need proof, just a reasonable suspicion.
- You do not need permission to report, nor can anyone prevent you from reporting.
- The report must come from the person who receives the information first hand, not a third party.
- All calls are important. Your piece of the puzzle could tip the scales for a response.

Special Thank You to the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre For The Information Provided On This Card.