



# WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE OR NEGLECT

## IF YOUR CHILD TELLS YOU THEY ARE BEING ABUSED OR NEGLECTED, YOU SHOULD:

Take them to a space where they can talk freely

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Listen, believe, and support your child

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Reassure them continuously and speak on a level that they can understand

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Make sure they understand that what happened is not their fault

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Contact the local Children's Advocacy Center and/or SANE program right away

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Contact the police and/or a local Child Advocacy Center

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Make the child feel safe in terms of physical and emotional comfort.

### **For example:**

The child may show regression by requesting a stuffed animal that they haven't slept with in years; allow this to happen. Many children develop enuresis following abuse, even if it is years after they no longer experience wetting. It is important to be patient with a child showing any regression and not punish even when it is a developmental milestone that has already been achieved, because it could be a sign of abuse.

Each state designates specific agencies to receive and investigate reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Typically, this responsibility is carried out by child protective services (CPS) within a Department of Social Services, Department of Human Resources, or Division of Family and Children Services. In some states, police departments may also receive reports of child abuse or neglect.

Some people (typically certain types of professionals, such as teachers, social workers, therapists, and medical professionals) are required by law to make a report of child maltreatment under specific circumstances –these professionals are called mandatory reporters. For more information, see the [Child Welfare Information Gateway publication, Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

**For more information or assistance with reporting, please call Childhelp USA at 800-4-A-CHILD (800-422-4453), or your local CPS agency.**

Most youth sports connected with National Governing Bodies under the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) will use the U.S. Center for SafeSport as the primary reporting and investigating tool. While this is an option, we recommend also reporting to law enforcement in conjunction for a timely response. If the athlete is in a sport organization that is unaffiliated with a national governing body, request and familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures for reporting abuse from their organization. To learn more about what the reporting process may look like, check out our [“Getting Help” resource](#).

**You do not have to investigate or be certain that abuse has occurred to file a report; you only have to suspect its occurrence.**

If your report is an emergency, for example, if the perpetrator currently has access to the child, the child will be near the perpetrator again soon, or you suspect the child is in immediate danger of being abused again or is in the care of an abuser, call 911. Any reports of abuse that happened more than a while ago or where the perpetrator is no longer near the child or other children can be reported to your local non-emergency law enforcement agency and the local Children’s Advocacy Center. If you are unsure if the report is an emergency report or historical, it’s best to contact 911 and allow law enforcement to determine the current threat.