

# REPORTING ABUSE OR MALTREATMENT

What to do when you suspect abuse, or a child discloses to you



## STEP 1

Your first priority should always be to **protect the young person** and if necessary, help them out of immediate danger, by intervening only if it's safe for you to do so, or calling the police immediately if it's not.

## STEP 2

**Beware of your initial reaction.** For the benefit of the youth set aside personal feelings of fear, disbelief, anger, or sadness and stay calm. Initial reactions are critical for the young person's path to healing.

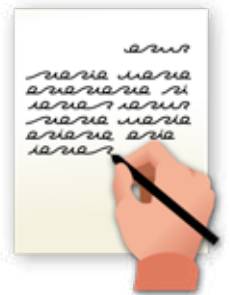


## STEP 3

**Listen and believe.** Whether you suspect abuse and ask the child about it, or they disclose to you, as soon as the child starts talking about it, stop asking questions. Let the child continue to talk. Keep providing support, but don't prompt or ask further questions. Reassure the child that telling you was the right thing to do. Explain that you believe them and will need to tell someone who can help them.

## STEP 4

**Document any comments, word for word.** This includes those made by the child, parent, caregiver, other leader, or anyone else relevant to the situation. Document the time, date, and who was involved. Make notes immediately after your discussion with the child while the conversation is still fresh in your mind.



## STEP 5

**Report your concerns immediately.** Always report incidents to your organization contact your local child protection agency or local police service. As we discussed earlier, 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.