

# RESPONDING TO ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT DISCLOSURES

If someone chooses to disclose experiences of abuse or misconduct to you, it means that they trust you. While it can be scary and upsetting to hear this information, remember that they chose to talk to you for a reason. There is no one “right” way to respond to a disclosure. Your response will be different based on factors like your relationship with the survivor, the survivor’s age, and your specific reporting responsibilities.



## KEEP THE FOLLOWING GENERAL STEPS IN MIND:

- **Listen with empathy** – Let them tell you at their own pace and give you the details they want to share. Make sure your facial expressions and body language are open and not judgmental.
- **Be Supportive** – Show empathy and thank them for telling you and trusting you. Acknowledge that it was probably difficult to do.
- **Know your role** - You are not a counselor or investigator. Do not ask questions to find out more details. Do not assess whether information is true. Do not make promises about what will happen or what other people will do.
- **Ask how you can help** – Ask what help and support they need. Offer confidential resources like the [SafeSport Helpline](#) or other places where they can talk to a trained advocate. Give them the resources in writing, unless doing so would cause a safety concern for the survivor.
- **Tell them what you will do next** – Let them know who you are making an official report to and who else you will need to tell. Remember, you must follow reporting requirements if you are a mandatory reporter even if the survivor does not want the incident to be reported.



## HELPFUL PHRASES TO USE

**"What happened is not okay."**

**"Thank you for telling me this – it took a lot of courage."**

**"It isn't your fault."**

**"You don't have to share any information with me that you don't want to."**

**"I want to help you be safe."**

**"Do you have any worries about your safety?"**

**"What help do you need from me? You might not know right now, and that is okay."**

**"What can I do to support you?"**

"Here is the information for the SafeSport Helpline – they have specially trained people you can talk to about what happened. It is free and confidential."

**"Let me explain what I am going to do next."**

"This is a serious situation. I'm required by law to report it to authorities to help you and others be safe. We can make the call together if you want to listen to the report that I make."

## RESOURCES

### 24-HOUR HOTLINES

#### **SAFESPORT HELPLINE**

Chat: [safesporthelpline.org/](https://safesporthelpline.org/)  
Phone: 1-866-200-0796

#### **NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE**

Chat: [rainn.org/at](https://rainn.org/at)  
Phone: 1-800-656-4673

#### **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

Chat: [thehotline.org/](https://thehotline.org/)  
Phone: 1-800-799-7233

#### **TEEN DATING VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

Chat: [loveisrespect.org/](https://loveisrespect.org/)  
Phone: 1-866-331-9474

#### **NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE**

Chat: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org/](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)  
Phone: 1-800-273-8255

### **FIND SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY:**

[National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#)

[National Network to End Domestic Violence](#)

[National Child Advocacy Center](#)