

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR REPORTING ABUSE



Reporting abuse can be a difficult thing to do. Follow this advice to give authorities what they need to proceed.

DO'S

DO thank the person for reporting the abuse and for telling you what happened.

This helps the person feel safe and heard. Let them know there is a process you will follow to report the incident.

DO report abuse right away.

Remember, federal law requires mandatory reporters report actual and suspected abuse to law enforcement within 24 hours. Your state may have similar requirements. If you are an adult member of a National Governing Body, you should report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport immediately. Notify your organization according to their policies.

DO give investigators your name and contact information.

If you feel comfortable, give investigators your name and contact information. Many states allow you to make a report anonymously. But if you provide your information, investigators can contact you later for follow-up. Giving your name also creates a record that you fulfilled your reporting responsibilities.

DO tell investigators as much as you can.

Give investigators as much information as possible. That includes who was abused, who committed the reported abuse, when it happened, and where it happened.

DO tell investigators if the person is likely to come into contact with the alleged abuser.

Tell investigators if the person is likely to come into contact with the person who caused harm. This helps authorities address safety planning for them.

DON'TS

DON'T doubt someone's report of abuse.

False reports of abuse are extremely rare. Simply listen to the story so you can make an accurate report to the authorities.

DON'T ask leading questions.

Let the person tell you what happened in their own words. If you need to ask follow-up questions, make them open-ended ("What did this person do?"). Do not ask leading questions ("This person hurt you, didn't they?").

If the person is a minor, DON'T call their parents immediately.

First, think over how you should proceed. Authorities, such as child protective services, may want to contact the child's parents. Your organization may also have procedures about when and how to notify parents. In cases where the reported abuse involves a parent or other family member, authorities can take steps to ensure the athlete's safety.

DON'T talk to others to "check out the story."

It is not your responsibility to determine if the report is true or to uncover more information. You could harm the investigation. Leave that to trained investigators.

DON'T confront the person who allegedly caused harm.

When you learn about actual or potential abuse, you may be upset and angry. Do not go to the alleged abuser. It could tip them off or compromise the investigation. It may even put you and the survivor in danger.