

**Do report the allegations to Child Protective Services, law enforcement or the child abuse hotline.**

Make the report as soon as possible after receiving the information which causes you to suspect abuse. Do not wait for proof. The law requires you to report when you have "reason to suspect." The only information that CPS needs to take a report is: The child's name and the allegation. All schools should have a protocol on what to do when a child discloses abuse or if abuse is suspected, but remember, reporting to your principal or supervisor is not enough. You must make the call.

**Remember:**

- Every state legally mandates that educators report suspected child abuse and neglect.
- All states provide immunity from civil liability and criminal penalty for mandated reporters who report in good faith.
- You don't have to give you name. It's okay to report anonymously.

**Report Suspicions of Child Maltreatment to:**

**Albemarle Department of Social Services** 972-4010

**Charlottesville Department of Social Services** 970-3400

**Child Abuse Hotline** (800) 552-7096

**Albemarle Police Department**  
296-5807

**Charlottesville Police Department**  
970-3280

**To learn more about how to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse call Foothills Child Advocacy Center to schedule a training for you and your youth-serving organization.**

***Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Abuse***

***Dos and Don'ts for Education Professionals***



FOOTHILLS CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

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Educators play a vital role in identifying, reporting, and preventing child sexual abuse. Because educators have consistent contact with children, they are often the first person to learn of a new allegation of sexual abuse. The initial response of adults will affect the outcome of the case. To help minimize additional trauma for children and to help support effective investigation and prosecution, these are some do's and don'ts for educators when responding to an outcry of sexual abuse:

### What is child sexual abuse?

Any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other.

Forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act, including sexual contact. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet.



### When a child discloses abuse to you:

- **Don't** show shock or other strong reaction.
- **Don't** make promises you can't keep.
- **Don't** repeat what the child told you unless there is a clearly defined need for that person to know.
- It is rarely appropriate for educators to communicate directly with parents regarding alleged child maltreatment because:
  - Danger to child may increase.
  - The child may recant.
  - The parent may flee with child.
  - Risk of suicide for victim and perpetrator.
- **Don't** put personal or diagnostic opinion regarding the truthfulness of the allegation in the child's record.
- **Don't** correct the child if they use slang terms for body parts or functions.
- **Do** remain calm.
- **Do** reassure the child that it is not his/her fault and they did the right thing to tell.
- **Do** tell the child that you believe her/him.

- **Do** tell the child that you must report it and that someone whose job it is to protect children will be talking to her/him.
- **Do** check to see if the child feels safe returning home: "How do you feel about going home today?"
- **Do** document the exact words the child says when disclosing.
- **Do** listen. Let the child tell his/her story, but leave the questioning to the professionals

### Don't conduct your own investigation.

This includes refraining from detailed questioning of the child, questioning witnesses and confronting the alleged offender. In addition, no other education professionals should question the child once he or she has made the initial disclosure. If another educator must be informed of the allegation, the person hearing the disclosure should provide the information, not the child. Questioning the child might lead to contamination, which makes prosecuting the offender more difficult and can cause psychological stress to the child. CPS and law enforcement refer sexual abuse victims to Foothills Child Advocacy Center, which specializes in questioning children, to gather evidence in child abuse cases.