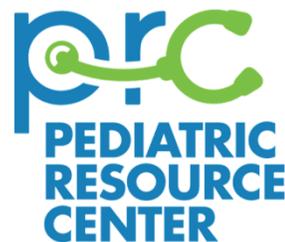




If You Think a Child Has Been Sexually Abused ...



...meeting the medical needs of
abused and neglected children.

Stay calm

Children look to the adults in their lives for reassurance that things will be alright. Try to control your emotions. Fear and anger on your part are natural reactions, but may be frightening to the child and misunderstood. Let the child know that your feelings are not directed at him/her.

Believe what the child says

Let the child know that it was right to tell you and thank them for telling. If you find the disclosure hard to believe, remind yourself that false disclosures are very rare. It's best not to ask questions of the child. If you feel you need more information, again, stay calm. Be very careful to avoid asking questions that suggest you want a specific answer (for example "Did someone touch you down there?")

Establish safety

Reassure the child that he/she is safe. Let the child know that the person who abused them did something wrong and the person needs help to stop hurting people. Pay attention to what the child may need to feel safe, even if it seems unusual, like wearing two pairs of pajamas. Help the child feel safe by protecting their privacy. Don't talk about the abuse with anyone who does not need to know and don't talk about it with the child around. Children may feel embarrassed and unsafe if they overhear you speaking about the abuse.

Get Help

Immediately contact DCFS at 1-800-252-2873 and phone the police to report the abuse.

Provide them with as much information as possible to better ensure their appropriate intervention.

Consider the need for a medical examination for your child. If necessary, contact the Pediatric Resource Center at 309-624-9595 or toll-free 877-262-6122 (M-F; 8:30 to 5:00). If the medical needs of your child constitute an emergency (the abuse happened in the last 7 days or the child was cared for by the abuser in the last 7 days), take your child immediately to a hospital Emergency Department.

Seek counseling for both the child and yourself as soon as possible. Immediate intervention can help prevent long-term effects of the abuse and start the healing process.