



WHEN ABUSE AFFECTS THE COMMUNITY

Tips for Parents and Caregivers

You may learn that a staff, volunteer, or person in position of power has been accused of misconduct. It might be sexual abuse, physical abuse, exploitation, or possession of child pornography. What do you do?

Parents often want to know the facts about the accusations; what the institution, school, organization, or facility is doing; and the legal case or employment status of the accused. As parent(s) whose child may have had contact with the accused, you should be provided with accurate and complete information.

- Ask that you get up-to-date information.
- Find out the contact info if there is a victim advocate assigned to the case.

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD

The purpose of talking with your child is to learn what the child already knows and to address any concerns they may have. Do not ask your child about the specifics of the accusations. That should be left to the professionals. It might impact the legal case. Below are some examples of open questions. Use your judgment based on the child's age. Depending on their answers, you can decide the next steps to take.

- I heard there might be concerns about a [teacher/coach/counselor] at school. Tell me what you know.
- Are there any adults at school who bother you? Tell me more about that.

These situations are also good opportunities to talk in general about sexual abuse and safety. Our resource **"A Safer Family, A Safer World"** has tips for talking about consent and sexual development.

Children should know that even people who are admired and liked can make very bad choices. They should know it is wrong for adults or older teens to touch children in a sexual way, take sexual pictures of children, or keep sexual pictures of children. Children can be encouraged to tell parents (or other trusted adults) if they know something, have seen something, or if something happened to them. Even if nothing has happened, parents need to know about their children's worries.

Parents are often very upset when a trusted person has been accused of misconduct. These are normal reactions:

- Concern that the institution, organization, school, or facility did not follow procedures. Or that they don't have safeguards in place.
- Worry about their child's safety.
- Shock or doubt about the accusations.
- Uncertainty about the legal process.

Parents and caregivers may want to discuss their concerns or questions. Respect the privacy of the child(ren) and families who have been directly affected. You may contact the institution, organization, school, or facility. You may contact the victim advocate or investigators on the legal case. Reach out to our center for support. We are here to help.