



# IDENTIFYING & REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse and neglect, which is defined by state statute, impacts millions of children every year in the United States. Therefore, it is important to recognize the indicators of abuse, and understand one's obligations to report abuse to protect children.

## Indicators Of Abuse

- » Malnourished/Hungry
- » Tired/Lethargic
- » Chronic injuries
- » Bruises
- » Human bite marks
- » Untreated injuries
- » Head injuries
- » Non-accidental burns
- » Poor relations with peers
- » Poor academic performance
- » Change in behavior or attitude
- » Disruptive, impulsive, aggressive
- » Passive, depressed, withdrawn

## Disclosure

**Disclosure is often a process, not a one-time event.**

- » Less than 1/4 of victims disclose immediately after abuse occurs.
- » Less than 1/4 may disclose from 1 month to 5 years later.
- » Over 1/2 may wait more than 5 years to disclose, if at all.

### Ways children may attempt to disclose abuse:

- » **Hinted Disclosure** - "A neighbor is messing with me."
- » **Questioned Disclosure** - "What would happen if somebody was hurting a kid and they told someone about it?"
- » **Conditional Disclosure** - "I need to tell you something, but if I do, you have to promise not to tell."

## Do...

- » Support, believe, and reassure the child
- » Understand your limits, you are not an investigator
- » Provide a quiet, safe environment
- » When you are done talking to the child, write down the child's exact words
- » Ask limited, open-ended questions
- » Respect the child's right to privacy
- » Seek help and advice
- » Report any suspicions of abuse/neglect

## Don't...

- » Make assumptions or promises
- » Show shock or other emotions
- » Interrogate or investigate
- » Put words in the child's mouth
- » Be judgmental about the abuser; it is often someone the child loves/trusts
- » Assume someone else will report abuse

## Reporting Abuse

Every person over the age of 18 who is a citizen of the State of Florida is required by law to report suspected child abuse. Reporters should have a reasonable suspicion before making a report. Reporters will remain anonymous. Call 1-800-96ABUSE or local law enforcement. You will need the child's name, address, age, parents' names, and reason for suspected abuse. Learn more: Gulf Coast Kid's House (850)-595-5800 [gulfcoastkidshouse.org](http://gulfcoastkidshouse.org) and for additional resources visit [mbfpreventioneducation.org](http://mbfpreventioneducation.org).