



REMEMBER

- Since 1 out of every 3 adults in Canada have suffered some sort of abuse, youth you work with are sure to have been impacted. If a youth discloses to you, make time to process this for yourself with a wise friend, supervisor or mentor. Hold back the names (except with your supervisor), but do not hold back talking about the impact on you.
- It's not your job to make a case against the abuser – you don't even need to know all the details. The responsibility to prove allegations rests with the government ministry and the police. Your job is to represent the heart of God which stands for the abused and gives a voice to the victim.
- Disclosing abuse within the family throws a family system into chaos. When teens fear this they may avoid disclosing the truth. Help them realize that they are the child and they do not need to carry responsibility for what may happen any more than they are responsible for what has happened. Holding back the truth is more unsafe for the family than the short term chaos that may result from telling the truth.



RECOGNIZE

- Abuse is a non-accidental injury of mistreatment by the ACTIONS and OMISSIONS of a child's parents, guardians or other adult influences. It can be physical, verbal, sexual, emotional or even from neglect; it can be direct or from exposure to repeated partner violence in the home.
- You may find out about abuse through a courageous conversation you initiate based on things you have seen, through friends of the teen coming to you with information, or through the teen sharing directly with you.
- Signs of abuse vary. Become aware of what to watch for and don't hold back from respectfully following up your suspicions with questions. Watch for a collection of signs such as: unexplained bruises of different colours, over-sexualization of behaviour, flinching and fearfulness around heightened emotion, hyper-responsibility for siblings, excessive self-deprecating, or fear of going home.



RESPOND

Abused children suffer at the hands of those they should be able to trust most. Rebuilding trust and processing the meaning of the losses can take many years. Start with connecting the young person to a competent counsellor that they feel comfortable with.

When hearing a report of abuse:

- **Stay calm.** Look them in the eye. Sit close with your full attention. LISTEN.
 - **Don't push for all the informational details.** Simply invite them to tell you about what has happened/is happening and how it is impacting them.
 - **Ask who else they have shared this with** and what happened from that conversation. If this information has not been brought to the authorities already you will need to make a report (see below). BUT FIRST – care for the young person in front of you with respect and gentleness.
 - **Do not agree to keep this between the two of you.** You cannot and will not stand by and let harm go unaddressed. Let them know that they don't have to carry this burden by themselves any more.
- **Be prepared for varied responses** such as anger, relief, minimizing, panic, backtracking. Allow them to feel what they feel and be honest about how you feel. They need to know that something has been taken from them and that your heart breaks for their loss.
 - **Prepare them.** Help the young person be aware of the process ahead and assure them that you will walk with them through it.
 - **Don't forget the parents.** If the abuse is within the family, resist the urge to avoid and instead, step toward parents with support as soon as it is appropriate and to whatever level they will allow. Most parents don't want to harm their children but are unable to manage what is going on in their lives.



ABUSE

lifeteams
resources



RESOURCES

cwrp.ca/faqs - Each province has a designated government service to protect children and encourage family stability. This resource will connect you with the numbers you need to call and the process you need to follow in your area.

www.kidshelpphone.ca - Contact the professionals standing by for an online chat or call 1-800-668-6868 to talk voice to voice. They can guide you in walking through the next steps.

Youth Unlimited
lifeteams.ca