

# Reporting Abuse



Professionals working with children or vulnerable adults, immediately following a report of the abuse, are interacting with a person at a critical moment. If someone discloses abuse during your involvement with them:



## Listen

Do not fill in words for them and do not ask probing questions. If the person is having a difficult time talking, don't help them with words that you think they are going to say. Allow them to tell you in their words or in the normal ways that he or she communicates.



## Reassure

Tell them you are glad they told you and that you believe him or her. Let him/her know that was not their fault and reassure them that they are not in trouble. If they ask you not to tell anyone, remind them that it is your job to help keep him or her safe and you will do whatever you may need to do to keep him or her safe.



## Recognize your own feelings

Don't express panic or shock or be overly critical of the offender. We are all protective of people we care about, even if we are being abused.



## Report it

Contact your local law enforcement and/or social services to report the abuse.

## Who do I call to make a report?

In case of an emergency, call 911. In non-emergency situations, call your local county social services to make a report about the abuse.

## What information do I need to make a report?

The name and address of the child you suspect is being abused or neglected

- The age of the child
- The name and address of the parents or caretakers
- The name of the person you suspect is abusing or neglecting the child and the address if available.
- The reason you suspect the child is being abused and neglected
- Any other information which may be helpful to the investigation

## What can you do to help?

Anytime there is an allegation of abuse it needs to be reported and investigated by the proper authorities. **A report is the statement that you have knowledge of or reasonable cause to suspect a person has been abused or neglected.** Any case of suspected child abuse or neglect, must be reported, even if the event occurred in the past.

When you report abuse, families are connected with counseling, resources, and services. This may reduce stress and save a life.

A person reporting suspected child abuse or neglect should contact the County Social Service Office in the county where the child resides, or download the form at <https://www.dakotacac.org/the-issue-of-child-abuse/how-to-report/>

To report suspected abuse of vulnerable adults call 1-855-462-5465 (1-855-GO2LINK)

or visit [nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/reporting.html](http://nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/reporting.html)

Call (701) 323-5626 to learn more or visit us online at [www.dakotacac.org](http://www.dakotacac.org)



Dakota Children's  
ADVOCACY CENTER

*The Dakota Children's Advocacy Center provides and coordinates services for families affected by abuse*

# Recognizing Abuse



Abuse refers to any intentional or negligent act that causes harm or serious risk to a child or vulnerable adult

## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse of a child is when an adult causes non-accidental injury or harm to a child OR pain or injury, depriving of basic needs or confinement of a vulnerable adult.

## Neglect

Neglect is when a caregiver does not give the care, supervision, affection, and support needed for a child's or vulnerable adults health, safety, and well-being.

## Psychological Maltreatment

Psychological Maltreatment is when a caregiver harms a person's mental or social development, or causes severe emotional harm. While a single incident may be abuse, most often emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior that causes damage over time.

## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or someone older or more powerful uses a child for sexual purposes or involves a child in sexual acts. It also includes sexual contact of vulnerable adults that is non-consensual.

## Exploitation

Exploitation is when someone exploits funds, property, or assets of a vulnerable adult for personal profit.

## Signs of Abuse

Abuse can be very subtle and you may not even see the signs. Look for changes in behavior and trust your instinct. Some of the behaviors you may see include:

- Unexplained Injuries
- Changes in behavior
- Changes in eating
- Fear of going home
- Returning to earlier behaviors
- Changes in school/job performance and attendance
- Risk-taking behaviors
- Inappropriate sexual behaviors
- Changes in sleeping
- Lack of personal care or hygiene

When families are involved in allegations of abuse, emotions run high and anxiety levels rise. The allegations alone are stressful due to fear of the victim being removed from the home, the possibility of what has happened, and the social stigma attached to abuse. Family stress and the emotional response should be expected.

It is important to recognize this does not mean that the family is uncooperative. It simply means that they need time and/or assistance in dealing with the situation. It does not help the family, or the investigation, to pressure someone in a state of crisis to provide information or to respond in a punitive manner. It is best to call upon the assistance of those trained in dealing with abuse.

*Abuse Hurts at any Age ~ Recognize and Report it*

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