

## What to Do if a Child Makes an Outcry of Abuse

If you suspect a child is a victim, or if a child has made an outcry of abuse to you, your next steps are critical to that child's safety. By believing the child and reporting the abuse, you affirm the trust this child has in you to protect him/her.

- ❑ **ALWAYS BELIEVE THE CHILD.** Children rarely lie about such an intense and painful topic.
- ❑ Ask a few open-ended questions that allow the child to tell his/her story. Let him/her use his/her own words to tell you what happened.
- ❑ Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling you and that what happened is absolutely not his/her fault.
- ❑ Remain calm/don't overreact. Children will interpret that your anger or disgust is directed at them.
- ❑ Don't criticize the child or their abuser.
- ❑ **Don't make promises you can't keep!** Don't promise a child that you will make things better. Sometimes, even if justice is served, things may not feel "better" to that child. It is also important to let a child know that you can't keep this a secret. Tell them that your job is to keep them safe.
- ❑ **ALWAYS REPORT ABUSE!**

## Reporting Abuse to Child Protective Services (CPS)

- ❑ Gather details about what has happened to the child. Find out what you can about the alleged perpetrator, as well as identifying and locating information.
- ❑ Make reports of child abuse by calling the Statewide Intake Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or by reporting on-line at [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org).
- ❑ CPS asks that you DO NOT tell anyone that you are reporting, including the child's parents or alleged perpetrator.
- ❑ If the child is in immediate danger, call the local police department or 911.

To learn more about Child Protective Services and information on reporting child abuse, please visit the following website: [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

**Learn more. Call (512) 321-6161 or 1-866-88CHILD.**