Talking With a Child Who May Have Been Abused

Let’s consider how to respond to a potentially abused child and what information is needed:

- Present a calm and soothing manner when talking to the child. (You may be upset by what’s happening, but showing that won’t help the child or the process.)
- Listen. This includes being prepared to wait quietly while the child responds.
- Be supportive.
- Don’t make any statements that may suggest shame, disbelief, fear, disgust, or blame.
- Don’t ask the youth why they did not report earlier.
- Assure the youth that it was not their fault.
- Assure the youth that you believe them.
- If you can, gently ask basic, specific, and open-ended questions, such as…
- Name, address and phone number of the victim.
- Name, address and phone number of the offender.
- Relationship with the offender (e.g. family member, leader, family friend)
- Location of the abuse.
- Nature of the abuse (e.g. physical, emotional, sexual)
- Date and time of the abuse.
- Whether anyone else knows of the abuse.
- If possible, write down the details.

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