



*If you are concerned about child abuse, talk to your child. Keep in mind a few guidelines to create a non-threatening environment where the child may be more likely to open up to you.*

- **Pick your time and place carefully.** Choose a space where the child is comfortable. Avoid talking in front of someone who may be causing them harm.
- **Be aware of your tone.** A casual, non-threatening, tone will help put the child at ease and ultimately provide you with more accurate information.
- **Talk to your child directly.** Ask questions that use the child’s own vocabulary, but that are a little vague. For example, “Has someone been touching you?” In this context “touching” can mean different things, but it is likely a word the child is familiar with. Understand that abuse can be very confusing for a child, so asking if someone is “hurting” them may not bring out the information that you are looking for.
- **Listen to your child.** Allow the child to talk freely without interruptions or excessive questions.
- **Reassure your child.** Make sure that the child knows that they are not in trouble. Let them know you are simply asking questions because you are concerned about them.
- **Be patient.** Remember that this conversation may be very frightening for the child. Many perpetrators make threats about what will happen if someone finds out about the abuse.

### *What should I do if my child tells me that something has happened to them?*

Your reaction will have a big effect on how your child deals with trauma. Children whose caregivers are supportive, heal more quickly. To be supportive, it is important to:

- **Stay calm.** Hearing your child has possibly been abused is hard. Controlling your own emotions can help your child share. Avoid asking too many questions at this time.
- **Believe your child.** Let your child know they are not to blame and brave for telling.
- **Protect your child.** Keep your child away from the alleged abuser.
- **Immediately report.** It is important to contact law enforcement as soon as possible to protect your child and others.
- **Reassure your child.** Tell your child that they are loved. Don’t make promises you can’t keep such as, “I won’t tell anyone.” Assure your child that you will do everything you can to protect them.

To report possible abuse, call  
Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office **843-524-2777** or **911** if an emergency

For additional guidance, call  
Child Abuse Prevention Association (CAPA) **843-524-4350**  
or visit [www.capabeaufort.org](http://www.capabeaufort.org)