

YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS:

REPORT ABUSE IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

Your role as a mandated reporter

Helping kids is what you do! Are their times where you are not sure if a child is being harmed? Do you feel helpless as to how to respond? Adults need the skills to know what to do if abuse is observed or disclosed by a child. This resource will empower you to know what to do if you suspect child abuse. Employees of youth serving organizations are #Essential4Kids!

Legal Responsibilities

All Youth Serving Organization (YSO) staff/volunteers are mandated reporters. You do not need proof.

If you reasonably suspect abuse/neglect, you must directly report it immediately to the hotline.

Making a Report is Asking for Help and Services

You are not making an accusation when you report, you are requesting professional help for a child and their family.

If a Child Discloses Abuse to You

Stay calm and listen with compassion. Tell the child, "I believe you." Only ask open ended questions ("Tell me more"). Avoid digging for details and do not have multiple staff question the child's story. This re-traumatizes the child and damages the investigation and/or prosecution.



Where To Report

Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline
1-800-392-3738 or 1-844-CAN-TELL
Online at dss.mo.gov/cd/can.htm
Child in immediate danger, call 911.

Effectively Reporting

Explain how the suspected abuse has impacted the child.

Be precise with dates, times, and locations, if available.

Describe specific changes in behavior/emotions: expressions of fear, interactions with other children and adults, impact on grades, and/or impact of an unsafe environment.

Removing Obstacles to Reporting Abuse

- No supervisor or YSO staff may delay or prevent any report.
- When you make a report in good faith, you are protected against legal penalty or adverse employment action.
- "Nothing will be done." If your concern is not assessed or investigated, it will be documented in a central database, which could help the child at a later date. A previous negative experience does not mean the next report will not be handled well.
- "I am uncomfortable making a report. In the past, the YSO representative made the reports." You are required to directly report, but you can ask for support and get educated. Have a YSO staff member call with you.

Creating a Safe Environment

Make one on one interactions with children observable and interruptible.

Make an extra effort with children who:

- Have a history of emotional, sexual, physical abuse or neglect, drug use or discussed/attempted suicide.
- Are responsible for the care of other children or live in a highly stressful family situation with limited support systems.
- Require assistance due to physical, mental, behavioral, or medical disabilities or delays.

TRUST YOUR GUT: If something does not look safe, sound safe or feel safe – report.