# How to receive a disclosure?

## Basic attitudes to adopt

- Listen, be attentive and remain calm.
- Believe the person and respond with empathy and respect.
- Normalize their feelings and offer reassurance.
- Thank them for trusting you and acknowledge the courage it takes to disclose.
- Avoid blaming or judging.

## Essential things to know

### Avoid asking questions

When a young person discloses a sexual violence, it is important to ask as few questions as possible in order not to contaminate or influence their account, even if this may seem counterintuitive. Asking questions increases the risk of obtaining answers influenced by suggestions made to the child. Further, a child may answer simply to please the adult or because they feel pressured to do so. This can interfere with the police investigation. It is the investigator's role to further explore the relevant elements and obtain the necessary details.

When the disclosure is vague or incomplete (e.g., "Some weird things happened yesterday that I didn't like…" / "She touched me in places…"), it is possible to repeat the young person's own words to encourage them to say more, using prompts such as:

This approach encourages the youth to draw from their own memory.

Tell me everything about **[repeat exactly what the young person said]**
*"Tell me everything about the weird things you didn't like."*

Tell me more about **[repeat exactly what the young person said]**
*"Tell me more about her touching you in places."*

### Make a report to **the Director of Youth Protection** (DYP)

Everyone has a legal obligation to report situations involving physical or sexual abuse of a minor, whether they witnessed it, were informed about it, or suspect that abuse may have occurred[1].

Making a report helps protect the child, as well as other potential victims. It can also help victims and their close relatives access support services.

When a report is made, the Director of Youth Protection will inform you about the next steps and your role in the situation, for example: informing the environment involved (school, sports club, etc.), whether or not the young person should continue participating in activities, accessing resources, and so on.

[1] Youth Protection Act, CQLR c P-34.1, s. 39.

## Take notes if needed

When making a report, it is important to use the youth's exact words rather than your own interpretation. Depending on your comfort level, it may be helpful to take notes during the disclosure. If you do, you can explain your approach by saying: "What you're telling me is important, so I'm going to take some notes.".

If information is missing or if some of your questions remain unanswered during your report to the DYP, simply say that you do not know rather than making assumptions or interpretations.

## Best practices to keep the teen at the centre of the process

- Offer the young person the opportunity to make the report to the DYP themselves, while remaining by their side during the call.
- Offer the young person the option of being present when the report is made, putting the call on speakerphone and inviting them to correct or add information if needed.
- Ask how they are feeling and about their immediate, short-, medium- and long-term needs.
- Learn about the different support resources available.

**All of this aims to…**

- ✓ give them autonomy
- ✓ validate their experience
- ✓ empower and value them
- ✓ involve them in the process
- ✓ help restore their sense of agency

**You are worried, but unsure about making a report?**

Whenever you have doubts, you can consult the DYP. Never hesitate to do so. Your responsibility is to report any concerns you may have.

It is also possible to make a consultation call to the DYP. This service allows you to ask questions and receive guidance about the steps to take, without sharing personal information about the young person or their immediate entourage.

**If you took the time to listen to a young person who disclosed sexual violence, you have already contributed to their well-being: you listened and believed them. That initial response can profoundly change the course of their story.**

marie-vincent

Self-care toolkit