

RECOGNIZING, REPORTING, AND RESPONDING TO ABUSE

Guidance for the Education Sector

Recognize

Report

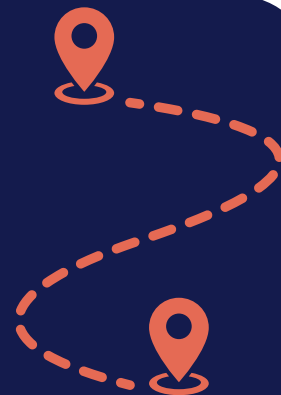
Respond

For a child or youth who has experienced abuse, school can be a place of refuge. Students may show general signs of abuse, but there are also school-specific behaviours that can serve as indicators.

Reporting suspected child abuse ensures a student has every chance to receive the intervention they need in support of their resilience and well-being.

Students Experiencing Abuse May:

- Seem frightened of parents, write or post concerning messages
- Have sudden changes in behaviour or performance
- Have unexplained physical injuries that don't match the child's explanation
- Show up early, stay late and generally be reluctant to go home
- Show extreme behavioural reactions such as aggression or withdrawal
- Show sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond their stage of development
- Be consistently hungry, sick, or not suitably dressed for the conditions



Reporting Suspected Abuse:

- Your responsibility is to report reasonable suspicions or concerns, not to prove or investigate them
- The report must come directly from the person who received the information or witnessed the event. It is okay to ask an administrator to help you make the call
- You do not need permission to report
- Referral sources are kept confidential

Responding To Child Abuse Disclosures:

A child or youth may come to you, a trusted adult, to share their experience of abuse because they believe you can help. Although it is common to feel fear, disbelief, anger, or sadness, it is important to set aside personal feelings and stay calm.

- Allow the child to do most of the talking
- If you need more understanding about the context, use an open-ended question such as “when you say ... tell me what you mean?”
- Assure child that you believe them and will need to tell someone who can help them
- Document comments made by the student, caregiver, or anyone else verbatim

Information To Prepare For Your Call To Authorities

To guide professionals in making an informed decision about the next steps, they will ask:

- Who is in the family?
- Was a guardian's specific action or inaction the reason you suspect child abuse?
- Is the incident related to a pattern of the guardian's behaviour and if so, can you describe the frequency and/or severity of the concern?
- What is the impact of this action, inaction or pattern of behaviour from the guardian on the child?

Who Do I Call?

- It is your legal duty to report suspected abuse. If you suspect abuse, call: Child Abuse Hotline: **1-800-387-5437 (KIDS)**;
- If contacted by a caregiver, the priority should be to preserve the dignity & confidentiality of all involved;
- Direct caregivers to the school administration.

School staff have a legal duty to report suspected child abuse.

Resources and References:

- [Reporting Suspected Child Abuse | Luna \(lunacentre.ca\)](#)
- [ProtectKidsOnline.ca](#)