

## **WHAT SHOULD I SAY WHEN OTHERS ASK ABOUT MY CHILD'S ABUSE?**

It is often difficult to know how to respond to the questions of concerned friends and family members about your child's abuse. It is important to remember that you do not have to respond to anyone's questions if you do not want to. You only need to tell those people who have a reason to know what happened (caseworkers, law enforcement, siblings, parents, etc.).

When deciding whom to tell, keep in mind how people unusually react to stressful situations. If a person tends to become overemotional in stressful situations, it may not be wise to tell them about this incident. You have the right to ask those you share information with to not discuss what happened with others.

If a friend or relative asks you for more information than you feel comfortable sharing, you may tell them that you appreciate their concern, but you would rather not discuss it. Your child has a right to a certain amount of privacy. If you need to talk about what happened, it is encouraged that you seek out a therapist, who is required to maintain confidentiality.

Depending on your child's age, you may help him/her decide with whom is appropriate for them to discuss the abuse. For example, a therapist or a trusted teacher may be appropriate, while telling everyone at school is not. Your child may need help preparing for the questions, comments, and reactions from others. Again, neither you nor your child have to share information about the abuse with anyone who does not have a reason to know.

Finally, and very importantly, if there are other children and families involved in this investigation, do not discuss the specifics of what happened to your child with them.