



Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

24 Hour Crisis Line:  
MO (816) 531- 0233  
KS (913) 642-0233  
[www.mocsa.org](http://www.mocsa.org)

## Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Abuse:

### *How to Talk with Teens*

Sexual abuse occurs more often than we would like to think; **one in four girls** and **one in six boys** will be sexually abused before their eighteenth birthday. To help you feel more comfortable with and prepared for the challenge of addressing sexual abuse, we offer these helpful tips.

If a teen discloses abuse to you, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Believe him or her.** The most important thing is to believe him/her. Teens rarely lie about abuse; what is more common is denial that abuse happened when it did. Tell them you believe him/her.
- **Reassure him/her that the abuse is not their fault.** A victim's greatest fear is that he or she is responsible for the abuse. Be sure to make it clear that what happened is not a result of anything they did or did not do.
- **Do not make promises you can't keep.** Do not promise him/her that he/she will never have to see the abuser again or other things you cannot guarantee.
- **Stay calm,** even though you may feel surprised or upset. Remember that crisis line services are also available to you.
- **Do not interrogate, lecture, or punish him/her.** Experiences of sexual abuse are traumatic. This is a time to offer nonjudgmental support.
- **Help your teen assess resources available to him/her.** Call MOCSA for information about advocacy and counseling services.
- **Report the abuse immediately.** If your teen is under the age of consent for your state, report the abuse or suspected abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline.

**Believing and supporting teens are two of the best actions to start the healing process.** Appropriate and helpful responses can include:

- "I am glad you told me, thank you."
- "You are very brave and did the right thing."
- "It wasn't your fault."
- "I am proud of you for telling me."

**For more information please visit [www.mocsa.org](http://www.mocsa.org).**

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