

DISCLOSURES OF MALTREATMENT MADE BY A TEENAGER

Guidelines

The conversation should take place in private.

All the same, to avoid any subsequent feelings of betrayal, the teen must not be led to believe that everything disclosed will necessarily be kept secret.

Many teenagers are reluctant to disclose abuse due to their **fear of consequences and retaliation.**

The adult having the conversation should be **someone the teenager trusts.**

“ Joanie, tell me about what happened at home. ”

“ It's good that you confided in me. You're safe at school. Remember that this isn't your fault! ”

“ What you're going through isn't easy... You don't have to tell me everything right away... I'll do what I can to help you ”

It's normal for adults to feel angry, powerless or saddened by a disclosure, but adults must always **regulate their own emotions and show compassion.**

● The role of school staff or other adults is not to investigate the situation but, rather, to **give the teenager a voice** and to share this information with the authorities, if necessary.

● Even if a teenager doesn't immediately disclose what he or she has experienced, **the fact that adults care about the teenager and share his or her concerns is a first step in building trust**, which may eventually allow the teenager to talk about what he or she is experiencing.

This infographic is adapted from an article by Delphine Collin-Vézina, retrieved June 9, 2020, from: theconversation.com/retour-en-classe-comment-les-profs-peuvent-reagir-aux-cas-de-maltraitance

Conception: Marie-France Blais, IUJD

© Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté (IUJD) du CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, 2020

1/2

! Avoid !

Leading questions! For example: "Did someone at home hit you or touch you?"

Promising that "everything will be OK," because many of the steps that follow a report are no longer in your hands.

Openly expressing shock or negative judgment about the teenager's disclosure. This may give rise to feelings of shame and guilt and may slow down the teenager's disclosures.



The adult's reaction has a significant impact on the teenager. If the teenager feels that he or she isn't being believed or taken seriously, or if the teenager isn't told before Youth Protection or the police are called, he or she may stop talking.

Disclosure is a difficult and delicate process. It should be handled with empathy and sensitivity, given the enormous risk the teenager takes when deciding to disclose.

In short...

- Ask open-ended questions and avoid overly leading ones
- Use vocabulary appropriate to the teenager's age and development.
- Respond with empathy and without judgment, while regulating your own emotions.
- Be as honest as possible about the possibility of having to involve other people who will protect the teenager, if necessary.

IUJD INSTITUT
UNIVERSITAIRE
JEUNES EN DIFFICULTÉ



**Centre intégré
universitaire de santé
et de services sociaux
du Centre-Sud-
de-l'Île-de-Montréal**

Québec  

This infographic is adapted from an article by Delphine Collin-Vézina, retrieved June 9, 2020, from: theconversation.com/retour-en-classe-comment-les-profs-peuvent-reagir-aux-cas-de-maltraitance

Design: Marie-France Blais, IUJD