**DO:**

* Give them your full attention
* Maintain a calm appearance – if you become angry, upset or out of control this will only make it more difficult for the child
* Reassure them it is right to tell. Tell them that you believe them and that the abuse is not their fault
* Recognize the bravery and strength it takes to disclose
* Let the child or young person take their time
* Let the child or young person use their own words
* Keep the child informed about what will happen next. Ask them what they need or hope to happen after they told you

**DO NOT:**

* Make promises you can’t keep
* Confront the perpetrator
* Ask too many detailed questions about the abuse
* Challenge or act like you don’t believe the child
* Attempt to conduct your own investigation
* Ask the child to repeat the disclosure to other family members or friends – the child should only speak with the professional investigative team

**REMEMBER:**

* It is not uncommon for children to recant “take it back”; this may occur due to mixed feelings about their abuser and what has happened because of disclosure
* Some children were sworn to secrecy or threatened harm if they were to disclose
* Children are most likely to be abused by someone they and the family know, not a “stranger in the bushes”
* **Do not frighten the child by asking confronting questions**
	+ **Instead, ask for basic details; who did it; when did it happen; where did it happen**
	+ **Ask open-ended questions**
	+ **Ensure child’s safety**
	+ **Immediately contact DHS or local law enforcement**

**PHRASES TO USE:**

* **“**I believe you.”
* “You did the right thing by telling me.”
* “It’s not your fault.”

References:

*How to respond to a disclosure of abuse*. Indiana Center for the Prevention of Youth Abuse & Suicide. (n.d.). https://www.indianaprevention.org/respond-to-disclosure