



## Common Reactions of Parents When Abuse Has Been Reported

1. **Denial.** Your first reaction may be disbelief or not accepting that it really happened. Or you may believe it happened, but that no real harm was done. Parents often experience denial because it is too overwhelming to accept that the abuse occurred and that there will be aftereffects.
2. **Anger.** You may feel angry with yourself for not protecting your child. You may feel angry with the perpetrator for what he/she did. Be honest about your feelings and share them with a trusted friend, relatives or a support group.
3. **Helplessness.** You probably do not know what to expect and may feel that things are out of your control. Speaking with Team members will help you address these concerns and stay aware of how your case is proceeding. This may help you understand what to expect in your situation.
4. **Lack of assertiveness.** You may feel invisible and think there is nothing you can do to help the situation get better. We will help you learn what you can do to take appropriate action.
5. **Shock, numbness, disgust.** You may feel this way when you learn of the reported abuse. This can often be brought about by memories of being abused as a child. You may need to seek counseling for yourself to help you recover so that you can better assist your child.
6. **Guilt, self-blame.** You may feel that what happened is your fault. Remember, the offender is responsible for the abuse, not you. The best thing you can do now is support your child and learn all you can about how to make things better.
7. **Hurt and betrayal.** It is normal to feel hurt from the loss of your child's innocence. You may have lost a spouse or partner if that person was the offender. You may even have lost friends. It is very important to grieve for these losses.
8. **Financial Concerns.** You may be worried about finances because of loss of income. In some cases, allegations of sexual abuse may result in the breadwinner leaving the home. Please call your Family Advocate from the CAC who can help you access programs that may be available to help you.
9. **Fear of violence.** You may fear the offender will try to hurt you or your child. Express these concerns immediately to your local police, DCF worker and CAC Team members. There are many possible steps to help prevent this from happening.
10. **Fear of substance abuse.** You may be afraid that you or your child will abuse drugs or alcohol because of the stress. If you need help, don't hesitate to contact a therapist, trusted person, or recovery center.
11. **Loss of privacy.** You may be concerned that others in your community will hear about what has happened to your child. The investigation of child abuse is performed in a confidential manner and information will not be communicated to anyone other than Team members. You should be careful about what you tell others while the investigation is going on to protect your child's privacy and to prevent complicating the process.
12. **Confusion: Why didn't my child tell me?** It is common for a child not to tell his or her parents about the abuse. The abuser may have threatened the child in many ways, such as saying that the abuser will get in trouble if the child tells; that a parent will be mad at them if he or she tells; that the child will be "taken away" from his or her parents; that a parent will be harmed or killed; or that the child's pet will be harmed or killed if he or she tells. Even young children feel protective toward their parents and refrain from doing or saying anything that will upset the parent. Reassure your child that the fact that they told someone was very brave and an important thing for them to do.