



# OAK HILL CHRISTIAN SERVICE CAMP

*Planting seeds that will grow*

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[www.oakhillcamp.org](http://www.oakhillcamp.org)

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## ABUSE GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONALS

*Developed April 2007 Updated 04/15/2022*

*(Copied from "A Guide for Mandated Reporters In Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse And Neglect", Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services)*

If a child reports any type of abuse or neglect to a junior counselor at Oak Hill Christian Service Camp, the junior counselor should immediately involve an adult counselor or preferably the camp dean or camp manager. Adult counselors who are made aware of allegations of abuse or neglect should strive to involve the camp manager or camp dean as soon as possible, however, there could be a situation where the child feels only feels comfortable with the counselor he/she approached. These guidelines below are taken directly from A Guide for Mandated Reporters In Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse And Neglect", Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services

### **How should I Respond To A Child Who Reports Being Abused or Neglected?**

When it is necessary to talk with a child in response to a disclosure of maltreatment or to clarify suspicions, it is important to remember to handles the discussion with sensitivity. Your response has the power to calm or upset the child.

#### **Do:**

- Find a private place to talk without interruptions (**but in the clear view of other witnesses**).
- Put the child at ease by sitting near them, not behind a desk.
- Ask permission before touching the child. Touch may be associated with physical or emotional pain in children who have been physically or sexually abused.
- Reassure the child that they are not in trouble.
- Keep your own feelings under control.
- Use open-ended questions such as: "Can you tell me what happened?" or "I'm wondering who taught you how to do that."
- Use the child's vocabulary.
- Let the child know what you will do. "We need to tell (name). They know how to help children and families."
- Support the child: "I'm sorry that happened to you."

**Do Not:**

- Press for details beyond what the child is willing to share. You do not need to prove abuse or neglect.
- Ask “why questions”. These questions require children to explain actions that they may not understand. Young children have not developed the abstract thinking ability necessary to answer these questions.
- Promise not to tell anyone about the child’s disclosure of possible abuse or neglect.
- Ask leading or suggestive questions.
- Make angry or critical comments about the alleged perpetrator. They are often known, loved, or liked by the child.
- Disclose information indiscriminately, keeping in mind the child’s right to privacy.
- Make the child feel different or singled out.

**Techniques for Interacting with an Abused/Neglected Child**

The following tools or techniques can be used with children who may be abused or neglected:

- Never underestimate the power a positive adult relationship can have in a child’s life. Children take their cues from adults.
- Don’t speak badly of the offender. The offender is often known and liked or loved by the child. Suggested statements are: “What they did to you was wrong. I am sorry that it happened to you.” Or “it was unfair to do that to you. I am sorry that it happened.”
- Do not act shocked, angry, or upset at what a child may say or do. Remain open for more information.