

QUICK START: Responding to Suspicion, Allegation, or Disclosure of Abuse

The material appearing on the Education Portal is intended for informational purposes and should not be considered legal advice or used as such.

If the child or youth is in immediate danger report to local law enforcement and/or a child services agency directly and via a local hotline. You can find country specific hotline numbers and information [here](#). In cases of online sexual exploitation use local reporting hotlines and the international tip line at report.cybertip.org.

Activate your organization child protection protocols for documenting and investigating any suspicion or incidents of abuse. Do not question the child beyond confirming your own concern or suspicion with non-leading questions, such as “Can you tell me what happened?” As soon as possible, document disclosure (using the child’s language), and observations of concerning or inappropriate behavior. Sign and date this report (find sample forms in Incident Response). If you find an error or have anything to add, do not alter original report. Instead, document change or additional material, sign and date.

Law enforcement officers will generally not advise you on incidents and are duty bound to investigate criminal activity. Know and abide by the local laws and reporting procedures of your location. Retain records and share confidential material appropriately. If digital images are needed as evidence, such as if an adult is involved, turn off the device and secure it. It is illegal in most countries to view sexual images of children or youth. If you have viewed images accidentally as part of disclosure, document this and seek counseling if needed.¹

In the case of non-recent (historic) abuse, whether months or years have passed and even if you do not have full knowledge of the details, it is important to make a report. Seek support or counseling if you are the victim. In many cases tip lines can act on this information, but you should also reach out to current administrators and/or accrediting agencies (usually noted on websites) if the incident happened in a school, sports club or educational facility or included a member of staff, volunteer or another student. Any information you can share about the incident may be useful to law enforcement building a case or administrators strengthening school child protection policies.

Relevant sections of the Education Portal related to suspicion, allegation or disclosure of abuse are:

- [International & National Law](#)
- [Reporting & Support](#)
 - [Global Reporting Mechanisms](#)
 - [Incident Response](#)
- [Risk Management](#)
- [Responding to Disclosure \(Committee for Children\)](#) – First Responder Interview Guidelines

¹ Sexting in Schools: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people UKCCI