

# MYTHS and FACTS of Child Abuse

## MYTH

Children usually tell someone when they are being abused.

## FACT

Research has found that most child victims delay or never disclose abuse for many reasons.

## MYTH

Children are victimized by creepy strangers.

## FACT

Studies have found that 90% of victims know their abuser and 92% of victims were abused by their caregivers/parents.

## MYTH

Many children lie about being abused and the abuse never happened.

## FACT

False allegations of abuse are statistically uncommon, occurring at the rate of 2-10% of all cases.

## MYTH

If a child has been sexually abused, there will be medical evidence.



## FACT

Medical evidence is found in less than 5% of substantiated abuse cases.

# The **DO's** and **DON'Ts** of Responding to a Disclosure



## 1. Stay Calm

It can be easy to become upset, worried, or shocked. Try to remain calm so that the child feels comfortable.

-  **Don't show panic, fear, anger, or shock. These emotions may accidentally lead a child to feel unsafe or uncomfortable.**
-  **Support the child and thank them for telling you. Reassure the child that they are not in trouble and that this is not their fault.**



## 2. Listen

Listen to the child. If the child is having difficulty talking about it-be patient and don't rush them. Allow the child to explain things in their own words.

-  **Don't interrogate. Asking too many questions can overwhelm the child-or even retraumatize them. Allow them to discuss the event at their own pace**
-  **Do gather minimal information such as where, when, and who if possible.**

## 3. Support

Ensure the child is not in immediate danger, then report the incident by calling the 24/7 MDHHS line at (855) 444-3911.

-  **Don't keep this a secret to "protect" the offender. This can lead to the child being revictimized**
-  **Do report the disclosure as soon as possible. Child Advocacy Centers can conduct forensic interviews and provide additional services as needed.**