

➤ If you Suspect a Child is Being Harmed..

Source: <https://www.rainn.org/articles/if-you-suspect-child-being-harmed>

RAINN, (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. Below are some guidelines provided by RAINN.



Child sexual abuse is a crime that often goes undetected. Like all other adults in the education environment, you have the power to make a positive difference in this child's life.

1. Recognize the signs

The signs of abuse aren't always obvious, and learning the warning signs of child sexual abuse could be life saving. You might notice behavioral or physical changes that could signal a child is being abused. Some of these warning signs include:

- Behavioral signs: Shrinking away from or seeming threatened by physical contact, regressive behaviors like thumb sucking, changing hygiene routines such as refusing to bathe or bathing excessively, age-inappropriate sexual behaviors, sleep disturbances, or nightmares
- Physical signs: Bruising or swelling near the genital area, blood on sheets or undergarments, or broken bones
- Verbal cues: Using words or phrases that are "too adult" for their age, unexplained silence, or suddenly being less talkative

2. Talk to the child

If you are concerned about abuse, talk to the child. Keep in mind a few guidelines to create a non-threatening environment where the child may be more likely to open up to you.

Pick your time and place carefully. Choose a space where the child is comfortable. Avoid talking in front of someone who may be causing the harm and avoid being alone with them in a separate room.

Be aware of your tone. If you start the conversation in a serious tone, you may scare the child, and they may be more likely to give you the answers they think you want to hear—rather than the truth. Try to make the conversation more casual. A non-threatening tone will help put the child at ease and ultimately provide you with more accurate information.

Talk to the child directly. Ask questions that use the child's own vocabulary, but that are a little vague. For example, "Has someone been touching you?" In this context "touching" can mean different things, but it is likely a word the child is familiar with. The child can

respond with questions or comments to help you better gauge the situation like, "No one touches me except my mom at bath time," or "You mean like the way my cousin touches me sometimes?" Understand that sexual abuse can feel good to the child, so asking if someone is "hurting" them may not bring out the information that you are looking for.

Avoid judgment and blame. Avoid placing blame by using "I" questions and statements. Rather than beginning your conversation by saying, "You said something that made me worry..." consider starting your conversation with the word "I." For example: "I am concerned because I heard you say that you are not allowed to sleep in your bed by yourself."

Reassure the child. Make sure that the child knows that they are not in trouble. Let them know you are simply asking questions because you are concerned about them.

Be patient. Remember that this conversation may be very frightening for the child. Many perpetrators make threats about what will happen if someone finds out about the abuse. They may tell a child that they will be put into foster care or threaten them or their loved ones with physical violence.

3. Report it

Reporting a crime like sexual abuse may not be easy, and it can be emotionally draining. Keep in mind that reporting abuse gives you the chance to protect someone who can't protect themselves. **Remember that as a substitute employee, any witnessed or suspected incidents involving abuse must be reported to both school officials (such as a school administrator or guidance counselor) and to your local Kelly branch manager.**

Where to report

If you know or suspect that a child has been sexually assaulted or abused you must report these crimes to school officials and to your Kelly branch. If you have any doubts about whether or how to report, your local branch can assist.

Each state has specific reporting policy including which authorities, [such as Child Protective Services (CPS) or Department of Children and Families (DCF)] need to be contacted. Reporting agencies vary from state to state—be sure to follow the proper procedures for your state.

If you are able to, continue to play the supportive role you always have in that child's life. If making the report means that you can't have this relationship anymore, know that by reporting you are helping that child stay safe.