

The First 48 Hours - *An Immediate Crisis Protocol*

You are not alone in this. And your child is fortunate to have you.

There is no way to be fully prepared for a disclosure. Whether your child told you five minutes ago or you are returning to this document after a sleepless night, the shock is real, the fear is real, and the urge to fix everything immediately is real. This section is designed to give you a clear triage framework – not because you need to be perfect, but because having a sequence of priorities can cut through the paralysis that often follows a disclosure.

Establishing Immediate Safety. Before you do anything else, you need to **establish that your child is not in continued danger.**

If the alleged abuser lives in the home, either the child, and non-offending parent need to leave, or the accused needs to leave. There is no safe middle ground here, and there is no version of "we will figure this out" that involves your child remaining under the same roof as someone they have just disclosed abuse by. If you are unsure of your legal options in this situation, contact your local Children's Aid Society or provincial child welfare authority immediately – they can advise you on protective orders and emergency placements.

Do not wait for a criminal conviction, a formal investigation, or anyone else's opinion on what "probably" happened. Err on the side of your child's safety, every time.

The First 48 Hours – A Prioritized Checklist

The following sequence is designed to give you a structured path through the immediate aftermath of a disclosure:

Priority One – Immediate Safety (Hour 0-2)

- Respond with belief and calm reassurance
- Ensure the accused has no access to the child
- Do not confront the accused
- Do not conduct your own investigation or interrogate your child for details

Priority Two – Report (Hours 2-24)

- Contact local police or your provincial child welfare agency to report the disclosure. You do not need certainty – only reasonable grounds to suspect
- If the abuse involved digital content, exploitation, or online luring, report directly to [Cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca), Canada's national tip line
- Do not wait to see whether your child "changes their story" before reporting – delayed reporting can affect the investigation

Priority Three – Seek Specialized Support (Hours 24-48)

- Ask police or child welfare to connect you with your nearest Child Advocacy Centre (CAC). These multidisciplinary centres allow a child to be interviewed once, by a trained specialist, in a child-friendly environment. Police and social workers observe from a separate room, preventing your child from having to repeat their story to multiple agencies
- Contact a crisis line if you are struggling to cope – [Kids Help Phone](tel:18006686868) (1-800-668-6868) provides 24/7 support, and many provincial sexual assault centres also have parent-specific crisis lines

For more information on seeking support, see the “Therapeutic and Psychological Pathways” section.

Priority Four – Manage Your Own Immediate State

- You have just experienced a profound shock. Your nervous system is in crisis mode. This is expected
- Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, or therapist for your own immediate support – not to discuss the case, but to ensure you are not navigating this alone
- Eating, sleeping, and basic self-regulation in the first 48 hours are not indulgences. They are prerequisite to being present for your child