

## Tips for DAIL Staff

### What to Do When Someone Tells You They Have Been Abused

**Note:** To support a victim's rights and safety it is recommended that you disclose your obligations if you are a mandated reporter prior to engaging in a conversation with a person about abuse.

Here are some steps that you can take to help you if you suspect someone may be experiencing abuse, or someone starts to talk to you about their experiences of being abused.

- 1. Validate the person's feelings.** Let the person know that you **believe her/him** and that you are **concerned about her/his safety**. Helpful things to say:
  - I'm glad you told me.
  - Many people I work with have had similar experiences.
  - I'm sorry this happened to you.
  - It's not your fault.
  - You don't have to be alone.
  - It's normal to feel ... (angry, confused, conflicted, etc.)
- 2. Talk about other people who can help.** Tell the person that there are people (advocates) who work specifically with people who have been abused, and **with whom they can speak confidentially**. Advocates can talk to a person privately and keep information private. Ask if they want you to help contact an advocate. *(If YES, see below, if NO - go to 4)*

#### IF THE PERSON WANTS TO TALK TO AN ADVOCATE:

Give the person the hotline number:

- Sexual Violence: 800-489-7273
- Domestic Violence: 800-228-7395

Offer them a phone and a private room. Offer to leave the room while they talk to the hotline advocate.

**If the person wants you to initiate the call**, dial the hotline, explain who you are, why you are calling, and what your obligation to report is and let them know that you will or will not be in the room for the rest of the conversation. Tell the advocate that the person would like to speak with someone who is not a mandated reporter\*. Pass the phone to the person.

\* While most advocates are not mandated reporters, some are, by professional training or certification. If the advocate who answers the hotline is a mandated reporter, she or he can get a non-mandated advocate to talk to the person. The person can also call anonymously.

**IF THE PERSON DOES NOT WANT TO CALL AN ADVOCATE AT THIS TIME:**

- 3. Do not make promises or assurances that are beyond your control** (i.e., "We're going to make sure this will never happen again." Or "You don't have to be afraid anymore.")
- 4. If the person and/or other people are in immediate danger**, ask the person if they would like to call 911. Explain what will happen if 911 is called. Encourage the person to seek medical attention to ensure that there are no injuries (internal or external) and/or for proper medical treatment. Tell them that health care providers are mandated reporters.
- 5. If the person is in ongoing danger**, let them know they can call the local domestic or sexual violence program anytime.
- 6. Accept the person's choices about what to do next.** Remain calm and be aware of your own personal beliefs or biases. Remember that reporting violence or abuse often *doesn't* result in positive outcomes for victims. Victims / survivors are the experts in their own situations. Don't confuse what a law or policy may require you to do with what is "right" or "best" for the person. Even if you have to make a report against the wishes of the person, it may be possible for you to continue to be a supportive person in her/his life if you are responding to the persons needs as s/he defines them.
- 7. If you have to make a report to Adult Protective Services (APS) or the Department for Children and Families (DCF)**, give the person a choice to:
  - Call APS/DCF and self-report in private.
  - Call APS/DCF and have you there when they report.
  - Have you call APS/DCF with them present.
  - Make a plan for her/his safety.

Inform the person that they have the right to refuse APS services. However, if you are a mandated reporter, you still must make an independent report to APS/DCF.

### **Vermont Reporting Hotlines**

To Report Suspected Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation

**DCF/Child Protective Services: 1-800-649-5285**

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/protection/reporting>

**DAIL/Adult Protective Services: 1-800-564-1612**

<http://dlp.vermont.gov/aps/make-aps-report>

8. If you have any questions or concerns, want information on safety planning or other resources, **call the domestic or sexual violence hotlines**. Consultation, help and support are available for you too.

### **Vermont's 24-hour Statewide Hotlines**

Free and confidential help and information

**Domestic Violence: 1-800-228-7395**

**Sexual Violence: 1-800-489-7273**

<http://vtnetwork.org/>

**State of Vermont – Domestic Violence: Get Help Now**

<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/domestic-violence>

**State of Vermont – Invest EAP – Employee Assistance Program**

**1-888-834-2830**

[www.vtstate.investeap.org](http://www.vtstate.investeap.org) – password: vteap

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