

# Green Bear Guidelines



## Reasons Children Do Not Report Abuse

Perpetrators who abuse children have 2 main goals:

1. How can I be around children so I can abuse them?
2. How can I prevent the child from disclosing the abuse?

### Why do Children Keep Abuse a “Secret”?

- *Children are afraid of the abuser.* Assure your child they are in a safe environment and you are available to help at any time.
- *Children do not think anyone will believe them.* If a child discloses abuse, BELIEVE THEM! Very few cases of alleged abuse are deemed false. If a child discloses, tell them right away, “I believe you.” **NEVER** ask children, “Are you sure this *really* happened?” Children will not feel believed.
- *The abused child blames themselves.* Many children who have been abused were told by the abuser, or another family member, the abuse was the child’s fault. When children disclose abuse, reassure them what happened was not their fault. Do not act angry when a child discloses abuse, they may feel the anger is directed towards them.
- *The child was threatened or bribed by the abuser to keep it a secret.* Instruct children on the difference between keeping secrets about abuse versus a surprise.
- *Some children feel confused by the attention and feelings accompanying the abuse.* Many children who have been abused, care about the person that abused them—it’s ok! It may be a family member or someone who pays special attention to them. Do not make derogatory comments about the perpetrator in front of the child.
- *The child is too young to put what happened into words.* At a young age, teach children the correct names for body parts.

For more information, contact Southeast Missouri Network Against Sexual Violence at 573.332.1900 or log on to [www.semonasv.org](http://www.semonasv.org) or [www.greenbearmo.org](http://www.greenbearmo.org).