

# “THE W METHOD”

This resource is meant to be used as a conversation guide in the event that a child of any age is making a disclosure of abuse to you. The child’s safety and well-being is of utmost importance in a delicate situation like this. Gathering information is helpful for a report and understanding immediate needs, but we do not demand answers from a child.

## Wait.

Before asking any questions, choose to listen! Children may provide the minimal information you need to make a report of child abuse without asking questions. If the child does not provide what you need, we recommend the following questions. Remember, a child will be thoroughly interviewed, so we only want to gather the minimum information needed to make a report. The rest of the conversation should be used to help the child feel heard, supported, and believed.

## Who did this?

Appropriate for ages 3 and older. Understanding who the alleged perpetrator is will help you determine the next steps in keeping the child safe. We want to ensure the child is not in any contact with the alleged perpetrator after the disclosure.

## What happened?

Appropriate for ages 3 and older. What happened can help determine what the child needs. The child may be in need of medical attention, require their devices to be confiscated, or be taken to a safer place. Understand that the younger the child, the more difficulty they may have producing this information.

## Where did this happen?

Appropriate for children over the age of 5. Knowing a place where any part of the abuse occurred will assist in referring the next steps to the appropriate investigating agencies.

## *What else can I say?*

- "Thank you for sharing this with me. I care about you being safe."
- "You were so brave for telling me this - it is ok that you don't want to talk anymore right now."
- "Who makes you feel safe?"
- "What do you feel comfortable telling me?"
- "How does your body feel right now?"

**After the child has told you the details they are comfortable with, thank them for talking to you, ensure their safety, and notify the correct contact. That could be law enforcement, your supervisor, or child protective services.**

