

Supporting Someone Who Discloses: Guidance For Professionals

You may be the first person someone tells about their experience of sexual assault or family violence. How you respond matters.

You are not expected to have all the answers. Your role is to provide them with a safe and supportive initial response.

Initial response principles

- When someone first discloses, they need you to listen to them and believe them.
- Listen without judgement or interruption
- Believe what the person is telling you
- Remain calm and present
- Let them share at their own pace
- Acknowledge it may have been difficult to tell you

Your Role

Do's and Don'ts

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| ✓ Do provide a safe and supportive space | ✗ Don't interrupt or interrogate them |
| ✓ Do stay within your role and scope | ✗ Don't ask detailed or leading questions |
| ✓ Do refer to your legal, organisational or professional responsibilities | ✗ Don't try to investigate what happened |
| ✓ Do support them to access appropriate support if that is not within your role | ✗ Don't try to fix what they have told you |
| ✓ Do prioritise safety | ✗ Don't try to take control of the situation |
| ✓ Do give clear, simple information | ✗ Don't rush them or pressure them to share |
| ✓ Do be aware of power dynamics | ✗ Don't express shock, doubt or judgement |
| | ✗ Don't make promises you can't keep |
| | ✗ Don't pressure them to report or take action |

A trauma-informed approach prioritises safety and supports the person's choice and control.

Receiving a disclosure can be challenging and emotionally taxing. It can also be rewarding. Make sure you are taking care of your own wellbeing throughout the process.

Be sure to seek advice or guidance from a supervisor or colleague where required. Professionals can contact SECASA Intake team for specialist secondary consultation on **8769 2200 – option 1**.

SECASA has additional resources online to support professionals, survivors and support people. Professional development training can help to build confidence in responding to disclosures.