



## Myth Busters

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There is a popular belief that preschool children are inherently unreliable sources of information. Child sexual abusers know this myth and exploit it to their advantage. Research has shown that if questioned properly, even very young children are reliable sources of information.

As with preschoolers, there is a myth that children with certain disabilities are unreliable. Even if a child cannot talk or only expresses herself with difficulty, this should not prevent you from making a report if you suspect child abuse. DCFS investigators have several techniques they can use to communicate with non-verbal children.

Although some sexual abuse victims are gay, some people have the mistaken belief that boys who were sexually abused by men always become homosexuals. This is simply not true! This myth only makes it more difficult for boys to disclose their sexual abuse histories.

Sometimes when children make a disclosure of abuse or neglect, they later say nothing happened. This does not always mean that the child was not initially telling the truth. Sometimes recanting is a natural reaction for children because there may be factors influencing the child to change their story. For example, being frightened, parent pressure, or perpetrator threats may cause the child to change their story.

Many Mandated Reporters believe that when they make a child abuse or neglect report the child will be removed from their family. In fact, less than 5% of children reported for abuse or neglect are removed from the home and usually it is not long term. For those who are not removed, their families are provided with services to insure the safety of the child.

Some mental health professionals, domestic violence counselors and medical professionals believe that the privileged communication laws prohibit them from reporting abuse. This is incorrect. Privileged communication laws do NOT apply in cases of child abuse. You are legally obligated to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child known to you in your professional or official capacity. The only exception applies to clergy in certain circumstance. See Arkansas Code 12-18-402 (b) (29) for exceptions. If you fail to do so, you can lose your license to practice your profession.

Some Mandated Reporters believe they can't make an anonymous call to the Hotline. Like the general public, Mandated Reporters do have the right to make reports to the Hotline anonymously. Before you make this decision, know all the facts.

1. The investigator will not be able to contact you to verify your information or gather any additional information you may have. This weakens the investigation.
2. You cannot be notified of the results of the investigation because no one will know how to reach you.
3. Also, if something happens to the child, you will have no legal proof that you fulfilled your role as a Mandated Reporter.