



safety respect equity

## RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES OF VICTIMIZATION

Keeping yourself, victim-survivors, and others safe.

\*Remember: The response to disclosures of victimization directly impacts a victim-survivor's ability to recover and their rate of recovery.

### DO

### DO NOT

✔ Listen to and believe the individual.

✔ Make sure that the individual is safe.  
Provide them with helpful resources.

✔ Thank the individual and acknowledge their courage in sharing an extremely personal narrative with you. They have given you a gift by telling you their story.

✔ Acknowledge the bravery and courage it took for them to disclose their victimization to you.

✔ Understand your role and fulfill your legal obligations, if any, to all involved parties.

✔ Provide them with the care they need.

✔ Respect their desire and need for privacy – although they spoke to you once, they may not want to discuss the issue again or repeatedly.

✔ Follow up with them to see how they are doing.

✔ Seek outside advice regarding how to deal with and respond to the disclosure from experts such as mental health professionals and law enforcement personnel while remembering issues of confidentiality.

✔ Recognize that this may be a time of crisis and take care of yourself.

✘ Blame the individual or imply that they were in any way responsible for their victimization.

✘ Ask questions that further victimize them, such as asking for proof.

✘ Discourage them from discussing their story with others or force them to take next steps.

✘ Tell them how they should feel or discourage them from expressing their feelings.

✘ Minimize the pain and suffering they endured by being victimized or by remaining silent until the disclosure.

✘ Make promises of confidentiality to them that will put people in danger or enable the furtherance of violence and abuse.

✘ Attempt to launch an investigation yourself. Be aware of your role. You are not the therapist or the police.

✘ Ignore them because you do not know what to do, feel conflicted or uncomfortable, or want to pretend like they never told you anything.

✘ Attempt to deal with the situation on your own.

✘ Deny your feelings regarding what you have been told.