

## How to discuss concerns of abuse with caregivers?

Discussing concerns of child abuse with a caregiver can be one of the most difficult tasks a health care provider faces. We have developed suggestions for how to approach some common conversations that may arise when speaking with a caregiver. These principles mirror some key tenets of motivational interviewing (MI). MI is a less directive model to drive change in that the interviewer spends more time listening and reflecting back of the client's thoughts so that the client can hear their own reasons and motivations expressed back to them. It relies heavily on expressions of empathy and support of self-efficacy, and these serve as the framework for the suggestions below. **For additional questions or to discuss a specific case, please contact Hayley Southworth at 614-846-6258.**

<u>Scenario</u>	<u>Expression of Empathy</u>	<u>Support of Self-Efficacy</u>
I'm sending a family for a work-up for suspected child abuse, or find that I need to report suspected child abuse.	<p>Key Points: 1) Parents whose child has been reported need to hear that they and their child will continue to be supported throughout this difficult time. The health care provider should let the parents know that health care staff care about them and their child and that the staff will continue to provide the same high-quality care. Staff members should be careful not to alienate the family since they will be more open to assistance if they know others are willing to help. However, health care providers must remember that the child's safety is paramount. 2) Parents often feel less alienated if they have been informed of the program's legal responsibility to report suspected abuse and neglect. Suggested Language: <i>"I think it is probably really difficult to hear that I have a concern that somebody harmed your child. Abuse is something no one likes to discuss, but it is real and it does happen-so much so that there's an entire field of pediatrics dedicated to recognizing and ending abuse, and supporting families through this difficult time. As your child's pediatrician, my only goal in this is to keep your child safe, and I know that's your goal too. Are you surprised to hear that I have concerns? Have you had concerns about your child's safety?"</i></p>	<p>Suggested Language: <i>"Just being here today shows that you care about your child's health and well-being. The tests I'm suggesting we do today are my way to better evaluate your child's health."</i></p>
I sent a child for a workup for suspected abuse, and it came back negative.	<p>Suggested language: <i>"Thank you for working with our team to rule out suspected abuse as a cause of injury-I know it must have been hard and felt terrible. Here are some things you can keep an eye out for in the future to ensure your child is safe: 1) Make sure your child does not have any new injuries in the coming months, 2) Be aware who your child is around at all times, and 3) If you have any concerns that come up, please call the office. Would you feel better if we scheduled a follow-up visit before your child next well-child visit? Say in 3 or 6 months? That way I can be here and address any questions or concerns you may have."</i></p>	<p>Suggested language: <i>"As we discussed before, you're clearly willing to do everything possible to ensure your child's health and well-being, including the tests I recommended. I'll ask that you continue to keep a close eye on your child, and be mindful about who he or she is with at all times. If you see another injury like the one that brought you here before, please call me immediately so we can discuss what that may mean."</i></p>
I have a caregiver that is asking questions on payment for a workup for suspected child abuse.	<p>Suggested language: <i>"I know this is difficult for you. Please know I wouldn't be ordering these tests if I didn't think they were absolutely necessary to make sure your child doesn't have additional injury. I think of it the same as ordering tests to rule out a heart attack if you were here reporting chest pain. Many insurance plans cover this testing. In addition (if applicable) x children's hospital covers most of the payment for these tests. Our goal is not to increase costs to you or your family, but it is to keep your child safe and un-harmed, and these tests are one way that doctors like me have to do so."</i></p>	<p>Suggested language: <i>"You're doing everything you can to take care of your family. I often see families who have concerns with food, housing, transportation, or other issues - are there specific areas of concern that we can help with today?"</i></p>

