

What To Do When You Witness Mistreatment or Abuse

Denver Children's Advocacy Center



It can be very difficult to watch the mistreatment of a child by an adult out of control. There are things you can do to help.

- Strike up a conversation with the adult. See if you can redirect his/her attention away from the child.
- "He seems to be trying your patience."
- "Looks like your little girl is having a hard time."
- "My child used to get upset like that."
- Praise the child or parent at the first opportunity.
- "What a beautiful child you have."
- "How old is she?"
- Avoid negative remarks or looks. These reactions are more likely to increase the parent's anger and could make matters worse for the child.
- If the child is in danger, offer your assistance. For example, if the child is left unattended, stand by the child until the parent returns.

You can help prevent abuse from happening in the first place. Preventing child abuse should be everyone's concern. If you've ever thought that the problem is just too big for you to do anything about it, think again. Child abuse is 100% preventable, but only with the support of strong families and communities. In your community you can help to strengthen families and make a difference in the life of a child. Every small effort can bring big rewards and will make a difference in the quality of life in your community.

Help a friend, neighbor, or relative. Someone you know may be struggling with his or her parenting responsibilities. Offer a sympathetic ear or a helping hand. Assisting occasionally with child care or offering to locate services in the community for help can be a tremendous boost to someone under stress.

If you have witnessed child abuse, call Child Protective Services, the local Police Department, or the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437).