

Tips for Nurses in Handling Angry Parents

- Take the call – do not ignore an angry parent
- Be honest, non-judgmental and direct
- Remain calm and keep your voice controlled
- Avoid, if possible, the question of “who called in the report?” Redirect by saying that what is important is that the child has an injury and that you are concerned. Focus on the common ground that you and the parent have which is concern for the child.
- If parent persists with questions about the report, briefly explain that every school employee is required by law to report suspicions of child maltreatment and that the school protocol for handling such concerns was followed.
- In some cases, the parent may not know any more about the abuse than you, because the perpetrator may be another family member, babysitter or someone else.
- Take the opportunity to ask the parent what happened; this may diffuse their anger to have someone listen to them.
- Be reassuring. Explain that the situation will be evaluated by Children and Youth to sort out the details, reach the right conclusions and offer any support that may be helpful for the child and family. Emphasize that the Children and Youth agency can provide links to services that the family may benefit from and that every reasonable effort will be made to keep the child in the home – as long as the child is safe.
- Give a message of caring, i.e. “This does not mean I will be less involved with your daughter. The staff and I are here to help.”
- If parent is threatening or verbally abusive, refer them to an administrator and hang up.