

When Parents Misbehave in Public

DO -

1. Sympathize with the parent.

Say something like "She sure is a bundle of energy," or "My child used to get upset just like that."

2. Divert the angry attention away from the child.

Open up a conversation with the adult. Ask a question or for directions - anything to provide a distraction and some time for the parent's anger to subside.

3. Compliment or praise the parent or child.

Say something positive. "What a big, strong boy you have! How old is he?" or "It's hard to shop with a toddler. You have my admiration for managing it!"

4. Offer sympathy and help.

Sometimes a parent's anger is fueled by embarrassment at the fuss the child is making. "Children sure can wear you out! Is there anything I can do to help?" or "Taking kids out to eat is hard! I'm sure everyone here is remembering that and giving you credit for your patience."

5. Alert the store manager if you are concerned about the child's safety.

Ask someone with authority over the parent to communicate that *"This is a safe place for children. You may not spank here."*

6. Quietly stand guard if the child is being neglected and is in jeopardy.

Keep an eye on a child left unattended – for example, in a grocery cart or by a car in a parking lot or curbside.

DON'T -

Give dirty looks or make snide remarks. Disapproval or anger will only increase the parent's anger and make matters worse. If someone else in a store or restaurant is clearly disapproving, step in and be an obvious ally to the parent by offering a kind remark or help.

Remember - If you have reason to suspect that a child is abused, neglected or died as the result of maltreatment, you must report it to North Carolina's child protection agency, or to the Director of the Department of Social Services in the county where the child lives.

In Wake County, call the Child Protection Report Line at 919.212.7990 (English) or 919.212.7963 (Spanish).