



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Disabled Persons Protection Commission

FISCAL YEAR 2017

July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

DPPC ANNUAL REPORT

DPPC Mission Statement

“To protect adults with disabilities from the abusive acts or omissions of their caregivers through investigation, oversight, public awareness and prevention”

**Report Suspected Abuse of Persons
with Disabilities to the
DPPC 24-Hour Hotline
1-800-426-9009 VOICE
1-888-822-0350 TTY**

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Charles D. Baker	Governor
Karyn E. Polito	Lt. Governor
James T. Brett	Chairman (Jan16)
Yndia Lorick-Wilmot, PhD	Commissioner
Maurice Medoff	Commissioner
Nancy A. Alterio	Executive Director

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Hotline: 800-426-9009 Voice
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A Message from Nancy A. Alterio, DPPC Executive Director

Dear Reader:

Organized under Chapter 19C of the General Laws, the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) is charged with protecting adults with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 59, from the abusive acts or omissions of their caregivers through investigation, oversight, public awareness and prevention. The DPPC was created by the Legislature in 1987 as an independent agency to fill the gap between the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). The DPPC has a critical mission – the consequences of a failure or misstep can be grave.



The dedicated staff of DPPC, in partnership with the investigative staff of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), confronted the unparalleled challenges throughout FY2017 and

- Responded to over **18,308** hotline calls;
- Received **11,395** abuse reports, more than a **9%** increase from Fiscal Year 2017;
- Responded to over **6,000** informational and referral calls;
- Recorded **972** death reports;
- Assigned **2,571** investigations;
- Completed over **1,866** investigations;
- Completed **154** petitions for review;
- Responded to **713** record requests and record demands;
- Oversaw protective services to over **3,000** individuals with disabilities;
- Revised **83** policies and procedures and created two new policies;
- Pursued passage of Senate Bill 1248 to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of DPPC operations;
- Improved access to trauma services for sexual assault victims with intellectual/developmental disabilities through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living to Improve States' Adult Protective Services (APS) Systems;
- Trained **905** direct care staff, **715** persons with disabilities, **1,048** law enforcement officers and **265** medical personnel; and
- Maintained operations **24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

Persons with disabilities who are victims of abuse and neglect deserve a timely and effective response to minimize their trauma and identify necessary protective services. My deep appreciation is given to all the dedicated and hardworking staff that took part in recognizing, reporting and responding effectively, efficiently and compassionately to ensure persons with disabilities were given the opportunity to live a life free from abuse and neglect. On behalf of the agency, I invite you to review DPPC's Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report to learn more about the dedicated work of those involved in responding to abuses committed against adults with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy A. Alterio". The signature is fluid and cursive.

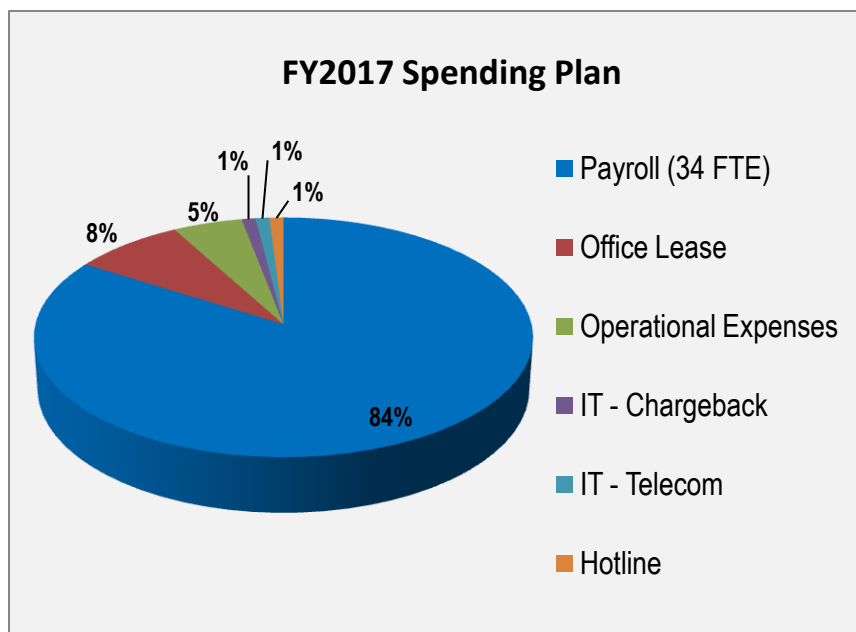
Nancy A. Alterio
Executive Director

Administration and Finance

The DPPC's Administration and Finance (A&F) Unit is primarily responsible for increasing the efficiency of office operations, thereby enhancing its delivery of services while ensuring a high level of transparency and accountability throughout the agency's financial operations.

DPPC develops and submits annual budgets and spending plans to the Governor's Office and Legislature to allow DPPC to provide an adequate level of services to receive reports, investigate abuse of persons with disabilities and to ensure the provision of protective services. To ensure fiscal accountability, monthly and annual fiscal reports are generated, reconciled and provided internally for the Executive Director and the Commissioners.

A system of checks and balances is in place for internal control and fraud prevention purposes. DPPC's Internal Control Plan (ICP) identifies risks of fraud and addresses ways in which to mitigate those risks. The plan is reviewed at least annually and more often as operations change or other risks are identified during the course of conducting business. Upon initial completion and approval, DPPC's ICP was used by the Office of the State Comptroller as a template for other agencies seeking guidance. In addition to the ICP, A&F operates under the guidance of 49 policies and procedures. Within the fiscal year 21 policies were revised and two new policies were created.



Staff payroll and personnel matters are also managed within the A&F Unit. Mandatory staff enhancement in-services and training programs are provided for staff's professional and personal development. Annual in-services include diversity training, disability awareness, time and stress management, team-building exercises and other informative Human Resources Division (HRD) sponsored topics which may include insurance, retirement or general benefits information.

DPPC has proven time and time again that it is an effective and efficient organization. Every dollar received is greatly appreciated, every dollar helps in the protection of persons with disabilities who are victims of abuse and neglect, and every dollar helps to **save lives**. As reflected in the pie chart above, 92% of DPPC's appropriation is dedicated to staffing and lease space. Another 5% is designated to operational expenses such as technology supports, staff travel, copier lease and maintenance agreements, postage and office supplies with 3% remaining to cover the costs of DPPC's 24-hour hotline, telephone system and ITD chargeback.

DPPC Hotline

The Disabled Persons Protection Commission operates a 24-hour Hotline to which citizens of the Commonwealth can report incidents of suspected abuse involving adults with disabilities by dialing 1-800-426-9009 (voice) or 1-888-822-0350 (TTY). Mandated reporters must also file a written report within 48 hours of the oral report. Deaths are also reported to DPPC's Hotline. The DPPC Hotline and the Intake/Oversight Unit staff who operate it are a vital part of DPPC's efforts to protect adults with disabilities, who are dependent upon others, from abuse and neglect.

Four DPPC Intake Operators staff the Hotline between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on business days. An after-hours vendor contracted, trained and monitored by DPPC staff, answers the Hotline after 4:00 p.m. and before 9:00 a.m. on business days. The vendor also answers the Hotline on weekends and holidays. During the time that the after-hours vendor answers the Hotline, there are DPPC staff members readily available to manage emergency or complicated situations. Bilingual (Spanish – English) Intake Operators are available to take abuse reports, and all staff members are trained to communicate via TTY and to utilize Verizon's Telecommunication Relay Service.

Staff members working on the DPPC Hotline are responsible for receiving, documenting and evaluating information provided by reporters. DPPC management reviews each report of abuse to determine the response needed to ensure the safety of the individuals involved. Reports are also evaluated to determine whether the situation meets the statutory criteria that establish jurisdiction under M.G.L. c. 19C.

For DPPC to investigate abuse committed against persons with disabilities, the statute requires that the victim of the alleged abuse must be:

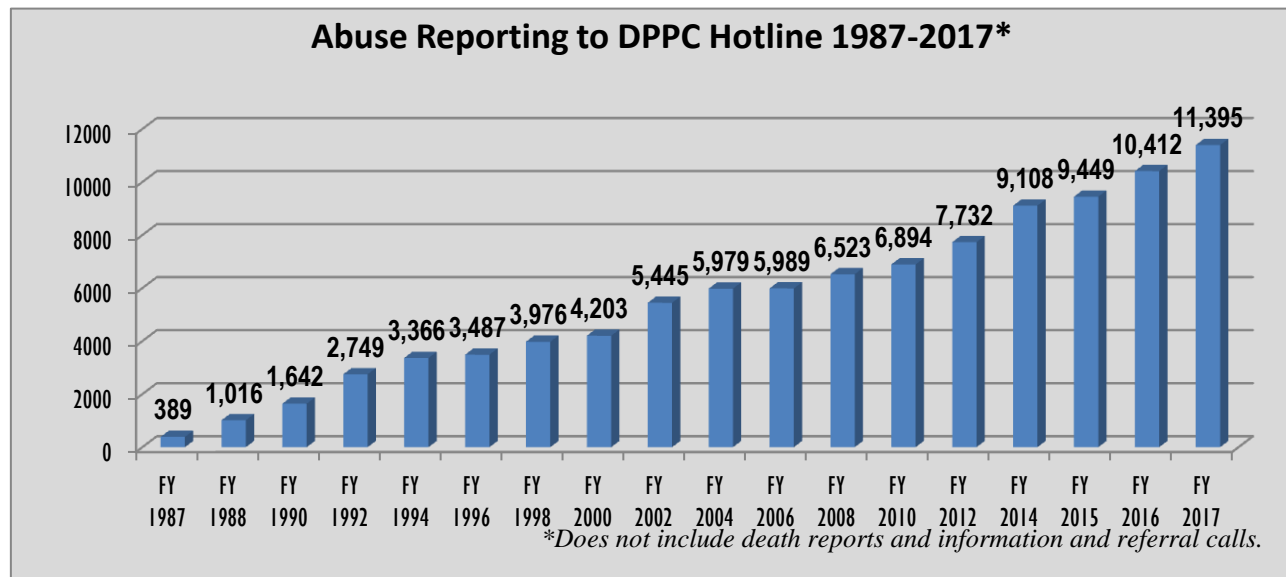
- Between the ages of 18 and 59 years;
- Disabled by means of mental illness, developmental/intellectual disability or physical impairment; and
- Require the assistance of a caregiver to accomplish daily living needs as a result of the disability.

To establish jurisdiction, the Hotline staff must also examine the nature of the incident. DPPC's enabling statute, **M.G.L. c. 19C, and the DPPC regulations, 118 CMR, require that the incident must:**

- Include an act or omission by a caregiver and
- Result in a serious physical or serious emotional injury.

Information gathered by Hotline staff is entered into the DPPC database. The information is available for review each time a subsequent report is made involving a particular individual, alleged abuser or program. All relevant information is documented on a DPPC Intake form and is forwarded to an investigator in situations that meet DPPC's jurisdictional criteria.

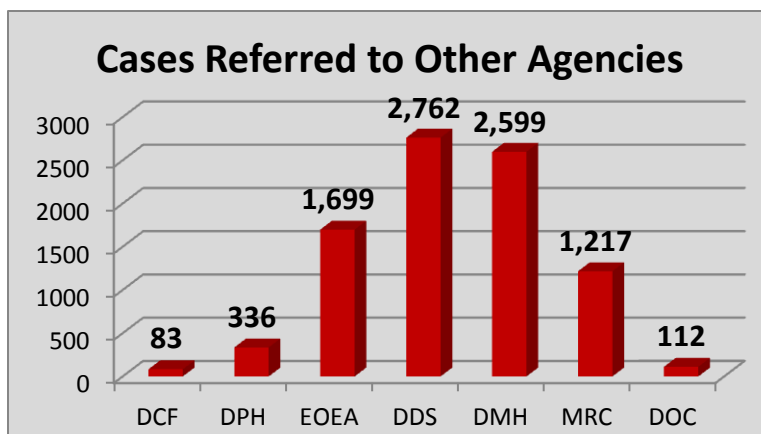
During fiscal year 2017, the DPPC Hotline experienced an increase of 9.44% in abuse reports. The graph below depicts the historical increase in reporting dating back to DPPC's inception in 1987.



If a reported situation does not meet the criteria to establish jurisdiction under M.G.L. c. 19C, a copy of the DPPC Intake form is forwarded for review and action to the service agency appropriate to the individual's age or disability.

The graph on the right indicates that in FY2017 there were 8,808 reports that did not fall under DPPC jurisdiction, and illustrates to which state agencies they were referred.

A member of the State Police Detective Unit (SPDU) assigned to the DPPC reviews every report made to the DPPC Hotline. The review by the SPDU is to determine whether the information suggests a crime may have occurred and whether a criminal investigation is necessary. Suspected criminal activity is reported by the SPDU to the appropriate District Attorney's office for their review and action as needed.



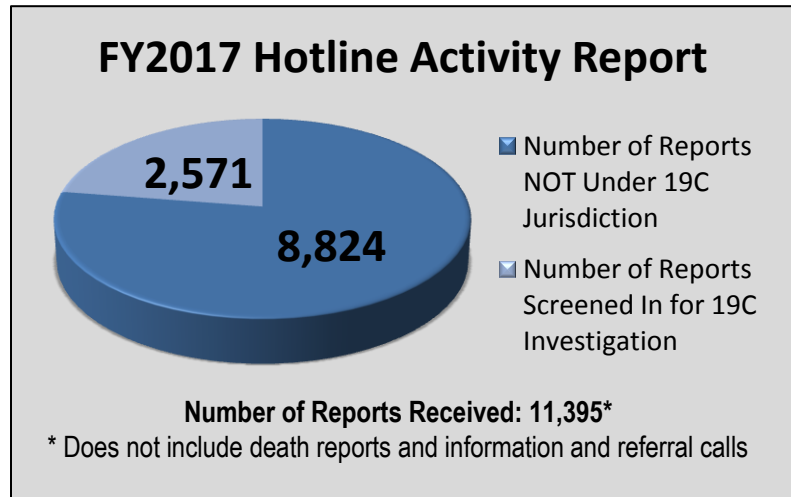
Death Reports

The DPPC statute requires that any caregiver that is a state agency or subdivision of the Commonwealth or any private agency contracting with the Commonwealth shall immediately orally notify the DPPC and local law enforcement of the death of any person under their care. A written report of such deaths must also be forwarded to DPPC within 24 hours of the death. This information is assessed to determine whether the cause of death may be related to abuse, and if so, an investigation is conducted. Each report of a death is entered into a database specifically for this purpose.

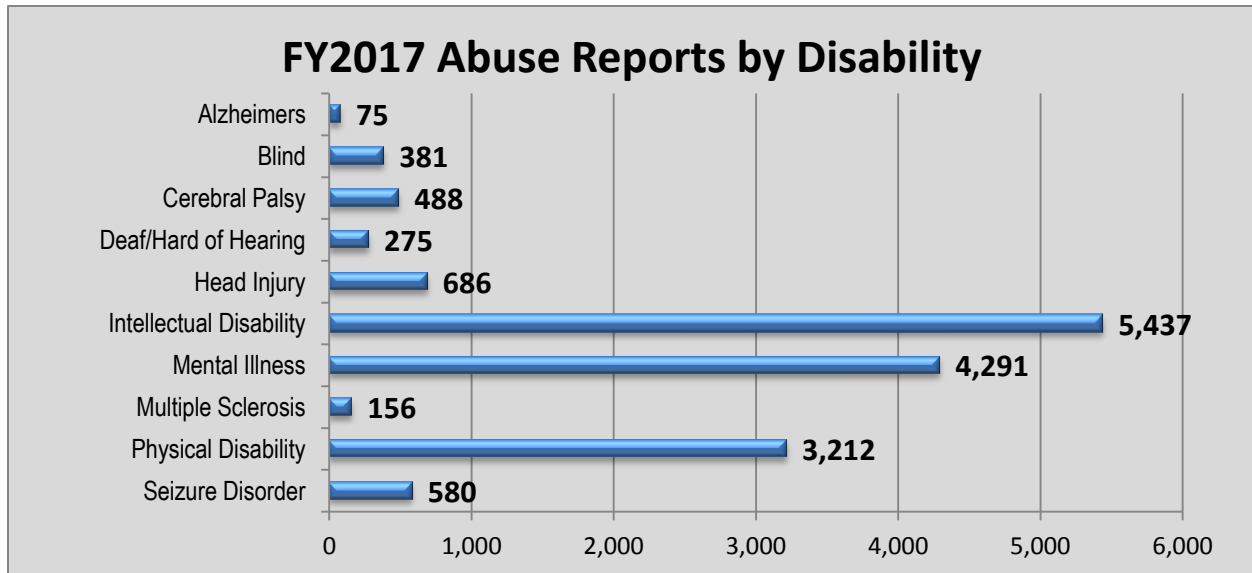
The goal of the DPPC Hotline is to provide every citizen of the Commonwealth a resource to which they can report suspected abuse of persons with disabilities. DPPC trains its staff to be efficient, effective and courteous so that reporters can feel positive about their decision to report what they suspect to be abuse or neglect.

The graph on the right illustrates that during FY2017 the DPPC Hotline received 11,395 reports, not including death reports and information and referral calls, with 2,571 of these reports screened in for investigation.

Each month the DPPC Hotline received an average of 1,525 calls including reports of abuse and deaths. In addition, each month DPPC responded to approximately 495 information and referral calls.



The graph below categorizes abuse reports according to the person's type of disability and illustrates that some individuals have more than one type of disability.



Hotline Unit FY2017 Update

During FY2017 the DPPC Hotline Unit:

- Received information and entered intakes on 11,395 reports of abuse;
- Received 6,000 Information and Referral calls;
- Received information and entered death intakes on 972 reports of death; and
- Revised six Intake Policies and Procedures.

Mandated Reporting

The DPPC receives reports of abuse from various sources. Many reporters of abuse are mandated by law to make reports of suspected abuse to the DPPC.

What is a Mandated Reporter?

Mandated reporters are persons who, as a result of their profession, are more likely to be aware of abuse or neglect of persons with disabilities. Mandated reporters are required by law to report cases of suspected abuse to DPPC when they have a reasonable cause to believe that a person with a disability is being abused or neglected. Other persons who are not mandated to report may choose to file reports of suspected abuse.

Who are Mandated Reporters?

- Police Officers
- Probation Officers
- Medical Personnel
- Medical Examiners
- Dentists
- Psychologists
- Social Workers
- Family Counselors
- Foster Parents
- Educational Administrators
- Public and Private School Teachers
- Guidance Counselors
- Day Care Workers
- Employees of private agencies providing services to people with disabilities
- Employees of state agencies in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services

What is Reportable?

The standard for reporting suspected abuse and neglect is “reasonable cause to believe” that abuse or neglect was committed against a person with a disability.

Mandated reporters are also required to report to the DPPC all cases in which an individual with a disability has died, regardless of whether or not abuse or neglect is suspected.

Protection for Mandated Reporters

Mandated reporters are immune from civil or criminal liability as a result of filing a report of alleged abuse of a person with a disability. Non-mandated reporters are also protected provided the report was made in good faith. If a mandated reporter is retaliated against by their employer for filing an alleged report of abuse, or by participating in the DPPC investigation, DPPC will conduct an investigation into the retaliation. Such retaliation is a crime and is punishable by up to a \$1,000.00 fine, or up to one (1) year in jail, or both.

Consequences for Not Reporting

The failure to report can result in severe consequences for the alleged victim, other potential victims and the mandated reporter. Victims of abuse and neglect are at increased risk of further abuse if abuse goes unreported. The frequency and severity of abuse and neglect are likely to increase over time if no intervention occurs. A failure to intervene by not reporting will likely result in other individuals being abused and neglected. In Massachusetts, mandated reporters can be fined up to \$1,000 for failure to report incidents of suspected abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities.

DPPC Investigations

Reports of alleged abuse determined to be within the jurisdiction of DPPC are immediately assigned to an Adult Protective Service (APS) investigator and a DPPC oversight officer. The APS investigator may be one of DPPC's four investigators or an investigator from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health (DMH) or the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).

The DPPC Investigation Unit and the Investigation Units of DDS, DMH and MRC conduct abuse investigations under the authority of M.G.L. c. 19C. The DPPC regulations, 118 CMR, further clarify and operationalize the criteria established by the statute.

The most important goal of any DPPC investigation is to provide protection to anyone who has been, or is, at risk of abuse or neglect by his or her caregiver. To accomplish this protection, the DPPC relies on the services of other state agencies like DDS, DMH and MRC. Working collaboratively with staff from these agencies, DPPC is able to develop effective protection plans for people with a range of disabilities. During the course of the investigation, APS investigators also look for systemic issues that may contribute or lead to abuse.

APS investigators conduct civil, not criminal, investigations. They work in collaboration with DPPC oversight officers, service providers, law enforcement and others to ensure that victims of abuse are protected. Investigators collect information by interviewing witnesses, reviewing relevant documents and collecting all of the information necessary to develop an

appropriate course of action to protect victims of abuse.

Based upon the collected information, the investigator completes an investigation report. In the report, the investigator documents his or her activities and presents conclusions based on the facts. When the facts indicate that an abusive situation exists, the investigator must include specific recommendations in the investigation report to resolve any circumstances that create risk for adults with disabilities who are the subject of the investigation.

Investigations Unit FY2017 Update

- APS investigators investigated allegations of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect of alleged victims with varying disabilities in private and public settings;
- APS investigators of DPPC, DDS, DMH and MRC were assigned 2,571 investigations;
- APS investigators completed 1,866 investigations;
- As of July 2017, 400 DPPC 19C APS investigations were overdue;
- APS investigators conducted 37 death investigations; 23 reports were unsubstantiated, three reports were substantiated and 11 reports are pending;
- APS investigators from DPPC conducted three investigations involving the Department of Corrections (DOC);
- APS investigators from DPPC conducted one retaliation investigation; and
- DPPC revised and disseminated 25 Investigation Policies and Procedures.

DPPC Oversight Unit

The DPPC Oversight Unit oversaw approximately 3,000 cases during FY2017. These cases are monitored according to the statute and regulations. The type of monitoring/oversight necessary for each of the cases is dependent on the nature of the case, and is determined on a case-by-case basis. The Oversight Unit also works in collaboration with the State Police Detective Unit (SPDU) assigned to the DPPC.

The overall goal of the Oversight Unit is to ensure that individuals who are identified as victims or are at risk of abuse or neglect are protected. The oversight officer is available to the investigator, service providers and law enforcement as a resource, supplementing their work and providing another perspective. An oversight officer may at times accompany an investigator on site visits or interviews during the course of an investigation.

The DPPC Oversight Unit is primarily responsible for the following:

- Assessing risk to victims throughout the investigative process;
- Backing up DPPC's Hotline staff by answering the 24-hour abuse Hotline, collecting and evaluating information from reporters and making decisions regarding the actions necessary;
- Maintaining an extensive database of reports of abuse and deaths;
- Reviewing completed APS 19C investigation reports for compliance with DPPC's governing statute and regulations;
- Evaluating recommendations and protective service actions made during and as a result of an investigation; and
- Ensuring that appropriate and adequate protective service measures are put in place.

Oversight Unit FY2017 Update

During Fiscal Year 2017, DPPC Oversight Officers:

- Were assigned a total of 2,571 new cases to monitor;
- Reviewed 1,866 investigation reports;
- Reviewed 1,804 protective service plans;
- Closed 2,718 cases;
- Had 755 active cases, as of July 2017; and
- Revised 19, 100%, of the Oversight Policies and Procedures.

DPPC Outreach and Prevention

DPPC defines prevention as: ***“Any action taken to prevent abuse or neglect from occurring ...or, any action taken to protect the individual from risk of further abuse, once it has already occurred.”*** DPPC is committed to addressing the problem of abuse and neglect as it relates to persons with disabilities. To accomplish this, DPPC created an Abuse Prevention Unit and included abuse prevention as part of the agency mission. DPPC uses education and awareness as primary tools in its efforts to stop abuse. However, abuse prevention encompasses a wide range of activities.

Some of DPPC's ongoing prevention activities include:

- Curricula development and trainings designed to educate law enforcement, mandated reporters, caregivers, persons with disabilities and other professionals regarding the identification and reporting of abuse of persons with disabilities;
- Providing consultation or information to other agencies interested in the development of abuse prevention programs;
- Collaboration with other agencies to develop presentations, programs and services related to abuse prevention and improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities;
- Development and distribution of educational materials to introduce DPPC operations, the role of mandated reporters, and indicators of abuse and neglect;
- Collecting and analyzing data from DPPC's database, which tracks over 800 pieces of information on each report to the 24-Hour Hotline. Data is provided to service providing agencies, upon request, to assist them in identifying and correcting trends in their programs that may lead to abuse and neglect; and
- Participation in local, statewide and national conferences to increase knowledge and share information related to the protection of persons with disabilities.

Outreach and Prevention FY2017 Update

The following trainings took place to educate persons with disabilities, mandated reporters and others on recognizing, reporting and responding to abuse and crimes committed against persons with disabilities:

- Forty-two *Awareness and Action* trainings were conducted, resulting in 746 individuals being trained.
- Ten one-day trainings were held for new recruits within the police academy resulting in 475 recruits being trained.
- Ten other law enforcement trainings were conducted, resulting in 573 veteran police officers being trained.
- One all-day Tier I training, sponsored by Building Partnerships Initiative in collaboration with Worcester County District Attorney was held for law enforcement, prosecutors, adult protective service investigators, victim witness advocates and medical personnel. The training was held in Worcester County on June 8, 2017 at Anna Maria College, Paxton. A total of 85 professionals were trained.
- Four trainings were held to educate 265 medical personnel.
- Two Protect, Report, Preserve trainings, sponsored by Building Partnerships Initiative, were held at the Chelmsford Radisson Hotel and Conference Center, Chelmsford on May 2, 2017 and at the Log Cabin, Holyoke on May 8, 2017 with a total of 210 attendees.
- Eighteen local trainings were conducted to educate 685 human service providers.
- An additional 13 trainings were held at different venues, with 417 staff from various agencies being trained.
- DPPC participated in and provided outreach materials at eight conferences and two legislative events with 1,850 in attendance.
- Four workshops were held at NAPSA's 2017 Conference in Philadelphia, PA.

IT Unit

Considering the small number of staff and large responsibility the DPPC has, it would be impossible to accomplish all the things that are achieved without the contributions of DPPC's Information Technology Unit. The DPPC relies heavily on technology and consequently the DPPC IT Unit is a vital part of every activity. Every DPPC unit depends on the IT Unit to develop, modify and make available the most current and innovative technology; and by doing this the DPPC IT Unit helps to make the agency as efficient and effective as possible.

The DPPC Abuse Database is a one-of-a-kind information management system developed at DPPC and primarily used to organize, store and report information about every abuse report, investigation, protective service action and oversight activity accomplished by DPPC staff. However, since its inception, the database has evolved into an invaluable source of information not only about individual situations, but also about systemic issues. State agencies, media outlets, service providers and a host of others, request and receive information from the DPPC database throughout the year. This information is utilized for news articles, research, service planning and court proceedings, to name just some of the uses.

Document Retention Unit

The DPPC Document Retention Unit is responsible for maintaining the integrity and security of all documents created by and in the possession of the DPPC. The Document Retention Unit is an essential piece in DPPC's successful efforts to ensure the protection of personally identifying information.

The Document Retention Unit, within the DPPC Legal Unit, is responsible for preparing and processing the documents needed to respond to the hundreds of requests for documents and information made to the DPPC each year. The Document Retention Unit also processes the documents necessary to comply with DPPC's statutory obligation to notify all persons who have been determined to have committed abuse against a person with a disability at the completion of an investigation. There are hundreds of these substantiated investigations each year for which this type of notification must be made. Another activity of the Document Retention Unit is to track, process and record the documents related to the hundreds of Petitions for Review that are filed each year with the DPPC. Although most of the work of the DPPC Document Retention Unit is done behind the scenes, without the dedication, organization and commitment of the staff of this unit, the DPPC would be unable to comply with the many demands and requirements around the security of documents and information in its possession.

Document Retention Unit FY2017 Update

During Fiscal Year 2017, the Document Retention Unit:

- Processed 154 Petitions;
- Completed 707 Record Requests;
- Responded to 10 Record Demands; and
- Notified 291 abusers of the outcome of the investigation finding and their right to petition.

DPPC Legal Unit

The DPPC Legal Unit provides legal advice and guidance on a variety of matters pertaining to the core functions of DPPC. This includes providing general advice and support to staff investigators from DPPC, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health (DMH) and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) who conduct investigations on behalf of DPPC.

Specifically, DPPC Legal Counsel provides:

- Information and assistance to other state agencies regarding protective services and guardianship; and
- Advice, support and training with regard to investigation issues and legal interpretation of the terms and mandates contained in M.G.L. c. 19C and 118 CMR.

DPPC attorneys work in coordination with legal counsel from DDS, DMH, MRC and other agencies, including District Attorneys' offices (DA), the Office of the Attorney General (AG), Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Public Health (DPH), Division of Professional Licensure (DPL), Department of Corrections (DOC), Medical Examiner's Office (ME) and others. When requested, DPPC legal staff provide information and assistance to other agencies as justice requires.

The DPPC Legal Unit also provides information to the public about DPPC's functions and mandate and handles record requests and court interventions when necessary. In addition, the Legal Unit performs the following specific functions within DPPC:

- Obtains judicial protective orders when an alleged victim of abuse is at immediate risk of harm and is not able to consent to the provision of protective services due to a mental or physical impairment;
- Secures access warrants when law enforcement and/or DPPC investigators are unreasonably denied access to an alleged victim of abuse;
- Responds to reports of mandated reporters' failure to report abuse as required by M.G.L. c. 19C and other reporting issues;
- Conducts legal reviews of the findings and conclusions of DPPC Investigation Reports pursuant to 118 CMR 14.00;
- Acts as the DPPC's Keeper of Records and ensures that DPPC responses to written requests for DPPC records are compliant with all statutory requirements;
- Responds to formal legal demands for statutorily protected records, pursuant to court process or court order; and
- Assists Executive Director in advancing and advocating for legislation implicating or affecting DPPC's ability to efficiently perform its core functions.

DPPC LEGAL UNIT UPDATE 2017

- Completed 154 petitions, with 71 petitions pending review;
- Completed 707 records requests;
- Responded to 10 record demands;
- Notified 291 abusers of the outcome of the investigation finding and their right to petition;
- Facilitated/monitored seven guardianship cases; and
- Revised 12 Legal memorandums.

DPPC State Police Detective Unit

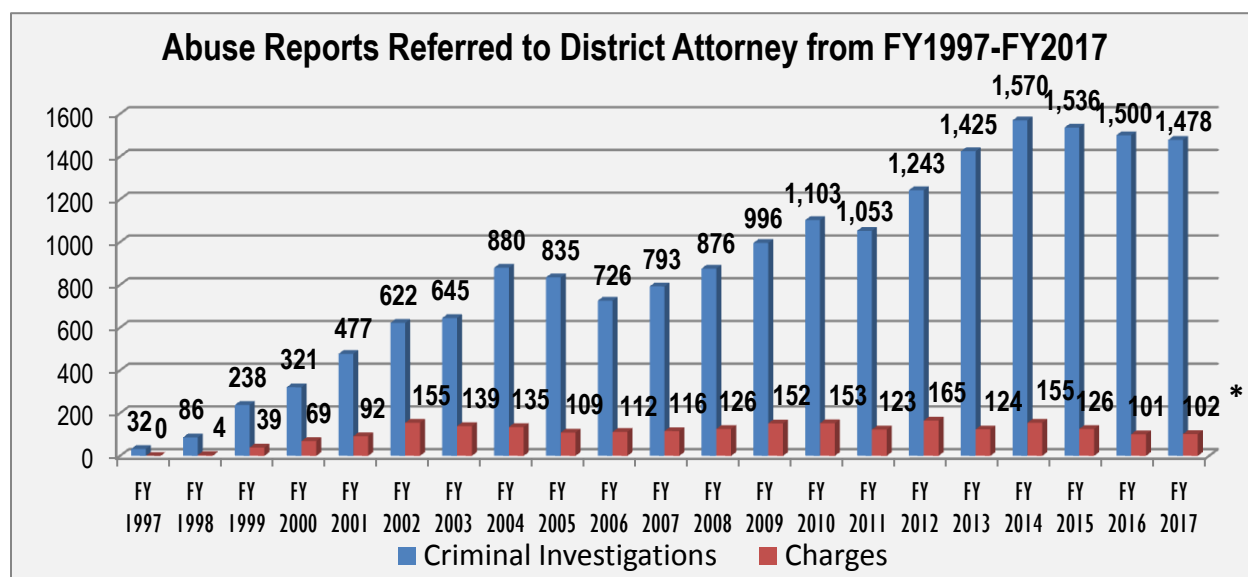
The State Police Detective Unit (SPDU) assigned to the DPPC is comprised of a Sergeant and four troopers and became fully operational on May 1, 1998. The SPDU provides a statewide mechanism to ensure an effective and rapid response to potential criminal complaints of abuse and neglect against persons with disabilities by coordinating the efforts of adult protective services (APS), human services, state and local law enforcement and the Commonwealth's District Attorneys' Offices.

The SPDU assigned to DPPC reviews 100% of all abuse reports to DPPC's 24-Hour Hotline to determine which ones constitute criminal activity. Reports identified as criminal are referred to the applicable District Attorney's office. As defined in each Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) established in each of the eleven district attorney jurisdictions, the SPDU assigned to DPPC, the state police liaisons within each of the eleven District Attorneys' Offices and the municipal police are assigned to investigate crimes against persons with disabilities as determined by the District Attorney.

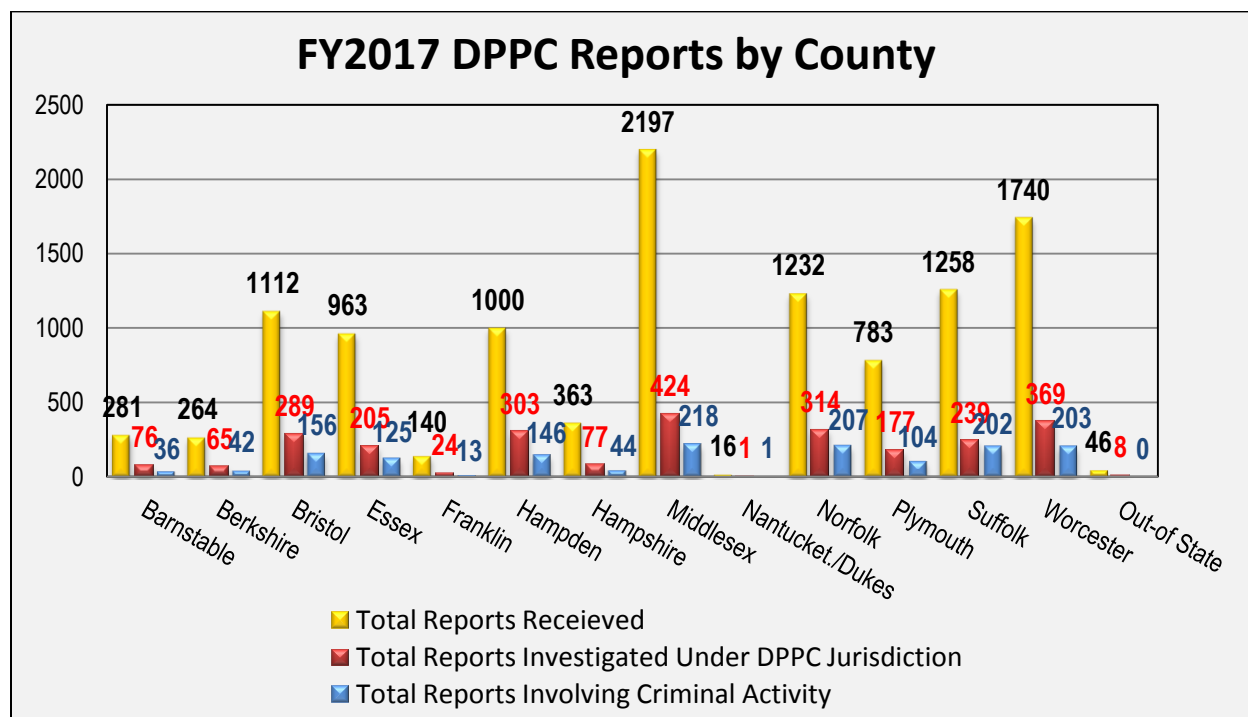
The SPDU at DPPC tracks the criminal investigation from intake to indictment on a statewide basis and analyzes the types of crimes involved in the abuse reports received by the DPPC Hotline. The information tracked includes, but is not limited to, the type of criminal activity, location of criminal activity, investigating officer and criminal charges brought.

Within Fiscal Year 2017, the SPDU reviewed 11,395 allegations of abuse. Of the 11,395 reports reviewed, 1,478 were referred to the District Attorneys for assignment of the criminal investigation.

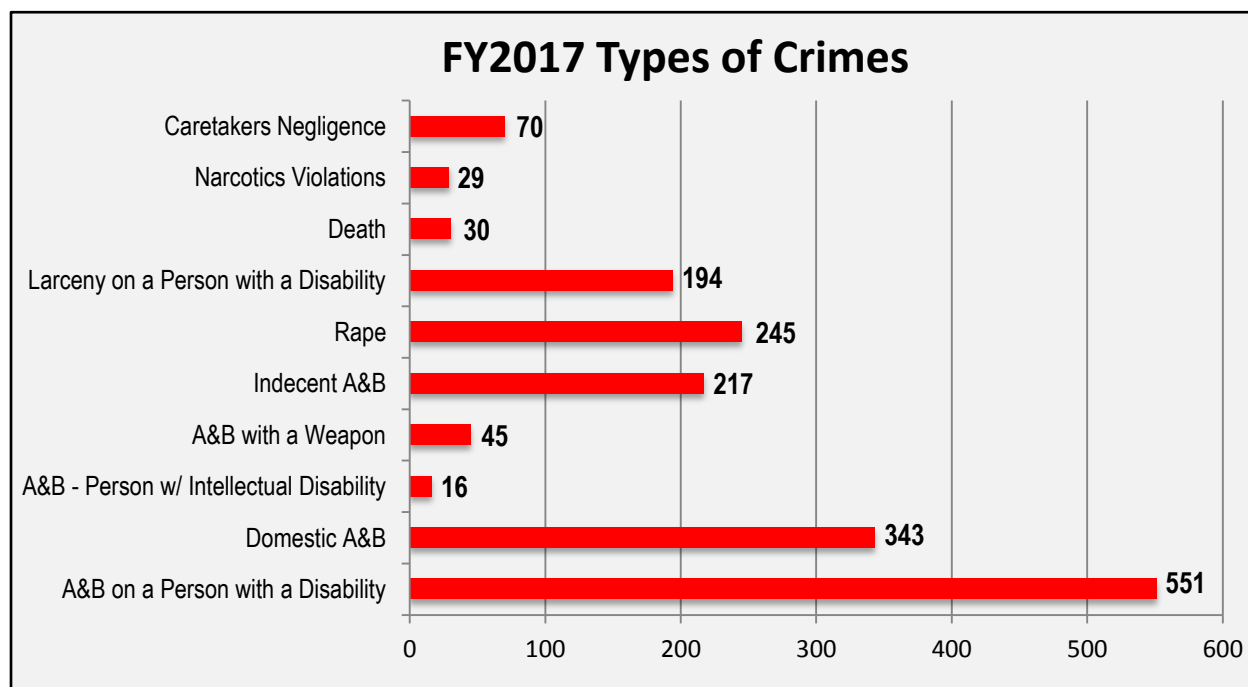
The following graph shows the number of reports referred to the District Attorney for criminal investigation and the number of criminal charges from fiscal year 1997 to 2017. In 1997 there were 32 reports referred with zero charges and in 2017 there were 1,478 abuse reports referred with 102 charges. ***Please note the criminal charges is a fluid number. As additional charges are taken, the number will rise to reflect the charges.**



The graph below is a breakdown by county of the number of reports received by the DPPC Hotline, reports meeting the jurisdiction for 19C investigation and number of reports referred to the District Attorney for criminal investigation.



The SPDU assigned to DPPC tracks the types of crimes involved in the abuse reports received by the DPPC Hotline. The following graph presents the types of criminal activity reported during Fiscal Year 2017.



The SPDU tracks incidents of domestic violence involving persons with disabilities. Domestic violence is abuse that often takes place where the person lives. Domestic violence can be any type of abuse including sexual assault and rape, emotional, psychological or financial. Domestic violence involves family and household members who are or were married, living together, related by blood, parents of a common child or involved in a substantive dating relationship.

During Fiscal Year 2017, it was determined that 343 reports made to the DPPC Hotline involved domestic violence abuse. These reports require the State Police Detective Unit to notify law enforcement immediately to ensure the safety of the individuals

involved and assist in the issuance of restraining orders and criminal prosecution of offenders if warranted.

As well as actively investigating criminal complaints committed against persons with disabilities, the SPDU continues to be involved in training agency staff, law enforcement and other professionals. Training is provided on recognizing and reporting abuse and on what to do and what not to do when abuse or a crime committed against a person with a disability is suspected. Training of recruits and seasoned officers throughout the Commonwealth continues to be provided at the request of the Municipal Police Training Committee and the State Police Academy.

2017 Pride in Performance Award Winner Berkys Kazimierczak

Berkys Kazimierczak, Intake Specialist



The 2017 Performance Recognition Program (PRP) award winner, Berkys Kazimierczak, was recognized by DPPC staff for her dedication, calm demeanor and efficiency.

Berkys has been at the center of operations of the Hotline for many years, and has consistently been a stabilizing force in the unit and unofficial team leader. She has the most tenure of any staff that has worked in the Hotline, and is as dedicated to that role and her commitment to the Commission's mission as she was 20 years ago. Berkys maintains a positive attitude regardless of how stressful the day can be, and this positive attitude has a helpful effect on others. Berkys' organizational skills, attention to detail, calm demeanor and strong knowledge of DPPC's statute and regulations make her an invaluable employee and significant support to the unit

managers. Berkys' skills allow her to keep things moving in a very fast paced environment, regardless of call volume and related administrative tasks. She promotes teamwork within the unit, and is well respected by her peers. She is quick to roll up her sleeves and help out any of her co-workers when needed. Berkys is critical to the successful day to day operation of the Intake Unit. She is extremely experienced, always calm under pressure and consistently displays a positive outlook on life and on her work. She is a crucial asset to both the Commission and the individuals we strive to protect.

"Berkys is very efficient at completing intakes while putting the caller at ease. Berkys is not only professional when dealing with callers but also very kind when the caller is a family member or the victim. We could not do what we do without Berkys."

“Berkys works every day to make sure clients are not at risk with every intake she takes.”

“Berkys’ hard work and dedication to the protection of our clients is always present with her and she is available whenever anyone has a question regarding an intake.”

“Berkys has such a great impact on the morale of this agency. She is always smiling and it is so easy to be around.”

“Berkys’ achievements are longstanding and ever-present. During her long tenure at the DPPC, Berkys has been a constant and calm presence in the Hotline. She exudes calmness and a centeredness that is rarely seen.”

“Berkys is the unofficial team leader of the Hotline. Her calm and collected demeanor impacts the overall mood in the Hotline office, which is shared by four staff.”

To File a Report of Abuse Call DPPC’s 24-Hour Hotline:

1-800-426-9009
1-888-822-0350 TTY



Abuse Reporting Hotline Numbers

Mass. Department of Children & Families (DCF) *Ages birth to 17*
Phone: 1-800-792-5200

Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) *Ages 18 to 59*
Phone: 1-800-426-9009

Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) *Ages 60 & above*
Phone: 1-800-922-2275

Department of Public Health (DPH) *Patients in Long Term Care Facilities*
Phone: 1-800-462-5540



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities

Building Partnerships for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities (BPI) is a statewide Massachusetts initiative that, using a multidisciplinary approach, links law enforcement, adult protection, human services and others to address violence committed against persons with disabilities. The partnership was formed in 1999 to effectively address abuse, neglect and crimes committed against persons with disabilities. Having started as a federally funded Byrne grant program, BPI is currently funded through an award to the Hampden District Attorney's Office from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). A BPI steering committee, co-chaired by retired Northwestern District Attorney Elizabeth D. Scheibel and Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) Executive Director Nancy A. Alterio, oversees the initiative's legislative and training activities.

The cornerstone of BPI is the manner in which it brings together various disciplines, each with its own role and perspective, to share their experiences, goals, issues, and ideas for combating abuse. This collaboration has led to the successful implementation of targeted training—typically done across those disciplines—to spread awareness about the issue of abuse, and also how to respond to it in a manner that first and foremost protects the victim, but also promotes the goals of service providers, forensic personnel, and law enforcement. Cross-training among the various disciplines has been the key to BPI's success as it is by understanding the unique role of each – APS, SANE, law enforcement, trauma-informed services – that we can all provide the full array of protection and services to victims with disabilities. Through the efforts of the steering committee, thousands of persons with disabilities, local and state police, adult protective service investigators, victim witness advocates, assistant district attorneys and human service providers have been trained to effectively recognize, report, investigate abuse and neglect, and prosecute crimes committed against persons with disabilities.

However, due to shortcomings in social and crime victim services, sexual assault victims with disabilities were prevented from an opportunity to timely access trauma-informed services tailored to meet their unique needs. BPI and its many partners committed to address this void. Both victims and service providers recognized the lack of service provision for sexual assault victims with disabilities and providers' lack of comfort in working with sexual assault victims with disabilities as large gaps in the system. With federal grant funding from the Administration for Community Living, the DPPC, Department of Public Health, DDS, SANE and self-advocates leveraged the connections created through BPI and expanded the network of partners to all 16 rape crisis centers, Riverside Community Care, Jane Doe, Inc., Victim Compensation Division of the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office and the Victim Rights Law Center. This enhanced partnership focused on improving the overall experiences, health, well-being and outcomes of sexual assault victims with disabilities through improved access to effective trauma-informed services, including improved access to services offered by Massachusetts Rape Crisis Centers (RCCs). The end result was the collaborative creation and dissemination of Guidelines for RCCs designed to better educate staff on providing services to individuals with disabilities, as well as a series of trainings, offered over the course of two years, described below:

- **Regional Trainings:** Four regional trainings in Metro Boston, Northeast, Central/West, and Southeast were completed with all trainings receiving a rating of 4.5 out of five. The day-long regional training events were held on September 27, 2016 (Boston, MA); September 29, 2016 (Chelmsford, MA); October 18, 2016 (Holyoke, MA); and October 19, 2016 (Hyannis,

MA). Training highlights included an overview of trauma, a panel of RCC staff explaining services offered by all RCCs, an overview of sexual violence, the introduction of a Regional Sexual Assault Liaisons Contact List, and a summary of the drafted Guidelines. Over 340 staff from a range of disciplines attended these trainings, including staff from each of the 16 RCCs in Massachusetts, as well as a significant number of staff from DDS. Attendees received a comprehensive packet including a variety of handouts as well as an electronic copy of the extensive PowerPoint compiled by the Riverside Trauma Center. Each training included a live or recorded presentation by a self-advocate survivor of sexual assault. Additionally, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito attended and spoke at the September 29, 2016 training event. The Building Partnerships for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities Initiative (“BPI”) issued a news brief titled “Partnering for Hope and Healing”, reflecting the Lieutenant Governor’s and self-advocate survivor’s participation.



From left: Patricia Carney, Department of Developmental Services; Joanna Bridger, Riverside Trauma Center; Thomas Hall, Riverside Community Care; Nancy Alterio, Disabled Persons Protection Commission; Lt. Governor Karyn Polito; Patty Quatieri, Mass Advocates Standing Strong and Marian Ryan, Middlesex District Attorney.

- **Survivor Video:** Under the leadership of the DPPC and in partnership with Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS) and Riverside Trauma Center, a 14-minute video of a self-advocate and rape survivor, speaking about her challenges to recover from her trauma was produced and disseminated.
- **RCC Guidelines:** The Guidelines for RCCs to address such areas as accommodations, communication, guardianship and confidentiality, and to develop a training curriculum to educate RCCs on working with sexual assault victims with disabilities were finalized and distributed statewide.
- **Webinars:** DPPC held its’ first of three ACL Learning Collaborative lunchtime Webinars on February 16, 2017 entitled, *Communication Strategies for Staff Working with Persons who have an Intellectual/Developmental Disability*. Tom Hall, Assistant Vice President for Clinical Services at Riverside Community Care, was the primary presenter. The second statewide webinar, entitled, *Sexual Decision-making among Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, was held on April 27, 2017 and presented by Pat Carney, Trainer for the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services. The third and final webinar was held on September 13, 2017 to review the finalized Guidelines. All the webinars were recorded and disseminated.
- **Learning Collaborative Sessions:** Four regional, in-person Learning Collaborative sessions were held during the month of May 2017 and another four were held during the month of September 2017. The four regional discussion sessions in May were hosted by an RCC in one of the four regions with the four in September hosted by DDS. Participation at each regional Learning Collaborative was limited to approximately 20-25. Clinical Services Director at Riverside Trauma Center, Joanna Bridger, moderated the lunchtime multidisciplinary discussions.

DPPC COMMISSIONERS

IN CLOSING

The Honorable Chairman James Brett and Commissioners of the Disabled Persons Protection Commission would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Governor Charles D. Baker and the House and Senate members for their ongoing commitment and support in protecting adults with disabilities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts against abuse and neglect. We would also like to recognize and thank the many hard-working men and women who dedicate their work to enhancing the quality of life of people with disabilities. Your dedication is immensely appreciated.



James T. Brett
Chairman

Yndia Lorick-Wilmot, Ph.D.
Commissioner

Maurice Medoff
Commissioner

The DPPC staff thanks you for taking the time to review DPPC's FY2017 Annual Report. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact the DPPC at (617) 727-6465.

Charles D. Baker
GOVERNOR

Karyn E. Polito
LT. GOVERNOR

Nancy A. Alterio
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Disabled Persons Protection Commission
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James T. Brett
CHAIRPERSON

Yndia Lorick-Wilmot, Ph.D.
COMMISSIONER

Maurice Medoff
COMMISSIONER