

Design & Implementation of the OCA's Training for Mandated Reporters



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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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About the OCA

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is an independent executive branch agency with oversight and ombudsperson responsibilities, established by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2008. The OCA's mission is to ensure that children receive appropriate, timely, and quality state services, with a particular focus on ensuring that the Commonwealth's most vulnerable and at-risk children have the opportunity to thrive. Through collaboration with public and private stakeholders, the OCA identifies gaps in state services and recommends improvements in policy, practice, regulation, and law. The OCA also serves as a resource for families who are receiving, or are eligible to receive, services from the Commonwealth.

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Introduction

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) has, for many years, prioritized strengthening and improving our state's system of mandated reporting, a legal system that requires certain identified professionals to report child maltreatment (abuse or neglect) to the Department of Children and Families (DCF).¹

Mandated reporters carry a heavy, though deeply important, responsibility. Mandated reporters are essential to the child protective services system, as they are best positioned to notice when a child experiences abuse and/or neglect. However, fulfilling their role is particularly challenging due to several confounding factors: limited available information, the challenge of distinguishing neglect from poverty, and the potential impact of bias can all complicate efforts to accurately identify abuse and neglect. Furthermore, no one entity is empowered to be the sole voice on how the obligation should be executed; as a result, mandated reporters are left to interpret their legal responsibility without clear guidance.

Experiencing abuse or neglect without any intervention or support is harmful for a child. At the same time, it can also harm a family when a report is filed that does not reach the threshold of abuse or neglect. **The goal of the OCA is to improve the *quality* of mandated reporting.** This does not mean increasing or decreasing the raw number of reports filed each year but instead increasing the percentage of reports that meet the legal threshold for filing, are well considered and supported, and are child-centered.

To reach this goal, the OCA believes the Commonwealth can and should do more to provide mandated reporters with training that helps them correctly identify abuse and/or neglect, differentiate neglect and poverty, appropriately consider the roles of bias and cultural considerations in evaluating whether to make a report, and gain structured decision-making skills that will prevent reporting when the situation does not reach the threshold of abuse or neglect. **The OCA's ultimate goal is for mandated reporters to focus on *what the child is experiencing* – not their perception of caregivers' motivations or potential fault – when evaluating whether to file.**

Based on discussions within the OCA-chaired Mandated Reporter Commission (MRC) about profession-specific training, the OCA launched a new, state-funded [Mandated Reporter Training](#) in August 2023.² The program includes a general training designed for all mandated reporters (available in English and Spanish) as well as a module specifically designed for Massachusetts K-12 educators and a resource library available to all users as well as the general public.

¹ MGL c. 119 § 51A. Accessed November 26, 2025.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVII/Chapter119/section51a>

² The OCA acknowledges with appreciation the Legislature's role in appropriating funding to the OCA to support this initiative.

The OCA identified Massachusetts K-12 educators as the first audience for a profession-specific training module for several reasons: educators often spending more waking hours with children on weekdays than their families do; educators in Massachusetts submit the highest number of mandated reports to DCF each year, even when accounting for the seasonal decline in reports during the summer months; they are among the few groups of mandated reporters in the Commonwealth required train annually;³ and public listening sessions conducted by the MRC highlighted concerns about possible over-reporting by educators.⁴

This report provides insights into the design and development of the online training as well as initial outcomes from the first two years of implementation, including:

- Background information about mandated reporter training nationally and in Massachusetts
- Goals of the training program
- Curriculum design, development, implementation, and updates
- Training program data, including learner satisfaction and learner outcomes
- Next steps

³ MGL c. 71 § 37L. Accessed November 26, 2025.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section37L> ; MGL c. 71B, §10. 603 CMR 18.00. Accessed November 26, 2025. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr18.html?section=05>

⁴ Office of the Child Advocate. (n.d). *Mandated Reporter Commission*. The Office of the Child Advocate. Accessed November 26, 2025. <https://www.mass.gov/mandated-reporter-commission>

Background

Mandated reporting is a legal requirement that certain identified people and/or professionals have an obligation to report child maltreatment (abuse or neglect) to the relevant state’s child protective services agency. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires that states have mandatory reporting laws, specifically, “...provisions or procedures for an individual to report known and suspected instances of child abuse and neglect, including a state law for mandatory reporting by individuals required to report such instances...”⁵ Federal funding of child protective services is conditioned on each state’s compliance with CAPTA.

A mandated reporting system is a network of adults who are required by law to report concerns about child neglect or abuse to the state’s child protective services agency. That agency then determines whether state intervention is necessary and, if so, what type of intervention is appropriate. A system of mandated reporting exists in every U.S. state. Some states, including Massachusetts, identify mandated reporters as specific groups of people, while others use a system of “universal” reporting whereby all adults are legally required to report child abuse and neglect to child protective services. Much like mandated reporting of elder neglect and abuse, mandated reporting of child neglect and abuse is built on the understanding that children are at the mercy of their caregivers – parents, guardians, or other adults who exercise supervisory duties over them. Children, particularly those with disabilities, may not fully understand their circumstances in relation to safety, and they are at a physical, emotional, and intellectual disadvantage when it comes to exercising self-protection and self-care.

Mandated Reporting in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts mandated reporting statute is largely contained in MGL [c. 119 §§ 21, 51A](#) and [51B](#). The [statute](#) lists specific roles and professions of persons who qualify as mandated reporters. Mandated reports of child abuse or neglect in Massachusetts are commonly referred to as “51A reports” – a direct reference to the statute requiring the report.

Mandated reporters are required to report when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering a physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse or neglect or is being sexually exploited or trafficked. Although the statute states that mandated reporters should report when a child is suffering from a physical or emotional injury, mandated reporters also report, and DCF accepts reports for investigation, when children are at substantial risk of such injury.⁶

⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(b)(2)(B)(i). Accessed November 26, 2025.

[https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:42%20section:5106a%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:42%20section:5106a%20edition:prelim))

⁶ The regulations that govern DCF’s actions on abuse and neglect cases (including screening) define abuse to cover situations of “substantial risk of physical or emotional injury” ([110 CMR 2.00](#)). The DCF regulatory definition of neglect similarly refers to

Mandated reporters must immediately report allegations of child maltreatment⁷ to DCF via a phone call to the local area office during business hours or to the statewide [Child-at-Risk-Hotline](#) after business hours and on weekends and holidays.⁸ Mandated reporters are also required by statute to file a written report within 48 hours detailing the suspected maltreatment. Within 30 days of receiving a 51A report, DCF must inform mandated reporters of its determination of the nature, extent, and cause(s) of the child's injuries and the services it intends to provide the child or family.⁹ Mandated reporters must cooperate with DCF in providing information related to the investigation of 51A reports.¹⁰

Mandated Reporter Commission

From 2020-2021, the OCA chaired the [Mandated Reporter Commission](#) (MRC), which was established by the [Childhood Wellness Bill of 2019](#). The MRC's charge was "to review and report on existing mandated reporter laws and regulations and make recommendations on how to improve the response to, and prevention of, child abuse and neglect."¹¹ The Commission was comprised of statutorily appointed members representing a wide range of viewpoints from public entities and groups with extensive experience with mandated reporting in the Commonwealth.

The MRC was required by the enabling statute to explore current training requirements; the agencies and employers responsible for training; the frequency, scope, and effectiveness of training; best practices for training; and options for designating an agency responsible for overseeing the mandated reporter system, including developing and monitoring training requirements.

In 2021, the MRC published a [final report](#) that detailed the work and discussions of the Commission and noted where additional work could be done in the future. Among other areas of discussion, the MRC Final Report **identified the importance of providing *profession-specific training to educate mandated reporters on their responsibilities*** and relevant considerations when reporting child maltreatment to DCF.

caretakers' responsibility to take certain actions to provide children with a minimum standard of care and does not focus on whether the child has suffered an injury related to that failure to take action ([110 CMR 2.00](#)).

⁷"Maltreatment" as used in this report is meant to encompass child abuse and child neglect, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking and is not meant to signify any standard that would be considered less stringent.

⁸ Although mandated reporters have a legal requirement to report, any person may file a report of allegations of child abuse and/or neglect with DCF.

⁹ MGL c. 119 § 51A(i)). Accessed November 26, 2025.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVII/Chapter119/section51a>

¹⁰ MGL c. 119 § 51B(m)). Accessed November 26, 2025.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVII/Chapter119/section51a>

¹¹ St. 2014, c. 124 § 12(a). Accessed November 26, 2025. <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2019/Chapter124>

The MRC Final Report also noted that developing a robust training for mandated reporters could help achieve several goals, foremost among them clarifying reporters' legal obligations. **Currently, no state agency or entity is responsible for training, monitoring, or providing guidance to mandated reporters, and there is a lack of practical, fact-based information about reporters' legal duties.** While some mandated reporters do receive training, there are no uniform statewide standards for the training content, duration, frequency, or instructor qualifications.¹²

Goals for such a training included but were not limited to helping reporters understand how the law applies to certain professions or situations; addressing disparities in reporting; clarifying the difference between poverty and neglect; and providing information and resources to help mandated reporters address concerns that do not rise to the level of requiring a report.

The MRC also felt strongly that **trainings should be evidence-based**. For the purposes of this report, we refer to an evidence-based training as one that measures whether users can better recognize, report, and respond to suspected child abuse and neglect as a result of the training.

¹² Unless otherwise required by law or regulation governing professional licensure. Also see MGL Chapter 119 Section 51A (k). <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVII/Chapter119/section51a>

Goals of the OCA Mandated Reporter Training

In August 2023, the OCA launched an online, on-demand, evidence-based general training designed for all mandated reporters, as well as a module specifically designed for educators. The educator training delves deeper into issues particularly relevant to Massachusetts K-12 educators. Schools, as the place where children are most frequently seen outside the home, make the highest number of mandated reports in Massachusetts each year.

The goals of the training are to help mandated reporters:

- Gain structured decision-making skills to prevent potential over-reporting of families to the DCF system and improve the accuracy of reporting.
- Identify red flags in child and adult behavior.
- Identify the types of neglect and understand the differences between neglect and poverty.
- Consider the roles bias and cultural considerations play in evaluating whether to report.
- Focus on evaluating the available information.
- Better understand what to do when concerns do not reach the level of abuse or neglect.

OCA Training Curriculum Development and Launch

The OCA contracted with [Simple Learning Systems \(SLS\)](#) to create an online learning management system to host the training modules. The OCA and SLS collaborated on the creation of training content, drawing from statute, regulation, research, and expertise. In particular, the OCA drew from the office's expertise in mandated reporting and from knowledge gained by ongoing review of supported reports of abuse and neglect in multiple settings.

Additional sources that informed the training's design and development consisted of research on how to effectively address implicit and confirmation bias, consultation with content partners at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and DCF, and engagement with [Equity Imperative](#) to review the draft curriculum and provide feedback. Equity Imperative is a consulting group that helps organizations identify racial equity problems, diagnose their causes, and design context-driven systemic solutions.

The mandated reporter training has a general and educator-specific module. Both modules focus on promoting:

- **Child-centered analysis:** viewing mandated reporter responsibilities through evaluation of what the child is experiencing and not evaluating the motivations or potential fault of caregivers.
- **Structured thinking:** evaluating various sources of information about concerns for maltreatment, weighing that information, and placing it into broader contexts.

The training highlights both child-centered analysis and structured thinking using case reviews and quizzes that focus on the impact on the child. Each case scenario presented in the training is followed by a 1-question quiz and a thorough review of the correct answer.

Scenario 2

You are a middle school teacher and you have started to worry that one of your students, Greg, age 11, is unhoused.

Greg hasn't turned in any homework in the past week and a half.

When asked, Greg shared that he is having trouble completing his homework as he and his mother had to leave her friend's house where they had been staying for a while and move to another friend's home two weeks ago.

Greg is typically a strong student who submits all his work on time.

Greg said that he doesn't like this new home as much as they have young children who keep bothering him.

Greg says that he can't wait to have his own room and that his mother has promised to find them an apartment once she obtains a new job.

You worry that Greg doesn't have a stable place to live and that it impacts his ability to do his homework and negatively affects his schoolwork in other ways.

Should you file a report?

Select the best answer.

☐ Yes

☒ No



Correct

Although Greg is unhoused, his situation is not neglectful. His mother has ensured that they have a place to stay, although it may be temporary and with another family. You have no information to suggest that his current living arrangement is unsafe or that it has a significant negative impact on his emotional, physical, and mental well-being. You are encouraged to reach out to your school district's homeless liaison to identify ways to support Greg and his mother as they work to identify stable living arrangements.

Continue

Figure 1: Child-Centered Analysis and Promotion of Structured Thinking

General Module

The general module covers information on mandated reporters' obligations to report as well as information about abuse and neglect. It also provides information about the disproportional involvement of child protective services in the lives of Hispanic/Latino and Black children. The module includes direct messaging on cultural and demographic bias and the importance of checking reporters' pre-existing biases prior to making the decision to file a 51A report. In addition, it explicitly and implicitly addresses the various vulnerabilities of specific cohorts of children.

The general training curriculum consists of the following topic areas:

- The role of the mandated reporter
 - Protections for mandated reporters
 - Legal requirements
 - Reporting bias, implicit bias, and cultural considerations
- Neglect
 - What is neglect?
 - Learning the signs of neglect
 - Parental substance use disorder/infants affected by prenatal substance exposure
 - Neglect vs. poverty
- Physical abuse
 - What is physical abuse?
 - Learning the signs and red flags of physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
 - What is sexual abuse, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children?
 - Red flags of sexual abuse
- Children with disabilities
- How to report and what happens next
 - Knowing when to report
 - Required information
 - The phone calls/the written report
 - Investigation response
 - Myths about child protective services

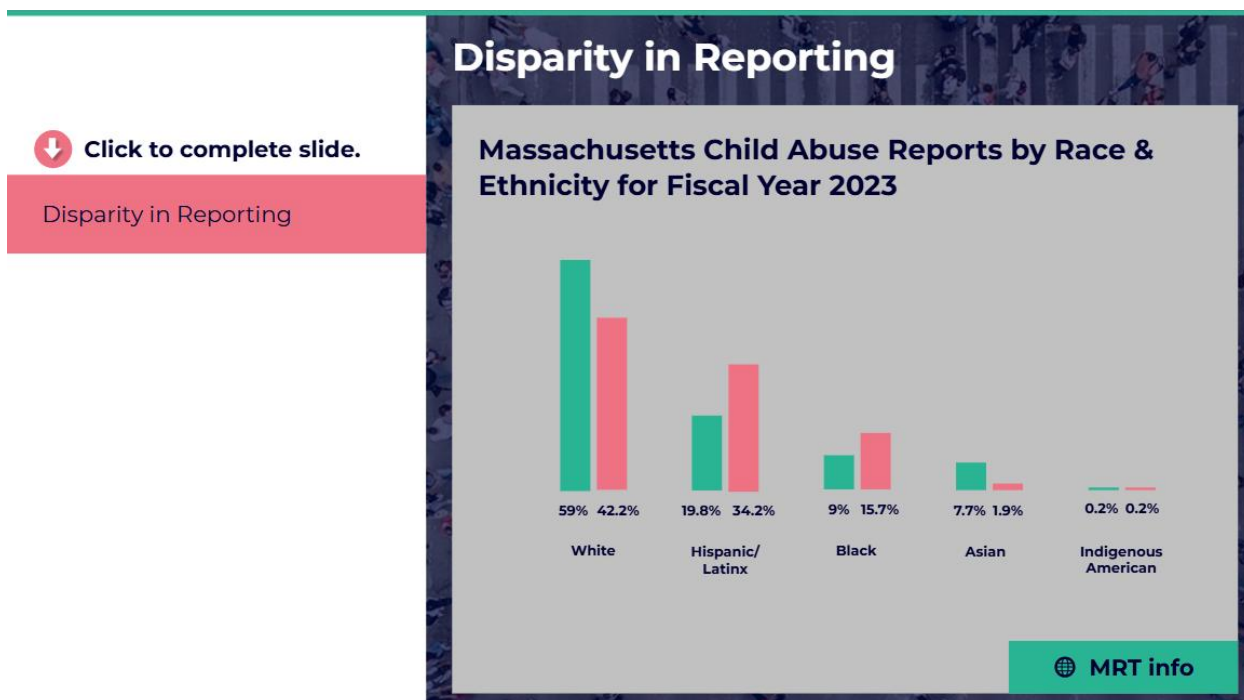


Figure 2: OCA Mandated Reporter Training- A Focus on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Reporting

Note: In the graph above, green represents the percentage each demographic represents in the Massachusetts general population. Orange represents the percentage each demographic represents among 51A reports filed in Massachusetts.

Educator-Specific Module

From November 2021 through January 2022, the OCA invited Massachusetts educators to complete an anonymous online survey on mandated reporting to inform the design and development of the educator training. The survey was completed by 913 educators, including teachers (44%), administrators (28%), school counselors (17%), teaching assistants or paraeducators (8%), others (8%), related service providers (6%), and athletic coaches (3%). Respondents came from a variety of school systems throughout the Commonwealth: public schools (79%), approved special education schools (8%), collaborative schools (6%), charter schools (4%), private schools (3%), and others (0.4%).

The survey gathered feedback on mandated reporter responsibilities, training, and profession-specific needs, including whether educators had been recently trained in mandated reporting and how they valued that training.

Eighty-five percent of respondents who had received training felt that they could identify child maltreatment, compared to 69% of those who had not received training. However, confidence in their ability to identify and report maltreatment varied depending on their role within the school. While the great majority of counselors and administrators (95% and 89%, respectively)

expressed confidence in identifying abuse and neglect, only 63% of teaching assistants and paraeducators said they were confident identifying abuse and neglect.

The survey highlighted training topics school professionals would like to cover, namely:

- A breakdown of the **reporting process from beginning to end**, including step-by-step instructions on how, when, and who is responsible for filing.
- **Case scenarios presenting “gray areas” or complex cases** of child maltreatment, such as instances of domestic violence that do not lead to the child being physically hurt and sexual relationships between children/minors.
- **How to address implicit bias.** Close to 8% of respondents indicated that fear of acting on implicit bias might prevent them from reporting. Others described difficulty distinguishing poverty from neglect, while others noted the importance of addressing biases and using cultural sensitivity when working with families.

“As much as we would like reporting to be a black and white decision, it is not. A lot of training is straightforward scenarios, maybe providing training on scenarios that are less obvious would help.” – Survey respondent

Additional topics of interest included:

- Laws about reporting in a school setting
- Communicating with parents regarding concerns about child abuse/neglect
- Understanding and recognizing educational neglect
- Reporting concerns relating to the behavior of school staff
- Reporting sexual relationships between children/minors
- How child maltreatment presents among special education students

The OCA was particularly interested in learning what concerns might prevent educators from reporting. The top three concerns shared by respondents were:

1. Insufficient information to file a report.
2. Straining relationship(s) with the child(ren) and/or their family.
3. Inability to identify when a family needs resources rather than DCF involvement.

The survey responses were critical in the development of the educator-specific module. After careful analysis of the survey results, the OCA conducted focus groups with educators to explore these topics more deeply. The educator module ultimately included the following topic areas (non-exhaustive list):

- Role of school personnel in children's lives
 - Role as mandated reporter
 - Role as educator
- Recognizing abuse and neglect in educational settings
 - Educational neglect
 - Sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and grooming
 - Problematic and age-appropriate sexual behaviors
 - Unhoused students
 - Students with disabilities
- Mandated reporting in educational settings
 - Institutional protocols
 - Child protection teams in schools
 - Talking with parents
 - Maltreatment perpetrated by school personnel
 - Cooperating with the Department of Children and Families
 - Providing support

Resource Library

The training is accompanied by an extensive [resource library](#) available to the public online. The resource library provides mandated reporters with Massachusetts-specific resources on relevant topics and services. It also provides [valuable tools to assist mandated reporters with connecting families to services](#) when concerns don't rise to the level of abuse and/or neglect as well as a [structured decision-making worksheet](#) to help mandated reporters think through whether a situation requires a report to DCF.

Training Completion

At the end of each module, course participants must complete an exam with a passing score of 80% or above. After passing the exam, participants receive a training completion certificate and may review any sections of their module(s).

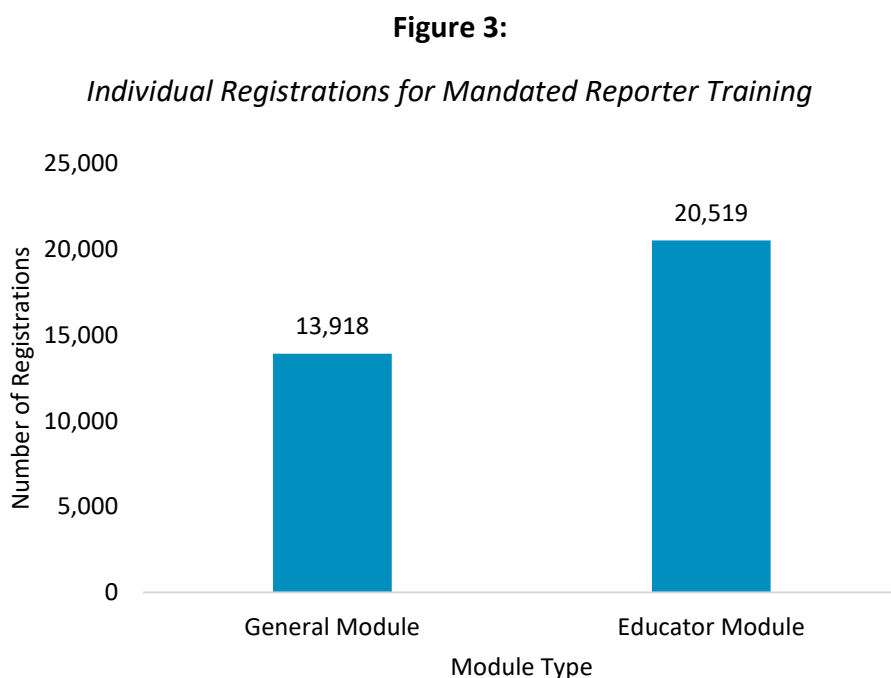
OCA Mandated Reporter Training Data

The data presented in this report is from the first two years of training implementation, which took place from August 21, 2023 through September 30, 2025. The data was collected quarterly by SLS and submitted to the OCA.

Registration Data

Individual Registration Data

Between August 21, 2023 and September 30, 2025, a total of 34,437 individuals registered for the OCA Mandated Reporter Training. Figure 3 presents a breakdown of individuals registered by module type.



Source: Simple Learning Systems (SLS)

Organization Registration Data

Massachusetts organizations have the option to create organizational accounts to invite their staff to complete the mandated reporter training. Organizations that choose to create an account may monitor their workforce's mandated reporter training completion status. Organizations are not required to create their own account.

In Years 1 and 2 of implementation, a total of 838 organizations registered for mandated reporter training. Schools represented 38% of organizations, "unknown" organizations represented 28%, and the remaining 34% were child care services (9%), other services (5%),

counseling and mental health (4%), social services (3%), youth services (3%), medical and dental groups (3%), religious groups (3%), sports and recreation (2%), elder care (1%), emergency services and government (1%), food and hospitality (1%), finance, legal and professional services (<1%), and arts and entertainment (<1%).

Number of Training Certificates Issued by Module Type

The OCA issued a total of 11,162 general module certificates of completion and 16,696 educator module certificates of completion. Course completion typically spikes each year in Q3, which is the beginning of the school year.



Source: Simple Learning Systems (SLS)

Note: Data collection started in 2023. 2023 data collection period was 8/21/23-12/31/23; 2024 Quarter 1 data collection period was 1/01/24-3/31/24; 2024 Quarter 2 data collection period was 4/01/24-6/30/24; 2024 Quarter 3 data collection period was 7/01/24-9/30/24; 2024 Quarter 4 data collection period was 10/1/25-12/31/25; 2025 Quarter 1 data collection period was 1/01/25-3/31/25; 2025 Quarter 2 data collection period was 4/01/25-6/30/25; 2025 Quarter 3 data collection period was 7/01/25-9/30/25.

To improve accessibility of the online training, the OCA released a Spanish language version of the general module in 2024. For the timeframe of this report, 199 participants have completed the Spanish Language version of the general module.

Learner Outcomes

Change in Knowledge

Between August 21, 2023 and September 30, 2025, the average exam score before completion of the OCA training (general or educator module) was 76%. There was a notable increase in the average exam score after completion of either module: those who completed the general module had an average exam score of 92% and those who completed the educator module had an average exam score of 91%. Most users took the post-training exam once.

Table 1: Average Exam Scores			
	Average Exam Scores	Average Exam Attempts	Completions on First Exam Attempt
Pre-Training	76%	1.05	N/A
General Training	92%	1.27	87%
Educator Training	91%	1.24	86%
Source: Simple Learning Systems (SLS)			

Learner Feedback

At the beginning of August 2024, the OCA implemented an OCA Mandated Reporter Training satisfaction survey. Course completers were invited to complete a brief anonymous online survey about their OCA Mandated Reporter Training module. The OCA uses feedback gathered from these surveys to inform course updates, resolve technical issues, and improve accessibility.

As of September 30, 2025, 3,095 general course participants and 2,007 educator course participants completed the survey. Educator course participants included teachers (49%), paraeducators (15%), school administrators (8%), counselors (5%), coaches (1%), service providers (6%), and others (21%), such as school nurses, cafeteria staff, information technology staff, campus monitors, tutors, substitutes, custodians, volunteers, bus drivers, interpreters, and after school recreational staff.

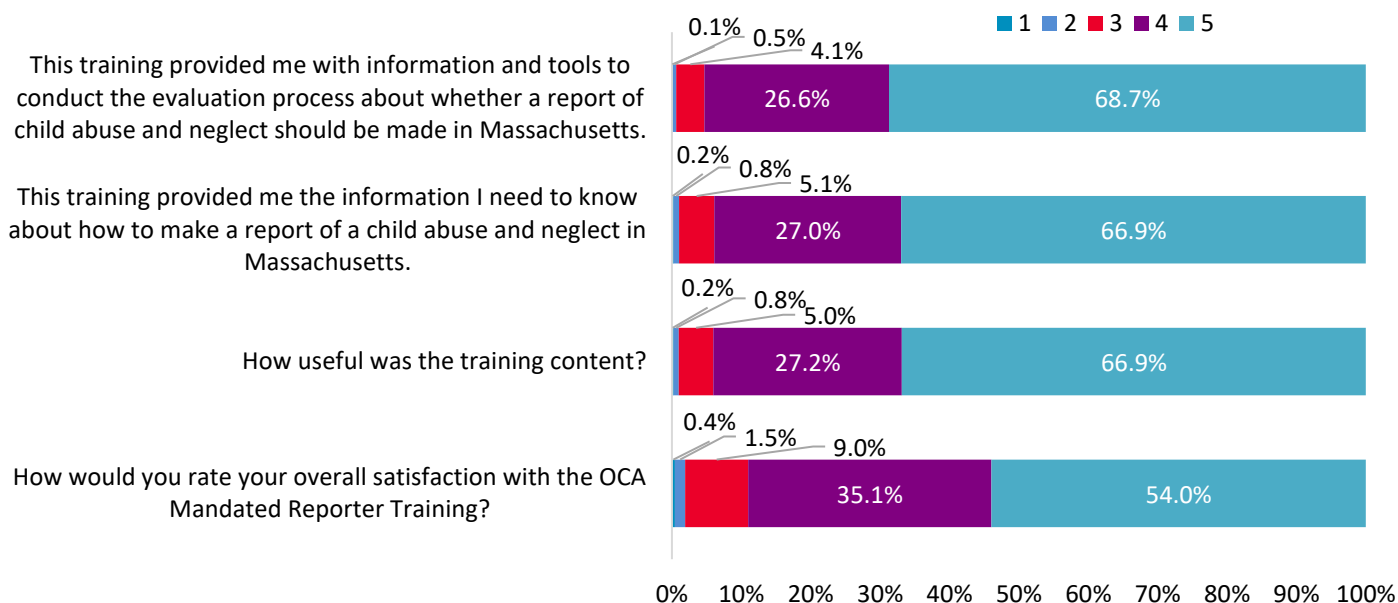
The survey includes the following questions:

- On a scale from 1-5 (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree), this training provided me with **information and tools to conduct the evaluation process about whether a report of child abuse and neglect should be made** in Massachusetts.
- On a scale from 1-5 (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree), this training provided me the information I need to know about **how to make a report of child abuse and neglect** in Massachusetts.
- On a scale from 1-5 (1=not useful, 5=extremely useful), **how useful was the training content?**
- On a scale from 1-5 (1=not satisfied, 5=extremely satisfied), **how would you rate your overall satisfaction** with the OCA Mandated Reporter Training?

Overall, course participants were highly satisfied with the training; most survey respondents rated each question at a 4 or 5.

Figure 5:

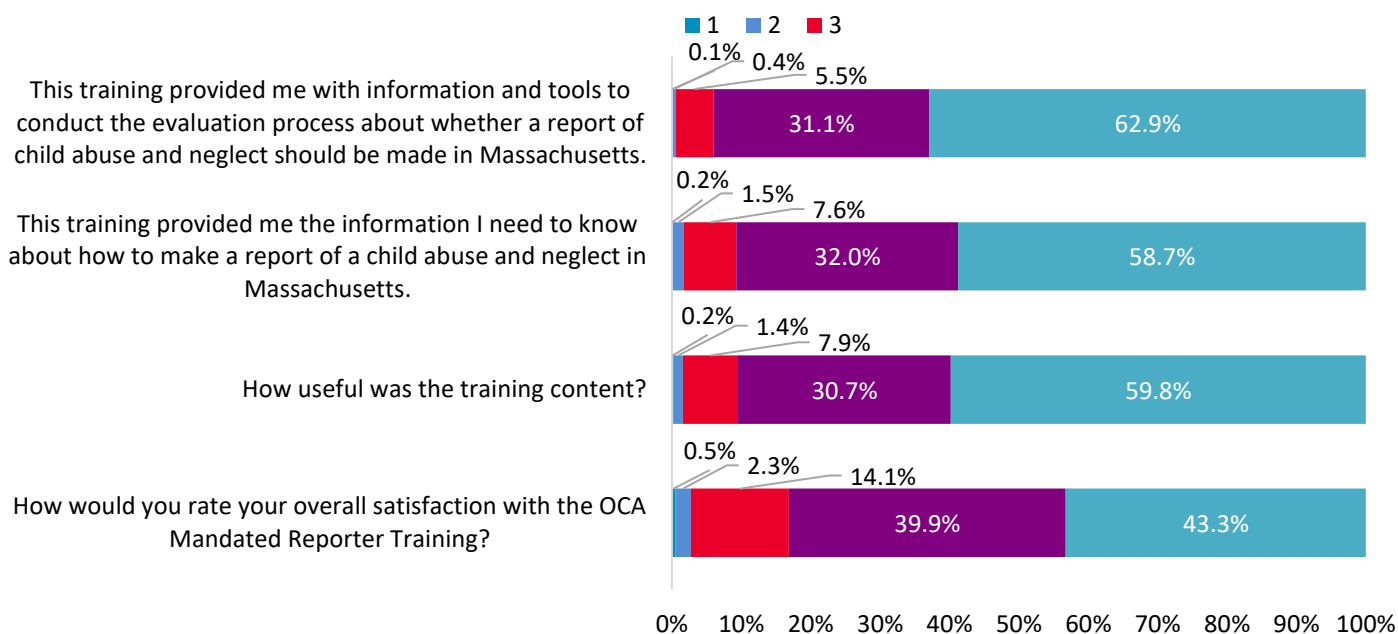
Satisfaction Survey Results: General Module



Source: Satisfaction data retrieved from the OCA's Survey Monkey account.

Figure 6:

Satisfaction Survey Results: Educator Module



Source: Satisfaction data retrieved from the OCA's Survey Monkey account.

Additionally, the satisfaction survey collected optional open-ended responses from learners. Key takeaways are summarized below:

OCA Mandated Reporter Satisfaction Survey Key Takeaways

1. The training modules are comprehensive, structured, and clear.
2. The training modules increased learners' comfort level with 51A reporting.
3. The training is beneficial to new educator staff and a helpful refresher for experienced educators.
4. The OCA MRT resource library is convenient and important for an online training.
5. The training is too long.

Key takeaway #1: The training modules were informative, comprehensive, structured, and clear. Learners reported that training was easy to follow, well organized, and concise.

- *"This training was extremely thorough and informative; well designed; nicely paced; visually appealing and current!" (General)*

- *"This was the best version of this training in which I have participated for over five years." (Educator)*
- *"I have worked with kids for 15 years and I have never taken this training. It was very informative and I'm glad I did [it]." (Educator)*
- *"The course was comprehensive and incredibly well structured. As a participant, I left with broad/philosophical knowledge as well as more detailed, tactical information. The art teacher in me would like to salute the creators of the course. Text, photos, narration. All were wonderful and helped carry us through this." (Educator)*
- *"This is concise in giving information on when and when not to report, along with the process once a report is filed." (General)*

Key takeaway #2: The training modules increased learners' comfort level with 51A reporting.

Learners reported that scenarios provided in the training modules helped reinforce how and when to file a 51A report while also taking cultural practices into consideration.

- *"I learned a great amount of information taking this class. I left with more knowledge and wisdom to move forward." (Educator)*
- *"The case scenarios provided in this training made it very easy to understand how and when to file a 51A." (General)*
- *"Understanding the mandated reporter training has educated me on the importance of child abuse and how to make my observation and report abuse or neglect." (Educator)*
- *"I appreciated that the training included more information regarding cultural practices and cautioned me to think more carefully." (Educator)*
- *"I appreciated the clarification of terminology, the data from reporting, the inclusion of reporter biases, and stressing that the well-being of the child is what is being reported, not the reasons." (General)*
- *"Training was thorough, and I feel confident I will be able to report when necessary." (General)*

Key takeaway #3: The training is beneficial to new child-facing staff and a helpful refresher for experienced staff.

- *"Very helpful as a new employee nurse." (Educator)*
- *"This was the best version of this training in which I have participated for over five years." (Educator)*
- *"The training is much more complete and explicit than it used to be and I appreciate this very much." (Educator)*
- *"This training was excellent, start to finish. I also appreciated that there was an option to speed up the content, as I've completed some version of this training multiple times"*

during my career... Even though it was familiar, it was all important information, and a regular review is warranted.” (Educator)

- *“Great training for seasoned staff and new staff. Would highly recommend 10 out of 10.” (General)*

Key takeaway #4: The OCA MRT resource library is convenient and important for an online training.

- *“It is good that resources are available that can be accessed at any time without repeating the course. Because I have never had to file a 51A, it is not information that remains at top of mind. I will likely have to access the resources should I face a situation where there is suspected abuse or neglect.” (Educator)*
- *This training provides us materials, information, and resources that will help us to decide when and how to make a 51A report in order to protect the safety of our students.” (Educator)*
- *“This reporter training is very informative. It also provides additional information and resources relevant to mandated reporting.” (General)*
- *“The additional resource are very helpful.” (General)*

Key takeaway #5: The training is too long.

- *“This is a good training, but some of it is just too long.” (General)*
- *“This training is extremely long and could be condensed.” (General)*
- *“Respectfully, although I think the information in this training is important to know, it takes far too long to complete, especially for those who are required to take it every year.” (General)*
- *“It was informative, but way too long and repetitive.” (Educator)*
- *“This course took too much time to complete.” (Educator)*
- *“The information is important, but the training is extremely long.” (Educator)*

Next Steps

The OCA's online training curriculum can be updated regularly to improve content and reflect any changes to mandated reporting laws or regulations.

As discussed above, the OCA learned from user feedback that the course would benefit from cutting down on the repetition in some places. While repetition within a training module can be beneficial to reinforce critical information and repetition of ideas was a purposeful inclusion in the mandated reporter training, in response to user feedback, in July 2025 the OCA revamped the course curriculum to reduce repetition. The OCA also added more information about sexual abuse grooming and addressed a recent change in law regarding children who are affected by prenatal substance exposure.¹³

The OCA is also in the process of shortening the learning pathway for the educator module because educators, who take the course annually, have a solid knowledge base and prefer deeper information on the profession-specific curriculum. Additionally, in response to participants' consistent praise for current scenarios and requests for additional, more challenging practice scenarios, the OCA is in the process of developing optional challenging scenario questions.

To ensure the OCA's training continues to meet the needs of mandated reporters, the OCA will continue to monitor and improve the training modules, including updating content as needed to reflect changes in statute and best practice.

The OCA also aims to create additional profession-specific curriculum modules in the future.

¹³ MGL c. 285. Accessed November 26, 2025. <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2024/Chapter285>

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