



Resource Guide for Massachusetts Mandated Reporters

2023



About the Office of the Child Advocate

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is an independent executive branch agency with oversight and ombudsperson responsibilities. For more information about the OCA go to: [Office of the Child Advocate | Mass.gov.](#)

About this Guide

This Resource Guide has been compiled to support mandated reporters who are seeking to connect children and families to services. Most often a mandated reporter will use this guide when concerns about the child or family do not reach the threshold of requiring an abuse/neglect report (51A) to DCF. However, nothing prevents a mandated reporter from connecting a child and family to resources in addition to making an abuse/neglect report (51A). Mandated reporters should be cognizant of their obligations to file abuse/neglect reports any time that they have reasonable cause to believe a child has experienced abuse or neglect or is at substantial risk of abuse or neglect regardless of whether or not a child or family is engaged in services. Please see the full scope of mandated reporter obligations here: [General Law - Part I, Title XVII, Chapter 119, Section 51A \(malegislature.gov\)](#); [General Law - Part I, Title XVII, Chapter 119, Section 51B \(malegislature.gov\)](#)

*This Guide has taken language about the programs and services below directly from the relevant websites and adapted the language as necessary to make sense for this Resource Guide.

Contents

Family Resource Centers.....	4
Specialized Helplines.....	5
Resources to Address Mental and Behavioral Health	8
Resources for Childcare	9
Resources for Financial Assistance	10
Resources for Food Assistance	11
Resources for Housing	12
Resources for Transportation	13
LGBTQIA+ Resources.....	14

Family Resource Centers

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are a type of one-stop-shop for community-based services in Massachusetts. Many FRCs have already-established relationships with LEAs in their catchment areas.

FRCs serve as partners who help parents and children thrive by strengthening family bonds. FRCs' goal is to empower, nurture, and support children and families to help them reach their full potential. The centers reflect the cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds of families in the communities they serve. When someone arrives at their local FRC, fully trained staff will greet that someone and ask some questions to help obtain the support needed. After this brief meeting, the person or family will be referred to experts who work either on site at the center or at another location to provide assistance.

FRCs help families by:

- Bringing people together for friendship and mutual support
- Strengthening parenting skills
- Responding to family crises
- Linking families to services and opportunities
- Helping children develop social and emotional skills
- Observing and responding to early warning signs of child abuse and neglect
- Valuing and supporting parents

FRC programs include:

- Career- Find help looking for employment, exploring career options, and discovering which jobs are a good fit for your skills.
- Child Care- Find help in identifying childcare options in your community.
- Civic Engagement- Want to get involved? We may know of opportunities.
- Early Childhood- Find out how to develop positive parenting skills that will improve your child's growth and development.
- Education- Learn about opportunities for youth who need services not available at traditional schools, and for adults who want to obtain General Education Diplomas (GED).
- English as a Second Language- Habla usted Inglés? Aprende a hablar Inglés ahora!
- Family Support- Obtain direct assistance or referrals to groups that promote family unity and successful life skills so everyone in your family reaches their full potential.
- Financial- Learn how to manage your budget, save for your future, repair your credit, and obtain assistance to pay for your certain home housing expenses.

- Housing- If you are homeless or are in danger of losing your house or apartment, find out how to meet your temporary and/or long-term housing needs.
- Legal- We work with local juvenile courts to identify services for youth.
- LGBTQ- If you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer, and need specialty counseling services, help is available.
- Medical- We can help identify potential medical services.
- Mental Health- Find relief for depression, anxiety, anger management, behavioral issues, eating disorders, substance abuse, and other health concerns. Services are available for individuals of all ages as well as for families. Let us help you make the connection.
- Peer Support- Some of our clients turn into peer support leaders.
- School Services- We have staff that can help you work with schools to ensure your child is receiving the support and resources they need. Some centers also provide homework assistance.
- Special Education- Looking for a resource? Ask us.
- Substance Use- Gain your independence from substance use with individual and peer support programs in outpatient and/or residential settings.

Access the website to learn more or find the FRC in your area: [Family Resource Centers - Massachusetts \(frcma.org\)](https://www.frcma.org)

Specialized Helplines

1. Mass 2-1-1: is an information and referral line that provides free, confidential information to individuals and families seeking child and elder care, emergency food and shelter, substance abuse treatment, and educational and vocational assistance. If you need help with any of these services, just dial 2-1-1 from any phone in Massachusetts to speak with a friendly information and referral specialist 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Translation services are available in more than 140 languages. Mass 2-1-1 is the Commonwealth's primary telephone information call center. You can also call 2-1-1 for information about the location of open shelters, transportation or other restrictions due to a declared state of emergency, post disaster assistance, ways to volunteer or donate, or other services you or your family may need. Call: 211 or visit website here: <https://mass211.org/>

2. Behavioral Health Help Line: The Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) connects individuals and families to the full range of treatment services for mental health and substance use offered in Massachusetts, including outpatient, urgent, and immediate crisis care. Call for real-time support, initial clinical assessment, and connection to the right evaluation and treatment.

The BHHL is available in more than 200 languages. The BHHL is free and available to all Massachusetts residents, even if you do not have insurance.

- Call or Text: [833-773-2445](tel:833-773-2445)
- Web Chat: masshelpline.com
- Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing: [MassRelay at 711](#).

3. Parents Helping Parents/ Parental Stress Line: Call: 1-800-632-8188 or click here: [Parents Helping Parents](#) The Parent Stress Line is a toll-free, confidential helpline for parents who need to discuss issues related to their children. Trained volunteer counselors answer the Parental Stress Line and offer support, empathy, encouragement, information and referrals. They are there for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are also virtual and in-person support groups. Virtual support groups include:

- Father's Support Group
- Dealing with Child Protective Services Support Group
- Parenting Connection
- Parents in Recovery
- Parenting as a Person of Color
- Parenting Teens with Special Needs
- Single Parents Support Group
- Parenting, Divorce & Probate Court
- Parenting Teenagers

4. The Trevor Project: The Trevor Project is a 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention hotline for LGBTQ youth. Youth can also text "Trevor" to 1-202-304-1200 for support or use the online chat feature on the Trevor Project's website: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help/>

TrevorText is available Monday-Friday between 3-10PM.

TrevorChat is available seven days a week between 3-10PM.

Call: 800-488-7386

5. Massachusetts Substance Use Information and Education Helpline: The Helpline is the only statewide, public resource for finding substance use treatment, recovery, and problem gambling services. Helpline services are free and confidential. Their caring, trained specialists will help you understand the treatment system and your options. Call: 1-800-327-5050 or click here: <https://helplinema.org>

6. National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Dial 9-8-8 - <https://988lifeline.org/> The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential

emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the United States. They're committed to improving crisis services and advancing suicide prevention by empowering individuals, advancing professional best practices, and building awareness.

7. National Domestic Violence Hotline: The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides essential tools and support to help survivors of domestic violence so they can live their lives free of abuse 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Contacts to The Hotline can expect highly-trained, expert advocates to offer free, confidential, and compassionate support, crisis intervention information, education, and referral services in over 200 languages. Call: (800) 799-7233 or click here: <https://www.thehotline.org/>

8. Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to [741741](https://www.crisistextline.org/) from anywhere in the United States, anytime. Crisis Text Line is here for any crisis- any painful emotion and anytime you need support. Some examples of reasons why people use the crisis line are: feelings of anxiety, feelings of depression, thinking about ending your life, self-harm, eating disorders, and so on. A live, trained Crisis Counselor receives the text and responds, all from our secure online platform. The volunteer Crisis Counselor will help you move from a hot moment to a cool moment. Click here: [Crisis Text Line](https://www.crisistextline.org/)

9. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): The NAMI HelpLine is a free, nationwide peer-support service providing information, resource referrals and support to people living with a mental health condition, their family members and caregivers, mental health providers and the public. HelpLine staff and volunteers are experienced, well-trained and able to provide guidance.

- They understand, many from their own experiences, listen and offer support.
- They are informed on NAMI Programs, NAMI Support Groups and how to locate your local NAMI Affiliate.
- They are trained to help identify the best resource options for your individual concern.
- They are knowledgeable and a source of accurate information about relevant topics.
- They care.

Unfortunately, the NAMI HelpLine is unable to provide mental health counseling, advice, personal advocacy or referrals to mental health providers or lawyers. The NAMI HelpLine does not provide individual casework, legal representations or any type of individual advocacy.

The NAMI HelpLine can be reached Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Call [1-800-950-NAMI \(6264\)](tel:1-800-950-NAMI), text "HelpLine" to [62640](tel:62640) or email at helpline@nami.org
[Support & Education | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

10. Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline: This is a free and confidential service for Massachusetts residents. The hotline provides assistance in understanding where and how to access food support. You can find information about food programs or chat with Project

Bread's counselors by calling or texting the hotline number ([1-800-645-8333](tel:1-800-645-8333)). Or you can chat with a counselor online by using the Live Chat feature on the bottom of the Help Directory webpage: <https://www.projectbread.org/get-help>

Resources to Address Mental and Behavioral Health

1. Handhold: The Handhold website is an online collection of resources that you can try at home today and organizations that can help children struggling with mental and behavioral health. This resource is for parents who need guidance addressing the mental health needs of children. Click here: <https://handholdma.org/>

2. Behavioral Health Help Line: The Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) connects individuals and families to the full range of treatment services for mental health and substance use offered in Massachusetts, including outpatient, urgent, and immediate crisis care. This resource is for people of all ages. Call for real-time support, initial clinical assessment, and connection to the right evaluation and treatment. The BHHL is available in more than 200 languages. The BHHL is free and available to all Massachusetts residents, even if you do not have insurance.

- **Call or Text:** [833-773-2445](tel:833-773-2445)
- **Web Chat:** masshelpline.com
- **Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing** can also use the BHHL by contacting [MassRelay at 711](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mass-relay-at-711).
- **FAQs:** [Behavioral Health Help Line \(BHHL\) FAQ | Mass.gov](#)

3. Community Behavioral Health Centers: Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) are one-stop shops for a wide range of mental health and substance use treatment programs. This resource is for people of all ages. The statewide network includes 25 CBHCs in communities across Massachusetts. CBHCs offer immediate care for mental health and substance use needs, both in crisis situations and the day-to-day. Crisis intervention services are available around the clock for anyone in Massachusetts who feels they may be experiencing a mental health crisis and are entirely insurance-blind, meaning anyone can access services, no insurance needed. Crisis stabilization and outpatient services are available for all MassHealth members and may also be covered by some commercial insurers.

All crisis services offered by CBHCs are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Every CBHC offers treatment both in-person and via telehealth. To find your closest CBHC: <https://www.mass.gov/community-behavioral-health-centers/locations>

4. The Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access (MABHA): The MABHA website helps both providers and individuals locate openings in mental health and substance use disorder services. Everyone to search for services that they can access directly from their community.

MABHA: [Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access \(MABHA\) \(mabhaccess.com\)](https://mabhaccess.com)

5. LINK-KID: LINK-KID is a centralized referral system to streamline access to care for children. It provides a single point of access to connect Massachusetts youth (ages 0 to 22) who need evidence-based trauma treatments with trained mental health professionals. LINK-KID uses a toll-free number—**1-855-LINK-KID**—to ensure kids receive quality treatment as quickly as possible. Children and young adults who need evidence-based treatments (EBTs), child-serving professionals, and caregivers are encouraged to call. Or click here for website: [LINK-KID | Child Therapy Referrals | Lifeline for Kids | Massachusetts \(umassmed.edu\)](https://umassmed.edu/link-kid)

6. William James Interface Referral Service: The William James Interface Referral Service aims to help break down the “silos” that exist between various agencies, mental health providers, and systems that can often hinder access to mental health and wellness services for individuals. Through the Helpline that operates from 9 AM- 5 PM on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 8 AM- 6 PM on Tuesday and Thursday, callers from subscribing communities will work with a Resource and Referral Counselor who will help them navigate the challenges of finding mental health services. Each caller from a subscribing community will be assigned a lead counselor who will provide matches to services, as well as provide information and resources about mental health and wellness. Please see the "[What to Expect When You Call the Helpline](#)" page for more information about the process or call: [888-244-6843 \(toll free\)](tel:888-244-6843); [617-332-3666 \(local\)](tel:617-332-3666)

7. Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI): Helping children who have MassHealth coverage with behavioral, emotional and mental health needs and their families with integrated behavioral health services and a comprehensive, community-based system of care. Click here: <https://www.mass.gov/childrens-behavioral-health-initiative-cbhi>

8. Psychology Today: This is searchable database that can locate therapists, telehealth, support groups or psychiatrists in Massachusetts. Click here: [Find a Therapist, Psychologist, Counselor - Psychology Today](#)

Resources for Childcare

1. Mass211: Help families identify and locate childcare programs in their area. To do so, parents are asked a series of questions in order to best assess the family’s needs. Families can speak with Child Care Specialists to learn more and or ask detailed questions about the process of obtaining financial assistance for childcare and eligibility. Just dial 2-1-1 from any phone in

Massachusetts to speak with a friendly information and referral specialist 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or visit <https://mass211.org/childcare>.

2. Department of Early Education and Care (EEC): The Department of Early Education & Care is a state agency. EEC offers financial assistance to eligible families in the form of a subsidy for childcare. EEC will pay for a portion of a family's childcare expense based off of their household size and income. Due to limited funding, there may be a waitlist.

For information on financial assistance: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/early-education-and-care-financial-assistance-for-families>. EEC also provides a listing of licensed family and program-based childcares: https://eeced.force.com/EEC_ChildCareSearch

3. Family Resource Centers: Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are described in-depth on page 4 of this document. FRCs serve as partners who help parents identify childcare options within their communities. To find the closest FRC near you: <https://www.frcma.org/locations>

4. Massachusetts Association for Community Action Agencies: The Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP) is the statewide association of the 23 [Community Action Agencies](#) (CAAs) operating in Massachusetts. MASSCAP works with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and other state agencies to open doors to economic prosperity for low-income Massachusetts residents. MASSCAP is deeply invested in the delivery of quality, affordable and accessible early education and care services through a comprehensive mixed delivery system operating in various settings including center-based, preschool programs, family childcare, out-of-school time programs, and Head Start/Early Head Start. To find the closest CAA: <https://www.masscap.org/earlyeducationcare/#in-your-area>

5. Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA): DTA is a state agency that assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency, and improve their quality of life. DTA provides childcare to parents and caregivers who receive SNAP and participate in a SNAP Path to Work program. DTA also provides childcare to parents and caregivers who work or participate in education, training, or employment-related activities.

Visit www.snappathtowork.org to find a program. Already enrolled? Contact a DTA employment and training specialist at 888-483-0255 or call the DTA Assistance Line at: 877-382-2363.

Resources for Financial Assistance

1. Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA): DTA is a state agency that assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency, and improve their quality of life in part through Transitional Aid to

Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) which is an economic assistance (cash benefit) program that helps pregnant individuals, families and caregivers explore opportunities, improve their finances, and reach their goals. DTA Assistance Line - [\(877\) 382-2363](tel:8773822363) Apply Here: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-tafdc>

2. Family Resource Centers: Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are described in-depth on page 4 of this document. This statewide network provides a number of services related to financial assistance. To find your local FRC, visit www.frcma.org.

3. Community Action Agencies: Community Action Agencies (CAAs, also known as Community Action Programs or CAPs) are private, non-profit human service and advocacy organizations. CAAs help low-income Americans escape poverty and achieve economic security. Through programs such as Head Start, job training, housing, food banks, energy assistance, and financial education, CAAs tailor their services to meet the needs of the individuals and communities they serve.

Your local Community Action Agency may offer the following [money management services](#):

- [Free Tax Preparation – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\)](#)
- Financial Education
- Financial Counseling
- Financial Coaching
- Credit Counseling
- Credit Building
- Access to Safe and Affordable Financial Products
- Incentivized Savings Programs
- Asset Ownership Programs

See the following list of CAAs providing such services:

<https://www.masscap.org/programs/money-management/>

Resources for Food Assistance

1. Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline: This is a free and confidential service for Massachusetts residents. The hotline provides assistance in understanding where and how to access food support. Project Bread's counselors are ready to assist callers in 180 languages. They can help you access local food resources and federal nutrition programs. They can tell you if you qualify for SNAP - a.k.a. money for groceries - and help you apply, where you can find free meals for your kids, and many other local food programs.

You can find information about food programs or chat with Project Bread's counselors by calling or texting the hotline number **(1-800-645-8333)**. Or you can chat with a counselor

online by using the Live Chat feature on the bottom of the Help Directory webpage:
<https://www.projectbread.org/get-help> To find Information about School Meals click here:
[About School Meals in Massachusetts | Project Bread](#)

2. Find your local food pantry [Find Your Food Pantry | Boston.gov](#) or here: [Massachusetts Food Pantries | Food Banks, Food Pantries, Food Assistance in Massachusetts](#)

3. Greater Boston Food Bank: The Greater Boston Food Bank partners with more than 600 hunger-relief agencies, including food pantries, community meal programs, and other food assistance providers throughout the nine counties and 190 towns and cities across Eastern Massachusetts. Click here: [Need Food? | The Greater Boston Food Bank \(gbfb.org\)](#)

4. The WhyHunger Hotline: This hotline refers people in need across the U.S. to food pantries, soup kitchens, summer meals sites, government nutrition programs and grassroots organizations, especially those that provide access to nutritious foods and nutritional support services. Call [1\(800\) 5-HUNGRY](tel:18005HUNGRY), text your zip code to 1-800-548-6479 to locate a local emergency food provider and other support services.

Resources for Housing

1. Department of Housing and Community Development: The Department of Housing and Community Development is a state agency that provides affordable housing options, financial assistance, and other support to Massachusetts communities.

To apply for **Emergency Assistance** and speak with a Homeless Coordinator please call (866) 584-0653 or click here for a list of Emergency Housing Assistance Programs- Emergency shelters: <https://www.mass.gov/emergency-housing-assistance-programs> or here: [Applying for Rental Assistance in Massachusetts to Avoid Eviction | Mass.gov](#)

2. Housing Consumer Education Centers: Housing Consumer Education Centers offer answers to a wide range of questions about all types of housing problems. Tenants, landlords, prospective buyers, and homeowners can access information designed to maximize housing stability, strengthen investments, and minimize disputes. Find the Housing Consumer Education Center Nearest You: <https://www.masshousinginfo.org/>

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Your local Community Action Agency offers many of the following supports related to Housing:

<https://www.masscap.org/programs/housing-programs/>

- Help with Eviction Notices
- Rent or Mortgage Assistance
- Assistance with Housing Searches
- Help with Move-in Costs
- Mediation in Landlord/Tenant Disputes
- Help with Subsidized Housing, Including Application Issues
- Foreclosure Counseling

Your local Community Action Agency offers many of the following energy services:

<https://www.masscap.org/programs/energy-programs/>

- Assistance with fuel bills – Visit heatinghelpMA.org for more information.
- Discounts on utility bills
- Heating System Repair and Replacement
- Weatherization
- Appliance Management Program
- Advocacy and Support

See the following list of CAAs providing such services:

<https://www.masscap.org/programs/money-management/>

4. MassHealth MATCH Program: The MATCH program helps MassHealth members pay for move-in costs and buy the items they may need to make a new home livable and comfortable. MassHealth members can apply for MATCH assistance if they are moving from a place where they do not need to pay for housing costs and related expenses into community-based housing where they do need to pay for housing costs and expenses. <https://www.mass.gov/masshealth-match-program>

Resources for Transportation

1. MassOptions: MassOptions connects older adults, individuals with disabilities and their caregivers with agencies and organizations that can best meet their needs in lots of areas (housing, equipment and supplies, insurance, etc.) including transportation. Call: (844) 422-6277 or click: <https://massoptions.org/massoptions/>

2. Transportation Access Pass (TAP) CharlieCard: People with disabilities and Medicare cardholders are eligible for reduced MBTA fares with a Transportation Access Pass (TAP) CharlieCard. Call: [617-222-3200](tel:617-222-3200) or click: <https://www.mbta.com/fares/reduced/transportation-access-pass>

If you are eligible for **MassHealth**: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/covered-services> and have no other way to get to medical appointments, ask your doctor to request transportation for you: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/request-transportation-for-a-member>

LGBTQIA+ Resources

1. The Massachusetts Mental Health and Gender Affirming Care Resource Guide for Massachusetts LGBTQ2IA+ Young People and their Trusted Adults.

Click here: https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2023/01/04/MAAG_LGBTQ2IA%2B_MentalHealthGenderAffirmingCare_web%20%281%29.pdf

2. Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth: The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth advises others in state government on effective policies, programs, and resources for LGBTQ youth. The Commission also produces the Safe Schools Program with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This program:

- Provides training and technical assistance to schools across the state
- Organizes the statewide network of Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs)
- Works to make schools safer for all students

Call: [\(508\) 944-1287](tel:5089441287) or click here: [Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/commission-on-lgbtq-youth)

3. Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ students: The Safe Schools Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students is a joint initiative between the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth. Founded in 1993 in response to concerns about LGBTQ youth suicides and other risk factors, the program now offers a range of services designed to help schools implement state laws impacting LGBTQ students, including the state's anti-bullying law, gender identity law, and student anti-discrimination law. Call: [\(617\) 624-5495](tel:6176245495) or Email: safeschoolsprogram@doe.mass.edu or click here: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/lgbtq/>

4. BAGLY: The Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth (BAGLY), is a youth-led, adult-supported social support organization, committed to social justice and creating, sustaining, and advocating for programs, policies, and services for the LGBTQ+ youth community. BAGLY believes LGBTQ+ youth deserve access to high-quality, barrier-free mental health therapies. They offer four distinct mental and behavioral health therapies, all of which are free for LGBTQ+ youth ages 25 and under, and do not require proof of insurance or identification. Click here: <https://www.bagly.org/therapy>

BAGLY's work extends well beyond the borders of the City of Boston. Through the [GLBTQ+ Youth Group Network of Massachusetts](#), they provide technical assistance and training, capacity building, best practices development, and program evaluation to LGBTQ+ youth groups

across the state. This vital work ensures that each year, nearly 7,000 LGBTQ+ youth and young adults from urban, suburban, and rural communities in Massachusetts access comprehensive, culturally competent social support, leadership development, and health promotion programs and referral services. Visit the [programs](#) page to find out more about Statewide and Boston-based work here: <https://www.bagly.org/the-agly-network>

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate



Phone

Main Office: [\(617\) 979-8374](tel:(617)979-8374)
Complaint Line: [\(617\) 979-8360](tel:(617)979-8360)

Address

One Ashburton Place, 11th Floor
Boston, MA 02108

Website

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-child-advocate>

Contact

Have a suggestion for additional resources to be included in this guide?
Email us at: childadvocate@mass.gov subject line: "MRT Resource Guide"