



Internal Investigations

Policy Number: RP-26-01

Release Date: May 14, 2026

Effective Date: November 17, 2026

Applicability: All Licensed Residential Programs

BACKGROUND

When a serious incident occurs in a Residential Program, including when there is an allegation of abuse, Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) regulations require the program to conduct an internal investigation in order to provide an in-depth assessment of the incident, including the cause of the incident, the involved persons, and the corrective actions to be taken. Internal investigations are then shared with and reviewed by EEC. Through this policy, EEC seeks to clarify for programs the circumstances that require an internal investigation and the procedures programs must have in place for conducting these investigations.

AUTHORITY

- 3.04(3)(f): The licensee shall develop and follow procedures for conducting internal investigations within the program.

POLICY STATEMENT

A residential program licensed by EEC must conduct an internal investigation when:

- An incident is reported to The Department of Children and Families (DCF) pursuant to M.G.L. chapter 119, section 51A, regardless of whether the report is screened in for investigation by DCF.¹
- A report is made to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) pursuant to M.G.L. chapter 19C.²
- An incident occurs that is not reported to DCF or DPPC but still raises health and safety concerns and requires notification to EEC, including but not limited to:
 - Any serious injury;
 - A serious illness that may not have received proper medical treatment;
 - A major disturbance by residents of a facility;
 - A fire or other emergency that requires evacuation and/or the need to seek alternate shelter;
 - A missing or absent resident.

Required Investigation Policies and Procedures

Licensees are required to develop and follow procedures for conducting internal investigations within the program. These procedures must be approved by EEC and shall include:

- 1. Provisions for communicating and coordinating with EEC, DCF, DPPC, and other external entities authorized to conduct investigations *prior to initiating any internal investigations*;**
 - The licensee must consult with EEC before initiating their internal investigation whenever EEC, or any other outside agency, is also investigating the incident.
 - In the event that an outside investigating agency requests that a provider delay their internal investigation activities, the licensee must cooperate with and inform EEC of such requests.

- 2. Timelines for conducting and completing investigations;**
 - Internal investigations must be completed in order to assure the safety of residents, protect the rights of all involved parties, and minimize disruption

¹ In accordance with 606 CMR 3.04(5)(d)(2), any staff member suspected of potential abuse or neglect must be removed immediately from unsupervised contact with residents. Please see EEC's Removal and Return of Staff Suspected of Abuse or Neglect policy ([link](#)) for more details.

² In accordance with 606 CMR 3.04(5)(d)(3), any staff member suspected of potential abuse or neglect must be removed immediately from unsupervised contact with residents. Please see EEC's Removal and Return of Staff Suspected of Abuse or Neglect policy ([link](#)) for more details.

within the program. Two weeks is an approximate estimate for many internal investigations; however, a complex investigation involving multiple agencies, numerous interviews, and extensive documentation may require more time.

3. The standard format to be used for investigation reports;

- After reviewing the evidence, the program investigator(s) must write a report that:
 - states the allegations;
 - describes the investigative activities;
 - details the findings; and
 - describes any corrective action taken by the licensee, including recommendations to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.
- This report, and any documents, including video or audio monitoring³ that are collected or produced by the licensee or staff members, must be made available to EEC and may be reviewed as part of EEC's investigation activities.

4. The process for designating persons responsible for conducting the investigation;

- The internal investigation must be conducted by individuals who are not involved in the incident in any way and who can review the facts surrounding the event objectively. Such individuals may include an agency administrator, a team of staff, or an outside consultant.
- The investigator(s) must interview all involved persons and witnesses individually and must gather all relevant documentation, such as signed statements, incident reports, medical reports, log entries, residents' records, and personnel files.

5. The process for reviewing the investigation report and for taking corrective action;

- Upon reaching a determination, the licensee must review the circumstances surrounding the incident, address any non-compliances, and identify how the program will prevent future occurrences.

³ Video or audio footage requested by EEC as part of investigative activity may not be altered or deleted until EEC has closed its investigation.

6. **A written plan for staff to file a report of abuse or neglect with DCF, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 119, § 51A, or DPPC, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 19C. Additionally, for staff of programs serving young parents, the plan shall include guidelines for reporting abuse or neglect of children by young parents and abuse or neglect of young parents younger than 18 years old by their caregivers;**
- In all cases of serious physical and sexual assault allegations or injuries reported to the police or the District Attorney's Office, the licensee must consult with the program's EEC licensor before beginning an internal investigation.
 - This plan must include the procedure for notifying EEC, as required by 606 CMR 3.04(3)(g).

Notifying EEC

In accordance with 3.04(5), upon learning of an allegation or serious incident in Residential care, the licensee, the licensee's chief administrative person, or a designee must notify EEC immediately and no later than 24 hours after the notice or event by entering the case into the EEC LEAD Portal. **If the case involves death, evacuation, or a high-profile/media event, the licensee must also call the EEC Regional Office.**

COMPLIANCE

Failure to submit documentation showing completion of an internal investigation in cases that require one may result in a citation of non-compliance with EEC regulation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information on EEC's requirements when allegations of abuse or neglect are made against staff members, please see EEC's [Removal and Return of Staff Suspected of Abuse or Neglect Policy](#).

OBSOLETE

For licensed Residential programs, this policy, along with EEC's Removal and Return of Staff Suspected of Abuse or Neglect policy, replaces EEC's previous Internal Investigations and Personnel Guidance policy issued on March 22, 2022.