



Mandated Reporter Commission
Office of the Child Advocate
1 Ashburton Place, Fifth Floor
Boston, MA 02108

Re: Mandated reporting statute

To whom it may concern:

I have worked in child protection for 33 years. I served as a child abuse prosecutor for 10 years and then went on to direct the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse and found the National Child Protection Training Center (which subsequently merged into Zero Abuse Project). We currently train child abuse prosecutors and investigators pursuant to a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Given this experience, I'm deeply concerned that Massachusetts is one of two states that still permits a "chain of command" mandated reporting statute. There are at least two problems with this statute. First, it decreases the chance a report will be made. Institutions wary of lawsuits or bad press are apt to look the other way in the hope of protecting the institution and not the child. We have seen this fact repeated numerous times in sexual abuse scandals within institutions.

Second, even if an institution makes a report, the information may leave out critical details that results in the report being screened out or not properly investigated. The person who directly witnessed, heard, or otherwise received information creating a reasonable suspicion of abuse is best positioned to give details to the authorities and to respond to follow-up questions from the person receiving the report.

I strongly urge Massachusetts to require mandated reporters with direct knowledge of the abuse to be making the report to the authorities.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Vieth".

Victor I. Vieth
Chief Program Officer for Education & Research, Zero Abuse Project
Zero Abuse Project

Cc: Nancy Guardia