

Massachusetts Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Task Force



Who we are: A statewide, multi-agency collaboration utilizing the collective experience of both public and private youth-serving agencies, offices and organizations to create new frameworks, guidance and tools building on existing best practices and research for the safety and protection of our children and the prevention of child sexual abuse (CSA).

Our Task and Membership: As mandated by the Massachusetts State Legislature (see reverse).

Our committees and what they are working on:

Code of Conduct

- Ethics-informed guidelines and policies defining clear boundaries for the expected behaviors, actions and interactions of all staff, volunteers and partners who come into contact with minors.
- Operationally relevant scenarios will help organizations define and evaluate risk, train, review and self-monitor. Clear protocols will outline best practices for responding and investigating.

Responding and Reporting

- Strategies and tools to help ensure that all professionals, volunteers and participants working with children and youth can identify instances of CSA, including youth-on-youth offenses, and the obligations of mandated reporting.
- Ways to ensure that youth-serving organizations have clear policies and procedures on how to report and respond to suspicions, allegations or disclosures of CSA, and understand the role of law enforcement and/or of the Department of Children and Families in that response.

Safe Physical Environments and Technology

- Strategies to ensure access to children and youth is monitored, all adults have a role known to staff and participants, maximum visibility of all youth, and that adults are present at all times.
- Ways to ensure appropriate supervision of youth in all places and at all times, and to ensure the privacy and protection of youth in the use of social media and technology.

Screening and Hiring

- Guidance to organizations implementing background screenings to recruit and select skilled, qualified staff and volunteers and to screen out those who have, or are at risk to abuse minors.
- Rules that will help organizations determine who to screen, how to develop a consistent process for screening and establish policies for use of screening information.
- A Screening Toolbox to assist organizations in selecting the appropriate screening tools.

Training

- A set of clear and attainable goals for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention (CSAP) Trainings.
- Essential elements for effective CSAP trainings, including information on implementation and choosing curricula.
- Resources that will help organizations address issues of access, content and sustainability.



Task Force Charter and Current Membership

In 2014, the Massachusetts Legislature authorized the creation of a task force on child sexual abuse prevention (SECTION 34. Chapter 431 of the acts of 2014) to be co-chaired by the state child advocate and the executive director of the Children's Trust. The purpose of the task force is to develop guidelines and tools for the development of sexual abuse prevention and intervention plans by organizations serving children and youth.

The task force will recommend policies and procedures for implementation and oversight of the guidelines as well as strategies for incentivizing such organizations to develop and implement sexual abuse prevention and intervention plans. The task force will also develop a 5-year plan for using community education and other strategies to increase public awareness about child sexual abuse, including how to recognize signs, minimize risk and act on suspicions or disclosures of such abuse.

The legislation designates certain elected and appointed officials (or their designees) and organizations (see below) to serve on the task force, and further states that the governor may appoint additional representatives from agencies serving children, law enforcement, religious organizations and others as necessary to fulfill the purpose of the task force.¹

- *Office of the Child Advocate*
- *The Children's Trust*
- *Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership*
- *Massachusetts Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs*
- *Department of Public Health*
- *Massachusetts Citizens for Children*
- *Department of Children and Families*
- *Massachusetts Children's Alliance*
- *Children's League of MA*
- *Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance*
- *Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership*
- *Office of the Attorney General*²
- *Office of the Lieutenant Governor*³
- *Senate Minority Leader*⁴
- *House Minority Leader*⁵
- *Mass. Mentoring Partnership*
- *Massachusetts District Attorneys Association*
- *Sex Offender Registry Board*
- *Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance*
- *Girl Scouts of Eastern MA*
- *Department of Early Education and Care*
- *Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston*
- *Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs*
- *Department of Mental Health*
- *Massachusetts Adolescent Sex Offender Coalition*
- *Massachusetts Association for Treatment of Sexual Abusers*
- *Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children*
- *Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*
- *House Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities*⁶
- *Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities*⁷

Periodic public presentations will be made to discuss progress in more detail, solicit legislative and public input, and keep all constituencies informed of our ongoing work. The task force will periodically report on its activities and recommendations to the Governor, the clerks of the House of Representatives and Senate, and the chairs of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities and will submit a final report and 5-year implementation plan on or before June 30, 2017.

Contacts: The Task Force is co-chaired by the Office of the Child Advocate (617) 979-8374; and the Children's Trust (617) 502-8801.

¹ See: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter431>

² Hon. Gail Garinger, designee for A.G. Maura Healey

³ Tammy Mello, designee for Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito

⁴ Seth Yorra, designee for Sen. Bruce Tarr

⁵ Rep. Susannah Whipps Lee, designee for Rep. Brad Jones

⁶ Lisa Rosenfeld, designee for Rep. Kay Khan

⁷ Amanda Early, designee for Sen. Jennifer Flanagan