



GREATER LOWELL
TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 119 Section 51 A

Mandated Reporting 51A Reporting

The Mandated Reporter Statute: c.119 51-A

gavel The Statute (51-A)

Massachusetts Chapter 119, Section 51A requires school employees to report suspected child abuse or neglect (under 18) when there is reasonable cause to believe injury or malnutrition is occurring.

Failure to report is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000.

shield Role & Protection

It is **not** the employee's responsibility to prove abuse or neglect—only to act on reasonable cause for concern.

School personnel reporting with reasonable cause are presumed to act in good faith and are **immune** from civil or criminal liability.

track_changes Core Objective

The fundamental purpose of the Massachusetts mandated reporter law is designed to:

check_circle Identify suspected cases

check_circle Report and investigate

check_circle Provide support to families



Reasonable Cause for 51-A Reporting

Mandated Reporter Requirement

All school personnel are legally required to contact the **Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF)**.

This applies if you have reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from any of the conditions listed.

5 Key Indicators for Reporting

report_problemAbuse: Inflicted harm or risk of harm, including sexual abuse.

report_problemNeglect: Failure to provide proper care, including malnutrition.

report_problemDrug Dependence at Birth: Physical dependence on addictive drugs at birth (requires immediate oral and 48-hr written report).

report_problemSexual Exploitation: Any child who is sexually exploited.

report_problemHuman Trafficking: Victim as defined under Section 20M of Chapter 233.

help_outlineNeed Assistance? Greater Lowell Technical High School personnel should consult with a **School Counselor, Adjustment Counselor, or School Psychologist** if abuse or neglect is suspected.

How does DCF define abuse and neglect?

error_outline Abuse

The non-accidental commission of any act by a caretaker upon a child under 18 which causes, or creates a substantial risk of, physical or emotional injury; or an act constituting a sexual offense; or any sexual contact between a caretaker and child. Abuse can occur in any setting.

warning Neglect

Failure by a caretaker, deliberately or through inability, to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, or emotional stability. Inability must not be due solely to inadequate economic resources.

healing Physical Injury

Death, fracture, subdural hematoma, burns, organ impairment, or non-trivial injury; soft tissue swelling or bruising depending on child's age and circumstances; or drug addiction at birth, or failure to thrive.

psychology Emotional Injury

An impairment to or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child. Evidenced by an observable and substantial reduction in the child's ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior.



Reporting Process

All Staff Responsibilities

- Immediately contact the student's School Counselor if you believe a student may be abused and/or neglected.
- Document and follow-up with the School Counselor (all staff are mandated reporters).

School Counselor Actions

- **Notify School Nurse:** Who will evaluate and record the nature of the injury if appropriate.
- **Collaborate:** Contact other school personnel (Instructors, Adjustment Counselors, Psychologists) to assist in review if necessary.
- **Intake Call:** Immediately telephone DCF. Meet with the mandated reporter to assist with the 51A Form prior to calling.
- **Complete 51A Form:** Submit via the online portal within 48 hours of the intake call.
- **Notify SRO:** Inform our School Resource Officer of a possible criminal investigation.
- **Follow-up:** Notify results to all members of the team and the initial reporter when notified by DCF.



Important Numbers, Links and Resources

phoneImportant Hotline Numbers

Lowell Area DCF Office

978-275-6800

Child at Risk Hotline

800-792-5200

descriptionReporting Resources & Links

- [DCF Reporting Form \(51A\)](#)
Official document for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.
- [MA General Laws Section 51A](#)
Legal mandate and requirements for mandated reporters.
- [A Guide for Mandated Reporters](#)
Comprehensive guidance on child abuse and neglect reporting.

