



Policy Name: VII.24 Abuse and Mandatory Reporting	Section: VII Health and Safety	Programs: All
	Standard/Area: H 9.30 Health and Safety	Review Date:
File: Employee Portal Health and Safety VII.24 Abuse and Mandatory Reporting	Effective Date: 8.4.25	

Section I: Intent

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines and responsibilities for all MVCS staff, volunteers, contractors, and associated personnel regarding the identification, response, and reporting of suspected or actual abuse. This policy aims to protect vulnerable individuals from harm, ensure compliance with legal obligations, and foster a safe and supportive environment.

Section II: Policy

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, interns, contractors, and anyone working on behalf of MVCS who interact with minors, vulnerable adults, or others at risk of abuse within the scope of MVCS operations. MVCS is committed to maintaining a safe environment free from abuse. All personnel have a responsibility to recognize signs of abuse, respond appropriately, and report concerns promptly in accordance with this policy and applicable laws.

Definitions

Abuse: Any act or failure to act that causes harm, potential harm, or risk of harm to a person, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Vulnerable Persons: Individuals who may be at increased risk of abuse due to age, disability, or other circumstances.

Mandated Reporter: An individual legally required to report suspected abuse to authorities.



Section III: Procedures

Recognizing Abuse

Personnel should be vigilant for signs of abuse, which may include:

- Unexplained injuries or bruises
- Sudden withdrawal or behavioral changes
- Inappropriate sexual behavior or language
- Neglect or poor hygiene
- Fearfulness, anxiety, or depression
- Exploitation or financial abuse

Note: Suspected abuse should never be ignored or dismissed.

Responding to Suspected Abuse

If abuse is suspected or disclosed:

1. Ensure Immediate Safety: If there is an immediate danger, contact emergency services (911) without delay.
2. Listen and Reassure: Offer support and reassurance to the individual, emphasizing that they are not to blame.
3. Maintain Confidentiality: Keep information confidential and share only with designated authorities and on a need-to-know basis.
4. Do Not Investigate: Do not attempt to investigate the allegation yourself; leave that to professionals.

Reporting Procedures

1. Immediate Notification: Report concerns to the Supervisor immediately.
2. Documentation: Record all relevant details of the concern or disclosure, including date, time, observations, and direct quotes if applicable within the MVCS incident reporting system.
3. Follow-Up: The Supervisor will assess the situation and determine next steps, which may include reporting to external authorities per mandatory reporting guidelines.
4. If mandatory reporting is indicated, the following reporting procedure applies (see Mandatory Reporting section)



Mandatory Reporting

All personnel are ****mandated reporters**** and are legally required to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities.

For suspected child abuse, mandated reporters must immediately call the DCF area office that serves the city or town where the child lives to report child abuse or neglect. Nights, weekends, and holidays call the Child-at-Risk Hotline at **(800)792-5200**. After calling, mandated reporters *must submit a written report within 48 hours*. For Martha's Vineyard, the area office is the Cape and Islands DCF, which can be reached at **508 760-0200**.

Massachusetts law requires mandated reporters to report suspected abuse of adults aged 60+ to the Adult Protective Services program. Reports of suspected abuse can be made over the phone at **(800) 922-2275** or online at <https://hssmaprod.wellsky.com/intake/>

In Massachusetts, mandated reporters are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect of individuals with disabilities to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC). Reports should be made immediately, followed by a written report within 48 hours. Instances of suspected abuse or neglect and/or deaths of persons with disabilities must be reported immediately to the DPPC's 24-hour Hotline at **1-800-426-9009**. Hearing impaired callers, please use Video Relay Services (VRS) or MassRelay ([711](tel:711)) to contact the DPPC Hotline. For non-emergencies, reporters can file an online abuse report at <https://reports.dppc.mass.gov/fmi/webd/dppc%20online>

Legal References:

Massachusetts statutes 21 and 51A, chapter 119 (Child abuse).

MGL c. 19A, 14-26 (Elder abuse)

MGL Part 1, Title II, Chapter 19C, Sec. 10 (Disabled person abuse)

Confidentiality and Privacy

Information related to suspected abuse must be handled sensitively, respecting the privacy of all individuals involved, and disclosed only to those directly involved in the response or required by law.

Training and Awareness

MVCS will provide regular training to all staff and volunteers on recognizing abuse, reporting procedures, and safeguarding policies to ensure awareness and compliance.



Non-Retaliation

MVCS prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports suspected abuse in good faith. Anyone who retaliates will be subject to disciplinary action and/or termination.

Section IV: Distribution and Training

The Policy and associated attachments are distributed on the MVCS Employee Portal. Notifications related to new, amended, or reviewed policies will be communicated to MVCS leadership and program directors for dissemination to their staff as appropriate. The policy may be directly disseminated to appropriate staff and/or staff groups via email notification after initial dissemination to leadership as per direction of the CEO or designee. The dissemination will be performed by the Chief Operating Officer or designee.

Section V: Legal, Regulatory, Accrediting, and Other Related References and Resources

Massachusetts statutes 21 and 51A, chapter 119 (child abuse)

MGL c. 19A, 14-26 (Elder Abuse)

MGL Part 1, Title II, Chapter 19C, Sec. 10 (Disabled person abuse)

Elder Abuse Mandated Reporting Form