

Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) Coalition Frequently Asked Questions

Mandated Reporting and Child Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSEC)

1. *Is a child who is being commercially sexually exploited a victim of child abuse?*

Yes. The commercial sexual exploitation of a child is a form of child abuse, and therefore a report of child abuse must be filed in accordance with Chapter 119, section 51A-f. In accordance with established procedure, all mandated reporters should

- make an oral report to the Department of Children and Families when they know or suspect a child under the age of 18 years is being commercially sexually exploited. This may include:
 - if the reporter suspects sexual exploitation of the child, including if the child is found in a location or on a website known for commercial sexual activity;
 - is affiliated with a known pimp or prostituted person; and/or
 - reports frequent interstate moves with boyfriend/pimp/friend.
- include any known information about the pimp/perpetrator including street name, vehicle information and any known addresses
- 51A reports should be filed regardless of whether or not the identity of the pimp/perpetrator is known
- submit a written report to DCF within 48 hours of the oral report

Non-mandated reporters should also file when they become aware of a child being commercially sexually exploited. Non-mandated reporters are only required to file an oral report.

2. *What is commercial sexual exploitation of a child (CSEC)?*

Massachusetts law defines a sexually exploited child as any person under the age of 18 who engages, agrees to engage or offers to engage in sexual conduct with another person in return for a fee or in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, education or care.

3. *Should I be concerned if the perpetrator is not a caretaker?*

No. DCF was created to respond to caretakers who abuse children. Perpetrators of children who are being commercially sexually exploited tend not to be caretakers, however the law requires that a report of child abuse is necessary regardless of the caretaker status.

4. *Are these reports any different from other 51A's?*

No. As with other reports of child abuse, mandated reporters should contact the DCF area office serving the child's residence to make an oral report. If the report is being filed after business hours (i.e. business hours are Monday – Friday, 9 am – 5 pm), the reporter should call the DCF Child-at-Risk Hotline at 1-800-792-5200.

You will also be required to mail or fax your written report to the Department within 48 hours after making the oral report.

5. *What will happen after I file the report?*

Upon receipt of the 51A, DCF will screen the report to determine whether the allegation meets the Department's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect, whether there is immediate danger to the safety of a child, and whether DCF involvement is warranted. If the 51A is filed due to concerns of suspected commercial sexual exploitation, per Massachusetts law, DCF will also likely notify law enforcement and the district attorney.