



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Disabled Persons Protection Commission

300 Granite Street • Suite 404 • Braintree • Massachusetts • 02184

MAURA T. HEALEY
GOVERNOR
KIMBERLEY L. DRISCOLL
LT. GOVERNOR
JAMES T. BRETT
CHAIRPERSON
KACY C. MAITLAND
COMMISSIONER
MARY BETH McMAHON
COMMISSIONER

NANCY A. ALTERIO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Phone: (617) 727-6465

FAX (617) 727-6469

Hotline: (800) 426-9009

Dear Members of the Legislature,

On behalf of the Honorable James T. Brett, Chairperson, and Nancy A. Alterio, Executive Director, Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC), attached please find a copy of DPPC's FY2025 Quarterly Report for the period of October to December 2024.

Each year DPPC receives thousands of reports of abuse and hundreds of reports of crimes committed against persons with disabilities through a 24-hour Hotline. All reports are maintained and tracked using an extensive computer database. The information in the DPPC database involves persons with various disabilities living throughout the Commonwealth. On a quarterly basis, a portion of the data is calculated and provided for review.

We hope you find the attached report useful, informative, and helpful in understanding the role of DPPC. We thank you for all your past support and look forward to continuing our work together addressing abuse committed against persons with disabilities.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Barthe at Kathleen.Barthe@mass.gov.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Disabled Persons Protection Commission
FY2025 QUARTERLY REPORT

October-November-December



DPPC OVERVIEW

Every month, the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) receives hundreds of abuse reports. These reports are maintained and tracked using an extensive computer database. In the DPPC database, the information ranges from basic demographic information regarding the people involved, including the alleged victim, to specific information about the site of the alleged abuse and other factors that may have contributed to the abuse. The DPPC tracks different types of injury, and information about whether an injury was caused by abuse or neglect. In addition to the hundreds of other categories, the DPPC tracks whether the alleged abuse or neglect reported may also be a crime. Information in the database is analyzed continually in an effort to identify potential preventative measures to be implemented and/ or trends and systemic challenges needing attention. On a quarterly basis a portion of the data is calculated and provided for review. In addition to providing the quarterly statistical data, for those of you who are not familiar with the DPPC, this report also presents the history, mission and an overview of the operations of the Agency.

The DPPC was created through legislation in 1987 as an independent state agency responsible for the investigation and remediation of abuse against persons with a disability. The mission of the DPPC is to protect adults with a disability from the abusive acts and omissions of their caregivers through investigation, oversight, public awareness and abuse prevention. Pursuant to its enabling statute, M.G.L. c. 19C, the jurisdiction of the DPPC extends to adults with a disability between the ages of 18 and 59 who suffer serious physical and/or serious emotional injury, or abuse per se through an act and/or omission by their caregiver. This protection is provided whether the individual is in state care or in a private setting.

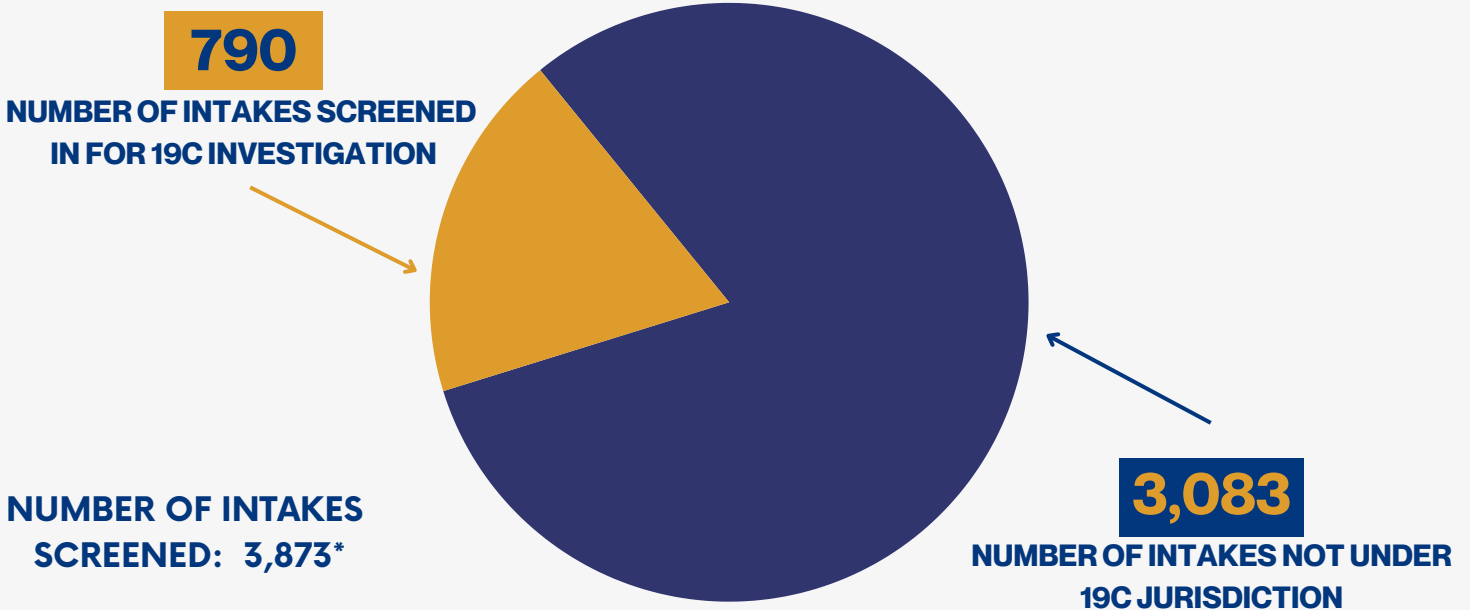
Although an independent agency, DPPC was designed to be one of a number of agencies with complementary missions, including, but not limited to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Department of Children and Families, Department of Developmental Services, Department of Mental Health, MassAbility (formerly the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission) and the local and state police. Replacing none of them, the DPPC was designed to closely coordinate its work with all. The DPPC, similar to the Department of Children and Families for children and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs for elders, acts to protect adults with a disability who are dependent on others to meet a daily living need. DPPC fills the gap between the child protection and elder protection systems. DPPC is located in Braintree, MA and currently has a staff of **103.5** FTEs. The DPPC is comprised of a number of units including Learning and Development, Intake, Oversight, Investigation, Legal, Quality Assurance, Information Technology, Human Resources and Finance. It also includes a Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) grant funded Sexual Assault Response (SAR) Team comprised of **6.5** FTEs. During fiscal year 1998, a State Police Detective Unit (SPDU) was established within the DPPC. The SPDU is comprised of a Sergeant and four troopers and is physically located within the offices of the DPPC.

DPPC's mission is to protect adults with a disability from the abusive acts and omissions of their caregivers through investigation, oversight, public awareness and abuse prevention.

INTAKE UNIT

The DPPC Intake Unit receives reports of abuse against persons with a disability via a 24-Hour Hotline at 1-800-426-9009 or MassRelay (711) for Deaf and Hard of Hearing callers. During this quarter, the DPPC received **4,068** reports of abuse resulting in **3,873** intakes. Multiple reports on the same incident are combined into one intake. In addition, DPPC staff received **381** death reports, **574** information and referral requests and **7** retaliation complaints. There were **0** allegations of abuse found to have been falsely reported as a result of intentional and malicious action.

INTAKE ACTIVITY REPORT



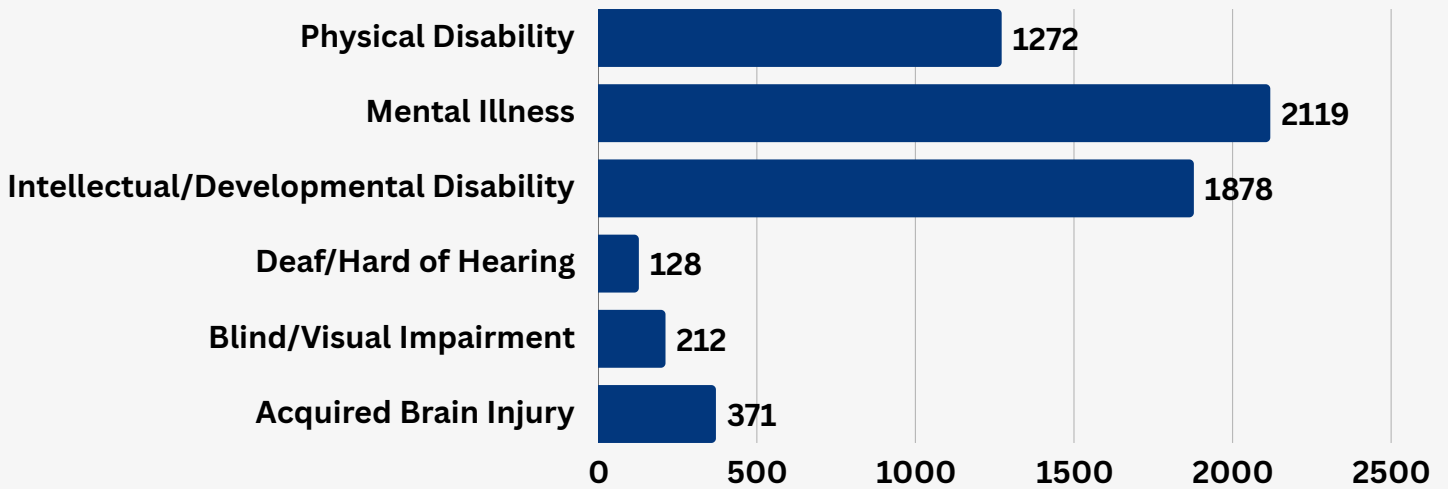
**DOES NOT INCLUDE DEATH REPORTS AND INFORMATION AND REFERRAL CALLS*

Every intake is reviewed pursuant to the DPPC screening criteria. A determination is made regarding whether the intake is an emergency or non-emergency, and then, whether the situation meets the agency's jurisdictional criteria. During this quarter, **790** of the intakes screened by the DPPC 24-Hour Hotline were assigned for a DPPC 19C investigation. Also during this quarter, the **3,083** intakes not within the jurisdiction of the Commission were forwarded to the appropriate state agency for review and action as necessary.

INVESTIGATION UNIT

Reports of alleged abuse determined to be within the jurisdiction of the DPPC are immediately assigned to an Adult Protective Services (APS) Investigator and a DPPC Oversight Officer. The APS Investigator may be one of DPPC's Investigators or an Investigator from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health (DMH) or MassAbility. The DPPC Investigation Unit and the Investigation Units of DDS, DMH and MassAbility conduct abuse investigations under the authority of DPPC's statute, M.G.L. c. 19C. The primary focus of all APS investigations is the protection of vulnerable individuals. Investigators also look for systemic issues that may contribute or lead to abuse.

INTAKES BY DISABILITY



THE DPPC PROTECTS INDIVIDUALS WITH ANY FORM OF DISABILITY. THIS CHART ILLUSTRATES INTAKE REPORTS TO THE DPPC HOTLINE BY DISABILITY FOR THIS QUARTER.

The DPPC Oversight Unit is responsible for monitoring all 19C investigations. Every case, whether investigated by DPPC, DDS, DMH or MassAbility, is monitored by one of DPPC's Oversight Officers to ensure that the victim is safe, the report is timely and the investigation is thorough. In cases where abuse by a caregiver has been substantiated, protective services are provided by the respective service-providing agency, DDS, DMH or MassAbility. To confirm that necessary protective services are implemented, the DPPC Oversight Officers monitor cases until risk of harm to the victim is adequately reduced or eliminated.

In July of 2017, a Sexual Assault Response (SAR) team was created at the DPPC to increase access to trauma informed support services for persons with a disability thanks to the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) through the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) funding. SAR provides navigation, peer support and clinical matching services to sexual assault victims with disabilities. SAR works with individuals with disabilities, families and support teams by providing information, resources, referrals and supports. The goal of SAR is to increase access to trauma services for persons with disabilities to aid in their recovery of sexual abuse.

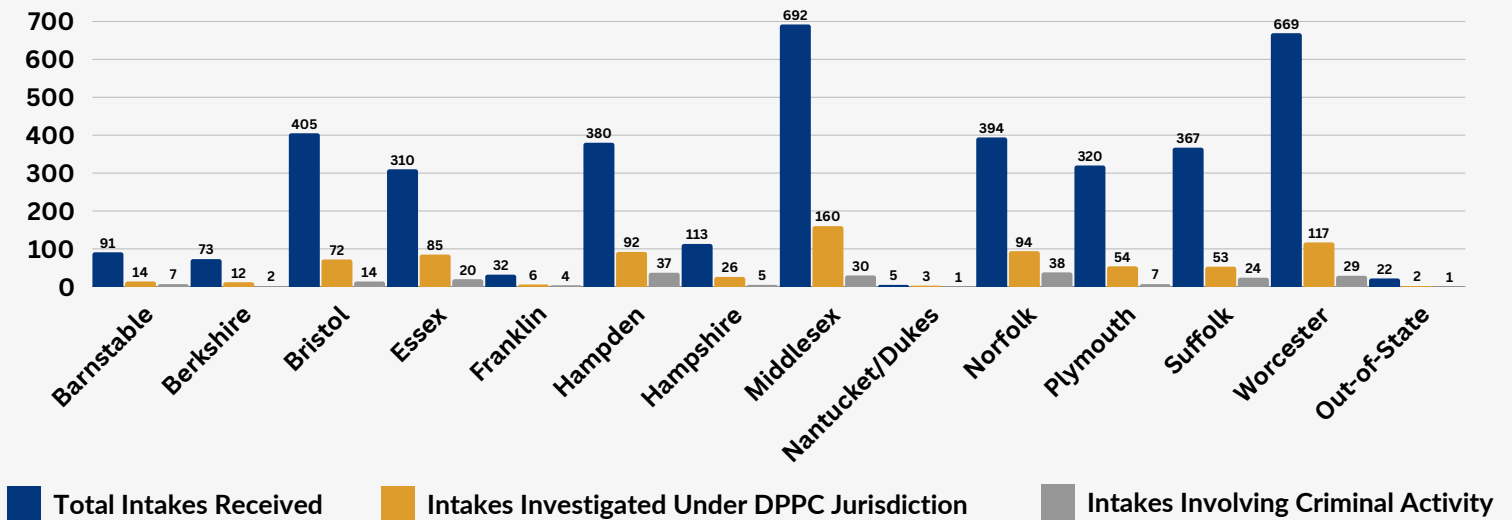
In addition to navigation, peer support and clinical matching, SAR also benefits from a robust and active volunteer Advisory Council. The volunteer Advisory Council's role is to advise the DPPC in its ongoing development of SAR. The Advisory Council members share their professional/experiential wisdom to guide and enhance SAR operations. Advisory Council members also serve as ambassadors for SAR within the members' own spheres of influence by taking action within their own organizations to prevent and effectively respond to sexual violence against persons with a disability. Further, the Advisory Council members are called upon for assistance with introductions to stakeholders in the fields of disability services and advocacy, sexual violence, law, mental health, criminal justice, law enforcement, medical health, education, research and employment. DPPC and SAR have benefited greatly from the collective experience offered by the individual members of the volunteer Advisory Council.

STATE POLICE DETECTIVE UNIT

The MA State Police Detective Unit (SPDU), assigned to the DPPC, reviews 100% of the Intakes received by the DPPC to determine which of these complaints suggest criminal activity against a person with a disability. Within this quarter the SPDU reviewed **3,873** allegations of abuse. Of the **3,873** intakes reviewed and screened by the SPDU, **219** were referred to the District Attorney for possible criminal investigation.

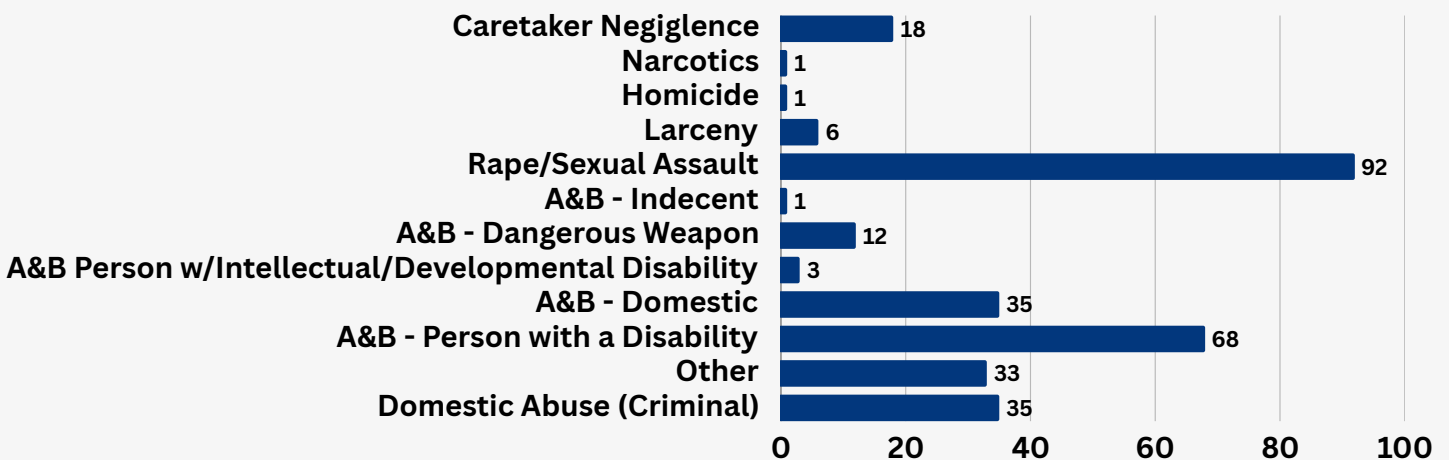
DPPC APS CRIMINAL INTAKES BY COUNTY OCTOBER 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

The graph is a breakdown by county of the number of Intakes received by the DPPC Hotline, Intakes meeting the jurisdiction for an APS investigation, and the number of Intakes referred to the District Attorney for possible criminal investigation.



FY2025 TYPES OF CRIMES CRIMINAL ACTIVITY REPORT, OCTOBER 1, 2024 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2024

The SPDU also analyzes the types of crimes involved in the Intakes received by the DPPC Hotline. The chart below presents the types of criminal activity reported. Consistently a significant percentage of the criminal activity is sexual in nature. Often reports to the DPPC Hotline involve domestic violence.



Domestic violence is abuse that often takes place where the person lives. Domestic violence can be any type of abuse including sexual assault and rape, emotional, psychological or financial. Domestic violence involves "family and household members" who are or were married, living together, related by blood, parents of a common child or involved in a substantive dating relationship. During this quarter it was determined that **35** reports made to the DPPC Hotline involved domestic violence abuse.

LEGAL UNIT

The DPPC Legal Unit provides legal advice and guidance on a variety of matters before the DPPC. This includes assistance provided to DPPC staff and staff of the Department of Developmental Services, Department of Mental Health and MassAbility.

In addition, the Legal Unit performs the following functions within the DPPC:

- Secures Access Warrants when law enforcement and/or 19C investigators are unreasonably denied access to an alleged victim of abuse;
- Obtains judicial Protective Orders when an alleged victim of abuse is at immediate risk of harm and is not able to consent to the provision of protective services due to a mental or physical impairment;
- Responds to reports of Mandated Reporters' failure to report abuse as required by M.G.L. c. 19C, §10;
- Completes Petitions for Review as outlined in 118 CMR. The alleged victim, the alleged abuser and other parties involved in an investigation, may request a review of the findings. Upon the conclusion of the review process, the investigation report may be amended if the facts provided in the Petition are found to be meritorious. The DPPC completed **21** Petitions during this quarter; and
- Completes Requests for Reconsideration as outlined in 118 CMR. The alleged victim or their legal representative may file a Request for Reconsideration;
- Defends DPPC investigative findings at the Division of Administrative Law Appeals and Superior Court;
- Ensures that all responses to requests for DPPC records are compliant with all statutory requirements.

DPPC ABUSER REGISTRY

In 2020, Massachusetts enacted a law requiring the DPPC to establish and maintain a registry of care providers against whom the DPPC has made a substantiated finding of registrable abuse. The DPPC Abuser Registry became effective July 31, 2021 and is intended to protect individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) by barring care providers who have a substantiated finding of registrable abuse from working with other persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities. A substantiated finding of registrable abuse is a finding by the DPPC, after investigation and opportunity to appeal, that a care provider abused a person with I/DD.

A care provider is a person who is employed by, contracts with, or is funded by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) or an Employer who provides services or treatment to persons with I/DD. Care providers include all current and prospective care providers in any program licensed, contracted, or funded by DDS to provide services and support to persons with I/DD. Care providers can include volunteers, interns, work-study participants, or any other similar unpaid positions.

DDS and agencies defined by the law as Employers must check the registry prior to employing a care provider. For purposes of the DPPC Abuser Registry, Employer means any agency that provides services or treatment to people with I/DD pursuant to a contract or agreement with DDS; funding administered by DDS; or a license issued by DDS. The DPPC Abuser Registry is not a public registry. By law, the DPPC Abuser Registry can only be accessed by DDS or Employers who are funded by, contract with, or are licensed by DDS. Employers are required to create verified accounts to check whether prospective care providers are on the DPPC Abuser Registry.

During the second quarter of FY2025 (October 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024), the following activities occurred with the DPPC Abuser Registry:

- **3 Employers** were added as authorized to access the DPPC Abuser Registry
- **39 individual users** created accounts to check the DPPC Abuser Registry
- **7,529 prospective care providers/care providers** were searched on the DPPC Abuser Registry
- **27 care providers** were placed on the DPPC Abuser Registry

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT

Everyone at DPPC shares in the responsibility for preventing abuse. DPPC continually strives to identify new and effective ways to educate direct care staff, law enforcement, others working with persons with disabilities, and the public about the prevalence of abuse of persons with a disability. The DPPC's abuse prevention strategy is to decrease incidents of abuse by increasing awareness about how widespread the problem of abuse/neglect against persons with a disability is; and to educate people regarding the important role they can perform in preventing or stopping this abuse.

To educate others, the DPPC Learning and Development Unit distributes informational materials and conducts training on an ongoing basis. Training is provided to a broad range of individuals including law enforcement, educators, medical professionals, service providers and persons with a disability. Topics include recognizing and reporting abuse, preservation of evidence, the DPPC investigation process, communicating with individuals from varied backgrounds or with differing communication needs as well as regulatory and statutory compliance.

Some of DPPC's ongoing activities include:

- Curricula development and training designed to educate Adult Protective Services (APS) and others;
- Consulting with agencies interested in developing abuse prevention programs; and
- Collaborating with agencies to develop presentations, programs and services related to abuse prevention and improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities.

DPPC Learning and Development Unit
300 Granite Street, Suite 404
Braintree, MA 02184
Email: DPPClearning@mass.gov
Phone: (617) 727-6465
Website: DPPCMass.gov

**Report suspected abuse of persons with disabilities to:
DPPC 24 hour Hotline 1-800-426-9009
Deaf and Hard of Hearing callers, please use Video Relay Services (VRS)
or MassRelay (711) to contact DPPC.**

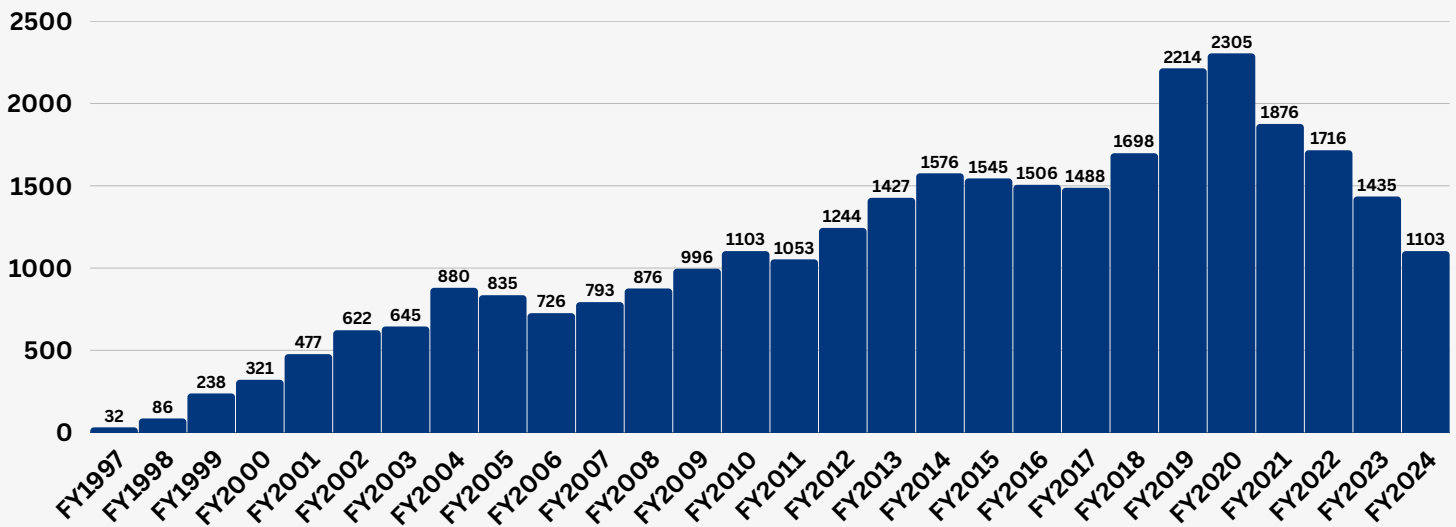
Massachusetts Agencies Partner to Support Crime Victims With Disabilities

Building Partnerships for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities (BPI) is a statewide Massachusetts initiative that, using a multidisciplinary approach, links law enforcement, adult protection, human services and others to address violence committed against persons with a disability. The partnership was formed in 1999 to effectively address abuse, neglect and crimes committed against persons with a disability. In addition, the partnership was created to respond to the fact that crimes committed against persons with a disability in the Commonwealth were not being recognized or reported to the appropriate authorities. Having started as a federally funded Byrne grant program, BPI is currently funded through an award to the Hampden District Attorney's Office from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). A BPI steering committee, co-chaired by retired Northwestern District Attorney Elizabeth D. Scheibel and Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) Executive Director Nancy A. Alterio, oversees the initiative's legislative and training activities. Through the efforts of the steering committee, thousands of persons with a disability, local and state police, adult protective service investigators, victim witness advocates, assistant district attorneys and human service providers have been trained to effectively recognize, report, investigate abuse and neglect, and prosecute crimes committed against persons with a disability.

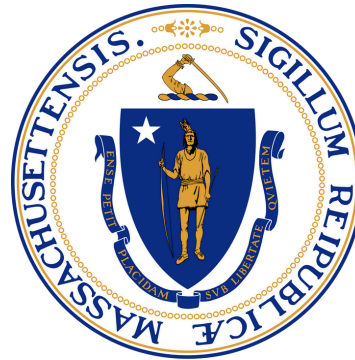
The partnership initiative brings together, through formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), the District Attorney, DPPC, human service organizations and law enforcement agencies in each county. The goals of the initiative are to provide protection, treatment and continuity of care for persons with a disability who are victims of a crime; to increase awareness of crimes being committed against persons with a disability; to increase communication and cooperation between law enforcement and agencies providing services to persons with a disability; and to ensure that crimes committed against persons with a disability are promptly reported, investigated by trained law enforcement personnel and prosecuted by the District Attorneys.

In FY2024, **1,103** cases were investigated criminally. Of those **1,103** criminal cases, **432** were crimes of a sexual nature. The following graph depicts the increase in intakes referred to the District Attorneys for criminal investigation for FY1997 through FY2024.

ABUSE REPORTS REFERRED TO DISTRICT ATTORNEY FROM FY1997 - FY2024



The DPPC's staff thanks you for taking the time to review this quarterly report. If you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the DPPC at (617) 727-6465.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Disabled Persons Protection Commission
300 Granite Street, Suite 404
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Office Hours: 8:45 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday
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