



Facing Sexual Assault Charges in Massachusetts

What You Need to Know If You Have Been Accused

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Introduction

Being accused of a sex crime is one of the most serious things that can happen to a person. These charges are treated differently from almost any other kind of criminal case. The stakes are higher, the process is longer, and the consequences reach far beyond a courtroom.

If you are reading this, you may not have been charged yet. You may have gotten a phone call from a detective, or a message from someone you haven't spoken to in months, or a notice in the mail. Or you may already have been arrested and are trying to understand what just happened. Either way, you are probably frightened, and the decisions you make in the next several days will matter more than almost anything else in your case.

This guide explains how these cases actually work in Massachusetts, why they are so often decided on credibility alone, and what to do — and not do — right now.

What Not to Do Right Now

If you have been accused, contacted by police, or already charged, these are the things that matter most in the next few days:

- **Do not talk to police or investigators without a lawyer present**, even if you believe you can clear things up yourself. Investigators are trained to obtain statements that can be used against you. There is no version of "just telling your side" that helps you here without a lawyer in the room.
- **Do not contact the accuser, under any circumstances.** Not to apologize, not to ask why, not to explain. Any contact can be used as evidence, can violate conditions of release, and can turn a defensible case into a charge of witness intimidation.
- **Do not respond to unexpected messages about the incident** — from the accuser, from a mutual friend, from a family member. Save them and give them to your lawyer.
- **Do not delete anything.** Text messages, social media posts, emails, call logs, direct messages, photos — leave all of it exactly as it is. Deleting evidence, even something that feels embarrassing or irrelevant, can result in a separate charge and can make you look guilty of the underlying accusation even if you are not.
- **Do not post about your case, or your life, on social media.** Prosecutors and investigators regularly review social media for anything that can be used against a defendant.

- **Do not discuss the case with anyone except your lawyer** — not friends, not family, not coworkers. Those conversations are not confidential and can be used against you.
- **Do not consent to a search** of your phone, car, or home, or to a DNA swab, unless your lawyer has told you to.
- **Write down what you remember** while it is fresh: dates, locations, who was present, and any communications. Give that document only to your attorney.
- **Follow every condition of release exactly**, if you have been arraigned.
- **Call an experienced Massachusetts criminal defense attorney immediately.**

Before You're Charged

Most people who need this guide have not been arrested. They've gotten a phone call. A detective leaves a voicemail asking them to come in and "clear a few things up," or shows up at the door, or a text arrives from someone they haven't heard from in months. This is the stage where cases are most often won or lost, and it is the stage almost nobody prepares for, because nothing has officially happened yet.

The detective's call. An investigator who asks you to come to the station is not offering you a chance to explain. By the time that call is made, a complaint has usually been taken, a statement has been recorded, and the detective is gathering the last thing they need — your words. You are not required to go. You are not required to answer questions on your doorstep. Asking to speak with a lawyer first is not an admission of anything, and it is not something a prosecutor may use against you at trial. Anything else you say can and will be written down.

Unexpected contact from the accuser. If you receive a call or message from the person who made the accusation — or from a mutual friend or family member — about the alleged incident, do not respond. Do not explain. Do not apologize. Even a message meant kindly can be read very differently months later. Save it, and give it to your lawyer.

Requests for your DNA, your phone, or a search. Investigators may ask you to "voluntarily" provide a cheek swab, hand over your phone, or allow a look around your home or car. Voluntary means exactly that — you can decline, and you should, until a lawyer has reviewed the situation. If police have a warrant, comply calmly and say nothing beyond confirming your identity. Do not attempt to delete anything from a device, before or after a request; that becomes its own charge and its own problem.

A clerk-magistrate hearing, in the rare case. Most sexual assault cases begin with an arrest or an indictment, not with a notice in the mail. But occasionally — usually where no officer

witnessed anything and the allegation is an indecent assault and battery that will stay in District Court — a case starts with a notice for a clerk-magistrate hearing, sometimes called a show cause hearing, where a clerk decides whether a complaint should issue at all. This is uncommon in these cases. If it does happen to you, it is an opportunity, and it should be treated as seriously as a trial date, because a case can end there before it ever really begins. Our First Timer's Guide to Massachusetts Criminal Courts explains how these hearings work.

District Court or Superior Court. Where the case is heard depends on the charge. Indecent assault and battery can be resolved in District Court. Rape and the child-rape offenses carry state prison exposure and are prosecuted in Superior Court, which means the case goes through a grand jury first. The grand jury hears only the Commonwealth's evidence. You will not be there, your lawyer will not be there, and an indictment is not a finding of guilt — it is a finding that the case may proceed. Many people are stunned to learn they were indicted weeks after believing the matter had gone quiet. Silence from the investigators is not a sign that the case has gone away.

What this stage is actually for. Everything above amounts to one principle: the time between the first contact and a formal charge is when the Commonwealth is building its case and you have the most control over what goes into it. It is also when an experienced lawyer can sometimes do the most — communicating with investigators on your behalf, preserving evidence that helps you, and in some cases preventing a charge from ever issuing.

Why These Cases Are Different

Most criminal cases involve some kind of physical evidence: a stolen item, a damaged car, a breath test. Sexual assault and rape cases are usually different. In many cases, there is no physical evidence at all. There is one person's word against another's.

That single fact changes everything about how these cases are investigated, charged, and defended. A prosecutor does not need a witness, a video, or DNA evidence to move forward. In most situations, one credible accusation is enough for the Commonwealth to file charges and take a case to a grand jury. This is true even when the accusation involves conduct that is said to have happened years, or even decades, earlier.

This does not mean the accusation is true. It means the case will almost always come down to which account the jury believes. Understanding that reality early is the first step in building an effective defense.

Two Massachusetts rules shape every one of these trials. Both surprise people.

- **The accuser's sexual history is off-limits.** Under the rape shield law (G.L. c. 233, §21B), evidence of an accuser's reputation for sexual conduct is never admissible, and evidence of specific past sexual conduct is barred except in narrow circumstances — prior conduct with the defendant, or recent conduct that explains a physical finding — and even then only after a closed-door hearing and a written motion. People often assume a defense can be built on the accuser's past. It cannot, and a lawyer who suggests otherwise does not know Massachusetts law.
- **Only one "first complaint" witness may testify.** Under the rule established in *Commonwealth v. King*, 445 Mass. 217 (2005), the prosecution may call the first person the accuser told about the alleged assault, and that witness may describe the details and circumstances of that first report. Other people the accuser later told generally may not testify to the complaint. The purpose is to let the jury evaluate why and how the accusation first came out — which cuts both ways. If the first complaint was delayed, vague, or made under pressure, that is where a jury sees it.

Bail, Dangerousness, and Protective Orders

You may be held without bail. Rape is a felony with force as an element, which makes it a qualifying offense under the Massachusetts dangerousness statute (G.L. c. 276, §58A). If the prosecutor moves for detention at arraignment, the court holds a hearing immediately or, on a party's request, continues it — up to three business days if the Commonwealth asks, up to seven if you do. You are typically held in the meantime. At the hearing the Commonwealth argues that no conditions of release would keep others safe. The rules of evidence do not apply; police reports and hearsay are considered. If the judge agrees, by clear and convincing evidence, you can be held without bail for up to 120 days in District Court or 180 days in Superior Court while the case proceeds. Even where the judge does not order detention, conditions of release — no contact, GPS monitoring, stay-away orders, surrender of firearms — are common.

Protective orders often arrive alongside the accusation. The accuser may seek a restraining order under G.L. c. 209A (if you were in a qualifying relationship) or a harassment prevention order under G.L. c. 258E (if you were not). These are civil orders, separate from the criminal case, but violating one — even by responding to a message the other person sent you — is a new criminal charge. And anything you say at a protective-order hearing can be used in the criminal case. Whether to appear and testify at that hearing is a decision to make with your lawyer, not alone.

Understanding the Charges

Massachusetts prosecutes sex offenses under a number of different statutes, and the specific charge matters enormously. The penalties, the available defenses, and even which court hears the case all depend on the exact charge and the age of the alleged victim.

- **Rape** (G.L. c. 265, §22): sexual intercourse compelled by force or threat, against the alleged victim's will. The statute has no age element — it applies to any victim — but where the alleged victim is under 16, prosecutors typically charge under the child-specific statutes below instead. Up to 20 years in state prison for a first offense; life for a second or later offense; a 10-year mandatory minimum if a firearm was involved.
- **Aggravated Rape** (§22(a)): rape involving serious bodily injury, multiple participants, or committed during another serious felony. Carries up to life in prison. Unlike the child offenses below, the statute does not formally bar a Continuance Without a Finding — but as a practical matter, a CWOFF on an aggravated rape charge is not something we have seen happen. Expect the realistic outcomes to be trial, a reduction to a lesser charge, or a plea.
- **Statutory Rape — Rape of a Child Under 16** (§23): sexual intercourse with someone under 16. Consent is not a defense, and mistake about the child's age is not a defense either — Massachusetts has no "Romeo and Juliet" exception. Carries up to life in prison, and the case cannot be continued without a finding.
- **Aggravated Statutory Rape** (§23A): statutory rape with a significant age gap (more than 5 years if the child is under 12, or more than 10 years if the child is 12 to 15) or committed by a mandated reporter such as a teacher, coach, clergy member, or healthcare provider. Carries a mandatory minimum of 10 years that cannot be reduced or suspended, and no CWOFF is available.
- **Rape or Indecent Assault of a 16- or 17-Year-Old by Someone in Authority** (§23A½) — **new as of July 9, 2026**. A mandated reporter who has, or ever had, custodial or supervisory authority over a 16- or 17-year-old — a teacher, coach, counselor, or similar — can now be charged even though the young person is over the age of consent. Sexual intercourse carries up to 20 years in state prison with no CWOFF available; indecent assault and battery on a 14- to 17-year-old in the same circumstances carries up to 10 years. The law deems the young person incapable of consenting, and it does not matter that the position of authority had ended. The only exception is where the defendant was no more than 4 years older. The statute is new enough that how prosecutors will use it is still unfolding.

- **Rape of a Child by Force** (§22A): sexual intercourse with a child under 16 compelled by force or threat. Carries up to life in prison, and the case cannot be continued without a finding.
- **Aggravated Rape of a Child by Force** (§22B): rape of a child by force committed during another serious felony, causing substantial bodily injury, while the child was bound or drugged, by joint enterprise, or in a manner that could transmit a disease the defendant knew of. Carries up to life in prison with a **15-year mandatory minimum** that cannot be reduced or suspended.
- **Indecent Assault and Battery on a Child Under 14** (§13B): up to 10 years in state prison or 2½ years in the house of correction. A child under 14 is deemed legally incapable of consent, and no CWOFF is available.
- **Indecent Assault and Battery on a Person 14 or Older** (§13H): unwanted intentional touching of a sexual nature. Up to 5 years in state prison or 2½ years in the house of correction. Where the alleged victim is elderly or disabled, the maximum rises to 10 years and no CWOFF is available.

A conviction on any of these offenses carries mandatory sex offender registration. There is no version of a rape conviction in Massachusetts that does not put you on the registry. How long you stay on it varies by charge, and that is covered in its own section below. We walk each client through exactly which statute applies to their situation, because the difference between charges can mean the difference between a resolution without a criminal record and a mandatory decade in state prison.

Statutes of Limitations Rarely Provide Protection

People are often surprised to learn how little protection the passage of time provides in these cases. Under G.L. c. 277, §63:

- An ordinary rape charge involving an adult victim must generally be brought within **15 years**.
- If the accuser was **under 16** at the time, that clock does not start until the accuser turns 16 or reports to law enforcement, whichever comes first.
- For the most serious child sex offenses — including rape of a child by force, statutory rape, indecent assault and battery on a child under 14, and several others — there is **no time limit at all**.

- The only limit on those no-deadline offenses is practical: if the Commonwealth waits more than **27 years**, it must present independent evidence corroborating the accuser's account, and that evidence cannot consist solely of a mental health professional's opinion. That last clause exists because of "recovered memory" cases — allegations that surface for the first time in therapy decades later. The law allows them, but requires something more than a therapist's belief that the memory is real.
- **New in 2026: DNA can reopen an expired case.** The Legislature amended §63 in July 2026 to remove the time limit entirely for rape and the child-rape offenses where the accused was identified *after* the deadline had already run, and identified through DNA analysis of evidence collected at the time of the offense. In plain terms: if a sexual assault kit from decades ago is tested today and the profile comes back to you, the fact that the statute of limitations expired years ago no longer protects you.

This last change matters more than it might appear, because the same 2026 act also rewrote the rules on sexual assault evidence kits. Kits must now be tested within 30 days of reaching the lab and retained for at least 15 years, and profiles are entered into the state and federal DNA databases. A backlog that once meant old kits sat untested is being cleared, and each test is a potential identification.

What this means in practice is simple and important: do not assume that because an accusation involves something from long ago, it cannot be prosecuted. In our experience, some of the most serious cases we defend involve allegations dating back ten, twenty, or more years, often with no physical evidence, no forensic exam, and nothing left except memory and testimony.

Aggravating Factors and Mandatory Minimum Sentences

Certain facts change what a judge can and cannot do at sentencing. Some create a mandatory prison term the judge has no power to reduce, suspend, or waive. Others foreclose the dispositions that would have avoided a conviction altogether.

- **Age of the alleged victim.** Charges involving children carry far higher maximum penalties, and several — statutory rape, rape of a child by force, indecent assault and battery on a child under 14 — cannot be continued without a finding, which means they cannot be resolved short of trial without a conviction on the record.
- **Age gap between the parties.** When the accuser is under 16, a wide age difference can trigger the aggravated statutory rape statute and its 10-year mandatory minimum.

- **Position of authority.** Teachers, coaches, clergy, healthcare providers, and other mandated reporters face the aggravated statutory rape statute and its 10-year minimum when the accuser is under 16. And under the new §23A½, a mandated reporter who has or ever had custodial or supervisory authority can be charged over a 16- or 17-year-old who could otherwise legally consent — a category of exposure that did not exist before July 2026.
- **Use of a firearm.** Any rape charge involving a firearm carries a 10-year mandatory minimum, rising to 15 years for a subsequent offense.
- **Serious bodily injury or joint enterprise.** These factors elevate a standard rape charge to aggravated rape, raising the maximum from 20 years to life.

Identifying every aggravating factor the Commonwealth may allege — and whether the facts actually support it — is one of the first things we do in every case we take on. A mandatory minimum sentence is not something a judge can talk you out of at sentencing. It has to be addressed at the front end of the case.

Sex Offender Registration

A conviction on any offense listed above carries mandatory registration with the Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB). SORB assigns a classification level — Level 1, 2, or 3 — based on an individualized risk assessment. Level 2 and Level 3 classifications are publicly searchable online, with real consequences for where you can live, work, and be present in your community.

How long registration lasts depends on the charge. For a rape conviction under §22, for rape of a child by force (§22A or §22B), and for indecent assault and battery on a child under 14 (§13B), the statute defines the offense as "sexually violent" and makes registration lifetime — the duty "shall never be terminated" (G.L. c. 6, §§178C, 178G). For the other offenses on the list — indecent assault and battery on a person 14 or older, statutory rape, and even aggravated statutory rape with its 10-year prison minimum — a single conviction carries 20 years of registration, and you can petition to end it after 10 years if you have stayed offense-free. A second sex offense conviction of any kind makes registration lifetime.

Even for lifetime registrants, the picture is not static. SORB's classification level can be challenged, and a downward reclassification to Level 1 removes you from the public website. Courts have also held that registration must be tied to a person's current risk, not just the label on an old conviction, and SORB's own rules were rewritten in 2025 in ways that may matter here. Whether the "never" in the statute holds up over time is a live question. What is

settled is that the classification hearing is a separate proceeding with its own evidence and strict deadlines, and it deserves the same attention as the criminal case. Defending the underlying charge and, where necessary, pursuing the lowest possible classification are both part of a complete defense.

If You're a Student: Title IX and Campus Proceedings

If either you or the accuser is a college student, a second process may start alongside the criminal one. Colleges are required under Title IX to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, and they run their own proceedings with their own investigators, their own standard of proof (often lower than a criminal court's), and their own sanctions — suspension, expulsion, a permanent notation on a transcript.

Two things matter here. First, the campus process does not wait for the criminal case, and it does not carry the same protections; there is no right to remain silent in the way a criminal defendant has, and although you may usually bring an advisor — who can be a lawyer — the advisor's role is limited by the school's own rules. Second, **anything you say to a Title IX investigator can be obtained by prosecutors and used in the criminal case.** People regularly damage a defensible criminal case by trying to be forthcoming with their school.

If you are a college student, or the person who made the accusation is, do not participate in a campus investigation, submit a written statement, or attend an interview until your criminal defense lawyer has reviewed the situation. The two processes have to be managed together.

Building a Defense

A defense in these cases is rarely just about poking holes in the Commonwealth's evidence. It is about building a complete, credible explanation for the jury of why the accusation exists at all — and helping the jury understand that explanation clearly enough to act on it.

Accusations can arise from genuine misunderstanding, from custody and family court disputes, from regret after a consensual encounter, from pressure applied by a family member or third party, from mental health struggles, or in some cases from deliberate fabrication. Every situation is different, and the honest answer for why an accusation was made is not always obvious at the outset. Uncovering it takes real investigative work: examining the full history between the parties, any documented motive, the way a disclosure developed and changed over time, and every inconsistency between what was said at each stage.

In cases involving a disclosure that came out over time — to a friend, then a family member, then police, then in testimony — those differences in the account are often where a case is won or lost. Our approach is to document every version carefully and present those differences to the jury clearly, so that the explanation for what actually happened is one they can see and understand for themselves.

Why preserving evidence matters so much. In a case built on competing accounts, communications often matter more than anything else. Text messages, social media messages, and emails between you and the accuser — before and after the alleged incident — can establish the actual nature of the relationship, contradict a timeline, or reveal a motive to fabricate or exaggerate. That evidence disappears the moment it is deleted, and it often cannot be recovered later, even with an expert. This is true whether the evidence seems to help you or hurt you. A defense built on an incomplete record is a weaker defense. Preserve everything and let your attorney decide what matters.

What a SANE exam does and does not prove. If the accuser went to a hospital, a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner may have documented injuries and collected samples. People assume this exam either proves or disproves the accusation. Usually it does neither. A SANE exam can confirm that sexual contact occurred, which is often not in dispute; it cannot tell anyone whether that contact was consensual. The absence of injury does not disprove force, and findings that are consistent with an assault are frequently consistent with consensual activity as well. Understanding exactly what the forensic evidence can and cannot support is part of every defense we build.

The defenses that actually arise in these cases:

- **Consent**, where the alleged victim is 16 or older. If the encounter was consensual, the charge cannot stand. This defense is not available where the accuser is under 16, and under the new §23A½ it is not available to a mandated reporter accused over a 16- or 17-year-old who was ever under their authority.
- **False or exaggerated accusation**, arising from custody disputes, relationship conflict, family pressure, or other motivations.
- **Mistaken identity**, particularly in cases involving strangers, limited prior contact, or unreliable identification procedures.
- **Challenges to physical and forensic evidence**, including chain-of-custody problems and the limits of what a SANE exam or DNA result actually proves.
- **Insufficient evidence** of one or more required elements, which the Commonwealth must prove beyond a reasonable doubt.

- **Constitutional violations**, including illegal searches, coerced statements, and improper identification procedures, which can result in evidence being suppressed before trial.

How Long This Takes

These cases take longer than almost any other kind of criminal case.

A District Court indecent assault and battery case typically runs about a year from arraignment to resolution — usually somewhere between ten and fourteen months.

A Superior Court rape case takes considerably longer. Counting from first police contact through the grand jury, indictment, discovery, motions, and trial, two to three years is common. Forensic testing, records requests, and expert review each add time, and none of it moves on your schedule.

If a conviction results, the SORB classification process begins after the criminal case ends and runs on its own timeline. How long that takes varies too much from case to case for anyone to give you an honest estimate up front.

None of this is a sign that something is wrong. It is the pace of these cases. The waiting is one of the hardest parts, and we tell every client that at the start so that the quiet stretches do not feel like abandonment.

What Happens to the Record If the Case Ends Well

An accusation is not a conviction, and it does not have to follow you forever.

If the case is dismissed, or you are found not guilty, the charge still appears on your CORI — your Massachusetts criminal record — until it is sealed. A dismissal or acquittal can be sealed by petition to the court, in many cases without a waiting period. Expungement, which erases the record entirely rather than hiding it, is available in narrower circumstances. Sex offender registration is triggered only by a conviction (or certain adjudications), so a case that ends in dismissal or acquittal carries no registration obligation at all.

Record sealing is a distinct area of practice, and one we handle regularly. If your case has already ended, or when it does, that conversation is worth having. You can read more on our [record sealing page](#).

Why the Right Lawyer Matters

These cases are decided on credibility, and credibility is built or lost long before a jury is seated. The lawyer you choose needs to know the rules that are specific to Massachusetts sex-offense trials — rape shield, first complaint, the dangerousness statute, SORB — and needs to have actually tried these cases in Essex and Middlesex courtrooms, in front of the judges and against the prosecutors who will handle yours.

But there is something else. Being accused and prosecuted is traumatic. We understand that. The trauma has real effects, and we understand those as well — on memory, on decision-making, on a person's ability to sit in a room and explain what happened. It is easy for lawyers to compound the trauma their clients are experiencing, and ignorance of how trauma works will hamper a defense.

We are trauma trained and trauma informed, and that informs everything we do — every interaction, every conversation, every decision about how and when to ask a client a hard question. We call our clients our people, and we treat our people with dignity, compassion, and understanding.

We believe the legal defense and the human being facing it cannot be separated. That means the case in the courtroom, but also the SORB hearing, the campus proceeding, the protective order, the family who does not know what to say, and what happens after — so that you are not facing any of it alone.

Frequently Asked Questions

A detective called and asked me to come in. Do I have to go?

No. You are not required to attend a voluntary interview or to answer questions. Tell the detective, politely, that you would like to speak with a lawyer first, and then do exactly that. Asking for a lawyer is not evidence of guilt and is not something a prosecutor may hold against you at trial.

The person who accused me texted me. Should I respond?

No. Save the message and give it to your lawyer. Anything you write back can become evidence, and a reply meant to smooth things over can read very differently when it is shown to a jury.

Can the accuser drop the charges?

No. Once a complaint is made, the decision to proceed belongs to the district attorney's office, not the accuser. The Commonwealth can and often does proceed even if the accuser later wishes to withdraw.

It happened years ago. Isn't it too late to charge me?

Usually not. The statute of limitations for rape is 15 years, does not begin running until an under-16 accuser turns 16 or reports, and does not exist at all for the most serious child offenses. And as of July 2026, there is no time limit whatsoever where the accused was identified through DNA testing of evidence collected at the time — even if the deadline had already passed. Time alone is not a defense.

Will I have to register as a sex offender?

Only if you are convicted (or receive certain adjudications). How long depends on the charge: rape, rape of a child by force, and indecent assault and battery on a child under 14 carry lifetime registration. Indecent assault and battery on a person 14 or older, statutory rape, and aggravated statutory rape carry 20 years, with a chance to petition out after 10 if you stay offense-free. A second conviction of any kind makes it lifetime. A dismissal or acquittal carries no registration obligation at all.

I'm a teacher/coach and the person was 17 and said yes. Doesn't that end it?

Not anymore. As of July 2026, a mandated reporter who exercises or ever exercised custodial or supervisory authority over a 16- or 17-year-old can be charged regardless of consent, and the fact that the coaching or teaching relationship had ended is not a defense. The age of consent in Massachusetts is still 16 generally — but this statute carves out a major exception, and it is new enough that few people know it exists.

Will this show up on a background check?

The charge appears on your CORI from arraignment forward. If the case ends in dismissal or acquittal, the record can be sealed. A conviction on these offenses is among the most closely scrutinized entries on any background check, which is one reason the front end of the case matters so much.

Where This Comes From

The statements in this guide are drawn from the following primary sources. Where the web version of this guide is published, each is linked.

- G.L. c. 265, §§13B, 13H, 22, 22A, 22B, 23, 23A, 23A½ — sex offense definitions and penalties

- St. 2026, c. 137, §86 — added §23A½, effective July 9, 2026
- G.L. c. 277, §63 — statutes of limitations, as amended by St. 2026, c. 137, §89 (DNA-identification exception), effective July 9, 2026
- G.L. c. 41, §97B½ — sexual assault evidence kit collection, testing, and retention, as rewritten by St. 2026, c. 137
- G.L. c. 233, §21B — rape shield
- G.L. c. 276, §58A — dangerousness hearings and pretrial detention
- G.L. c. 6, §§178C, 178G — sex offender registration definitions and duration
- 803 CMR 1.31 — SORB reclassification and termination (as amended April 25, 2025)
- G.L. c. 209A and c. 258E — abuse prevention and harassment prevention orders
- *Commonwealth v. King*, 445 Mass. 217 (2005) — first complaint doctrine; codified at Mass. Guide to Evidence §413
- *Doe, Sex Offender Registry Bd. No. 76819 v. Sex Offender Registry Bd.*, 480 Mass. 212 (2018) — burden of proof in SORB termination hearings

You Don't Have to Go Through This Alone

A criminal accusation is a storm crashing through your life — your freedom, your family, your career, your future.

You don't have to navigate it alone, and you don't have to figure it out as you go. We understand that good people sometimes face great challenges, and we treat every person we represent as exactly that: a good person going through the hardest time of their life. We view each client not as a set of legal problems, but as a whole individual living a unique and valued life.

We get you through the storm, safely.

If you have been accused, or you think you are about to be, the most important thing you can do right now is talk to someone who can look at your specific situation — before you talk to anyone else.

We offer a free consultation for people with pending charges, and our phones are answered 24/7 by a real person. We serve clients throughout Greater Boston and Eastern Massachusetts.

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About the Author



H. Ernest Stone has been defending people in Massachusetts criminal courts for 30 years. He started his career in 1996 with one goal: to stand up for regular people facing the power of the government. Ernie practices criminal defense exclusively. He has handled cases in District Court, Superior Court, the Massachusetts Appeals Court, the Supreme Judicial Court, and the Federal Courts. His practice focuses on sexual assault, domestic violence, OUI, and cases involving mental health — the kinds of cases where the stakes are highest and where people need someone truly in their corner.

The people he represents are good people who have had a really bad day — sometimes the worst day of their lives. He believes that everyone deserves the highest quality legal defense, no matter what they are accused of. And he believes that a criminal case is an opportunity to do more than just fight the charges. His goal is to help people make lasting positive changes in their lives — to address what brought them into the system in the first place, and to come out the other side in a better place than where they started.

Ernie practices in Beverly, Massachusetts, and serves clients throughout Greater Boston and Eastern Massachusetts.