



Domestic Assault Charges in Massachusetts

What You Need to Know Right Now

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Introduction

A domestic assault arrest often happens in the worst moment of an argument — sometimes started by a neighbor's 911 call, sometimes by someone who never expected the police to actually make an arrest. Many people caught up in this are not violent people. They are good people who had a really bad day: a fight that got loud, a moment that got physical, a partner who called for help and regretted it an hour later.

Whatever happened, you are probably scared right now. You may be worried about your kids, your home, your job, or whether the person you love is even safe. Those worries are real, and this guide won't dismiss them. It will walk you through what a domestic assault charge means in Massachusetts, what happens in the days right after an arrest, and what's at stake — so you can think clearly instead of panicking.

We wrote this guide because the rules in domestic cases are different from an ordinary criminal case in ways that surprise almost everyone who goes through it, and those differences matter enormously to what happens next.

What Not to Do Right Now

- **Do not contact the alleged victim, under any circumstances** — even if they reach out to you first. A no-contact order does not bend for an invitation.
- **Do not ask anyone else to pass along a message.** A message through a friend, a relative, or a child is still contact. Depending on what is said, it can also become a separate felony charge for intimidating a witness.
- **Do not talk to police without a lawyer present.**
- **Do not go back to the house** to get your things unless the court has said you may, and follow exactly whatever procedure the court sets.
- **Do not post anything about this on social media**, and do not delete anything either.
- **Follow every condition of your release precisely.** A violation is a new, separate charge stacked on top of what you already face.
- **Write down what you remember while it is fresh** — the sequence of events, what was said, who else saw or heard anything.
- **Preserve anything that could help you** — texts, photos, voicemails, anything documenting the relationship or the incident.
- **Call an experienced attorney as soon as you can.**

Before You're Charged

In most domestic cases there is no "before." The police arrive, make an arrest on the spot, and the case begins at arraignment. Clerk-magistrate hearings, which in other kinds of cases give you a chance to stop a complaint before it issues, almost never happen here. Do not count on one.

Occasionally there is a gap — a detective calls, or you learn that someone has made a report and nothing has happened yet. If you are in that position, it is the most valuable window you will get, and most people waste it. Evidence still exists that will be gone in a month: video that gets overwritten, messages that get deleted, witnesses whose memories are still fresh.

The one thing to understand is this: **talking to a detective is not a way to clear things up.** It feels like one. People believe that if they just explain, the misunderstanding resolves. What actually happens is that your account becomes evidence, and any gap between what you said then and what the evidence shows later becomes a credibility problem you carry through the whole case. You have a right not to answer questions, and using it is not an admission of anything. Call a lawyer first.

What Counts as "Domestic Assault" in Massachusetts

Massachusetts doesn't have one single "domestic assault" charge. An incident between people in certain relationships gets charged differently than the same incident between strangers.

The most common charge comes from a law that didn't exist until 2014: **assault or assault and battery on a family or household member.** Read that title carefully, because it describes two different crimes, and most people — and some websites — only know about one of them.

Assault and battery on a family or household member

This is the one people expect. To convict, the Commonwealth must prove that you touched the other person, that the touching was intentional, that it was either harmful or unwanted, and that you and that person were family or household members at the time. The touching can be slight. There does not need to be an injury.

Assault on a family or household member

This one requires no contact at all.

Under Massachusetts law an assault happens in either of two ways. The first is an **attempted battery** — you tried to use physical force on someone, intended to cause harm, and came reasonably close. Throwing a punch that misses is an assault. The second is an **immediately threatened battery** — you did something objectively menacing, intended to make the other person afraid of immediate harm, and they were afraid or recognized the danger. Coming at someone with fists raised is an assault.

Both fall under the same statute, and both carry the same penalties as the battery version.

This matters more than almost anything else in this guide. People walk into our office certain they have no real exposure because they never laid a hand on anyone. That is not a defense to this charge. If the allegation is that you raised a fist, threw something that missed, backed someone into a corner, or blocked a doorway in a threatening way, you are facing the same statute and the same maximum penalties as someone accused of striking a person.

Who counts as a "family or household member"

For this particular charge, it means people who:

- Are or were married to each other, or
- Have a child together, married or not, or
- Are or have been in a substantive dating or engagement relationship — where the court weighs how long the relationship lasted, what kind of relationship it was, how often you saw each other, whether either person ended it, and how long ago that was.

This definition is narrower than the one used for restraining orders. The restraining order law covers a wider circle, including people who live or lived in the same household and people related by blood or marriage — a sibling, a parent, an adult child, a roommate. None of those relationships, by themselves, satisfy this criminal charge.

Lawyers sometimes describe the difference as intimate partner abuse, which is the narrower criminal category here, versus domestic abuse, which is the broader civil one. If the Commonwealth can't prove you fall into one of the three categories above, this specific charge may not hold up — though an ordinary assault and battery charge could still apply.

Charges that often come alongside it

Strangulation or suffocation. Assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. Assault and battery on a person 60 or older. Assault and battery on someone known to be pregnant. Threats to commit a crime. Malicious destruction of property — a phone thrown against a wall is a property crime. Violating a restraining order. Intimidation of a witness.

Several of these are felonies, and several carry far more exposure than the domestic charge itself.

The 209A Restraining Order — A Separate Track

This is the single most misunderstood part of these cases.

A 209A order is not a criminal charge. It is a civil court order, requested by one person against another, asking a judge to require no contact, distance, or that you leave a shared home. It runs on its own track. You can face a 209A order with no criminal charges at all, criminal charges with no 209A order, or both at once.

How it usually starts. Most 209A orders begin with an ex parte hearing — the other person asks a judge for the order without you there or knowing about it in advance. If the judge finds an immediate danger, the order issues on the spot. You usually find out when the police hand you a copy.

What happens next. An ex parte order has a maximum duration of ten court business days. Within that window you get a hearing where you can appear, be heard, and contest whether the order should continue.

That hearing deserves far more attention than most people give it. It is tempting to skip it, or to show up without a lawyer and let the order issue on the theory that you weren't going to contact that person anyway. Two reasons that is a mistake. First, the order carries consequences of its own, described below. Second — and this is covered in the record section — the hearing is effectively your only chance to build a record if you believe the order is being sought dishonestly.

Firearms. If you hold a license to carry or an FID card, a restraining order can reach it immediately. When a temporary or emergency order issues, the court must order the immediate suspension of your license and the surrender of all firearms and ammunition you own, possess, or control — but only if the person seeking the order demonstrates a substantial likelihood of immediate danger of abuse. It is not automatic on every order. Where it is ordered, notice is attached to the copy of the order served on you, and law enforcement takes possession immediately on service. Violating a surrender order is itself a crime.

You can challenge it. A person aggrieved by a suspension or surrender order may petition the court that issued it, and that petition must be heard within ten court business days. If you file an affidavit that a firearm is required for your job and ask for an expedited hearing, the court must hold one within two business days, limited to the surrender and suspension question. If the order is later continued or modified, the suspension continues only if the court finds that returning your license or firearms would present a likelihood of abuse — a different and somewhat more demanding standard than the one applied at the emergency stage.

The order itself isn't a crime. But once it exists, violating any part of it — a single text, even one the other person invited — is its own criminal charge. Being invited to break a no-contact order is not a defense to breaking it.

What Happens Right After the Arrest

Domestic arrests move differently from other arrests, starting immediately.

You will not be released right away, and the rule is stricter than most people expect.

There are two different situations.

If you are arrested for violating an abuse prevention order, or for a crime involving domestic abuse while an order is already in effect against you, no out-of-court bail can be set at all. Not after six hours, not at all. You are held until you can be brought before a court. The victim named in the new offense does not have to be the same person who obtained the existing order.

If there is no order in effect and you are an adult arrested for an act that would constitute domestic abuse, or for strangulation, out-of-court bail may be set — but only after six hours have passed from the time of arrest. After that, a clerk magistrate or bail commissioner may release you on determining that release will reasonably assure your appearance in court and will not endanger anyone's safety, and may impose conditions. One condition is always imposed: that you commit no new offenses.

None of this depends on what the other person wants. It applies even if they are asking for your release.

A no-contact order at arraignment. This is different from a 209A order — it is a criminal court condition of release — but it does the same basic thing: no calls, texts, emails, or third-party messages.

Possible removal from your home, even if you are on the lease or own the property.

The alleged victim does not control whether your case goes forward. That decision belongs to the district attorney's office. If the person who called the police changes their mind, asks that the charges be dropped, or refuses to cooperate, the case does not automatically end. The Commonwealth can proceed on independent evidence — 911 recordings, body camera video, photographs, medical records, or a third-party witness. This surprises almost everyone, and it is one of the most frustrating parts of these cases for both people involved.

There is one wrinkle worth knowing if you are married. A husband or wife generally cannot be compelled to testify against their spouse in a criminal case. That choice belongs to the witness — not to you. You cannot assert it for them and you cannot stop them from

testifying if they choose to. And it does not end the case: if the Commonwealth has a 911 recording, video, photographs, or another witness, the prosecution goes forward without that testimony. Do not treat this as a strategy. Trying to influence whether someone testifies is how a difficult case becomes a much worse one.

Dangerousness hearings. Domestic assault is one of the charges that allows the Commonwealth to move for a dangerousness hearing — a separate proceeding where the prosecutor asks the judge to hold you without bail. The motion is usually made at arraignment and the hearing is held quickly; a continuance is limited to seven days if you request it and three days if the Commonwealth does, absent good cause.

To win, the Commonwealth must prove by clear and convincing evidence that no conditions of release would reasonably assure the safety of another person or the community. If the judge so finds, you are detained pending trial — for up to 120 days in the District Court, or 180 days in the Superior Court, not counting certain periods of delay. The clock starts when you are first detained. These are not automatic release dates, and the calculation matters, which is one more reason to have a lawyer tracking it from the first day.

The findings from that hearing are also entered into the domestic violence record system described later in this guide.

First and Second Offense: What's Really at Stake

A **first offense** is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to 2½ years in the house of correction, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both.

A **second or subsequent offense** is a felony, punishable by up to 2½ years in the house of correction or up to 5 years in state prison.

The program requirement. For any violation of this section, and also as a condition of a continuance without a finding, the court must order you to complete a certified batterer's intervention program. There are only two ways out: the court finds good cause and issues specific written findings explaining why intervention should not be ordered, or the program itself determines you are not suitable for it.

Note what that means. A CWO — the disposition most people hope for — still triggers the program requirement by statute.

What the program actually involves. Massachusetts renamed these programs; they are now Intimate Partner Abuse Education Programs, or IPAEP. Older statutes, court forms, and plenty of probation officers still say "batterer intervention." Both refer to the same thing: a program certified and monitored by the Department of Public Health.

It is a serious commitment, and most people badly underestimate it when they are weighing a plea offer:

- **Forty weeks**, in weekly group sessions that usually run two hours — roughly 80 hours in total.
- **You pay for it yourself.** Fees vary by provider and typically include an intake fee plus a weekly charge. Ask what the program near you costs before you agree to anything.
- **It is not confidential counseling.** The program reports to the court and to probation. Things you say and do there can go back.
- **There is an intake process** before you are admitted, and the program can conclude you are not a suitable participant — which is the second statutory exception mentioned above.
- **The program will contact your partner or former partner**, to connect that person with a local domestic violence agency. They are never required to engage with the program, but you should know the contact happens.
- **It is not anger management.** The curriculum is built around power and control rather than anger, and an anger management class you sign up for on your own is not a substitute for a certified program.

Aggravating factors. Where a dangerous weapon was involved, where the alleged victim was seriously injured, pregnant, or over 60, or where a protective order was in effect at the time, the Commonwealth can charge separate offenses that are felonies and that carry substantially greater exposure than the domestic charge itself — in some instances years in state prison rather than months in a house of correction. Which statute applies depends on exactly what is alleged.

Beyond the Courtroom

A domestic case rarely ends when the criminal case does.

Firearms. Expect to lose them early. If you own firearms or hold a license, they are usually surrendered while the case is still open — on a restraining order or as a condition of release — not at some later point. Getting them back is a separate question that gets answered after the case ends, and it does not follow automatically from a good outcome. A continuance without a finding is not a conviction, so it does not put you in the category of people Massachusetts law bars outright from holding a license. But people who are found unsuitable to hold one seldom get it back. If firearms matter to you, raise it with us at the beginning, because the decisions that shape the answer get made early.

Federal law is separate and stricter. A conviction for a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence bars possession of firearms and ammunition anywhere in the country. For most relationships — a spouse or former spouse, someone you lived with, someone you share a child with — that bar is for life, and sealing a Massachusetts record does not lift it. Federal law lifts it only where a conviction is expunged, set aside, pardoned, or civil rights are restored, and Massachusetts sealing does not accomplish any of those.

There is one recent exception. For a conviction involving a **dating partner** — not a spouse, not someone you lived with, not a co-parent — federal law restores eligibility five years after the later of the conviction or the completion of any sentence, as long as there is no further qualifying conviction in that period. A second such conviction ends that possibility permanently. This distinction did not exist before June 2022 and does not apply to anything older.

This almost never comes up while a case is being resolved. It comes up years later, when someone finds out which category they fell into. That is exactly why it belongs in a conversation at the start.

Children, custody, and DCF. A domestic charge or a restraining order can become a central issue in a separate family court case, affecting custody and parenting time long after the criminal case closes. Separately, when children are in the home, the incident sometimes generates a report to the Department of Children and Families — a 51A. This is not automatic, and it does not follow every domestic arrest. But it happens often enough that a parent should know it is possible. A DCF investigation runs on its own track with its own timeline and its own consequences, and it does not wait for the criminal case to finish.

Employment and professional licenses. A conviction creates a criminal record flagged specifically as a domestic offense — among the most closely scrutinized categories on a background check. Work in education, healthcare, government, and any role involving children or vulnerable people can become difficult to get or keep. Professional licensing boards in law, medicine, nursing, and teaching may require the matter to be reported, which can trigger a separate disciplinary process.

Immigration. For non-citizens, a domestic conviction can carry severe immigration consequences, and a continuance without a finding is generally treated as a conviction for immigration purposes even though Massachusetts does not treat it as one. If this applies to you, it has to be raised with your attorney immediately, before any decision is made about how to resolve the case.

None of this is meant to overwhelm you. It is meant to help you see the whole picture early, while there is still time to plan around it.

What Goes on Your Record — and What Comes Off

Most people assume there's one record, and that if the case ends well the record ends with it. In domestic cases there are three separate systems, they follow different rules, and the one almost nobody knows about is the one that's hardest to undo.

The police file. Created the night of the arrest. Domestic violence reports are confidential by statute, so this never shows up on a public police log. It also doesn't go away on its own.

Your CORI. This is the criminal record — the background check employers, landlords, and licensing boards actually run. It starts at arraignment and reflects the charge and how it ended.

The domestic violence record keeping system. This is the one to understand. It's a confidential registry the Commissioner of Probation has maintained since 1992. It holds restraining orders and violations of them, and since 2014 it also holds something else: a written statement in any criminal case where a judge rules that abuse is alleged.

How you end up in it. Before a judge releases you at arraignment on a charge against another person or their property, the judge must ask the prosecutor whether abuse is alleged to have happened immediately before or along with the charged crime. If the prosecutor says yes, the prosecutor files a written statement and the judge makes a written ruling that abuse is alleged. That statement goes into the registry.

This is not automatic, and that matters. The Supreme Judicial Court has held that the judge isn't a rubber stamp for the prosecutor. Before making that ruling, the judge has to look at what the prosecutor is relying on — usually the police report — and be satisfied there's an adequate factual basis. The judge assumes for this purpose that the facts are true and asks only whether, if true, they would amount to abuse. It's a low bar, deliberately lower than probable cause. But it is a real determination, it happens at your arraignment, and it is the one moment when it can be challenged. Almost no one challenges it, because almost no one knows it's happening.

Who can see it. Not employers. Not landlords. Not licensing boards. Not the public. The registry is available to judges and to law enforcement, and the statement itself is not a public record and not part of your CORI.

What it actually does to you. The consequences are all downstream, and they're real. When a judge considers any future restraining order application against you — from anyone — the judge is required to search this registry first and review what's there. It's also searched in certain divorce and paternity matters. Police responding to a future call have access to it. And judges see it at later arraignments and bail hearings.

What comes off, and what doesn't. If you're found not guilty, or a grand jury returns a no bill, or the court finds no probable cause, the court removes the statement. A dismissal is

not eligible for removal — the statute says so in those words.

Read that again, because of what it means in practice. The most common good outcome in these cases is a continuance without a finding that dismisses when you complete probation. That dismissal does not clear the registry entry. Neither does the prosecutor dismissing on the day of trial. This is worth knowing before you decide how to resolve your case, not after.

Restraining orders follow a similar pattern. If a 209A order against you is vacated, the court must notify the police department and direct it to destroy its record of the vacated order, and the department has to comply. That relief is real and worth asking for. But the registry entry stays. Courts have held there's no authority to remove it — even where the order was vacated after a hearing because the evidence didn't support it. The registry may show only that the matter is closed, without saying why, which leaves later readers to draw their own conclusions.

There is one narrow exception. A judge has inherent authority to expunge a registry record where the judge finds, by clear and convincing evidence, that the order was obtained by fraud on the court. That means a deliberate scheme to deceive the court — not simply a claim that didn't hold up. A case where the other side failed to prove their allegations is not a fraud case. And the fraud has to be established at the restraining order hearing itself; if no judge makes that finding, there's no basis to go back later. It's another reason the ten-day hearing deserves real attention even when the instinct is to let the order expire quietly.

One honest caveat about background checks. The registry won't appear on a standard background check. But some professional licensing applications ask broadly whether you've ever been subject to a court order. Those questions can reach a restraining order even though it never touched your CORI. If you hold a professional license, raise it with us early.

Sealing. A first or second offense domestic assault and battery is a misdemeanor and can be sealed three years after the case ends, including any time served, if you have no new guilty findings in that period. Sealing limits who can see your criminal record. It is a separate question from the registry, and it does not reach it.

Possible Defenses

Right now it may feel like there is no way out. There usually is a path — it depends on your specific facts, and on which version of the charge you are facing.

Self-defense or defense of others. Massachusetts law allows reasonable force to protect yourself or someone else, including a child, from immediate harm. If the other person

started the physical confrontation, this is a real and frequently successful defense. Where it is genuinely disputed who started it, a judge may allow evidence of specific violent incidents the other person is alleged to have initiated — which can change the shape of a case that otherwise looks like one word against another.

The conduct doesn't match the charged theory. This is why the assault-versus-battery distinction matters so much. If the charge is a battery, the Commonwealth has to prove an intentional touching — not accidental contact during an argument, not brushing past someone trying to leave a room. If the charge is an assault, the Commonwealth has to prove either a real attempt to use force with intent to cause harm, or an objectively menacing act intended to cause fear of immediate harm that actually produced that fear. A remote threat, an ambiguous gesture, or angry words alone may fail.

The relationship doesn't qualify. The Commonwealth has to prove one of the three statutory relationships beyond a reasonable doubt. Living together, being related, or knowing each other socially does not satisfy it. Where the relationship alleged is a dating one, whether it was substantive is a genuine factual question.

Credibility and motive. These cases often come down to one person's word against another's with no independent witnesses. Divorce, custody disputes, and immigration proceedings can all create reasons to exaggerate or invent.

Insufficient evidence. The Commonwealth must prove every element beyond a reasonable doubt. No injury, no witnesses, no physical evidence — one account and nothing more — is a real evidentiary weakness, not a formality.

How Long This Takes

Most District Court domestic assault cases take about six months from arraignment to resolution. A case that goes to trial can run up to a year.

That feels like a long time to live with an open case, and it is. But the pace is not wasted time. It is what gives your attorney room to obtain the discovery, review the recordings, and investigate the account before anyone asks you to make a decision. Going to trial before you have what you need is just a slower way of giving up.

A restraining order running alongside the criminal case does not change this timeline. The two proceed on their own tracks, and the 209A matter typically resolves long before the criminal case does.

Why the Right Lawyer Matters

Domestic cases move on a different track from most criminal matters — a mandatory hold, an automatic no-contact order, a prosecutor's office that rarely dismisses at the first court date, a parallel civil order, and a record system that operates quietly in the background. An attorney who handles these regularly knows how these hearings actually go in your specific court, how to challenge the relationship element when it doesn't hold up, how to test which theory of the charge the Commonwealth is actually pursuing, and how to build a defense around credibility when a case comes down to one person's word.

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 in comprehensive criminal defense, which means looking at your whole situation and not just the charge — the criminal case, but also the restraining order, the custody question, the record, and what happens next.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I be charged if I never touched anyone?

Yes. The statute covers both assault and assault and battery on a family or household member. An assault requires no contact — an attempt to use force that misses, or a menacing act intended to make someone fear immediate harm, is enough. The penalties are the same.

Can the person who called the police drop the charges?

No. Once police make an arrest, the decision whether to go forward belongs to the district attorney's office. The Commonwealth can proceed on independent evidence — 911 recordings, video, photographs, medical records, or other witnesses — even if the complaining witness asks that the case be dropped or refuses to cooperate.

My spouse doesn't want to testify. Does that end the case?

Not by itself. A husband or wife generally cannot be compelled to testify against their spouse, and that choice belongs to the witness alone. But if the Commonwealth has other admissible evidence, the case goes forward without that testimony.

Is a 209A restraining order a criminal charge?

No. It is a civil court order and it does not appear on your CORI. But violating any part of it — including a single text message, even one the other person invited — is a separate criminal charge that does appear on your CORI.

If my case is dismissed, does everything go away?

Not entirely. A dismissal ends the criminal case, but a written statement of alleged abuse entered at your arraignment stays in the statewide domestic violence registry. Only a not guilty finding, a no bill, or a finding of no probable cause removes it.

What happens to my firearms?

Expect to surrender them early, while the case is open, either on a restraining order or as a condition of release. Whether you get them back is decided later and separately. A continuance without a finding is not a conviction, but people found unsuitable to hold a license seldom get one back. Under federal law, a conviction for a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence bars possession anywhere in the country, and Massachusetts sealing does not lift it — for life in most relationships, though for a dating partner eligibility can be restored five years after the conviction or the end of any sentence, whichever is later, absent a further qualifying conviction.

Will I have to do a batterer's intervention program?

Almost certainly, if the case ends in a conviction or a continuance without a finding. The statute requires the court to order it unless the court makes specific written findings of good cause not to, or the program determines you are unsuitable for it.

Where This Comes From

The law described in this guide comes from Massachusetts statutes and published court decisions, verified against primary sources:

- G.L. c. 265, § 13M — assault or assault and battery on a family or household member
- G.L. c. 265, § 13N — transmission of conviction information where the victim was a family or household member
- G.L. c. 209A — abuse prevention orders
- G.L. c. 276, § 56A — allegations of abuse and the statewide domestic violence record keeping system
- G.L. c. 276, §§ 58 and 58A — release, bail, and dangerousness
- G.L. c. 276, § 100A — sealing of criminal records
- G.L. c. 233, § 20 — spousal testimony

- G.L. c. 140 — firearms licensing
- 18 U.S.C. §§ 921 and 922 — federal firearms prohibitions
- St. 1992, c. 188, § 7 — creation of the statewide domestic violence record keeping system
- Massachusetts District Court model jury instructions on assault and on assault and battery on a family or household member

You Don't Have to Go Through This Alone

A domestic assault accusation is a storm crashing through your life — your freedom, your family, your home, 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 — that's what we call Comprehensive Criminal Defense.

We are powerful in the courthouse and supportive outside of it — here to help you right the ship and continue your voyage.

We get you through the storm, safely.

If you're facing a domestic assault charge, the most important thing you can do right now is talk to someone who can look at your specific case.

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's office is in Beverly, Massachusetts, and he serves good people in cases throughout Greater Boston and Eastern Massachusetts.