



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Select Committee on Children  
Judiciary Committee  
Informational Hearing on Mandated Reporters  
of Child Abuse**

**January 24, 2012**



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**COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONER JOETTE KATZ**

Remaining silent in the face of the kind of abuse that occurred at Penn State shocks the conscience. This incident demonstrates the horrible human toll that can result when institutions -- whether it be a government, a corporation or an athletic program -- become more important in the eyes of a community than the human beings the institutions are created to serve. The lesson is even more chilling when it causes great and irreparable harm to children.

It is obvious that athletic coaches on all levels -- including youth and collegiate -- have a great deal of interaction with children. Our research following this scandal reveals, however, that Connecticut's mandated reporting law, § 17a-101 of the General Statutes, does not apply to youth, college, or university coaches. Because coaches have significant contact with children, we believe that this is a gap that must be addressed and we want to work with you this session to remedy this. The list of mandated reporters should be made consistent with those listed as persons entrusted with the care of a child in § 17a-93 (o). This category includes those responsible for the health, welfare or care of a child or youth for the purpose of providing education, child care, counseling, spiritual guidance, coaching, training, instruction, tutoring or mentoring of a child or youth.

While I want to continue to encourage those with first-hand suspicions of child abuse or neglect to report to DCF, I don't believe that we should make all citizens "mandated reporters." I believe that it is everyone's moral imperative to report. You don't have to be a mandated reporter to report abuse to the Department, and in fact, nearly thirty percent of our reports come from those who are not mandated to report.

I have attached to my comments an overview of a mandated reporter's responsibilities that we use in our mandated reporter training. This information provides a useful summary of the legal requirements for reporting, as well as some of the procedural steps involved in a child protective investigation.

There are some valuable lessons that all of us can learn from the Penn State scandal. We are all responsible for ensuring that athletic institutions -- both professional and collegiate -- and athletic pursuits are not allowed to distort our humanistic values. Athletics are a way for our children to develop confidence and competence. They must never be allowed to destroy them.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'll be happy to answer any questions that you may have on this important topic.