



PUBLIC SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION MARINE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

In April 2019, the Chicago Public Schools Office of Inspector General received complaints about two staff members alleged to have been engaged in sexual abuse of students at Marine Leadership Academy (MLA). CPS pulled the staff members from their jobs at the school in April 2019. However, the investigation quickly expanded, with new complaints coming in from anonymous sources, as well additional allegations against other staff members that were made during interviews with students, graduates, teachers and other MLA staff members. Three additional MLA staff members were pulled in spring and summer of 2021, and a volunteer was blocked in January 2021, as additional evidence surfaced in the investigation. Some allegations were made when the OIG initiated its investigation in 2019 while numerous other allegations surfaced during the course of the investigation.

The OIG's investigation substantiated allegations against ten MLA staff members for misconduct that ranged from prohibited sexual activity to sexually-motivated grooming of students to failure to report concerning allegations of misconduct; three of the ten staff members engaged in sexual misconduct in separate incidents involving three different students.

From the start of its investigation in 2019, the OIG has communicated with CPS and other agencies about developments that may have impacted student safety.

Since 2019, the OIG has contacted the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) at least 22 times about allegations at MLA and collaborated with the Chicago Police Department (CPD) on allegations that the department investigated. For various reasons outside the control of CPS and the OIG, no criminal charges resulted from these allegations.

The OIG has also shared information internally about allegations against MLA staff members with stakeholder departments within CPS including the Office of Student Protections (OSP). On April 4, 2019, the OIG provided a "list of employees who were alleged to have known about the abuse and failed to report. This list includes the Principal, the AP, the head of security, a counselor and a teacher's assistant." Later that day, the OIG shared information about another MLA allegation that had just

come in, saying “FYI, This is the third sexual complaint that we have received this week from Marine.” As a matter of CPS procedure, the OIG, OSP and CPS’ Law Department regularly coordinate to help inform decisions about overall objectives like whether staff need to be pulled from their jobs and the student supports that need to be administered. The OIG elevates concerning information about a staff member at any point during an investigation, as demonstrated here by the additional pull-outs of MLA staff members in 2021 before the case was concluded.

The OIG’s investigation included allegations of child sexual abuse, nonsexual conduct that raised grooming concerns, failure to report potential inappropriate conduct, and other violations of CPS policies and guidelines. In total, since April 2019, the OIG has:

- Conducted over 155 interviews with students, staff, alumni, and other potential witnesses;
- Compiled over 29,000 pages of documents through subpoenas and other sources, including 21 sets of cell phone records, police records, personnel files and reports from the CPS Law Department; and
- Reviewed over 151,000 pages of emails collected from MLA staff accounts.

On October 20, 2021, the OIG met with CPS to brief them on the allegations and potential findings against the subjects of the investigations. The first report in the MLA investigation was issued on October 22, 2021; it addressed the many unsubstantiated allegations, including sexual abuse and misconduct allegations, for which the OIG determined there was insufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations under a preponderance of the evidence standard.

Two additional reports were issued on November 19, 2021, and make substantiated allegations of sexual misconduct or failure to report against a total of ten staff members, along with other CPS policy violations. In the near future, the OIG will report on additional policy violations involving additional staff members and one volunteer as well as the systematic and cultural problems uncovered at MLA.

SEXUAL ABUSE/INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

A. SUBJECT A

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject A, an MLA Teacher, for the following:

1. From 2017 to 2019, Subject A frequently had private, closed-door interactions with the twelfth-grade student in his classroom that were not clearly related to school and in which they discussed personal matters. These interactions violated CPS policy.

2. The same twelfth-grade student changed her clothing in Subject A's classroom while they were in the room alone with the door closed in January 2019. Although the student was not completely unclothed during the encounter, it was nonetheless in violation of CPS policy.
3. Subject A sent this student social media communications in violation of CPS policy.
4. While still a student at MLA, the Teacher made plans with her to remain in contact after she graduated and engage in personal interactions after graduation. In June 2019, just weeks after the student's graduation from MLA, Subject A sent her social media communications that included flirtatious content and sexual advances.
5. There was sufficient evidence to conclude that while she was a student, these plans were sexually motivated and constituted grooming in violation of CPS policies.

B. SUBJECT B

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject B, an MLA Teacher, for the following:

1. Subject B engaged in sexual misconduct with a former MLA student while he attended MLA during the 2015-16 school year. Because the student was 18 at the time when the sexual interactions started, Subject B would not be subject to criminal prosecution under Illinois law.
2. Subject B's actions violated CPS policies.
3. Subject B exchanged text messages with this student when he was a twelfth grader, but the Staff Acceptable Use policy in effect at the time did not explicitly prohibit electronic communications between staff and students.

C. SUBJECT C

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject C, a Military Instructor, for the following:

1. Subject C had private meetings with a 2019 graduate during her twelfth-grade year and discussed personal matters with her, including her suicidal ideation and childhood sexual trauma. Subject C was involved in helping calm her down when she had what staff described as "meltdowns," and had lengthy conversations with the student after she graduated.
2. The student told Subject C that she had romantic feelings for him, but the evidence was insufficient to establish that she did so prior to her graduation.

3. Subject C's phone records showed that the student called him 12 times while she attended MLA; the longest connection time was 19 seconds. The two exchanged thousands of cell phone communications after the student graduated.
4. The military instructor's conduct and interactions with the student violated CPS policies.
5. Subject C also failed to report information that Subject B had inappropriate reactions with the former student. Subject C admitted that several students "confirmed the situation with [Subject B]" and that he never alerted anyone at MLA's administration regarding what the students had told him.

D. SUBJECT D

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject D, a Military Instructor, for the following:

1. Subject D made sexually-harassing comments to a twelfth-grade female student, making her uncomfortable on three occasions over two school years. After the student reported the last sexual comments, Subject D confronted her in the school hallway and told her that she should not have made a complaint, causing the student to experience further emotional harm.
2. Subject D's sexual comments and retaliatory conduct violated CPS policies.
3. Subject D also engaged in private cell phone communications with multiple students in violation of CPS policy.

E. SUBJECT E

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject E, a Military Instructor, for the following:

1. Subject E frequently texted, messaged and called students. However, some of these communications occurred before CPS revised its policy to explicitly prohibit cell phone communication between staff and students and/or occurred after students had graduated.
2. Subject E had one-on-one interactions with a female student, discussed personal matters with her, and purchased food for her and several other female students who regularly ate lunch in his classroom.
3. Certain aspects of Subject E's conduct violated CPS policies, and other conduct would have violated the current policies had they been in effect at the time.

FAILURE TO REPORT SEXUAL ABUSE/INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

The OIG investigated several allegations that various MLA staff members failed to report their knowledge of, or information regarding, sexual or other inappropriate interactions between staff and students.

A. SUBJECT F AND SUBJECT G

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject F, the MLA Principal, and Subject G, a Security Officer, for the following:

1. Subject F failed to report a sexual relationship between Subject A and a student.
 - a. Subject F learned from multiple staff members that Subject A and the student were having private, closed-door interactions in Subject A's classroom. Subject F had warned Subject A about spending time alone with students in his classroom as early as 2017.
 - b. Two MLA teachers reported to Subject F that the same student had changed clothes in Subject A's classroom while they were alone and with the door closed. However, Subject F failed to document this information in an incident report or otherwise notify OIG or OSP in violation of CPS policy.
2. Subjects F and G failed to report allegations of sexual intercourse between Subject B and a former student.
 - a. At the start of the 2018-19 school year, Subject G reported to Subject F that he had a conversation with the MLA graduate who had been previously investigated for having sex with Subject B. The MLA graduate told Subject G that he (the graduate) actually did have sex with Subject B. The MLA graduate was 18 at the time of the prohibited conduct.
 - b. Subject F failed to report this information for more than six months, and only did so after 15 minutes after a DCFS investigator made an unannounced visit to MLA to investigate other allegations of sexual misconduct.
 - c. Subject F's failure to timely report this information violated CPS policy.
 - d. Subject G failed to report the MLA graduate's disclosure of sexual intercourse with Subject B to the CPS Law Department, which was required by CPS policy at the time.

3. Subject G additionally lied to the OIG in his second interview in which he recanted his original statements to the OIG that the MLA graduate disclosed sexual interactions with Subject B and that he told Subject F about the MLA graduate's disclosure.

B. SUBJECT H

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject H, a Security Officer, for the following:

1. Subject H lied to the OIG in her first interview regarding her knowledge of any allegations of inappropriate interactions between Subject B and a former MLA student.
2. In her second OIG interview, Subject H admitted that she knew Subject B and the MLA graduate had sexual interactions, but did not report that information because she did not know any details and did not personally witness the conduct.

C. SUBJECT I

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject I, an MLA Teacher, for the following:

1. Subject I failed to report that multiple students told him that a student was "going out" with Subject A in violation of CPS policies.

D. SUBJECT J

The OIG substantiated findings against Subject J, an MLA Teacher, for the following:

1. Subject J failed to timely report a student's admission that she and Subject A were engaged in an inappropriate relationship.

FORTHCOMING REPORTS

In coming weeks, the OIG will additionally issue a report regarding allegations against additional staff members and a volunteer that were not necessarily sexual in nature, but nonetheless violated CPS policies or guidelines intended to protect students from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct.

The OIG will conclude shortly thereafter with a final report analyzing the systemic and school-culture issues uncovered at MLA.