

Summary of Recent Cases of Sexual Abuse in MA Schools – April 2023

Thomas Davis, a 42-year-old former **Foxborough** Special Education High School teacher was arrested after showing someone a video of himself having sex with a middle-school-aged child who he admitted was a student. He was reported to federal authorities who seized his laptop on which they found hundreds of child sexual abuse materials. He pled guilty in February and will be sentenced in May. He had worked previously at the **Sharon** Middle School.

James Toltz, a former **Peabody** gym teacher and coach is facing civil charges filed 6 months ago on behalf of 50 students for having sexually abused them during his 34-year tenure in local schools. The City is facing negligence charges for failing to have trained, supervised and disciplined the employee. The class action suit alleges that as many as 500 students ages 10 – 17 were likely victims of the teacher's sexual assaults which ranged from fondling to rape. He also provided cocaine to students at the school and in his home.

Larry Chen, a 36-year-old former **Brookline** Social Studies teacher was charged with 58 counts of statutory rape and indecent assault and battery of a child under 14. The female victim, a 6th grader, was assaulted in the school over a two-year period. The teacher also tutored part time and worked summers in the city's Recreation Department.

Paul Cheffi, a 43-year-old **Chelsea** High School Science teacher groomed a 14-year-old student by taking her on errands, giving her rides from school and paying her to clean his house, where he sexually assaulted her telling her, *"I can give you a piece of my heart, but you can never include me in your stories."* He went on to sexually abuse her in the classroom, in his car and at his home. When a friend of the girl's told a teacher about the abuse, she was told to "stop talking about it or you'll get in trouble." The victim, now an adult, has filed civil charges against him, the City of Chelsea and Boston University, which had control of the Chelsea Schools at the time of the abuse.

Daniel Hakim, a 37-year-old former gym teacher at the Saltonstall School in **Salem** was arrested a few months ago on 37 counts of indecent assault and battery of a child under 14 and 2 counts of rape of a child. Twelve children between the ages of 6 and 8 were allegedly assaulted while Hakim taught at the school between 2015 and 2018. The teacher pled not guilty in January and is awaiting trial. He remains free on \$200,000 cash bail, under house arrest and is monitored by a GPS bracelet.

The **Abbey Kelley Foster Charter School** in **Worcester** in February placed its entire cheerleading coaching team on administrative leave after allegations that its members were engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviors. A criminal investigation is underway. The cheering program has been suspended pending results.

Salvatore Freiri, Principal of **Lenox Memorial Middle School** resigned only two weeks after allegations emerged that he had an illicit relationship in 2008 with a 15-year-old Sophomore and foster child at the **Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School** in Adams, where he was previously employed. A 27-year-old substitute teacher then, Frieri violated school policy by giving her rides in his car, giving her alcohol at his home and engaging in a sexual relationship with her. He was fired and no charges were ever brought against him by police, DCF, or the DA as the youth claimed the relationship was consensual. When teachers at the BART School learned of his appointment as Lenox Principal in 2022, they alerted a reporter at iberkshires.com that published an article which resulted in the Principal's resignation. He had held the position of Principal formerly at elementary schools in Westfield and Holyoke and taught for five years at a Pittsfield Middle School.