

MASSACHUSETTS CONVICTION INTEGRITY WORKING GROUP

Convened by the Massachusetts Bar Association

CONVICTION INTEGRITY PROGRAMS

GOALS & CORE ELEMENTS

Common Goals of Conviction Integrity Programs

1. Provide independent internal reviews of cases.
2. Establish protocols for case screening and investigation.
3. Conduct analysis and re-investigate cases involving post-conviction claims of a wrongful conviction and allegations of error and misconduct that may have resulted in a wrongful conviction.
4. Establish protocols to prevent wrongful convictions and other miscarriages of justice.

Core Elements and Why they Matter

1. *Leadership and Support from the Top* – The District Attorney or Attorney General should communicate, internally and externally, that the program is an office priority, and the program lead should be a District Attorney or Attorney General direct report.
2. *Structural Independence* – While there is flexibility in program structure to allow differences in office size, staffing and funding needs, it is important to maximize structural independence.
3. *Clear Internal Program Practices* – Develop program protocols that establish clear case screening, review and investigative processes and foster a supportive environment for staff to bring cases and potential mistakes forward.
4. *Public Access* – Provide the public and incarcerated persons with information about how to access the program to apply for a case review and to learn about the standards and procedures for case reviews and investigations and report on program accomplishments.
5. *Periodic Internal Reviews and Staff Training* – Establish an internal, retrospective case review process and determine staff training needs to reduce wrongful convictions and achieve the goals listed above.