## VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE Lexington, Virginia

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## **Superintendent's Statement on the Protection of Minors**

We are all aware of reports in the media of the abuse of minors (individuals under 18 years of age) while they have been under the care of trusted teachers, coaches and other adults. The typical reaction is sadness for the children and their guardians and anger that anyone could commit such a terrible crime. Unfortunately, predators can be anywhere; individuals who prey on minors do not have a specific profile. Throughout the year minors visit VMI to participate in Admissions Open Houses, summer camps, and other activities. Their parents and guardians have entrusted VMI with the safety of these visitors who may be naïve or even reckless with their personal safety. All of us at VMI must be vigilant to recognize any situation that may constitute the abuse of a minor.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, the General Assembly recently passed legislation that requires any employee of an institution of higher education to report within 24 hours the suspected abuse of a minor. The Governor has signed the approved legislation into law effective 1 July 2012, amending § 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia. Failure to report carries a fine of not more than \$500 for the first failure and not less than \$1,000 for subsequent failures. In certain cases of sexual assault, knowing or intentional failure to report is a Class I Misdemeanor.

You must report any suspected child abuse to the Department of Social Services toll-free child abuse and neglect 24-hour hotline at 1-800-552-7096. If you receive a report of suspected abuse of a minor you must immediately report the specifics to the hotline. The Department of Social Services will notify local law enforcement, including the VMI Police.

Every VMI employee and cadet has a position of trust. We must safeguard all visitors, but particularly minors, on the VMI Post. Employees who work with minors must remember a lapse in judgment or inattention to responsibilities can have serious consequences. Some of the nation's most trusted institutions have been tainted with serious cases of the abuse of minors — we must not let this happen at VMI.

We will be proactive with training our employees and cadets and we will strengthen our policies, procedures, and protocols.

J.H. Binford Peay, III General, U.S. Army (Retired) Superintendent

DIST: E, Cadets

OPR: FAS