

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2009 SESSION

CHAPTER 538

An Act to amend and reenact § 63.2-1606 of the Code of Virginia, relating to duty to report suspected elder or dependent adult abuse.

[S 898]

Approved March 27, 2009

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 63.2-1606 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 63.2-1606. Protection of aged or incapacitated adults; mandated and voluntary reporting.

A. Matters giving reason to suspect the abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults shall be reported immediately upon the reporting person's determination that there is such reason to suspect. Medical facilities inspectors of the Department of Health are exempt from reporting suspected abuse immediately while conducting federal inspection surveys in accordance with § 1864 of Title XVIII and Title XIX of the Social Security Act, as amended, of certified nursing facilities as defined in § 32.1-123. Reports shall be made to the local department or the adult protective services hotline in accordance with requirements of this section by the following persons acting in their professional capacity:

1. Any person licensed, certified, or registered by health regulatory boards listed in § 54.1-2503, with the exception of persons licensed by the Board of Veterinary Medicine;
2. Any mental health services provider as defined in § 54.1-2400.1;
3. Any emergency medical services personnel certified by the Board of Health pursuant to § 32.1-111.5, *unless such personnel immediately reports the suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation directly to the attending physician at the hospital to which the adult is transported, who shall make such report forthwith*;
4. Any guardian or conservator of an adult;
5. Any person employed by or contracted with a public or private agency or facility and working with adults in an administrative, supportive or direct care capacity;
6. Any person providing full, intermittent or occasional care to an adult for compensation, including but not limited to, companion, chore, homemaker, and personal care workers; and
7. Any law-enforcement officer.

B. The report shall be made in accordance with subsection A to the local department of the county or city wherein the adult resides or wherein the adult abuse, neglect or exploitation is believed to have occurred or to the adult protective services hotline. Nothing in this section shall be construed to eliminate or supersede any other obligation to report as required by law. If a person required to report under this section receives information regarding abuse, neglect or exploitation while providing professional services in a hospital, nursing facility or similar institution, then he may, in lieu of reporting, notify the person in charge of the institution or his designee, who shall report such information, in accordance with the institution's policies and procedures for reporting such matters, immediately upon his determination that there is reason to suspect abuse, neglect or exploitation. Any person required to make the report or notification required by this subsection shall do so either orally or in writing and shall disclose all information that is the basis for the suspicion of adult abuse, neglect or exploitation. Upon request, any person required to make the report shall make available to the adult protective services worker and the local department investigating the reported case of adult abuse, neglect or exploitation any information, records or reports which document the basis for the report. All persons required to report suspected adult abuse, neglect or exploitation shall cooperate with the investigating adult protective services worker of a local department and shall make information, records and reports which are relevant to the investigation available to such worker to the extent permitted by state and federal law. Criminal investigative reports received from law-enforcement agencies shall not be further disseminated by the investigating agency nor shall they be subject to public disclosure; such reports may, however, be disclosed to the Adult Fatality Review Team as provided in § 32.1-283.5 and, if reviewed by the Team, shall be subject to all of the Team's confidentiality requirements.

C. Any financial institution staff who suspects that an adult has been exploited financially may report such suspected exploitation to the local department of the county or city wherein the adult resides or wherein the exploitation is believed to have occurred or to the adult protective services hotline. For purposes of this section, financial institution staff means any employee of a bank, savings institution, credit union, securities firm, accounting firm, or insurance company.

D. Any person other than those specified in subsection A who suspects that an adult is an abused, neglected or exploited adult may report the matter to the local department of the county or city wherein the adult resides or wherein the abuse, neglect or exploitation is believed to have occurred or to the adult protective services hotline.

E. Any person who makes a report or provides records or information pursuant to subsection A, C or D, or who testifies in any judicial proceeding arising from such report, records or information, or who takes or causes to be taken with the adult's or the adult's legal representative's informed consent photographs, video recordings, or appropriate medical imaging of the adult who is subject of a report shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability on account of such report, records, information, photographs, video recordings, appropriate medical imaging or testimony, unless such person acted in bad faith or with a malicious purpose.

F. An employer of a mandated reporter shall not prohibit a mandated reporter from reporting directly to the local department or to the adult protective services hotline. Employers whose employees are mandated reporters shall notify employees upon hiring of the requirement to report.

G. Any person 14 years of age or older who makes or causes to be made a report of adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation that he knows to be false shall be guilty of a Class 4 misdemeanor. Any subsequent conviction of this provision shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor.

H. Any person who fails to make a required report or notification pursuant to subsection A shall be subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$500 for the first failure and not less than \$100 nor more than \$1,000 for any subsequent failures. Civil penalties under subdivision A 7 shall be determined by a court of competent jurisdiction, in its discretion. All other civil penalties under this section shall be determined by the Commissioner or his designee. The Board shall establish by regulation a process for imposing and collecting civil penalties, and a process for appeal of the imposition of such penalty pursuant to § 2.2-4026 of the Administrative Process Act.

I. Any mandated reporter who has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult died as a result of abuse or neglect shall immediately report such suspicion to the appropriate medical examiner and to the appropriate law-enforcement agency, notwithstanding the existence of a death certificate signed by a licensed physician. The medical examiner and the law-enforcement agency shall receive the report and determine if an investigation is warranted. The medical examiner may order an autopsy. If an autopsy is conducted, the medical examiner shall report the findings to law enforcement, as appropriate, and to the local department or to the adult protective services hotline.

J. No person or entity shall be obligated to report any matter if the person or entity has actual knowledge that the same matter has already been reported to the local department or to the adult protective services hotline.

K. All law-enforcement departments and other state and local departments, agencies, authorities and institutions shall cooperate with each adult protective services worker of a local department in the detection, investigation and prevention of adult abuse, neglect and exploitation.