

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 37.2-902, 37.2-904, 37.2-907, 37.2-910, and 37.2-913 of the Code of Virginia, relating to assessment of sexually violent predators; qualifications.

[H 2227]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 37.2-902, 37.2-904, 37.2-907, 37.2-910, and 37.2-913 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 37.2-902. Commitment Review Committee; membership.

A. The Director shall establish a Commitment Review Committee (CRC) to screen, evaluate, and make recommendations regarding prisoners and defendants for the purposes of this chapter. The CRC shall be under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. Members of the CRC and any licensed psychiatrists or licensed clinical psychologists providing examinations under subsection B of § 37.2-904 shall be immune from personal liability while acting within the scope of their duties except for gross negligence or intentional misconduct.

B. The CRC shall consist of seven members to be appointed as follows: (i) three full-time employees of the Department of Corrections, appointed by the Director; (ii) three full-time employees of the Department, appointed by the Commissioner, at least one of whom shall be a psychiatrist or psychologist licensed to practice in the Commonwealth who is skilled in the diagnosis, ~~treatment~~ and risk assessment of sex offenders *and knowledgeable about the treatment of sex offenders*; and (iii) one assistant or deputy attorney general, appointed by the Attorney General. Initial appointments by the Director and the Commissioner shall be for terms as follows: one member each for two years, one member each for three years, and one member each for four years. The initial appointment by the Attorney General shall be for a term of four years. Thereafter, all appointments to the CRC shall be for terms of four years, and vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired terms. Four members shall constitute a quorum.

C. The CRC shall meet at least monthly and at other times as it deems appropriate. The CRC shall elect a chairman from its membership to preside during meetings.

§ 37.2-904. CRC assessment of prisoners or defendants eligible for commitment as sexually violent predators; mental health examination; recommendation.

A. Within 120 days of receiving notice from the Director pursuant to § 37.2-903 regarding a prisoner who is in the database, or from a court referring a defendant pursuant to § 19.2-169.3, the CRC shall (i) complete its assessment of the prisoner or defendant for possible commitment pursuant to subsection B and (ii) forward its written recommendation regarding the prisoner or defendant to the Attorney General pursuant to subsection C.

B. CRC assessments of eligible prisoners or defendants shall include a mental health examination, including a personal interview, of the prisoner or defendant by a licensed psychiatrist or a licensed clinical psychologist who is designated by the Commissioner, skilled in the diagnosis, ~~treatment~~, and risk assessment of sex offenders, *knowledgeable about the treatment of sex offenders*, and not a member of the CRC. If the prisoner's or defendant's name was forwarded to the CRC based upon an evaluation by a licensed psychiatrist or licensed clinical psychologist, a different licensed psychiatrist or licensed clinical psychologist shall perform the examination for the CRC. The licensed psychiatrist or licensed clinical psychologist shall determine whether the prisoner or defendant is a sexually violent predator, as defined in § 37.2-900, and forward the results of this evaluation and any supporting documents to the CRC for its review.

The CRC assessment may be based on:

An actuarial evaluation, clinical evaluation, or any other information or evaluation determined by the CRC to be relevant, including but not limited to, a review of (i) the prisoner's or defendant's institutional history and treatment record, if any; (ii) his criminal background; and (iii) any other factor that is relevant to the determination of whether he is a sexually violent predator.

C. Following the examination and review conducted pursuant to subsection B, the CRC shall recommend that the prisoner or defendant (i) be committed as a sexually violent predator pursuant to this chapter; (ii) not be committed, but be placed in a conditional release program as a less restrictive alternative; or (iii) not be committed because he does not meet the definition of a sexually violent predator. To assist the Attorney General in his review, the Department of Corrections, the CRC, and the psychiatrist or psychologist who conducts the mental health examination pursuant to this section shall

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57 provide the Attorney General with all evaluation reports, prisoner records, criminal records, medical
 58 files, and any other documentation relevant to determining whether a prisoner or defendant is a sexually
 59 violent predator.

60 D. Pursuant to clause (ii) of subsection C, the CRC may recommend that a prisoner or defendant
 61 enter a conditional release program if it finds that (i) he does not need inpatient treatment, but needs
 62 outpatient treatment and monitoring to prevent his condition from deteriorating to a degree that he
 63 would need inpatient treatment; (ii) appropriate outpatient supervision and treatment are reasonably
 64 available; (iii) there is significant reason to believe that, if conditionally released, he would comply with
 65 the conditions specified; and (iv) conditional release will not present an undue risk to public safety.

66 E. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any mental health professional employed or appointed
 67 pursuant to subsection B or § 37.2-907 shall be permitted to copy and possess any presentence or
 68 postsentence reports and victim impact statements. The mental health professional shall not disseminate
 69 the contents of the reports or the actual reports to any person or entity and shall only utilize the reports
 70 for use in examinations, creating reports, and testifying in any proceedings pursuant to this article.

71 F. If the CRC deems it necessary to have the services of additional experts in order to complete its
 72 review of the prisoner or defendant, the Commissioner shall appoint such qualified experts as are
 73 needed.

74 § 37.2-907. Right to assistance of experts; compensation.

75 A. Upon a finding of probable cause the judge shall ascertain if the respondent is requesting expert
 76 assistance. If the respondent requests expert assistance and has not employed an expert at his own
 77 expense, the judge shall appoint such experts as he deems necessary; however, if the respondent refused
 78 to cooperate pursuant to § 37.2-901 any expert appointed to assist the respondent shall not be permitted
 79 to testify at trial nor shall any report of any such expert be admissible. Any expert employed or
 80 appointed pursuant to this section shall be a licensed psychiatrist or licensed clinical psychologist who is
 81 skilled in the diagnosis, ~~treatment~~, and risk assessment of sex offenders *and knowledgeable about the*
 82 *treatment of sex offenders*, and who is not a member of the CRC. Any expert employed or appointed
 83 pursuant to this section shall have reasonable access to all relevant medical and psychological records
 84 and reports pertaining to the respondent. No such expert shall be permitted to testify as a witness on
 85 behalf of the respondent unless that expert has prepared a written report detailing his findings and
 86 conclusions and has submitted his report, along with all supporting data, to the court, the Attorney
 87 General, and counsel for the respondent. Such report shall be submitted no less than 45 days prior to the
 88 trial of the matter unless a different time period is agreed to by the parties.

89 B. Each psychiatrist, psychologist, or other expert appointed by the court to render professional
 90 service pursuant to this chapter who is not regularly employed by the Commonwealth, except by the
 91 University of Virginia School of Medicine and the Virginia Commonwealth University School of
 92 Medicine, shall receive a reasonable fee for such service. The fee shall be determined in each instance
 93 by the court that appointed the expert, in accordance with guidelines established by the Supreme Court
 94 after consultation with the Department. The fee shall not exceed \$5,000. However, in addition, if any
 95 such expert is required to appear as a witness in any hearing held pursuant to this chapter, he shall
 96 receive mileage and a fee of \$750 for each day during which he is required to serve. An itemized
 97 account of expenses, duly sworn to, shall be presented to the court, and, when allowed, shall be certified
 98 to the Supreme Court for payment out of the state treasury, and shall be charged against the
 99 appropriations made to pay criminal charges. Allowance for the fee and for the per diem authorized
 100 shall also be made by order of the court, duly certified to the Supreme Court, for payment out of the
 101 appropriation to pay criminal charges.

102 § 37.2-910. Review of continuation of secure inpatient treatment hearing; procedure and reports;
 103 disposition.

104 A. The committing court shall conduct a hearing 12 months after the date of commitment to assess
 105 each respondent's need for secure inpatient treatment. A hearing for assessment shall be conducted at
 106 yearly intervals for five years and at biennial intervals thereafter. The court shall schedule the matter for
 107 hearing as soon as possible after it becomes due, giving the matter priority over all pending matters
 108 before the court. A continuance extending the review may be granted to either the Attorney General or
 109 the respondent upon good cause shown or by agreement of the parties.

110 B. Prior to the hearing, the Commissioner shall provide to the court a report reevaluating the
 111 respondent's condition and recommending treatment. The report shall be prepared by a licensed
 112 psychiatrist or a licensed clinical psychologist skilled in the diagnosis, ~~treatment~~ and risk assessment of
 113 sex offenders *and knowledgeable about the treatment of sex offenders*. If the Commissioner's report
 114 recommends discharge or the respondent requests discharge, the respondent's condition and need for
 115 secure inpatient treatment shall be evaluated by a second person with such credentials who is not
 116 currently treating the respondent. Any professional person who conducts a second evaluation of a
 117 respondent shall submit a report of his findings to the court and the Commissioner. A copy of any

report submitted pursuant to this subsection shall be sent to the Attorney General.

C. The burden of proof at the hearing shall be upon the Commonwealth to prove to the court by clear and convincing evidence that the respondent remains a sexually violent predator.

D. If the court finds, based upon the report and other evidence provided at the hearing, that the respondent is no longer a sexually violent predator, the court shall release the respondent from secure inpatient treatment. If the court finds that the respondent remains a sexually violent predator, it shall order that he remain in the custody of the Commissioner for secure inpatient hospitalization and treatment or that he be conditionally released. To determine if the respondent shall be conditionally released, the court shall determine if the respondent meets the criteria for conditional release set forth in § 37.2-912. If the court orders that the respondent be conditionally released, the court shall allow the Department no less than 30 days and no more than 60 days to prepare a conditional release plan. Any such plan must be able to accommodate needed and appropriate supervision and treatment plans for the respondent, including but not limited to, therapy or counseling, access to medications, availability of travel, location of residence, and regular psychological monitoring of the respondent if called for, including polygraph examinations, penile plethysmograph testing, or sexual interest testing, if necessary. Access to anti-androgen medications or other medication prescribed to lower blood serum testosterone shall not be used as a primary reason for determining that less restrictive alternatives are appropriate pursuant to this chapter.

If the court places the respondent on conditional release, the court shall order the respondent to be subject to electronic monitoring of his location by means of a GPS (Global Positioning System) tracking device, or other similar device, at all times while he is on conditional release.

§ 37.2-913. Emergency custody of conditionally released respondents; revocation of conditional release.

A. A judicial officer may issue an emergency custody order, upon the sworn petition of any responsible person or upon his own motion, based upon probable cause to believe that a respondent on conditional release within his judicial district has violated the conditions of his release and is no longer a proper subject for conditional release. The judicial officer shall forward a copy of the petition and the emergency custody order to the circuit court that conditionally released the respondent, the Attorney General, and the Department. Petitions and orders for emergency custody of conditionally released respondents pursuant to this section may be filed, issued, served, or executed by electronic means, with or without the use of two-way electronic video and audio communication, and returned in the same manner with the same force, effect, and authority as an original document. All signatures thereon shall be treated as original signatures.

B. The emergency custody order shall require a law-enforcement officer to take the respondent into custody immediately. A law-enforcement officer may lawfully go to or be sent beyond the territorial limits of the county, city, or town in which he serves to any point in the Commonwealth for the purpose of executing an emergency custody order pursuant to this section. The respondent shall be transported to a secure facility specified by the Department where a person designated by the Department who is skilled in the diagnosis, ~~treatment~~, and risk assessment of sex offenders *and knowledgeable about the treatment of sex offenders* shall, as soon as practicable, perform a mental health examination of the respondent, including a personal interview. The mental health evaluator shall consider the criteria in § 37.2-912 and shall opine whether the respondent remains suitable for conditional release. The evaluator shall report his findings and conclusions in writing to the Department, the Office of the Attorney General, counsel for the respondent, and the court in which the petition was filed. The evaluator's report shall become part of the record in the case.

C. The respondent on conditional release shall remain in custody until a hearing is held in the circuit court that conditionally released the respondent on the motion or petition to determine if he should be returned to the custody of the Commissioner. The hearing shall be given priority on the court's docket.

D. The respondent's failure to comply with the conditions of release, including outpatient treatment, may be admitted into evidence. The evaluator designated in subsection B may be permitted to testify at the hearing as to his diagnosis, his opinion as to whether the respondent remains suitable for conditional release, his recommendation as to treatment and supervision, and the basis for his opinions. If upon hearing the evidence, the court finds that the respondent on conditional release has violated the conditions of his release and that the violation of conditions was sufficient to render him no longer suitable for conditional release, the court shall revoke his conditional release and order him returned to the custody of the Commissioner for secure inpatient treatment. The respondent may petition the court for re-release pursuant to the conditions set forth in § 37.2-911 no sooner than six months from his return to custody. The respondent petitioning for re-release shall transmit a copy of the petition to the Attorney General and the Commissioner.