

CHAPTER 410

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 54.1-2520 and 54.1-2523 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Prescription Monitoring Program; disclosures.

[H 1044]

Approved March 11, 2016

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That §§ 54.1-2520 and 54.1-2523 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows: § 54.1-2520. Program establishment; Director's regulatory authority.**

A. The Director shall establish, maintain, and administer an electronic system to monitor the dispensing of covered substances to be known as the Prescription Monitoring Program. Covered substances shall include all Schedule II, III, and IV controlled substances, as defined in the Drug Control Act (§ 54.1-3400 et seq.), and any other drugs of concern identified by the Board of Pharmacy pursuant to § 54.1-3456.1.

B. The Director, after consultation with relevant health regulatory boards, shall promulgate, in accordance with the provisions of the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.), such regulations as are necessary to implement the prescription monitoring program as provided in this chapter, including, but not limited to, the establishment of criteria for granting waivers of the reporting requirements set forth in § 54.1-2521.

C. The Director may enter into contracts as may be necessary for the implementation and maintenance of the Prescription Monitoring Program.

D. The Director shall provide dispensers with a basic file layout to enable electronic transmission of the information required in this chapter. For those dispensers unable to transmit the required information electronically, the Director shall provide an alternative means of data transmission.

E. The Director shall also establish an advisory committee within the Department to assist in the implementation and evaluation of the Prescription Monitoring Program. *Such advisory committee shall provide guidance to the Director regarding information disclosed pursuant to subdivision C 9 of § 54.1-2523.*

§ 54.1-2523. Confidentiality of data; disclosure of information; discretionary authority of Director.

A. All data, records, and reports relating to the prescribing and dispensing of covered substances to recipients and any abstracts from such data, records, and reports that are in the possession of the Prescription Monitoring Program pursuant to this chapter and any material relating to the operation or security of the program shall be confidential and shall be exempt from the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.) pursuant to subdivision 15 of § 2.2-3705.5. Records in possession of the Prescription Monitoring Program shall not be available for civil subpoena, nor shall such records be disclosed, discoverable, or compelled to be produced in any civil proceeding, nor shall such records be deemed admissible as evidence in any civil proceeding for any reason. Further, the Director shall only have discretion to disclose any such information as provided in subsections B and C.

B. Upon receiving a request for information in accordance with the Department's regulations and in compliance with applicable federal law and regulations, the Director shall disclose the following:

1. Information relevant to a specific investigation of a specific recipient or of a specific dispenser or prescriber to an agent who has completed the Virginia State Police Drug Diversion School designated by the superintendent of the Department of State Police or designated by the chief law-enforcement officer of any county, city, or town or campus police department to conduct drug diversion investigations pursuant to § 54.1-3405.

2. Information relevant to an investigation or inspection of or allegation of misconduct by a specific person licensed, certified, or registered by or an applicant for licensure, certification, or registration by a health regulatory board; information relevant to a disciplinary proceeding before a health regulatory board or in any subsequent trial or appeal of an action or board order to designated employees of the Department of Health Professions; or to designated persons operating the Health Practitioners' Monitoring Program pursuant to Chapter 25.1 (§ 54.1-2515 et seq.).

3. Information relevant to the proceedings of any investigatory grand jury or special grand jury that has been properly impaneled in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 13 (§ 19.2-191 et seq.) of Title 19.2.

4. Information relevant to a specific investigation of a specific recipient, dispenser, or prescriber to an agent of a federal law-enforcement agency with authority to conduct drug diversion investigations.

5. Information relevant to a specific investigation, supervision, or monitoring of a specific recipient for purposes of the administration of criminal justice pursuant to Chapter 1 (§ 9.1-100 et seq.) of Title

9.1 to a probation or parole officer as described in Article 2 (§ 53.1-141 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 53.1 or a local community-based probation officer as described in § 9.1-176.1 who has completed the Virginia State Police Drug Diversion School designated by the Director of the Department of Corrections or his designee.

C. In accordance with the Department's regulations and applicable federal law and regulations, the Director may, in his discretion, disclose:

1. Information in the possession of the program concerning a recipient who is over the age of 18 to that recipient. The information shall be mailed to the street or mailing address indicated on the recipient request form.

2. Information on a specific recipient to a prescriber, as defined in this chapter, for the purpose of establishing the treatment history of the specific recipient when such recipient is either under care and treatment by the prescriber or the prescriber is initiating treatment of such recipient. In a manner specified by the Director in regulation, notice shall be given to patients that information may be requested by the prescriber from the Prescription Monitoring Program.

3. Information on a specific recipient to a dispenser for the purpose of establishing a prescription history to assist the dispenser in determining the validity of a prescription in accordance with § 54.1-3303 when the recipient is seeking a covered substance from the dispenser or the facility in which the dispenser practices. In a manner specified by the Director in regulation, notice shall be given to patients that information may be requested by the dispenser from the Prescription Monitoring Program.

4. Information relevant to an investigation or regulatory proceeding of a specific dispenser or prescriber to other regulatory authorities concerned with granting, limiting or denying licenses, certificates or registrations to practice a health profession when such regulatory authority licenses such dispenser or prescriber or such dispenser or prescriber is seeking licensure by such other regulatory authority.

5. Information relevant to an investigation relating to a specific dispenser or prescriber who is a participating provider in the Virginia Medicaid program or information relevant to an investigation relating to a specific recipient who is currently eligible for and receiving or who has been eligible for and has received medical assistance services to the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the Office of the Attorney General or to designated employees of the Department of Medical Assistance Services, as appropriate.

6. Information relevant to determination of the cause of death of a specific recipient to the designated employees of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

7. Information for the purpose of bona fide research or education to qualified personnel; however, data elements that would reasonably identify a specific recipient, prescriber, or dispenser shall be deleted or redacted from such information prior to disclosure. Further, release of the information shall only be made pursuant to a written agreement between such qualified personnel and the Director in order to ensure compliance with this subdivision.

8. Information relating to prescriptions for covered substances issued by a specific prescriber, which have been dispensed and reported to the Program, to that prescriber.

9. *Information about a specific recipient who is a member of a Virginia Medicaid managed care program to a physician or pharmacist licensed in the Commonwealth and employed by the Virginia Medicaid managed care program. Such information shall only be used to determine eligibility for and to manage the care of the specific recipient in a Patient Utilization Management Safety or similar program. Notice shall be given to recipients that information may be requested by a licensed physician or pharmacist employed by the Virginia Medicaid managed care program from the Prescription Monitoring Program.*

D. The Director may enter into agreements for mutual exchange of information among prescription monitoring programs in other jurisdictions, which shall only use the information for purposes allowed by this chapter.

E. This section shall not be construed to supersede the provisions of § 54.1-3406 concerning the divulging of confidential records relating to investigative information.

F. Confidential information that has been received, maintained or developed by any board or disclosed by the board pursuant to subsection A shall not, under any circumstances, be available for discovery or court subpoena or introduced into evidence in any medical malpractice suit or other action for damages arising out of the provision of or failure to provide services. However, this subsection shall not be construed to inhibit any investigation or prosecution conducted pursuant to Article 1 (§ 18.2-247 et seq.) of Chapter 7 of Title 18.2.