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HOUSE BILL NO. 2344

Offered January 12, 2023

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 63.2-1605 of the Code of Virginia, relating to adult protective services; referrals to local law enforcement.*

Patron—Head

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 63.2-1605 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 63.2-1605. Protective services for adults by local departments.**

A. Each local board, to the extent that federal or state matching funds are made available to each locality, shall provide, pursuant to regulations and subject to supervision of the Commissioner for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, adult protective services for adults who are found to be abused, neglected, or exploited and who meet one of the following criteria: (i) the adult is 60 years of age or older or (ii) the adult is 18 years of age or older and is incapacitated. The requirement to provide such services shall not limit the right of any individual to refuse to accept any of the services so offered, except as provided in § 63.2-1608.

B. Upon receipt of the report pursuant to § 63.2-1606, the local department shall determine the validity of such report and shall initiate an investigation within 24 hours of the time the report is received in the local department. Local departments shall consider valid any report meeting all of the following criteria: (i) the subject of the report is an adult as defined in this article, (ii) the report concerns a specific adult and there is enough information to locate the adult, and (iii) the report describes the circumstances of the alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

C. The local department ~~or the adult protective services hotline~~ shall immediately refer the matter and all relevant documentation to the local law-enforcement agency where the adult resides or where the alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation took place or, if these places are unknown, where the alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation was discovered for investigation, upon receipt of an initial report pursuant to § 63.2-1606 involving any of the following or upon determining, during the course of an investigation pursuant to this article, the occurrence of any of the following:

1. Sexual abuse as defined in § 18.2-67.10;
2. Death that is believed to be the result of abuse or neglect;
3. Serious bodily injury or disease as defined in § 18.2-369 that is believed to be the result of abuse or neglect;
4. Suspected financial exploitation of an adult; or
5. Any other criminal activity involving abuse or neglect that places the adult in imminent danger of death or serious bodily harm.

Local law-enforcement agencies shall provide local departments ~~and the adult protective services hotline~~ with a preferred point of contact for referrals.

D. The local department shall refer any appropriate matter and all relevant documentation, to the appropriate licensing, regulatory, or legal authority for administrative action or criminal investigation.

E. If a local department is denied access to an adult for whom there is reason to suspect the need for adult protective services, then the local department may petition the circuit court for an order allowing access or entry or both. Upon a showing of good cause supported by an affidavit or testimony in person, the court may enter an order permitting such access or entry.

F. In any case of suspected adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation, local departments, with the informed consent of the adult or his legal representative, shall take or cause to be taken photographs, video recordings, or appropriate medical imaging of the adult and his environment as long as such measures are relevant to the investigation and do not conflict with § 18.2-386.1. However, if the adult is determined to be incapable of making an informed decision and of giving informed consent and either has no legal representative or the legal representative is the suspected perpetrator of the adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation, consent may be given by an agent appointed under an advance medical directive or medical power of attorney, or by a person authorized, pursuant to § 54.1-2986. In the event no agent or authorized representative is immediately available, then consent shall be deemed to be given.

G. Local departments shall foster the development, implementation, and coordination of adult protective services to prevent adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

H. Local departments shall not investigate allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults incarcerated in state correctional facilities.

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59 I. The report and evidence received by the local department and any written findings, evaluations,
60 records, and recommended actions shall be confidential and shall be exempt from disclosure
61 requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.), except that such
62 information may be disclosed to persons having a legitimate interest in the matter in accordance with
63 §§ 63.2-102 and 63.2-104 and pursuant to official interagency agreements or memoranda of
64 understanding between state agencies.

65 J. All written findings and actions of the local department or its director regarding adult protective
66 services investigations are final and shall not be (i) appealable to the Commissioner for Aging and
67 Rehabilitative Services or (ii) considered a final agency action for purposes of judicial review pursuant
68 to the provisions of the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.).

69 K. Each local department may foster, when practicable, the creation, maintenance, and coordination
70 of community-based multidisciplinary teams that shall include, where possible, members of the medical,
71 mental health, social work, nursing, education, legal, and law-enforcement professions. Such teams shall:

72 1. Assist the local department in identifying abused, neglected, and exploited adults as defined in
73 § 63.2-1603.

74 2. Coordinate medical, social, and legal services for abused, neglected, and exploited adults and their
75 families.

76 3. Develop innovative programs for detection and prevention of the abuse, neglect, and exploitation
77 of adults.

78 4. Promote community awareness and action to address the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults.

79 5. Disseminate information to the general public regarding the problem of abuse, neglect, and
80 exploitation of adults, strategies and methods for preventing such abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and
81 treatment options for abused, neglected, and exploited adults.

82 Such multidisciplinary teams may share information among the parties in the performance of their
83 duties but shall be bound by confidentiality and shall execute a sworn statement to honor the
84 confidentiality of the information they share. A violation of this subsection is punishable as a Class 3
85 misdemeanor. All such information and records shall be used by the team only in the exercise of its
86 proper function and shall not be disclosed. No person who participated in the team and no member of
87 the team shall be required to make any statement as to what transpired during a meeting or what
88 information was collected during the meeting. Upon the conclusion of a meeting, all information and
89 records concerning the adult shall be returned to the originating agency or destroyed. Any information
90 exchanged in accordance with the multidisciplinary review team shall not be considered to be a violation
91 of any of the provisions of § 63.2-102, 63.2-104, or 63.2-105.