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HOUSE BILL NO. 2779

Offered January 20, 1997

A BILL to amend and reenact § 63.1-55.3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to protection of aged or incapacitated adults and reports of abuse, etc.; penalty.

Patrons—McDonnell; Senator: Edwards

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 63.1-55.3 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 63.1-55.3. Protection of aged or incapacitated adults; physicians, nurses, etc., to report abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults; complaint by others; penalty for failure to report.

A. Any person licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts, any hospital resident or intern, any person employed in the nursing profession, any person employed by a public or private agency or facility and working with adults, any person providing full-time or part-time care to adults for pay on a regularly scheduled basis, any person employed as a social worker, any mental health professional, *any professional staff person not previously enumerated, employed by a private or state-operated hospital, institution or facility to which persons with mental disabilities have been committed or are placed for care and treatment or are placed for care, custody and control*, and any law-enforcement officer, in his professional or official capacity, who has reason to suspect that an adult is an abused, neglected or exploited adult, shall report the matter immediately 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. If neither locality is known, then the report shall be made to the local department of the county or city where the abuse, neglect, or exploitation was discovered. If the information is received by a staff member, resident, intern or nurse in the course of professional services in a hospital or similar institution, such person may, in place of the report, immediately notify the person in charge of the institution or department, or his designee, who shall make such report forthwith. Any person required to make the report shall disclose all information which is the basis for the suspicion of abuse, neglect or exploitation of the adult and, upon request, shall make available to the adult protective services worker and the local department investigating the reported case of abuse, neglect or exploitation any records or reports which document the basis for the report.

The initial report may be an oral report but the report shall be reduced to writing within seventy-two hours by the director of the local department on a form prescribed by the State Board of Social Services.

B. Any person required to make a report pursuant to subsection A who has reason to suspect that an adult has been sexually abused as that term is defined in § 18.2-67.10, and any person in charge of a hospital or similar institution, or a department thereof, who receives such information from a staff member, resident, intern or nurse, also shall ~~immediately~~ report the matter, *within seventy-two hours of his first suspicion of abuse*, to the local law-enforcement agency where the adult resides or the sexual abuse is believed to have occurred, or if neither locality is known, then where the abuse was discovered. The person making the report shall disclose and, upon request, make available to the law-enforcement agency all information forming the basis of the report.

C. 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. Such a complaint may be oral or in writing.

D. Any person who makes a report or provides records or information pursuant to subsection A or C of this section or who testifies in any judicial proceeding arising from such report, records or information shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability on account of such report, records, information or testimony, unless such person acted in bad faith or with a malicious purpose.

E. 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 and prevention of abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults.

F. Any person required to file a report pursuant to subsection A of this section who is found guilty of failure to do so shall be fined not more than \$500 for the first failure and not less than \$100 nor more than \$1,000 for any subsequent failures.

INTRODUCED

HB2779