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HOUSE BILL NO. 1671

Offered January 9, 2019

Prefiled December 3, 2018

A BILL to amend and reenact § 63.2-1505 of the Code of Virginia, relating to child abuse and neglect; investigations by local boards of social services.

Patrons—Mullin, Gooditis, Kory and Murphy

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 63.2-1505 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 63.2-1505. Investigations by local departments.

A. An investigation requires the collection of information necessary to determine:

1. The immediate safety needs of the child;
 2. The protective and rehabilitative services needs of the child and family that will deter abuse or neglect;
 3. Risk of future harm to the child;
 4. Alternative plans for the child's safety if protective and rehabilitative services are indicated and the family is unable or unwilling to participate in services;
 5. Whether abuse or neglect has occurred;
 6. If abuse or neglect has occurred, who abused or neglected the child; and
 7. A finding of either founded or unfounded based on the facts collected during the investigation.
- B. If the local department responds to the report or complaint by conducting an investigation, the local department shall:

1. Make immediate investigation and, if the report or complaint was based upon one of the factors specified in subsection B of § 63.2-1509, the local department may file a petition pursuant to § 16.1-241.3;

2. Complete a report and enter it into the statewide automation system maintained by the Department;

3. Consult with the family to arrange for necessary protective and rehabilitative services to be provided to the child and his family;

4. Petition the court for services deemed necessary including, but not limited to, removal of the child or his siblings from their home;

5. Determine within 45 days if a report of abuse or neglect is founded or unfounded and transmit a report to such effect to the Department and to the person who is the subject of the investigation. However, upon written justification by the local department, the time for such determination may be extended not to exceed a total of 60 days or, in the event that the investigation is being conducted in cooperation with a law-enforcement agency and both parties agree that circumstances so warrant, as stated in the written justification, the time for such determination may be extended not to exceed 90 days. If through the exercise of reasonable diligence the local department is unable to find the child who is the subject of the report, the time the child cannot be found shall not be computed as part of the total time period allowed for the investigation and determination and documentation of such reasonable diligence shall be placed in the record. In cases involving the death of a child or alleged sexual abuse of a child who is the subject of the report, the time during which records necessary for the investigation of the complaint but not created by the local department, including autopsy or medical or forensic records or reports, are not available to the local department due to circumstances beyond the local department's control shall not be computed as part of the total time period allowed for the investigation and determination, and documentation of the circumstances that resulted in the delay shall be placed in the record. In cases in which the subject of the investigation is a full-time, part-time, permanent, or temporary employee of a school division who is suspected of abusing or neglecting a child in the course of his educational employment, the time period for determining whether a report is founded or unfounded and transmitting a report to that effect to the Department and the person who is the subject of the investigation shall be mandatory, and every local department shall make the required determination and report within the specified time period without delay;

6. If a report of abuse or neglect is unfounded, transmit a report to such effect to the complainant and parent or guardian and the person responsible for the care of the child in those cases where such person was suspected of abuse or neglect; and

7. If a report of child abuse and neglect is founded, and the subject of the report is or was at the

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59 time of the investigation or the conduct that led to the report a full-time, part-time, permanent, or
60 temporary employee of a school division located within the Commonwealth, notify the relevant school
61 board of the founded complaint without delay.

62 Any information exchanged for the purposes of this subsection shall not be considered a violation of
63 § 63.2-102, 63.2-104, or 63.2-105.

64 C. Each local board ~~may~~ *shall* obtain and consider, in accordance with regulations adopted by the
65 Board, statewide criminal history record information from the Central Criminal Records Exchange and
66 results of a search of the child abuse and neglect central registry of any individual who is the subject of
67 a child abuse or neglect investigation conducted under this section when there is evidence of child abuse
68 or neglect and the local board is evaluating the safety of the home and whether removal will protect a
69 child from harm. *The local board shall inquire as to whether the individual has resided in another state*
70 *within the preceding five years. If the individual indicates that he has resided in another state in the*
71 *preceding five years, or the local board has knowledge that the individual has resided in another state*
72 *in the preceding five years, the local board shall request a search of the child abuse and neglect*
73 *registry or equivalent registry maintained by such state.* The local board also may obtain such a criminal
74 records or registry search on all adult household members residing in the home where the individual
75 who is the subject of the investigation resides and the child resides or visits. If a child abuse or neglect
76 petition is filed in connection with such removal, a court may admit such information as evidence.
77 Where the individual who is the subject of such information contests its accuracy through testimony
78 under oath in hearing before the court, no court shall receive or consider the contested criminal history
79 record information without certified copies of conviction. Further dissemination of the information
80 provided to the local board is prohibited, except as authorized by law.

81 D. A person who has not previously participated in the investigation of complaints of child abuse or
82 neglect in accordance with this chapter shall not participate in the investigation of any case involving a
83 complaint of alleged sexual abuse of a child unless he (i) has completed a Board-approved training
84 program for the investigation of complaints involving alleged sexual abuse of a child or (ii) is under the
85 direct supervision of a person who has completed a Board-approved training program for the
86 investigation of complaints involving alleged sexual abuse of a child. No individual may make a
87 determination of whether a case involving a complaint of alleged sexual abuse of a child is founded or
88 unfounded unless he has completed a Board-approved training program for the investigation of
89 complaints involving alleged sexual abuse of a child.