

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 8.01-581.16, 8.01-581.17, and 54.1-2909 of the Code of Virginia and to repeal § 54.1-2923.1 of the Code of Virginia, programs to address career fatigue in certain health care providers; civil immunity.

[H 115]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 8.01-581.16, 8.01-581.17, and 54.1-2909 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 8.01-581.16. Civil immunity for members of or consultants to certain boards or committees.

A. Every member of, or health care professional consultant to, any committee, board, group, commission or other entity shall be immune from civil liability for any act, decision, omission, or utterance done or made in performance of his duties while serving as a member of or consultant to such committee, board, group, commission or other entity, which that functions primarily to review, evaluate, or make recommendations on (i) the duration of patient stays in health care facilities; (ii) the professional services furnished with respect to the medical, dental, psychological, podiatric, chiropractic, veterinary, or optometric necessity for such services; (iii) the purpose of promoting the most efficient use or monitoring the quality of care of available health care facilities and services, or of emergency medical services agencies and services; (iv) the adequacy or quality of professional services; (v) the competency and qualifications for professional staff privileges; (vi) the reasonableness or appropriateness of charges made by or on behalf of health care facilities; (vii) patient safety, including entering into contracts with patient safety organizations, provided that such committee, board, group, commission, or other entity has been established pursuant to federal or state law or regulation, the requirements of a national accrediting organization granted authority by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to assure compliance with Medicare conditions of participation pursuant to § 1865 of Title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 1395bb), or guidelines approved or adopted by a statewide or local association representing health care providers licensed in the Commonwealth pursuant to clause (iii)(f) (iii) (f) of subsection B of § 8.01-581.17, or established and duly constituted by one or more public or licensed private hospitals, health systems, community services boards, or behavioral health authorities, or with a governmental agency, and provided further that such act, decision, omission, or utterance is not done or made in bad faith or with malicious intent.

B. Every member of, or health care professional consultant to, any committee, board, group, commission, or other entity that functions primarily to review, evaluate, or make recommendations on a professional program to address issues related to career fatigue and wellness in health care professionals licensed to practice medicine or osteopathic medicine or licensed as a physician assistant that is established or contracted for by a statewide association, that is exempt under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code, and that primarily represents health care professionals licensed to practice medicine or osteopathic medicine in multiple specialties shall be immune from civil liability for any act, decision, omission, or utterance done or made in performance of his duties while serving as a member of or consultant to such committee, board, group, commission, or other entity. No active participant in a professional program described in this subsection shall be employed or engaged by such professional program or have a financial ownership interest in such professional program.

§ 8.01-581.17. Privileged communications of certain committees and entities.

A. For the purposes of this section:

"Centralized credentialing service" means (i) gathering information relating to applications for professional staff privileges at any public or licensed private hospital or for participation as a provider in any health maintenance organization, preferred provider organization, or any similar organization and (ii) providing such information to those hospitals and organizations that utilize the service.

"Patient safety data" means reports made to patient safety organizations together with all health care data, interviews, memoranda, analyses, root cause analyses, products of quality assurance or quality improvement processes, corrective action plans, or information collected or created by a health care provider as a result of an occurrence related to the provision of health care services.

"Patient safety organization" means any organization, group, or other entity that collects and analyzes patient safety data for the purpose of improving patient safety and health care outcomes and that is independent and not under the control of the entity that reports patient safety data.

B. The proceedings, minutes, records, and reports of any (i) medical staff committee, utilization

57 review committee, *professional program*, or other committee, board, group, commission, or other entity
58 as specified in § 8.01-581.16; (ii) nonprofit entity that provides a centralized credentialing service; or
59 (iii) quality assurance, quality of care, or peer review committee established pursuant to guidelines
60 approved or adopted by (a) a national or state physician peer review entity, (b) a national or state
61 physician accreditation entity, (c) a national professional association of health care providers or Virginia
62 chapter of a national professional association of health care providers, (d) a licensee of a managed care
63 health insurance plan (MCHIP) as defined in § 38.2-5800, (e) the Office of Emergency Medical Services
64 or any regional emergency medical services council, or (f) a statewide or local association representing
65 health care providers licensed in the Commonwealth, together with all communications, both oral and
66 written, originating in or provided to such committees or entities, are privileged communications which
67 may not be disclosed or obtained by legal discovery proceedings unless a circuit court, after a hearing
68 and for good cause arising from extraordinary circumstances being shown, orders the disclosure of such
69 proceedings, minutes, records, reports, or communications. Additionally, for the purposes of this section,
70 accreditation and peer review records of the American College of Radiology and the Medical Society of
71 Virginia are considered privileged communications. Oral communications regarding a specific medical
72 incident involving patient care, made to a quality assurance, quality of care, or peer review committee
73 established pursuant to clause (iii), shall be privileged only to the extent made more than 24 hours after
74 the occurrence of the medical incident. Nothing in this section shall be construed as providing any
75 privilege to any health care provider, emergency medical services agency, community services board, or
76 behavioral health authority with respect to any factual information regarding specific patient health care
77 or treatment, including patient health care incidents, whether oral, electronic, or written. However, the
78 analysis, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and the deliberative process of any medical staff
79 committee, utilization review committee, or other committee, board, group, commission, or other entity
80 specified in § 8.01-581.16, as well as the proceedings, minutes, records, and reports, including the
81 opinions and reports of experts, of such entities shall be privileged in their entirety under this section.
82 Information known by a witness with knowledge of the facts or treating health care provider is not
83 privileged or protected from discovery merely because it is provided to a committee, board, group,
84 commission, or other entity specified in § 8.01-581.16, and may be discovered by deposition or
85 otherwise in the course of discovery. A person involved in the work of the entities referenced in this
86 subsection shall not be made a witness with knowledge of the facts by virtue of his involvement in the
87 quality assurance, peer review, *professional program*, or credentialing process.

88 C. Nothing in this section shall be construed as providing any privilege to health care provider,
89 emergency medical services agency, community services board, or behavioral health authority medical
90 records kept with respect to a patient, whose treatment is at issue, in the ordinary course of business of
91 operating a hospital, emergency medical services agency, community services board, or behavioral health
92 authority nor to any facts or information contained in medical records, nor shall this section preclude or
93 affect discovery of or production of evidence relating to hospitalization or treatment of such patient in
94 the ordinary course of the patient's hospitalization or treatment. However, the proceedings, minutes,
95 records, reports, analysis, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and the deliberative process, including
96 opinions and reports of experts, of any medical staff committee, utilization review committee,
97 *professional program*, or other committee, board, group, commission, or other entity specified in
98 § 8.01-581.16 shall not constitute medical records, are privileged in their entirety, and are not
99 discoverable.

100 D. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, reports or patient safety data in possession of
101 a patient safety organization, together with the identity of the reporter and all related correspondence,
102 documentation, analysis, results, or recommendations, shall be privileged and confidential and shall not
103 be subject to a civil, criminal, or administrative subpoena or admitted as evidence in any civil, criminal,
104 or administrative proceeding. Nothing in this subsection shall affect the discoverability or admissibility
105 of facts, information, or records referenced in subsection C as related to patient care from a source other
106 than a patient safety organization.

107 E. Any patient safety organization shall promptly remove all patient-identifying information after
108 receipt of a complete patient safety data report unless such organization is otherwise permitted by state
109 or federal law to maintain such information. Patient safety organizations shall maintain the
110 confidentiality of all patient-identifying information and shall not disseminate such information except as
111 permitted by state or federal law.

112 F. Exchange of (i) patient safety data among health care providers or patient safety organizations that
113 does not identify any patient or (ii) information privileged pursuant to subsection B between *professional*
114 *programs*, committees, boards, groups, commissions, or other entities specified in § 8.01-581.16 shall not
115 constitute a waiver of any privilege established in this section.

116 G. Reports of patient safety data to patient safety organizations shall not abrogate obligations to
117 make reports to health regulatory boards or other agencies as required by state or federal law.

118 H. No employer shall take retaliatory action against an employee who in good faith makes a report
119 of patient safety data to a patient safety organization.

120 I. Reports produced solely for purposes of self-assessment of compliance with requirements or
121 standards of a national accrediting organization granted authority by the Centers for Medicare and
122 Medicaid Services to ensure compliance with Medicare conditions of participation pursuant to § 1865 of
123 Title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 1395bb) shall be privileged and confidential and
124 shall not be subject to subpoena or admitted as evidence in a civil or administrative proceeding. Nothing
125 in this subsection shall affect the discoverability or admissibility of facts, information, or records
126 referenced in subsection C as related to patient care from a source other than such accreditation body. A
127 health care provider's release of such reports to such accreditation body shall not constitute a waiver of
128 any privilege provided under this section.

129 **§ 54.1-2909. Further reporting requirements; civil penalty; disciplinary action.**

130 A. The following matters shall be reported within 30 days of their occurrence to the Board:

- 131 1. Any disciplinary action taken against a person licensed under this chapter in another state or in a
132 federal health institution or voluntary surrender of a license in another state while under investigation;
- 133 2. Any malpractice judgment against a person licensed under this chapter;
- 134 3. Any settlement of a malpractice claim against a person licensed under this chapter; and
- 135 4. Any evidence that indicates a reasonable probability that a person licensed under this chapter is or
136 may be professionally incompetent; has engaged in intentional or negligent conduct that causes or is
137 likely to cause injury to a patient or patients; has engaged in unprofessional conduct; or may be
138 mentally or physically unable to engage safely in the practice of his profession.

139 The reporting requirements set forth in this section shall be met if these matters are reported to the
140 National Practitioner Data Bank under the Health Care Quality Improvement Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11101 et
141 seq., and notice that such a report has been submitted is provided to the Board.

142 B. The following persons and entities are subject to the reporting requirements set forth in this
143 section:

- 144 1. Any person licensed under this chapter who is the subject of a disciplinary action, a settlement, a
145 judgment, or evidence for which reporting is required pursuant to this section;
- 146 2. Any other person licensed under this chapter, except as provided in the protocol agreement entered
147 into by the Medical Society of Virginia and the Board for the Operation of the Impaired Physicians
148 Program by a contract agreement with the Health Practitioners' Monitoring Program;
- 149 3. The presidents of all professional societies in the Commonwealth, and their component societies
150 whose members are regulated by the Board, except as provided for in the protocol agreement entered
151 into by the Medical Society of Virginia and the Board for the Operation of the Impaired Physicians
152 Program;
- 153 4. All health care institutions licensed by the Commonwealth;
- 154 5. 4. The malpractice insurance carrier of any person who is the subject of a judgment or settlement;
- 155 and
- 156 6. 5. Any health maintenance organization licensed by the Commonwealth.

157 C. No person or entity shall be obligated to report any matter to the Board if the person or entity has
158 actual notice that the matter has already been reported to the Board. *The reporting requirements set forth*
159 *in this section shall be met if these matters are reported to the National Practitioner Data Bank under*
160 *the Health Care Quality Improvement Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11101 et seq., and notice that such report has*
161 *been submitted is provided to the Board.*

162 D. *No person or entity shall be obligated to report information regarding a health care provider*
163 *licensed to practice medicine or osteopathic medicine or licensed as a physician assistant who is a*
164 *participant in a professional program to address issues related to career fatigue and wellness that is*
165 *organized or contracted for by a statewide association exempt under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(6) of the*
166 *Internal Revenue Code and that primarily represents health care professionals licensed to practice*
167 *medicine or osteopathic medicine in multiple specialties to the Board unless the person or entity has*
168 *determined that there is reasonable probability that the participant is not competent to continue in*
169 *practice or is a danger to himself or to the health and welfare of his patients or the public.*

170 E. Any report required by this section shall be in writing directed to the Board, shall give the name
171 and address of the person who is the subject of the report, and shall describe the circumstances
172 surrounding the facts required to be reported. Under no circumstances shall compliance with this section
173 be construed to waive or limit the privilege provided in § 8.01-581.17.

174 ~~E.~~ F. Any person making a report required by this section, providing information pursuant to an
175 investigation, or testifying in a judicial or administrative proceeding as a result of such report shall be
176 immune from any civil liability or criminal prosecution resulting therefrom unless such person acted in
177 bad faith or with malicious intent.

178 ~~F.~~ G. The clerk of any circuit court or any district court in the Commonwealth shall report to the

179 Board the conviction of any person known by such clerk to be licensed under this chapter of any (i)
180 misdemeanor involving a controlled substance, marijuana, or substance abuse or involving an act of
181 moral turpitude or (ii) felony.

182 ~~G. H.~~ Any person who fails to make a report to the Board as required by this section shall be subject
183 to a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000. The Director shall report the assessment of such civil penalty to
184 the Commissioner of the Department of Health or the Commissioner of Insurance at the State
185 Corporation Commission. Any person assessed a civil penalty pursuant to this section shall not receive a
186 license, registration, or certification or renewal of such unless such penalty has been paid.

187 ~~H. I.~~ Disciplinary action against any person licensed, registered, or certified under this chapter shall
188 be based upon the underlying conduct of the person and not upon the report of a settlement or judgment
189 submitted under this section.

190 **2. That § 54.1-2923.1 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.**

191 **3. That an emergency exists and this act is in force from its passage.**