

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact § 63.2-1514 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Department of Social Services; central registry; retention of records.

[H 287]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 63.2-1514 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 63.2-1514. Retention of records in all reports; procedures regarding unfounded reports alleged to be made in bad faith or with malicious intent.

A. The local department shall retain the records of all reports or complaints made pursuant to this chapter, in accordance with regulations adopted by the Board. However, all records related to founded cases of child sexual abuse involving injuries or conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in serious harm to a child shall be maintained by the local department for a period of 25 years from the date of the complaint.

B. The Department shall maintain a child abuse and neglect information system that includes a central registry of founded complaints, pursuant to § 63.2-1515. The Department shall maintain all (i) unfounded investigations, (ii) family assessments, and (iii) reports or complaints determined to be not valid in a record which is separate from the central registry and accessible only to the Department and to local departments for child-protective services. The purpose of retaining these complaints or reports is to provide local departments with information regarding prior complaints or reports. In no event shall the mere existence of a prior complaint or report be used to determine that a subsequent complaint or report is founded. The subject of the complaint or report is the person who is alleged to have committed abuse or neglect. The subject of the complaint or report shall have access to his own record. The record of unfounded investigations and complaints and reports determined to be not valid that involved reports of child abuse or neglect shall be purged three years after the date of the complaint or report if there are no subsequent complaints or reports regarding the same child or the person who is the subject of the complaint or report within such three-year period. Records of complaints and reports determined to be not valid shall be purged one year after the date of the complaint or report if there are no subsequent complaints or reports regarding the same child or the person who is the subject of the complaint or report in that one year. The local department shall retain such records for an additional period of up to two years if requested in writing by the person who is the subject of such complaint or report. The record of family assessments shall be purged three years after the date of the complaint or report if there are no subsequent complaints or reports regarding the same child or the person who is the subject of the report in that three-year period. The child-protective services records regarding the petitioner which result from such complaint or report shall be purged immediately by any custodian of such records upon presentation to the custodian of a certified copy of a court order that there has been a civil action that determined that the complaint or report was made in bad faith or with malicious intent. After purging the records, the custodian shall notify the petitioner in writing that the records have been purged.

C. At the time the local department notifies a person who is the subject of a complaint or report made pursuant to this chapter that such complaint or report is either an unfounded investigation or a completed family assessment, it shall notify him how long the record will be retained and of the availability of the procedures set out in this section regarding reports or complaints alleged to be made in bad faith or with malicious intent. Upon request, the local department shall advise the person who was the subject of an unfounded investigation if the complaint or report was made anonymously. However, the identity of a complainant or reporter shall not be disclosed.

D. Any person who is the subject of an unfounded report or complaint made pursuant to this chapter who believes that such report or complaint was made in bad faith or with malicious intent may petition the circuit court in the jurisdiction in which the report or complaint was made for the release to such person of the records of the investigation or family assessment. Such petition shall specifically set forth the reasons such person believes that such report or complaint was made in bad faith or with malicious intent. Upon the filing of such petition, the circuit court shall request and the local department shall provide to the circuit court its records of the investigation or family assessment for the circuit court's in camera review. The petitioner shall be entitled to present evidence to support his petition. If the circuit court determines that there is a reasonable question of fact as to whether the report or complaint was made in bad faith or with malicious intent and that disclosure of the identity of the complainant would not be likely to endanger the life or safety of the complainant, it shall provide to the petitioner a copy

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57 of the records of the investigation or family assessment. The original records shall be subject to
58 discovery in any subsequent civil action regarding the making of a complaint or report in bad faith or
59 with malicious intent.