

# VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2024 SESSION

## CHAPTER 365

*An Act to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-269.1, 16.1-269.2, and 16.1-272 of the Code of Virginia, relating to juveniles; evidence of trafficking, sexual abuse, or rape by the alleged victim prior to or during the commission of the alleged offense; treatment and rehabilitation.*

[H 268]

Approved April 3, 2024

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That §§ 16.1-269.1, 16.1-269.2, and 16.1-272 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 16.1-269.1. Trial in circuit court; preliminary hearing; direct indictment; remand.**

A. Except as provided in subsections B and C, if a juvenile 14 years of age or older at the time of an alleged offense is charged with an offense which would be a felony if committed by an adult, the court shall, on motion of the attorney for the Commonwealth and prior to a hearing on the merits, hold a transfer hearing and may retain jurisdiction or transfer such juvenile for proper criminal proceedings to the appropriate circuit court having criminal jurisdiction of such offenses if committed by an adult. Any transfer to the appropriate circuit court shall be subject to the following conditions:

1. Notice as prescribed in §§ 16.1-263 and 16.1-264 shall be given to the juvenile and his parent, guardian, legal custodian or other person standing in loco parentis; or attorney;

2. The juvenile court finds that probable cause exists to believe that the juvenile committed the delinquent act as alleged or a lesser included delinquent act which would be a felony if committed by an adult;

3. The juvenile is competent to stand trial. The juvenile is presumed to be competent and the burden is on the party alleging the juvenile is not competent to rebut the presumption by a preponderance of the evidence; and

4. The court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the juvenile is not a proper person to remain within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. In determining whether a juvenile is a proper person to remain within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, the court shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors:

a. The juvenile's age;

b. The seriousness and number of alleged offenses, including (i) whether the alleged offense was committed in an aggressive, violent, premeditated, or willful manner; (ii) whether the alleged offense was against persons or property, with greater weight being given to offenses against persons, especially if death or bodily injury resulted; (iii) whether the maximum punishment for such an offense is greater than 20 years confinement if committed by an adult; (iv) whether the alleged offense involved the use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon by brandishing, threatening, displaying or otherwise employing such weapon; and (v) the nature of the juvenile's participation in the alleged offense;

c. Whether the juvenile can be retained in the juvenile justice system long enough for effective treatment and rehabilitation;

d. The appropriateness and availability of the services and dispositional alternatives in both the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems for dealing with the juvenile's problems;

e. The record and previous history of the juvenile in this or other jurisdictions, including (i) the number and nature of previous contacts with juvenile or circuit courts, (ii) the number and nature of prior periods of probation, (iii) the number and nature of prior commitments to juvenile correctional centers, (iv) the number and nature of previous residential and community-based treatments, (v) whether previous adjudications and commitments were for delinquent acts that involved the infliction of serious bodily injury, and (vi) whether the alleged offense is part of a repetitive pattern of similar adjudicated offenses;

f. Whether the juvenile has previously absconded from the legal custody of a juvenile correctional entity in this or any other jurisdiction;

g. The extent, if any, of the juvenile's degree of intellectual disability or mental illness;

h. The juvenile's school record and education;

i. The juvenile's mental and emotional maturity; ~~and~~

j. The juvenile's physical condition and physical maturity; *and*

*k. Any evidence that the juvenile was a victim of felonious criminal sexual assault in violation of Article 7 (§ 18.2-61 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2 or trafficking in violation of Article 3 (§ 18.2-344 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 18.2 by the alleged victim prior to or during the commission of the alleged offense and that such alleged offense was a direct result of the juvenile being a victim of such felonious criminal sexual assault or trafficking. This subdivision shall be construed to prioritize the successful*

*treatment and rehabilitation of juvenile victims of human trafficking and sex crimes who commit acts of violence against their abusers. It is the intent of the General Assembly that these juveniles be viewed as victims and provided treatment and services in the juvenile system.*

No transfer decision shall be precluded or reversed on the grounds that the court failed to consider any of the factors specified in subdivision 4.

B. The juvenile court shall conduct a preliminary hearing whenever a juvenile 16 years of age or older is charged with murder in violation of § 18.2-31, 18.2-32 or 18.2-40, or aggravated malicious wounding in violation of § 18.2-51.2. If the juvenile is 14 years of age or older, but less than 16 years of age, then the court may proceed, on motion of the attorney for the Commonwealth, as provided in subsection A. *Upon motion of the juvenile, the court may conduct a hearing to allow the juvenile to present any evidence described in subdivision A 4 k. If the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that sufficient evidence exists to believe that the juvenile was a victim of felonious criminal sexual assault in violation of Article 7 (§ 18.2-61 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2 or trafficking in violation of Article 3 (§ 18.2-344 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 18.2 by the alleged victim prior to or during the commission of the alleged offense and that such alleged offense was a direct result of the juvenile being a victim of such felonious criminal sexual assault or trafficking, then the court shall proceed as provided in subsection A.*

C. The juvenile court shall conduct a preliminary hearing whenever a juvenile 16 years of age or older is charged with murder in violation of § 18.2-33; felonious injury by mob in violation of § 18.2-41; abduction in violation of § 18.2-48; malicious wounding in violation of § 18.2-51; malicious wounding of a law-enforcement officer in violation of § 18.2-51.1; felonious poisoning in violation of § 18.2-54.1; adulteration of products in violation of § 18.2-54.2; robbery in violation of subdivision B 1 or 2 of § 18.2-58 or carjacking in violation of § 18.2-58.1; rape in violation of § 18.2-61; forcible sodomy in violation of § 18.2-67.1; object sexual penetration in violation of § 18.2-67.2; manufacturing, selling, giving, distributing, or possessing with intent to manufacture, sell, give, or distribute a controlled substance or an imitation controlled substance in violation of § 18.2-248 if the juvenile has been previously adjudicated delinquent on two or more occasions of violating § 18.2-248 provided the adjudications occurred after the juvenile was at least 16 years of age; manufacturing, selling, giving, distributing, or possessing with intent to manufacture, sell, give, or distribute methamphetamine in violation of § 18.2-248.03 if the juvenile has been previously adjudicated delinquent on two or more occasions of violating § 18.2-248.03 provided the adjudications occurred after the juvenile was at least 16 years of age; or felonious manufacturing, selling, giving, distributing, or possessing with intent to manufacture, sell, give, or distribute anabolic steroids in violation of § 18.2-248.5 if the juvenile has been previously adjudicated delinquent on two or more occasions of violating § 18.2-248.5 provided the adjudications occurred after the juvenile was at least 16 years of age, provided the attorney for the Commonwealth gives written notice of his intent to proceed pursuant to this subsection. Prior to giving written notice of his intent to proceed pursuant to this subsection, the attorney for the Commonwealth shall submit a written request to the director of the court services unit to complete a report as described in subsection B of § 16.1-269.2 unless waived by the juvenile and his attorney or other legal representative. The report shall be filed with the court and mailed or delivered to (i) the attorney for the Commonwealth and (ii) counsel for the juvenile, or, if the juvenile is not represented by counsel, to the juvenile and a parent, guardian, or other person standing in loco parentis with respect to the juvenile, within 21 days of the date of the written request. After reviewing the report, if the attorney for the Commonwealth still intends to proceed pursuant to this subsection, he shall then provide the written notice of such intent, which shall include affirmation that he reviewed the report. The notice shall be filed with the court and mailed or delivered to counsel for the juvenile or, if the juvenile is not then represented by counsel, to the juvenile and a parent, guardian or other person standing in loco parentis with respect to the juvenile at least seven days prior to the preliminary hearing. If the attorney for the Commonwealth elects not to give such notice, if he elects to withdraw the notice prior to certification of the charge to the grand jury, or if the juvenile is 14 years of age or older, but less than 16 years of age, he may proceed as provided in subsection A. *Upon motion of the juvenile, the court may conduct a hearing to allow the juvenile to present any evidence described in subdivision A 4 k. If the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that sufficient evidence exists to believe that the juvenile was a victim of felonious criminal sexual assault in violation of Article 7 (§ 18.2-61 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2 or trafficking in violation of Article 3 (§ 18.2-344 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 18.2 by the alleged victim prior to or during the commission of the alleged offense and that such alleged offense was a direct result of the juvenile being a victim of such felonious criminal sexual assault or trafficking, then the court shall proceed as provided in subsection A.*

D. Upon a finding of probable cause pursuant to a preliminary hearing under subsection B or C, the juvenile court shall certify the charge, and all ancillary charges, to the grand jury. Such certification shall divest the juvenile court of jurisdiction as to the charge and any ancillary charges. Nothing in this subsection shall divest the juvenile court of jurisdiction over any matters unrelated to such charge and ancillary charges which may otherwise be properly within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

If the court does not find probable cause to believe that the juvenile has committed the violent

juvenile felony as charged in the petition or warrant or if the petition or warrant is terminated by dismissal in the juvenile court, the attorney for the Commonwealth may seek a direct indictment in the circuit court. If the petition or warrant is terminated by nolle prosequi in the juvenile court, the attorney for the Commonwealth may seek an indictment only after a preliminary hearing in juvenile court.

If the court finds that the juvenile was not (i) for the purposes of subsection A, 14 years of age or older or (ii) for purposes of subsection B or C, 16 years of age or older, at the time of the alleged commission of the offense or that the conditions specified in subdivision A 1, 2, or 3 have not been met, the case shall proceed as otherwise provided for by law.

E. An indictment in the circuit court cures any error or defect in any proceeding held in the juvenile court except with respect to the juvenile's age. If an indictment is terminated by nolle prosequi, the Commonwealth may reinstate the proceeding by seeking a subsequent indictment.

**§ 16.1-269.2. Admissibility of statement; investigation and report; bail.**

A. Statements made by the juvenile at the transfer hearing provided for under § 16.1-269.1 shall not be admissible against him over objection in any criminal proceedings following the transfer, except for purposes of impeachment.

B. Prior to a transfer hearing pursuant to subsection A of § 16.1-269.1 or a preliminary hearing pursuant to subsection C of § 16.1-269.1, a study and report to the court, in writing, relevant to the factors set out in subdivision A 4 of § 16.1-269.1, as well as an assessment of any affiliation with a criminal street gang as defined in § 18.2-46.1, shall be made by the probation services or other qualified agency designated by the court. *Such report shall include any relevant information supporting an allegation that the juvenile was a victim of felonious criminal sexual assault in violation of Article 7 (§ 18.2-61 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2 or trafficking in violation of Article 3 (§ 18.2-344 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 18.2 by the alleged victim. It is the intent of the General Assembly that these juveniles be viewed as victims and provided treatment and services in the juvenile system.* Upon motion of the attorney for the Commonwealth for a transfer hearing pursuant to subsection A of § 16.1-269.1, the attorney for the Commonwealth shall provide notice to the designated probation services or other qualified agency of the need for a transfer report. Counsel for the juvenile and the attorney for the Commonwealth shall have full access to the study and report and any other report or data concerning the juvenile which are available to the court. The court shall not consider the report until a finding has been made concerning probable cause. If the court so orders, the study and report may be expanded to include matters provided for in § 16.1-273, whereupon it may also serve as the report required by this subsection, but on the condition that it will not be submitted to the judge who will preside at any subsequent hearings except as provided for by law.

C. After the completion of the hearing, whether or not the juvenile court decides to retain jurisdiction over the juvenile or transfer such juvenile for criminal proceedings in the circuit court, the juvenile court shall set bail for the juvenile in accordance with Chapter 9 (§ 19.2-119 et seq.) of Title 19.2, if bail has not already been set.

**§ 16.1-272. Power of circuit court over juvenile offender.**

A. In any case in which a juvenile is indicted, the offense for which he is indicted and all ancillary charges shall be tried in the same manner as provided for in the trial of adults, except as otherwise provided with regard to sentencing. Upon a finding of guilty of any charge, the court shall fix the sentence without the intervention of a jury. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require a court to review the results of an investigation completed pursuant to § 16.1-273.

1. If a juvenile is convicted of a violent juvenile felony, for that offense and for all ancillary crimes the court may order that (i) the juvenile serve a portion of the sentence as a serious juvenile offender under § 16.1-285.1 and the remainder of such sentence in the same manner as provided for adults; (ii) the juvenile serve the entire sentence in the same manner as provided for adults; or (iii) the portion of the sentence to be served in the same manner as provided for adults be suspended conditioned upon successful completion of such terms and conditions as may be imposed in a juvenile court upon disposition of a delinquency case including, but not limited to, commitment under subdivision A 14 of § 16.1-278.8 or § 16.1-285.1.

2. If the juvenile is convicted of any other felony, the court may sentence or commit the juvenile offender in accordance with the criminal laws of this Commonwealth or may in its discretion deal with the juvenile in the manner prescribed in this chapter for the hearing and disposition of cases in the juvenile court, including, but not limited to, commitment under § 16.1-285.1 or may in its discretion impose an adult sentence and suspend the sentence conditioned upon successful completion of such terms and conditions as may be imposed in a juvenile court upon disposition of a delinquency case.

3. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if the juvenile is convicted of any felony, the court may in its discretion depart from any mandatory minimum sentence required by law or suspend any portion of an otherwise applicable sentence.

4. If the juvenile is not convicted of a felony but is convicted of a misdemeanor, the court shall deal with the juvenile in the manner prescribed by law for the disposition of a delinquency case in the juvenile court.

5. *If the court, at any time prior to the final order in the case or within 21 days of such order,*

*receives evidence that the juvenile was a victim of felonious criminal sexual assault in violation of Article 7 (§ 18.2-61 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2 or trafficking in violation of Article 3 (§ 18.2-344 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 18.2 by the victim prior to or during the commission of the offense for which the juvenile was convicted and that such offense was a direct result of the juvenile being a victim of such felonious criminal sexual assault or trafficking, the court may set aside the guilty verdict, render the juvenile delinquent, and impose a disposition consistent with § 16.1-278.8.*

B. If the circuit court decides to deal with the juvenile in the same manner as a case in the juvenile court and places the juvenile on probation, the juvenile may be supervised by a juvenile probation officer.

C. Whether the court sentences and commits the juvenile as a juvenile under this chapter or under the criminal law, in cases where the juvenile is convicted of a felony in violation of § 18.2-61, 18.2-63, 18.2-64.1, 18.2-67.1, 18.2-67.2, 18.2-67.3, 18.2-67.5, 18.2-370 or 18.2-370.1 or, where the victim is a minor or is physically helpless or mentally incapacitated as defined in § 18.2-67.10, subsection B of § 18.2-361 or subsection B of § 18.2-366, the clerk shall make the report required by § 19.2-390 to the Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry established pursuant to Chapter 9 (§ 9.1-900 et seq.) of Title 9.1.

D. In any case in which a juvenile is not sentenced as a juvenile under this chapter, the court shall, in addition to considering any other factor and prior to imposing a sentence, consider (i) the juvenile's exposure to adverse childhood experiences, early childhood trauma, or any child welfare agency and (ii) the differences between juvenile and adult offenders.

E. A juvenile sentenced pursuant to clause (i) of subdivision A 1 shall be eligible to earn sentence credits in the manner prescribed by § 53.1-202.2 for the portion of the sentence served as a serious juvenile offender under § 16.1-285.1.

F. If the court sentences the juvenile as a juvenile under this chapter, the clerk shall provide a copy of the court's final order or judgment to the court service unit in the same locality as the juvenile court to which the case had been transferred.