

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2024 SESSION

CHAPTER 651

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 37.2-314, 37.2-416.1, and 37.2-506.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to barrier crimes; adult substance abuse and mental health services; exception.

[H 1269]

Approved April 8, 2024

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 37.2-314, 37.2-416.1, and 37.2-506.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 37.2-314. Background check required.

A. As a condition of employment, the Department shall require any applicant who (i) accepts a position of employment at a state facility and was not employed by that state facility prior to July 1, 1996, or (ii) accepts a position with the Department that receives, monitors, or disburses funds of the Commonwealth and was not employed by the Department prior to July 1, 1996, to submit to fingerprinting and provide personal descriptive information to be forwarded along with the applicant's fingerprints through the Central Criminal Records Exchange to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for the purpose of obtaining national criminal history record information regarding the applicant.

B. For purposes of clause (i) of subsection A, the Department shall not hire for compensated employment persons who have been convicted of (i) any offense set forth in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 or (ii) any offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 (a) in the five years prior to the application date for employment or (b) if such person continues on probation or parole or has failed to pay required court costs for such offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02.

C. *Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, the Department may hire for compensated employment at an adult substance abuse or mental health treatment program a person who was convicted of any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-57 or any violation of § 18.2-248, 18.2-250, or 18.2-258.1, except an offense pursuant to subsection H1 or H2 of § 18.2-248, provided that such conviction occurred more than four years prior to the application date for employment.*

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, the Department may hire for compensated employment at an adult substance abuse or adult mental health treatment program a person who was convicted of any violation of § 18.2-51.3; any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-56 or 18.2-56.1 or ~~subsection A of § 18.2-57~~; any first offense misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-57.2; any violation of § 18.2-60, 18.2-89, 18.2-92, or 18.2-94; any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-282, 18.2-346, or 18.2-346.01; any offense set forth in clause (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02, except an offense pursuant to subsection H1 or H2 of § 18.2-248; or any substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction, if the Department determines, based upon a screening assessment, that the criminal behavior was substantially related to the applicant's substance abuse or mental illness and that the person has been successfully rehabilitated and is not a risk to individuals receiving services based on his criminal history background and his substance abuse or mental illness history. In addition, where the employment at an adult substance abuse treatment program is as a peer recovery specialist, the Department may hire any person eligible under this subsection or who was convicted of any offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 if the Department determines, based upon a screening assessment, that the criminal behavior was substantially related to the person's substance abuse or mental illness and that the person has been successfully rehabilitated and is not a risk to individuals receiving services based on his criminal history background and his substance abuse or mental illness history.

For the purposes of this subsection, "peer recovery specialist" means any person who has completed a peer recovery specialist training course approved by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

~~D.~~ E. The Department and a screening contractor designated by the Department shall screen applicants who meet the criteria set forth in subsection ~~C~~ D to assess whether the applicants have been rehabilitated successfully and are not a risk to individuals receiving services based on their criminal history backgrounds and substance abuse or mental illness histories. To be eligible for such screening, the applicant shall have completed all prison or jail terms; shall not be under probation or parole supervision; shall have no pending charges in any locality; shall have paid all fines, restitution, and court costs for any prior convictions; and shall have been free of parole or probation for at least five years for all convictions. In addition to any supplementary information the Department or screening contractor may require or the applicant may wish to present, the applicant shall provide to the screening contractor a statement from his most recent probation or parole officer, if any, outlining his period of

supervision and a copy of any pre-sentencing or post-sentencing report in connection with the felony conviction. The cost of this screening shall be paid by the applicant, unless the Department decides to pay the cost.

~~E.~~ *F.* The Central Criminal Records Exchange, upon receipt of an applicant's record or notification that no record exists, shall submit a report or record to the state facility or to the Department. If an applicant is denied employment because of information appearing on his criminal history record and the applicant disputes the information upon which the denial was based, the Central Criminal Records Exchange shall, upon written request, furnish to the applicant the procedures for obtaining a copy of the criminal history record from the FBI. The information provided to the state facility or Department shall not be disseminated except as provided in this section.

~~F.~~ *G.* Those applicants listed in clause (i) of subsection A also shall provide to the state facility or Department a copy of information from the central registry maintained pursuant to § 63.2-1515 on any investigation of child abuse or neglect undertaken on them.

~~G.~~ *H.* The Board may adopt regulations to comply with the provisions of this section. Copies of any information received by the state facility or Department pursuant to this section shall be available to the Department and to the applicable state facility but shall not be disseminated further, except as permitted by state or federal law. The cost of obtaining the criminal history record and the central registry information shall be borne by the applicant, unless the Department or state facility decides to pay the cost.

§ 37.2-416.1. Background checks required; adult substance abuse and mental health services.

A. As used in this section:

"Direct care position" means any position that includes responsibility for (i) treatment, case management, health, safety, development, or well-being of an adult receiving substance abuse or mental health services or (ii) immediately supervising a person in a position described in this definition.

"Hire for compensated employment" does not include (i) a promotion from one adult substance abuse or adult mental health treatment position to another such position within the same licensee licensed pursuant to this article or (ii) new employment in an adult substance abuse or adult mental health treatment position in another office or program licensed pursuant to this article if the person employed prior to July 1, 1999, in a licensed program had no convictions in the five years prior to the application date for employment. "Hire for compensated employment" includes (a) a promotion or transfer from an adult substance abuse treatment position to any mental health or developmental services direct care position within the same licensee licensed pursuant to this article or (b) new employment in any mental health or developmental services direct care position in another office or program of the same licensee licensed pursuant to this article for which the person has previously worked in an adult substance abuse treatment position.

"Peer recovery specialist" means any person who has completed a peer recovery specialist training course approved by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

"Provider" means a provider who is licensed pursuant to this article and who provides substance abuse or mental health services to adults.

B. Every provider shall require (i) any applicant who accepts employment in any direct care position and (ii) any person under contract with the provider to serve in a direct care position to submit to fingerprinting and provide personal descriptive information to be forwarded through the Central Criminal Records Exchange to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for the purpose of obtaining national criminal history record information regarding the applicant. Except as otherwise provided in subsection C, D, E, or ~~F~~ *G*, no provider shall:

1. Hire for compensated employment any person who has been convicted of (i) any offense set forth in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 or (ii) any offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 (a) in the five years prior to the application date for employment or (b) if such person continues on probation or parole or has failed to pay required court costs for such offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02; or

2. Allow any person under contract with the provider to serve in a direct care position who has been convicted of (i) any offense set forth in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 or (ii) any offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 (a) in the five years prior to the application date for employment or (b) if such person continues on probation or parole or has failed to pay required court costs for such offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02.

The Central Criminal Records Exchange, upon receipt of an applicant's record or notification that no record exists, shall submit a report to the requesting authorized officer or director of a provider. If any applicant is denied employment because of information appearing on the criminal history record and the applicant disputes the information upon which the denial was based, the Central Criminal Records Exchange shall, upon written request, furnish to the applicant the procedures for obtaining a copy of the criminal history record from the FBI. The information provided to the authorized officer or director of a provider shall not be disseminated except as provided in this section.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, a provider may hire for compensated employment or permit any person under contract with the provider to serve in a direct care position or permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the provider to provide direct care services on behalf of the provider at an adult substance abuse or mental health treatment program a person who was convicted of any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-57 or any violation of § 18.2-248, 18.2-250, or 18.2-258.1, except an offense pursuant to subsection H1 or H2 of § 18.2-248, provided that such conviction occurred more than four years prior to the application date for employment.

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, a provider may hire for compensated employment or permit any person under contract with the provider to serve in a direct care position or permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the provider to provide direct care services on behalf of the provider at adult substance abuse or adult mental health treatment programs a person who was convicted of any violation of § 18.2-51.3; any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-56 or 18.2-56.1 or subsection A of § 18.2-57; any first offense misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-57.2; any violation of § 18.2-60, 18.2-89, 18.2-92, or 18.2-94; any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-282, 18.2-346, or 18.2-346.01; any offense set forth in clause (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02, except an offense pursuant to subsections H1 and H2 of § 18.2-248; or any substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction, if the hiring provider determines, based upon a screening assessment, that the criminal behavior was substantially related to the applicant's substance abuse or mental illness and that the person has been successfully rehabilitated and is not a risk to individuals receiving services based on his criminal history background and his substance abuse or mental illness history. In addition, where the employment at an adult substance abuse treatment program is as a peer recovery specialist, the provider may hire any person eligible under this subsection or who was convicted of any offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 if the hiring provider determines, based upon a screening assessment, that the criminal behavior was substantially related to the person's substance abuse or mental illness and that the person has been successfully rehabilitated and is not a risk to individuals receiving services based on his criminal history background and his substance abuse or mental illness history.

D. E. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, a provider may hire for compensated employment or permit any person under contract with the provider to serve in a direct care position or permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the provider to provide direct care services on behalf of the provider at adult substance abuse treatment facilities a person who has been convicted of not more than one offense under subsection C of § 18.2-57, or any substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction, if (i) the person has been granted a simple pardon if the offense was a felony committed in Virginia, or the equivalent if the person was convicted under the laws of another jurisdiction; (ii) more than 10 years have elapsed since the conviction; and (iii) the hiring provider determines, based upon a screening assessment, that the criminal behavior was substantially related to the applicant's substance abuse and that the person has been successfully rehabilitated and is not a risk to individuals receiving services based on his criminal history background and his substance abuse history.

E. F. The hiring provider and a screening contractor designated by the Department shall screen applicants who meet the criteria set forth in subsections C and D and E to assess whether the applicants have been rehabilitated successfully and are not a risk to individuals receiving services based on their criminal history backgrounds and substance abuse or mental illness histories. To be eligible for such screening, the applicant shall have completed all prison or jail terms, shall not be under probation or parole supervision, shall have no pending charges in any locality, shall have paid all fines, restitution, and court costs for any prior convictions, and shall have been free of parole or probation for at least five years for all convictions. In addition to any supplementary information the provider or screening contractor may require or the applicant may wish to present, the applicant shall provide to the screening contractor a statement from his most recent probation or parole officer, if any, outlining his period of supervision and a copy of any pre-sentencing or post-sentencing report in connection with the felony conviction. The cost of this screening shall be paid by the applicant, unless the licensed provider decides to pay the cost.

F. G. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, a provider may (i) hire for compensated employment, (ii) approve as a sponsored residential service provider, (iii) permit to enter into a shared living arrangement, or (iv) permit any person under contract with the provider to serve in a direct care position on behalf of the provider or permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the provider to provide direct care services on behalf of the provider persons who have been convicted of not more than one misdemeanor offense under § 18.2-57 or 18.2-57.2, or any substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction, if 10 years have elapsed following the conviction, unless the person committed the offense while employed in a direct care position. A provider may also approve a person as a sponsored residential service provider if (a) any adult living in the home of an applicant or (b) any person employed by the applicant to provide services in the home in which sponsored residential services are provided has been convicted of not more than

one misdemeanor offense under ~~§ 18.2-57~~ or 18.2-57.2, or any substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction, if 10 years have elapsed following the conviction, unless the person committed the offense while employed in a direct care position.

~~G.~~ *H.* Every provider shall require, as a condition of employment, approval as a sponsored residential service provider, permission to enter into a shared living arrangement with a person receiving medical assistance services pursuant to a waiver, or permission for any person under contract with the provider to serve in a direct care position, written consent and personal information necessary to obtain a search of the registry of founded complaints of child abuse and neglect that is maintained by the Department of Social Services pursuant to § 63.2-1515.

~~H.~~ *I.* The cost of obtaining the criminal history record and search of the child abuse and neglect registry record shall be borne by the applicant, unless the provider decides to pay the cost.

~~I.~~ *J.* A person who complies in good faith with the provisions of this section shall not be liable for any civil damages for any act or omission in the performance of duties under this section unless the act or omission was the result of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

~~J.~~ *K.* Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a provider that provides services to individuals receiving services under the state plan for medical assistance services or any waiver thereto may disclose to the Department of Medical Assistance Services (i) whether a criminal history background check has been completed for a person described in subsection B for whom a criminal history background check is required and (ii) whether the person described in subsection B is eligible for employment, to provide sponsored residential services, to provide services in the home of a sponsored residential service provider, or to enter into a shared living arrangement with a person receiving medical assistance services pursuant to a waiver.

~~K.~~ *L.* Any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with a provider and who will serve in a direct care position on behalf of such provider shall undergo a background check that shall include:

1. A criminal history records check through the Central Criminal Records Exchange pursuant to § 19.2-389; and
2. A search of the central registry maintained pursuant to § 63.2-1515 for any founded complaint of child abuse and neglect.

Except as otherwise provided in subsection C, D, *E*, or ~~F~~ *G*, no provider shall permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the provider to provide direct care services on behalf of the provider if that person has been convicted of (i) any offense set forth in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 or (ii) any offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 (a) in the five years prior to the application date for employment or (b) if such person continues on probation or parole or has failed to pay required court costs for such offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02.

§ 37.2-506.1. Background checks required; adult substance abuse and mental health services.

A. As used in this section:

"Direct care position" means any position that includes responsibility for (i) treatment, case management, health, safety, development, or well-being of an adult receiving substance abuse or mental health services or (ii) immediately supervising a person in a position described in this definition.

"Hire for compensated employment" does not include (i) a promotion from one adult substance abuse or adult mental health treatment position to another such position within the same community services board or (ii) new employment in an adult substance abuse or adult mental health treatment position in another office or program of the same community services board if the person employed prior to July 1, 1999, had no convictions in the five years prior to the application date for employment. "Hire for compensated employment" includes (a) a promotion or transfer from an adult substance abuse treatment position to any mental health or developmental services direct care position within the same community services board or (b) new employment in any mental health or developmental services direct care position in another office or program of the same community services board for which the person has previously worked in an adult substance abuse treatment position.

"Peer recovery specialist" means any person who has completed a peer recovery specialist training course approved by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

B. Every community services board shall require (i) any applicant who accepts employment in any direct care position with the community services board and (ii) any person under contract to serve in a direct care position on behalf of the community services board to submit to fingerprinting and provide personal descriptive information to be forwarded through the Central Criminal Records Exchange to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for the purpose of obtaining national criminal history record information regarding the applicant. Except as otherwise provided in subsection C, D, *E*, or ~~F~~ *G*, no community services board shall hire for compensated employment, approve as a sponsored residential service provider, permit to enter into a shared living arrangement with a person receiving medical assistance services pursuant to a waiver, or permit any person under contract to serve in a direct care position on behalf of the community services board persons who have been convicted of (a) any offense set forth in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 or (b) any offense

set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 (1) in the five years prior to the application date for employment, the application date to be a sponsored residential service provider, or entering into a shared living arrangement or (2) if such person continues on probation or parole or has failed to pay required court costs for such offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02.

The Central Criminal Records Exchange, upon receipt of an applicant's record or notification that no record exists, shall submit a report to the requesting executive director or personnel director of the community services board. If any applicant is denied employment because of information appearing on his criminal history record and the applicant disputes the information upon which the denial was based, the Central Criminal Records Exchange shall, upon written request, furnish to the applicant the procedures for obtaining a copy of the criminal history record from the FBI. The information provided to the executive director or personnel director of any community services board shall not be disseminated except as provided in this section.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, the community services board may hire for compensated employment or permit any person under contract to serve in a direct care position on behalf of the community services board or permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the community services board to provide direct care services on behalf of the community services board at an adult substance abuse or mental health treatment program a person who was convicted of any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-57 or any violation of § 18.2-248, 18.2-250, or 18.2-258.1, except an offense pursuant to subsection H1 or H2 of § 18.2-248, provided that such conviction occurred more than four years prior to the application date for employment.

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, the community services board may hire for compensated employment or permit any person under contract to serve in a direct care position on behalf of the community services board or permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the community services board to provide direct care services on behalf of the community services board at adult substance abuse or adult mental health treatment programs a person who was convicted of any violation of § 18.2-51.3; any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-56 or, 18.2-56.1, subsection A of § 18.2-57, or § 18.2-57.2; any violation of § 18.2-60, 18.2-89, 18.2-92, or 18.2-94; any misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-282, 18.2-346, or 18.2-346.01; any offense set forth in clause (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02, except an offense pursuant to subsection H1 or H2 of § 18.2-248; or any substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction, if the hiring community services board determines, based upon a screening assessment, that the criminal behavior was substantially related to the applicant's substance abuse or mental illness and that the person has been successfully rehabilitated and is not a risk to individuals receiving services based on his criminal history background and his substance abuse or mental illness history. In addition, where the employment at an adult substance abuse treatment program is as a peer recovery specialist, the community services board may hire any person eligible under this subsection or who was convicted of any offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 if the hiring community services board determines, based upon a screening assessment, that the criminal behavior was substantially related to the person's substance abuse or mental illness and that the person has been successfully rehabilitated and is not a risk to individuals receiving services based on his criminal history background and his substance abuse or mental illness history.

~~D.~~ *E. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, the community services board may hire for compensated employment or permit any person under contract to serve in a direct care position on behalf of the community services board or permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the community services board to provide direct care services on behalf of the community services board at adult substance abuse treatment programs a person who has been convicted of not more than one offense under subsection C of § 18.2-57, or any substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction, if (i) the person has been granted a simple pardon if the offense was a felony committed in Virginia, or the equivalent if the person was convicted under the laws of another jurisdiction; (ii) more than 10 years have elapsed since the conviction; and (iii) the hiring community services board determines, based upon a screening assessment, that the criminal behavior was substantially related to the applicant's substance abuse and that the person has been successfully rehabilitated and is not a risk to individuals receiving services based on his criminal history background and his substance abuse history.*

~~E.~~ *F. The community services board and a screening contractor designated by the Department shall screen applicants who meet the criteria set forth in subsections C and D and E to assess whether the applicants have been rehabilitated successfully and are not a risk to individuals receiving services based on their criminal history backgrounds and substance abuse or mental illness histories. To be eligible for such screening, the applicant shall have completed all prison or jail terms, shall not be under probation or parole supervision, shall have no pending charges in any locality, shall have paid all fines, restitution, and court costs for any prior convictions, and shall have been free of parole or probation for at least five years for all convictions. In addition to any supplementary information the community services board or screening contractor may require or the applicant may wish to present, the applicant shall*

provide to the screening contractor a statement from his most recent probation or parole officer, if any, outlining his period of supervision and a copy of any pre-sentencing or post-sentencing report in connection with the felony conviction. The cost of this screening shall be paid by the applicant, unless the board decides to pay the cost.

~~F.~~ *G.* Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, a community services board may (i) hire for compensated employment or (ii) permit any person under contract to serve in a direct care position on behalf of the community services board or permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the community services board to provide direct care services on behalf of the community services board persons who have been convicted of not more than one misdemeanor offense under ~~§ 18.2-57~~ ~~or~~ 18.2-57.2, or any substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction, if 10 years have elapsed following the conviction, unless the person committed the offense while employed in a direct care position.

~~G.~~ *H.* Community services boards also shall require, as a condition of employment or permission for any person under contract to serve in a direct care position on behalf of the community services board, written consent and personal information necessary to obtain a search of the registry of founded complaints of child abuse and neglect that is maintained by the Department of Social Services pursuant to § 63.2-1515.

~~H.~~ *I.* The cost of obtaining the criminal history record and search of the child abuse and neglect registry record shall be borne by the applicant, unless the community services board decides to pay the cost.

~~I.~~ *J.* Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a community services board that provides services to individuals receiving services under the state plan for medical assistance services or any waiver thereto may disclose to the Department of Medical Assistance Services (i) whether a criminal history background check has been completed for a person described in subsection B for whom a criminal history background check is required and (ii) whether the person described in subsection B is eligible for employment.

~~J.~~ *K.* Any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with a community services board and who will serve in a direct care position on behalf of such community services board shall undergo a background check that shall include:

1. A criminal history records check through the Central Criminal Records Exchange pursuant to § 19.2-389; and
2. A search of the central registry maintained pursuant to § 63.2-1515 for any founded complaint of child abuse and neglect.

Except as otherwise provided in subsection C, D, *E*, or ~~F~~ *G*, no community services board shall permit any person employed by a temporary agency that has entered into a contract with the community services board to provide direct care services on behalf of the community services board if that person has been convicted of (i) any offense set forth in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 or (ii) any offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02 (a) in the five years prior to the application date for employment, the application date to be a sponsored residential service provider, or entering into a shared living arrangement or (b) if such person continues on probation or parole or has failed to pay required court costs for such offense set forth in clause (iv) of the definition of barrier crime in § 19.2-392.02.