

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact § 37.1-67.3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to involuntary admission and treatment.

[H 1885]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 37.1-67.3 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 37.1-67.3. Same; involuntary admission and treatment.

If a person is incapable of accepting or unwilling to accept voluntary admission and treatment, the judge shall inform such person of his right to a commitment hearing and right to counsel. The judge shall ascertain if a person whose admission is sought is represented by counsel, and if he is not represented by counsel, the judge shall appoint an attorney-at-law to represent him. However, if such person requests an opportunity to employ counsel, the court shall give him a reasonable opportunity to employ counsel at his own expense. The commitment hearing shall be held within forty-eight hours of the execution of the detention order as provided for in § 37.1-67.1; however, if the forty-eight-hour period herein specified terminates on a Saturday, Sunday or a legal holiday, such person may be detained, as herein provided, until the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, but in no event may he be detained for a period longer than seventy-two hours or ninety-six hours when such legal holiday occurs on a Monday or Friday. A Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday shall be deemed to include the time period up to 8:00 a.m. of the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. Prior to such hearing, the judge shall fully inform such person of the basis for his detention, the standard upon which he may be detained, the right of appeal from such hearing to the circuit court, the right to jury trial on appeal, and the place, date, and time of such hearing.

If such person is incapable of accepting or unwilling to accept voluntary admission and treatment as provided for in § 37.1-67.2, a commitment hearing shall be scheduled as soon as possible, allowing the person who is the subject of the hearing an opportunity to prepare any defenses which he may have, obtain independent evaluation and expert opinion at his own expense, and summons other witnesses.

To the extent possible, during the commitment hearing, the attorney for the person whose admission is sought shall interview his client, the petitioner, the examiner described below, and any other material witnesses. He shall also examine all relevant diagnostic and other reports, present evidence and witnesses, if any, on his client's behalf, and otherwise actively represent his client in the proceedings.

The petitioner shall be given adequate notice of the place, date, and time of the commitment hearing. The petitioner shall be entitled to retain counsel at his own expense, to be present during the hearing, and to testify and present evidence.

Notwithstanding the above, the judge shall require an examination of such person by a psychiatrist who is licensed in Virginia or a clinical psychologist who is licensed in Virginia or, if such a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist is not available, a physician or psychologist who is licensed in Virginia and who is qualified in the diagnosis of mental illness. All such examinations shall be conducted in private. The judge shall summons the examiner who shall certify that he has personally examined the individual and has probable cause to believe that the individual (i) is or is not so seriously mentally ill as to be substantially unable to care for himself, or (ii) does or does not present an imminent danger to himself or others as a result of mental illness, and (iii) requires or does not require involuntary hospitalization or treatment. The judge, in his discretion, may accept written certification of the examiner's findings if the examination has been personally made within the preceding five days and if there is no objection to the acceptance of such written certification by the person or his attorney. The judge shall not render any decision on the petition until such examiner has presented his report either orally or in writing.

Except as otherwise provided in this section, prior to making any adjudication that such person is mentally ill and shall be confined to an institution pursuant to this section, the judge shall request from the community services board which serves the political subdivision where the person resides a prescreening report, and the board or clinic shall provide such a report within forty-eight hours or within seventy-two hours if the forty-eight-hour period terminates on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday. The report shall state whether the person is deemed to be so seriously mentally ill that he is substantially unable to care for himself, an imminent danger to himself or others as a result of mental illness and in need of involuntary hospitalization or treatment, whether there is no less restrictive alternative to institutional confinement and what the recommendations are for that person's care and treatment. If the

57 prescreening report is not received by the judge within the specified period, the judge shall proceed to
 58 dispose of the case without the board's or clinic's recommendation. In the case of a person sentenced
 59 and committed to the Department of Corrections and who has been examined by a psychiatrist or
 60 clinical psychologist, the judge may proceed to adjudicate whether the person is mentally ill and should
 61 be confined pursuant to this section without requesting a prescreening report from the community
 62 services board.

63 After observing the person and obtaining the necessary positive certification and other relevant
 64 evidence, if the judge finds specifically that the person (i) presents an imminent danger to himself or
 65 others as a result of mental illness, or (ii) has been proven to be so seriously mentally ill as to be
 66 substantially unable to care for himself, and (iii) that alternatives to involuntary confinement and
 67 treatment have been investigated and deemed unsuitable and there is no less restrictive alternative to
 68 institutional confinement and treatment, the judge shall by written order and specific findings so certify
 69 and order that the person be placed in a hospital or other facility for a period of treatment not to exceed
 70 180 days from the date of the court order. Such placement shall be in a hospital or other facility
 71 designated by the community services board which serves the political subdivision in which the person
 72 was examined as provided in this section. If the community services board does not provide a placement
 73 recommendation at the commitment hearing, the person shall be placed in a hospital or other facility
 74 designated by the Commissioner.

75 After observing the person and obtaining the necessary positive certification and other relevant
 76 evidence, if the judge finds specifically that the person (i) presents an imminent danger to himself or
 77 others as a result of mental illness, or (ii) has been proven to be so seriously mentally ill as to be
 78 substantially unable to care for himself, and (iii) that less restrictive alternatives to institutional
 79 confinement and treatment have been investigated and are deemed suitable, the judge shall order
 80 outpatient treatment, day treatment in a hospital, night treatment in a hospital, outpatient involuntary
 81 treatment with anti-psychotic medication pursuant to § 37.1-134.5, or such other appropriate course of
 82 treatment as may be necessary to meet the needs of the individual. Upon failure of the patient to adhere
 83 to the terms of the outpatient treatment, the judge may revoke the same and, upon notice to the patient
 84 and after a commitment hearing, order involuntary commitment for treatment at a hospital. The
 85 community services board which serves the political subdivision in which the person resides shall
 86 recommend a specific course of treatment and programs for provision of such treatment. The community
 87 services board shall monitor the person's compliance with such treatment as may be ordered by the court
 88 under this section, and the person's failure to comply with involuntary outpatient treatment as ordered by
 89 the court may be admitted into evidence in subsequent hearings held pursuant to § 37.1-67.2 or this
 90 section.

91 The judge shall also order that the relevant medical records of such person be released to the facility
 92 or program in which he is placed upon request of the treating physician or director of the facility or
 93 program. Except as provided in this section, the relevant medical records, reports, and court documents
 94 pertaining to the hearings provided for in this section and § 37.1-67.2 shall be kept confidential by the
 95 court if so requested by such person, or his counsel, with access provided only upon court order for
 96 good cause shown. Such records, reports, and documents shall not be subject to the Virginia Freedom of
 97 Information Act (§ 2.1-340 et seq.). Such person shall be released at the expiration of 180 days unless
 98 involuntarily committed by further petition and order of a court as provided herein or such person makes
 99 application for treatment on a voluntary basis as provided for in § 37.1-65.

100 Any person committed pursuant to this section for whom a subsequent commitment order is being
 101 sought prior to the expiration of the 180-day commitment period shall not be entitled to a separate
 102 preliminary hearing prior to such commitment hearing.

103 The procedures required by § 37.1-67.2 or by this section shall be followed at such commitment
 104 hearing. The judge shall render a decision on such petition after the appointed examiner has presented
 105 his report, either orally or in writing, and after the community services board which serves the political
 106 subdivision where the person resides has presented a prescreening report, either orally or in writing, with
 107 recommendations for that person's placement, care and treatment.

108 The clerk shall certify and forward forthwith to the Central Criminal Records Exchange, on a form
 109 provided by the Exchange, a copy of any order for involuntary commitment to a hospital and a
 110 thumbprint of the person who is committed. The thumbprint shall be obtained at the site of the
 111 commitment hearing. The copy of the form and the order shall be kept confidential in a separate file and
 112 used only for the purpose of conducting a firearms transaction record check authorized by
 113 § 18.2-308.2:2.