

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

SENATE BILL NO. 1149

92ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY SENATOR DOUGHERTY.

Read 1st time January 26, 2004, and ordered printed.

TERRY L. SPIELER, Secretary.

4222L.01I

AN ACT

To repeal sections 210.150, 210.152, 210.153, and 210.183, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof four new sections relating to the child abuse and neglect registry, with penalty provisions.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Sections 210.150, 210.152, 210.153, and 210.183, RSMo, are repealed and four new sections enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as sections 210.150, 210.152, 210.153, and 210.183, to read as follows:

210.150. 1. The division of family services shall ensure the confidentiality of all reports and records made pursuant to sections 210.109 to 210.183 and maintained by the division, its local offices, the central registry, and other appropriate persons, officials, and institutions pursuant to sections 210.109 to 210.183. To protect the rights of the family and the child named in the report as a victim, the division of family services shall establish guidelines which will ensure that any disclosure of information concerning the abuse and neglect involving that child is made only to persons or agencies that have a right to such information **and after the alleged perpetrator has received sufficient due process**. The division may require persons to make written requests for access to records maintained by the division. The division shall only release information to persons who have a right to such information **after the alleged perpetrator has received sufficient due process**. The division shall notify persons receiving information pursuant to subdivisions (2), (7), (8) and (9) of subsection 2 of this section of the purpose for which the information is released and of the penalties for unauthorized dissemination of information. Such information shall be used only for the purpose for which the information is released.

2. Only the following persons shall have access to investigation records contained in the central registry:

EXPLANATION--Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in this bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

(1) Appropriate federal, state or local criminal justice agency personnel, or any agent of such entity, with a need for such information under the law to protect children from abuse or neglect;

(2) A physician or a designated agent who reasonably believes that the child being examined may be abused or neglected;

(3) Appropriate staff of the division and of its local offices, including interdisciplinary teams which are formed to assist the division in investigation, evaluation and treatment of child abuse and neglect cases or a multidisciplinary provider of professional treatment services for a child referred to the provider;

(4) Any child named in the report as a victim, or a legal representative, or the parent, if not the alleged perpetrator, or guardian of such person when such person is a minor, or is mentally ill or otherwise incompetent, but the names of reporters shall not be furnished to persons in this category. Prior to the release of any identifying information, the division of family services shall determine if the release of such identifying information may place a person's life or safety in danger. If the division makes the determination that a person's life or safety may be in danger, the identifying information shall not be released. The division shall provide a method for confirming or certifying that a designee is acting on behalf of a subject;

(5) Any alleged perpetrator named in the report, but the names of reporters shall not be furnished to persons in this category. Prior to the release of any identifying information, the division of family services shall determine if the release of such identifying information may place a person's life or safety in danger. If the division makes the determination that a person's life or safety may be in danger, the identifying information shall not be released. However, the investigation reports will not be released to any alleged perpetrator with pending criminal charges arising out of the facts and circumstances named in the investigation records until an indictment is returned or an information filed;

(6) A grand jury, juvenile officer, prosecuting attorney, law enforcement officer involved in the investigation of child abuse or neglect, juvenile court or other court conducting abuse or neglect or child protective proceedings, and other federal, state and local government entities, or any agent of such entity, with a need for such information in order to carry out its responsibilities under the law to protect children from abuse or neglect;

(7) Any person engaged in a bona fide research purpose, with the permission of the director; provided, however, that no information identifying the child named in the report as a victim or the reporters shall be made available to the researcher, unless the identifying information is essential to the research or evaluation and the child named in the report as a victim or, if the child is less than eighteen years of age, through the child's parent, or guardian provides written permission;

(8) Any child-care facility; child-placing agency; residential-care facility, including

group homes; juvenile courts; public or private elementary schools; public or private secondary schools; or any other public or private agency exercising temporary supervision over a child or providing or having care or custody of a child who may request an examination of the central registry from the division for all employees and volunteers or prospective employees and volunteers, who do or will provide services or care to children. Any agency or business recognized by the division of family services or business which provides training and places or recommends people for employment or for volunteers in positions where they will provide services or care to children may request the division to provide an examination of the central registry. Such agency or business shall provide verification of its status as a recognized agency. Requests for examinations shall be made to the division director or the director's designee in writing by the chief administrative officer of the above homes, centers, public and private elementary schools, public and private secondary schools, agencies, or courts. The division shall respond in writing to that officer. The response shall include information pertaining to the nature and disposition of any report or reports of abuse or neglect revealed by the examination of the central registry. This response shall not include any identifying information regarding any person other than the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect;

(9) Any parent or legal guardian who inquires about a child abuse or neglect report involving a specific person or child-care facility who does or may provide services or care to a child of the person requesting the information. Request for examinations shall be made to the division director or the director's designee, in writing, by the parent or legal guardian of the child and shall be accompanied with a signed and notarized release form from the person who does or may provide care or services to the child. The notarized release form shall include the full name, date of birth and Social Security number of the person who does or may provide care or services to a child. The response shall include information pertaining to the nature and disposition of any report or reports of abuse or neglect revealed by the examination of the central registry. This response shall not include any identifying information regarding any person other than the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect. The response shall be given within ten working days of the time it was received by the division;

(10) Any person who inquires about a child abuse or neglect report involving a specific child-care facility, child-placing agency, residential-care facility, public and private elementary schools, public and private secondary schools, juvenile court or other state agency. The information available to these persons is limited to the nature and disposition of any report contained in the central registry and shall not include any identifying information pertaining to any person mentioned in the report;

(11) Any state agency acting pursuant to statutes regarding a license of any person, institution, or agency which provides care for or services to children;

(12) Any child fatality review panel established pursuant to section 210.192 or any state child fatality review panel established pursuant to section 210.195;

(13) **The administrative hearing commission for the purpose of reviewing the division's decision regarding an allegation of child abuse or neglect;**

(14) Any person who is a tenure-track or full-time research faculty member at an accredited institution of higher education engaged in scholarly research, with the permission of the director. Prior to the release of any identifying information, the director shall require the researcher to present a plan for maintaining the confidentiality of the identifying information. The researcher shall be prohibited from releasing the identifying information of individual cases.

3. Only the following persons shall have access to records maintained by the division pursuant to section 210.152 for which the division has received a report of child abuse and neglect and which the division has determined that there is insufficient evidence or in which the division proceeded with the family assessment and services approach:

(1) Appropriate staff of the division;

(2) Any child named in the report as a victim, or a legal representative, or the parent or guardian of such person when such person is a minor, or is mentally ill or otherwise incompetent. The names or other identifying information of reporters shall not be furnished to persons in this category. Prior to the release of any identifying information, the division of family services shall determine if the release of such identifying information may place a person's life or safety in danger. If the division makes the determination that a person's life or safety may be in danger, the identifying information shall not be released. The division shall provide for a method for confirming or certifying that a designee is acting on behalf of a subject;

(3) Any alleged perpetrator named in the report, but the names of reporters shall not be furnished to persons in this category. Prior to the release of any identifying information, the division of family services shall determine if the release of such identifying information may place a person's life or safety in danger. If the division makes the determination that a person's life or safety may be in danger, the identifying information shall not be released. However, the investigation reports will not be released to any alleged perpetrator with pending criminal charges arising out of the facts and circumstances named in the investigation records until an indictment is returned or an information filed;

(4) Any child fatality review panel established pursuant to section 210.192 or any state child fatality review panel established pursuant to section 210.195;

(5) Appropriate criminal justice agency personnel or juvenile officer;

(6) Multidisciplinary agency or individual including a physician or physician's designee who is providing services to the child or family, with the consent of the parent or guardian of the child or legal representative of the child;

(7) Any person engaged in bona fide research purpose, with the permission of the director; provided, however, that no information identifying the subjects of the reports or the reporters shall be made available to the researcher, unless the identifying information is essential to the research or evaluation and the subject, or if a child, through the child's parent or guardian, provides written permission;

(8) The administrative hearing commission for the purpose of reviewing the division's decision regarding an allegation of abuse or neglect.

4. Any person who knowingly violates the provisions of this section, or who permits or encourages the unauthorized dissemination of information contained in the information system or the central registry and in reports and records made pursuant to sections 210.109 to 210.183, shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

5. Nothing in this section shall preclude the release of findings or information about cases which resulted in a child fatality or near fatality. Such release is at the sole discretion of the director of the department of social services, based upon a review of the potential harm to other children within the immediate family.

210.152. 1. All identifying information, including telephone reports reported pursuant to section 210.145, relating to reports of abuse or neglect received by the division shall be retained by the division and removed from the records of the division as follows:

(1) For investigation reports contained in the central registry, identifying information shall be retained by the division;

(2) For investigation reports initiated by a person required to report pursuant to section 210.115, where insufficient evidence of abuse or neglect is found by the division, identifying information shall be retained for ten years from the date of the report. For all other investigation reports where insufficient evidence of abuse or neglect is found by the division, identifying information shall be retained for two years from the date of the report. Such report shall include any exculpatory evidence known by the division, including exculpatory evidence obtained after the closing of the case. At the end of such two-year period, the identifying information shall be removed from the records of the division and destroyed;

(3) For reports where the division uses the family assessment and services approach, identifying information shall be retained by the division;

(4) For reports in which the division is unable to locate the child alleged to have been abused or neglected, identifying information shall be retained for ten years from the date of the report and then shall be removed from the records of the division.

2. Within ninety days after receipt of a report of abuse or neglect that is investigated, the alleged perpetrator named in the report and the parents of the child named in the report, if the alleged perpetrator is not a parent, shall be notified in writing of any determination made by the division based on the investigation. The notice shall advise either:

(1) That the division has determined that there is probable cause to suspect abuse or neglect exists and that the division shall retain all identifying information regarding the abuse or neglect; that such information shall remain confidential and will not be released except to law enforcement agencies, prosecuting or circuit attorneys, or as provided in section 210.150; that the alleged perpetrator has sixty days from the date of receipt of the notice to seek reversal of the division's determination through a review by the [child abuse and neglect review board] **administrative hearing commission** as provided in subsection 3 of this section; or

(2) There is insufficient probable cause of abuse or neglect.

3. Any person named in an investigation as a perpetrator who is aggrieved by a determination of abuse or neglect by the division as provided in this section may seek an administrative review by the [child abuse and neglect review board] **administrative hearing commission** pursuant to the provisions of section 210.153. Such request for review shall be made within sixty days of notification of the division's decision under this section. In those cases where criminal charges arising out of facts of the investigation are pending, the request for review shall be made within sixty days from the court's final disposition or dismissal of the charges.

4. In any such action for administrative review, the [child abuse and neglect review board] **administrative hearing commission** shall sustain the division's determination if such determination is supported by evidence of probable cause and is not against the weight of such evidence. The [child abuse and neglect review board hearing shall be closed to all persons except the parties, their attorneys and those persons providing testimony on behalf of the parties] **provisions of chapter 536, RSMo, shall apply to all proceedings held by the administrative hearing commission under this section.**

5. If the alleged perpetrator is aggrieved by the decision of the [child abuse and neglect review board] **administrative hearing commission**, the alleged perpetrator may seek de novo judicial review in the circuit court in the county in which the alleged perpetrator resides and in circuits with split venue, in the venue in which the alleged perpetrator resides, or in Cole County. If the alleged perpetrator is not a resident of the state, proper venue shall be in Cole County. The case may be assigned to the family court division where such a division has been established. The request for a judicial review shall be made within sixty days of the notification of the decision of the [child abuse and neglect review board decision] **administrative hearing commission**. In reviewing such decisions, the circuit court shall provide the alleged perpetrator the opportunity to appear and present testimony. The alleged perpetrator may subpoena any witnesses except the alleged victim or the reporter. However, the circuit court shall have the discretion to allow the parties to submit the case upon a stipulated record.

6. In any such action for administrative review the [child abuse and neglect review

board] **administrative hearing commission** shall notify the child or the parent, guardian or legal representative of the child that a review has been requested.

210.153. 1. There is hereby created in the department of social services the "Child Abuse and Neglect Review Board", which [shall] **may** provide an independent review of child abuse and neglect determinations [in instances in which the alleged perpetrator is aggrieved by the decision of the division of family services. The division may establish more than one board to assure timely review of the determination]. **Any review conducted under this section shall be in addition to and not in lieu of any review conducted by the administrative hearing commission in instances in which the alleged perpetrator is aggrieved by the decision of the children's division.**

2. The board shall consist of nine members, who shall be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate, and shall include:

- (1) A physician, nurse or other medical professional;
- (2) A licensed child or family psychologist, counselor or social worker;
- (3) An attorney who has acted as a guardian ad litem or other attorney who has represented a subject of a child abuse and neglect report;
- (4) A representative from law enforcement or a juvenile office.

3. Other members of the board may be selected from:

- (1) A person from another profession or field who has an interest in child abuse or neglect;
- (2) A college or university professor or elementary or secondary teacher;
- (3) A child advocate;
- (4) A parent, foster parent or grandparent.

4. The following persons may participate in a child abuse and neglect review board review:

- (1) Appropriate **children's** division [of family services] staff and legal counsel for the department;

- (2) The alleged perpetrator, who may be represented pro se or be represented by legal counsel. The alleged perpetrator's presence is not required for the review to be conducted. The alleged perpetrator may submit a written statement for the board's consideration in lieu of personal appearance; and

- (3) Witnesses providing information on behalf of the child, the alleged perpetrator or the department. Witnesses shall only be allowed to attend that portion of the review in which they are presenting information.

5. The members of the board shall serve without compensation, but shall receive reimbursement for reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred in the performance of their duties.

6. All records and information compiled, obtained, prepared or maintained by the

child abuse and neglect review board in the course of any review shall be confidential information.

7. The department shall promulgate rules and regulations governing the operation of the child abuse and neglect review board except as otherwise provided for in this section. These rules and regulations shall, at a minimum, describe the length of terms, the selection of the chairperson, confidentiality, notification of parties and time frames for the completion of the review.

8. Findings of probable cause to suspect child abuse and neglect by the division which are substantiated by **the administrative hearing commission or by** court adjudication shall not be heard by the child abuse and neglect review board.

210.183. 1. At the time of the initial investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect, the division employee conducting the investigation shall provide the alleged perpetrator with a written description of the investigation process. Such written notice shall be given substantially in the following form:

"The investigation is being undertaken by the **Children's Division [of Family Services]** pursuant to the requirements of chapter 210 of the Revised Missouri Statutes in response to a report of child abuse or neglect.

"The identity of the person who reported the incident of abuse or neglect is confidential and may not even be known to the Division since the report could have been made anonymously.

"This investigation is required by law to be conducted in order to enable the **Children's Division [of Family Services]** to identify incidents of abuse or neglect in order to provide protective or preventive social services to families who are in need of such services.

"The division shall make every reasonable attempt to complete the investigation within thirty days. Within ninety days you will receive a letter from the Division which will inform you of one of the following:

"(1) That the Division has found insufficient evidence of abuse or neglect; or

"(2) That there appears to be probable cause to suspect the existence of child abuse or neglect in the judgment of the Division and that the Division will contact the family to offer social services.

"If the Division finds there is probable cause to believe child abuse or neglect has occurred or the case is substantiated by court adjudication, a record of the report and information gathered during the investigation will remain on file with the Division.

"If you disagree with the determination of the Division and feel that there is insufficient probable cause to believe abuse or neglect has occurred, you have a right to request an administrative review at which time you may hire an attorney to represent you. If you request an administrative review on the issue, you will be notified of the date and time of your administrative review hearing by the [child abuse and neglect review board]

administrative hearing commission. If the division's decision is reversed by the [child abuse and neglect review board] **administrative hearing commission**, the Division records concerning the report and investigation will be updated to reflect such finding. If the [child abuse and neglect review board] **administrative hearing commission** upholds the division's decision, an appeal may be filed in circuit court within sixty days of the [child abuse and neglect review board's] **administrative hearing commission's** decision."

2. If the division uses the family assessment approach, the division shall at the time of the initial contact provide the parent of the child with the following information:

- (1) The purpose of the contact with the family;
- (2) The name of the person responding and his **or her** office telephone number;
- (3) The assessment process to be followed during the division's intervention with the family including the possible services available and expectations of the family.

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