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State of Minnesota
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION

H. F. No. 16

01/08/2015 Authored by Anderson, P.; Backer and Kresha

The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Health and Human Services Reform

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to human services; modifying the use of reports alleging child
1.3 maltreatment that were not accepted for assessment or investigation; amending
1.4 Minnesota Statutes 2014, section 626.556, subdivisions 7, 10.

1.5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.6 Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2014, section 626.556, subdivision 7, is amended to read:

1.7 Subd. 7. **Report; information provided to parent.** (a) An oral report shall be
1.8 made immediately by telephone or otherwise. An oral report made by a person required
1.9 under subdivision 3 to report shall be followed within 72 hours, exclusive of weekends
1.10 and holidays, by a report in writing to the appropriate police department, the county
1.11 sheriff, the agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report, or the local
1.12 welfare agency. The local welfare agency shall determine if the report is accepted for an
1.13 assessment or investigation as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours
1.14 after the report is received.

1.16 (b) Any report shall be of sufficient content to identify the child, any person believed
1.17 to be responsible for the abuse or neglect of the child if the person is known, the nature
1.18 and extent of the abuse or neglect and the name and address of the reporter. The local
1.19 welfare agency or agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report shall
1.20 accept a report made under subdivision 3 notwithstanding refusal by a reporter to provide
1.21 the reporter's name or address as long as the report is otherwise sufficient under this
1.22 paragraph. Written reports received by a police department or the county sheriff shall be
1.23 forwarded immediately to the local welfare agency or the agency responsible for assessing
1.24 or investigating the report. The police department or the county sheriff may keep copies of
reports received by them. Copies of written reports received by a local welfare department

2.1 or the agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report shall be forwarded
2.2 immediately to the local police department or the county sheriff.

2.3 (c) When requested, the agency responsible for assessing or investigating a report
2.4 shall inform the reporter within ten days after the report was made, either orally or in
2.5 writing, whether the report was accepted or not. If the responsible agency determines the
2.6 report does not constitute a report under this section, the agency shall advise the reporter
2.7 the report was screened out. A local welfare agency or agency responsible for assessing
2.8 or investigating a report may use a screened-out report ~~must not be used~~ for any purpose
2.9 ~~other than~~ making an offer of social services to the subjects of the screened-out report and
2.10 for evaluating a subsequent report alleging maltreatment of a child who was the subject
2.11 of the screened-out report, to determine whether a family assessment or investigation
2.12 must be conducted.

2.13 (d) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), the commissioner of education must inform the
2.14 parent, guardian, or legal custodian of the child who is the subject of a report of alleged
2.15 maltreatment in a school facility within ten days of receiving the report, either orally or
2.16 in writing, whether the commissioner is assessing or investigating the report of alleged
2.17 maltreatment.

2.18 (e) Regardless of whether a report is made under this subdivision, as soon as
2.19 practicable after a school receives information regarding an incident that may constitute
2.20 maltreatment of a child in a school facility, the school shall inform the parent, legal
2.21 guardian, or custodian of the child that an incident has occurred that may constitute
2.22 maltreatment of the child, when the incident occurred, and the nature of the conduct
2.23 that may constitute maltreatment.

2.24 (f) A written copy of a report maintained by personnel of agencies, other than
2.25 welfare or law enforcement agencies, which are subject to chapter 13 shall be confidential.
2.26 An individual subject of the report may obtain access to the original report as provided
2.27 by subdivision 11.

2.28 Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 2014, section 626.556, subdivision 10, is amended to read:

2.29 Subd. 10. **Duties of local welfare agency and local law enforcement agency upon**
2.30 **receipt of report.** (a) Upon receipt of a report, the local welfare agency shall determine
2.31 whether to conduct a family assessment or an investigation as appropriate to prevent or
2.32 provide a remedy for child maltreatment. The local welfare agency:

2.33 (1) shall conduct an investigation on reports involving substantial child
2.34 endangerment;

3.1 (2) shall begin an immediate investigation if, at any time when it is using a family
3.2 assessment response, it determines that there is reason to believe that substantial child
3.3 endangerment or a serious threat to the child's safety exists;

3.4 (3) may conduct a family assessment for reports that do not allege substantial child
3.5 endangerment. In determining that a family assessment is appropriate, the local welfare
3.6 agency may consider issues of child safety, parental cooperation, and the need for an
3.7 immediate response; and

3.8 (4) may conduct a family assessment on a report that was initially screened and
3.9 assigned for an investigation. In determining that a complete investigation is not required,
3.10 the local welfare agency must document the reason for terminating the investigation and
3.11 notify the local law enforcement agency if the local law enforcement agency is conducting
3.12 a joint investigation.

3.13 If the report alleges neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse by a parent, guardian,
3.14 or individual functioning within the family unit as a person responsible for the child's
3.15 care, or sexual abuse by a person with a significant relationship to the child when that
3.16 person resides in the child's household or by a sibling, the local welfare agency shall
3.17 immediately conduct a family assessment or investigation as identified in clauses (1) to
3.18 (4). In conducting a family assessment or investigation, the local welfare agency shall
3.19 gather information on the existence of substance abuse and domestic violence and offer
3.20 services for purposes of preventing future child maltreatment, safeguarding and enhancing
3.21 the welfare of the abused or neglected minor, and supporting and preserving family
3.22 life whenever possible. If the report alleges a violation of a criminal statute involving
3.23 sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect or endangerment, under section 609.378, the
3.24 local law enforcement agency and local welfare agency shall coordinate the planning and
3.25 execution of their respective investigation and assessment efforts to avoid a duplication of
3.26 fact-finding efforts and multiple interviews. Each agency shall prepare a separate report of
3.27 the results of its investigation. In cases of alleged child maltreatment resulting in death,
3.28 the local agency may rely on the fact-finding efforts of a law enforcement investigation
3.29 to make a determination of whether or not maltreatment occurred. When necessary the
3.30 local welfare agency shall seek authority to remove the child from the custody of a parent,
3.31 guardian, or adult with whom the child is living. In performing any of these duties, the
3.32 local welfare agency shall maintain appropriate records.

3.33 If the family assessment or investigation indicates there is a potential for abuse of
3.34 alcohol or other drugs by the parent, guardian, or person responsible for the child's care,
3.35 the local welfare agency shall conduct a chemical use assessment pursuant to Minnesota
3.36 Rules, part 9530.6615.

4.1 (b) When a local agency receives a report or otherwise has information indicating
4.2 that a child who is a client, as defined in section 245.91, has been the subject of physical
4.3 abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect at an agency, facility, or program as defined in section
4.4 245.91, it shall, in addition to its other duties under this section, immediately inform the
4.5 ombudsman established under sections 245.91 to 245.97. The commissioner of education
4.6 shall inform the ombudsman established under sections 245.91 to 245.97 of reports
4.7 regarding a child defined as a client in section 245.91 that maltreatment occurred at a
4.8 school as defined in sections 120A.05, subdivisions 9, 11, and 13, and 124D.10.

4.9 (c) Authority of the local welfare agency responsible for assessing or investigating
4.10 the child abuse or neglect report, the agency responsible for assessing or investigating
4.11 the report, and of the local law enforcement agency for investigating the alleged abuse or
4.12 neglect includes, but is not limited to, authority to interview, without parental consent,
4.13 the alleged victim and any other minors who currently reside with or who have resided
4.14 with the alleged offender. The interview may take place at school or at any facility or
4.15 other place where the alleged victim or other minors might be found or the child may be
4.16 transported to, and the interview conducted at, a place appropriate for the interview of a
4.17 child designated by the local welfare agency or law enforcement agency. The interview
4.18 may take place outside the presence of the alleged offender or parent, legal custodian,
4.19 guardian, or school official. For family assessments, it is the preferred practice to request
4.20 a parent or guardian's permission to interview the child prior to conducting the child
4.21 interview, unless doing so would compromise the safety assessment. Except as provided in
4.22 this paragraph, the parent, legal custodian, or guardian shall be notified by the responsible
4.23 local welfare or law enforcement agency no later than the conclusion of the investigation
4.24 or assessment that this interview has occurred. Notwithstanding rule 32 of the Minnesota
4.25 Rules of Procedure for Juvenile Courts, the juvenile court may, after hearing on an ex parte
4.26 motion by the local welfare agency, order that, where reasonable cause exists, the agency
4.27 withhold notification of this interview from the parent, legal custodian, or guardian. If the
4.28 interview took place or is to take place on school property, the order shall specify that
4.29 school officials may not disclose to the parent, legal custodian, or guardian the contents
4.30 of the notification of intent to interview the child on school property, as provided under
4.31 this paragraph, and any other related information regarding the interview that may be a
4.32 part of the child's school record. A copy of the order shall be sent by the local welfare or
4.33 law enforcement agency to the appropriate school official.

4.34 (d) When the local welfare, local law enforcement agency, or the agency responsible
4.35 for assessing or investigating a report of maltreatment determines that an interview should
4.36 take place on school property, written notification of intent to interview the child on school

5.1 property must be received by school officials prior to the interview. The notification
5.2 shall include the name of the child to be interviewed, the purpose of the interview, and
5.3 a reference to the statutory authority to conduct an interview on school property. For
5.4 interviews conducted by the local welfare agency, the notification shall be signed by the
5.5 chair of the local social services agency or the chair's designee. The notification shall be
5.6 private data on individuals subject to the provisions of this paragraph. School officials
5.7 may not disclose to the parent, legal custodian, or guardian the contents of the notification
5.8 or any other related information regarding the interview until notified in writing by the
5.9 local welfare or law enforcement agency that the investigation or assessment has been
5.10 concluded, unless a school employee or agent is alleged to have maltreated the child.
5.11 Until that time, the local welfare or law enforcement agency or the agency responsible
5.12 for assessing or investigating a report of maltreatment shall be solely responsible for any
5.13 disclosures regarding the nature of the assessment or investigation.

5.14 Except where the alleged offender is believed to be a school official or employee,
5.15 the time and place, and manner of the interview on school premises shall be within the
5.16 discretion of school officials, but the local welfare or law enforcement agency shall have
5.17 the exclusive authority to determine who may attend the interview. The conditions as to
5.18 time, place, and manner of the interview set by the school officials shall be reasonable and
5.19 the interview shall be conducted not more than 24 hours after the receipt of the notification
5.20 unless another time is considered necessary by agreement between the school officials and
5.21 the local welfare or law enforcement agency. Where the school fails to comply with the
5.22 provisions of this paragraph, the juvenile court may order the school to comply. Every
5.23 effort must be made to reduce the disruption of the educational program of the child, other
5.24 students, or school staff when an interview is conducted on school premises.

5.25 (e) Where the alleged offender or a person responsible for the care of the alleged
5.26 victim or other minor prevents access to the victim or other minor by the local welfare
5.27 agency, the juvenile court may order the parents, legal custodian, or guardian to produce
5.28 the alleged victim or other minor for questioning by the local welfare agency or the local
5.29 law enforcement agency outside the presence of the alleged offender or any person
5.30 responsible for the child's care at reasonable places and times as specified by court order.

5.31 (f) Before making an order under paragraph (e), the court shall issue an order to
5.32 show cause, either upon its own motion or upon a verified petition, specifying the basis for
5.33 the requested interviews and fixing the time and place of the hearing. The order to show
5.34 cause shall be served personally and shall be heard in the same manner as provided in
5.35 other cases in the juvenile court. The court shall consider the need for appointment of a

6.1 guardian ad litem to protect the best interests of the child. If appointed, the guardian ad
6.2 litem shall be present at the hearing on the order to show cause.

6.3 (g) The commissioner of human services, the ombudsman for mental health and
6.4 developmental disabilities, the local welfare agencies responsible for investigating reports,
6.5 the commissioner of education, and the local law enforcement agencies have the right to
6.6 enter facilities as defined in subdivision 2 and to inspect and copy the facility's records,
6.7 including medical records, as part of the investigation. Notwithstanding the provisions of
6.8 chapter 13, they also have the right to inform the facility under investigation that they are
6.9 conducting an investigation, to disclose to the facility the names of the individuals under
6.10 investigation for abusing or neglecting a child, and to provide the facility with a copy of
6.11 the report and the investigative findings.

6.12 (h) The local welfare agency responsible for conducting a family assessment or
6.13 investigation shall collect available and relevant information to determine child safety,
6.14 risk of subsequent child maltreatment, and family strengths and needs and share not public
6.15 information with an Indian's tribal social services agency without violating any law of the
6.16 state that may otherwise impose duties of confidentiality on the local welfare agency in
6.17 order to implement the tribal state agreement. The local welfare agency or the agency
6.18 responsible for investigating the report shall collect available and relevant information
6.19 to ascertain whether maltreatment occurred and whether protective services are needed.
6.20 Information collected includes, when relevant, information with regard to the person
6.21 reporting the alleged maltreatment, including the nature of the reporter's relationship to the
6.22 child and to the alleged offender, and the basis of the reporter's knowledge for the report;
6.23 the child allegedly being maltreated; the alleged offender; the child's caretaker; and other
6.24 collateral sources having relevant information related to the alleged maltreatment. The
6.25 local welfare agency or the agency responsible for investigating the report may make a
6.26 determination of no maltreatment early in an investigation, and close the case and retain
6.27 immunity, if the collected information shows no basis for a full investigation.

6.28 Information relevant to the assessment or investigation must be asked for, and
6.29 may include:

6.30 (1) the child's sex and age;₂ prior reports of maltreatment, including any
6.31 maltreatment reports that were screened out and not accepted for assessment or
6.32 investigation; information relating to developmental functioning;₂ credibility of the child's
6.33 statement;₂ and whether the information provided under this clause is consistent with other
6.34 information collected during the course of the assessment or investigation;

6.35 (2) the alleged offender's age, a record check for prior reports of maltreatment, and
6.36 criminal charges and convictions. The local welfare agency or the agency responsible for

7.1 assessing or investigating the report must provide the alleged offender with an opportunity
7.2 to make a statement. The alleged offender may submit supporting documentation relevant
7.3 to the assessment or investigation;

7.4 (3) collateral source information regarding the alleged maltreatment and care of the
7.5 child. Collateral information includes, when relevant: (i) a medical examination of the
7.6 child; (ii) prior medical records relating to the alleged maltreatment or the care of the
7.7 child maintained by any facility, clinic, or health care professional and an interview with
7.8 the treating professionals; and (iii) interviews with the child's caretakers, including the
7.9 child's parent, guardian, foster parent, child care provider, teachers, counselors, family
7.10 members, relatives, and other persons who may have knowledge regarding the alleged
7.11 maltreatment and the care of the child; and

7.12 (4) information on the existence of domestic abuse and violence in the home of
7.13 the child, and substance abuse.

7.14 Nothing in this paragraph precludes the local welfare agency, the local law
7.15 enforcement agency, or the agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report
7.16 from collecting other relevant information necessary to conduct the assessment or
7.17 investigation. Notwithstanding sections 13.384 or 144.291 to 144.298, the local welfare
7.18 agency has access to medical data and records for purposes of clause (3). Notwithstanding
7.19 the data's classification in the possession of any other agency, data acquired by the
7.20 local welfare agency or the agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report
7.21 during the course of the assessment or investigation are private data on individuals and
7.22 must be maintained in accordance with subdivision 11. Data of the commissioner of
7.23 education collected or maintained during and for the purpose of an investigation of
7.24 alleged maltreatment in a school are governed by this section, notwithstanding the data's
7.25 classification as educational, licensing, or personnel data under chapter 13.

7.26 In conducting an assessment or investigation involving a school facility as defined
7.27 in subdivision 2, paragraph (i), the commissioner of education shall collect investigative
7.28 reports and data that are relevant to a report of maltreatment and are from local law
7.29 enforcement and the school facility.

7.30 (i) Upon receipt of a report, the local welfare agency shall conduct a face-to-face
7.31 contact with the child reported to be maltreated and with the child's primary caregiver
7.32 sufficient to complete a safety assessment and ensure the immediate safety of the child.
7.33 The face-to-face contact with the child and primary caregiver shall occur immediately
7.34 if substantial child endangerment is alleged and within five calendar days for all other
7.35 reports. If the alleged offender was not already interviewed as the primary caregiver, the
7.36 local welfare agency shall also conduct a face-to-face interview with the alleged offender

8.1 in the early stages of the assessment or investigation. At the initial contact, the local child
8.2 welfare agency or the agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report must
8.3 inform the alleged offender of the complaints or allegations made against the individual in
8.4 a manner consistent with laws protecting the rights of the person who made the report.
8.5 The interview with the alleged offender may be postponed if it would jeopardize an active
8.6 law enforcement investigation.

8.7 (j) When conducting an investigation, the local welfare agency shall use a question
8.8 and answer interviewing format with questioning as nondirective as possible to elicit
8.9 spontaneous responses. For investigations only, the following interviewing methods and
8.10 procedures must be used whenever possible when collecting information:

8.11 (1) audio recordings of all interviews with witnesses and collateral sources; and
8.12 (2) in cases of alleged sexual abuse, audio-video recordings of each interview with
8.13 the alleged victim and child witnesses.

8.14 (k) In conducting an assessment or investigation involving a school facility as
8.15 defined in subdivision 2, paragraph (i), the commissioner of education shall collect
8.16 available and relevant information and use the procedures in paragraphs (i), (k), and
8.17 subdivision 3d, except that the requirement for face-to-face observation of the child
8.18 and face-to-face interview of the alleged offender is to occur in the initial stages of the
8.19 assessment or investigation provided that the commissioner may also base the assessment
8.20 or investigation on investigative reports and data received from the school facility and
8.21 local law enforcement, to the extent those investigations satisfy the requirements of
8.22 paragraphs (i) and (k), and subdivision 3d.