

Chapter 637

(Senate Bill 948)

AN ACT concerning

Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Information

FOR the purpose of requiring a director of a local department of social services or the Secretary of Human Resources to disclose certain information concerning child abuse and neglect under certain circumstances; altering the circumstances under which certain information concerning child abuse and neglect is required to be disclosed; requiring the State's Attorney to notify the local director or the Secretary within a certain period of time after the conclusion of a certain investigation or prosecution under certain circumstances; requiring the local director or the Secretary to make a certain disclosure within a certain period of time after notification by the State's Attorney; repealing a requirement that the Secretary consult with a certain law enforcement agency before disclosing certain information concerning child abuse and neglect; requiring the local director or the Secretary to disclose certain information; prohibiting the local director and the Secretary from disclosing the names of certain individuals; and generally relating to the disclosure of information concerning child abuse and neglect.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Human Services

Section 1–203

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2007 Volume and 2009 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Human Services

1–203.

(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

(2) “Local department” means the department of social services that has jurisdiction in the county:

(i) where the allegedly abused or neglected child lives; or

(ii) if different, where the abuse or neglect is alleged to have taken place.

(3) “Local director” means the director of the local department.

(4) “Medical report” means a psychological, psychiatric, therapeutic, clinical, or medical report or evaluation related to the allegedly abused or neglected child, a sibling of the child, or another child in the household, family, or care of the alleged abuser or neglecter.

(5) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Human Resources.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the local director or the Secretary [may] **SHALL, ON REQUEST**, disclose information concerning child abuse or neglect in accordance with subsection (c) of this section if:

(i) [the local director or the Secretary determines that the disclosure is not contrary to the best interests of the child, the child’s siblings, or other children in the household, family, or care of the alleged abuser or neglecter] **THE INFORMATION IS LIMITED TO ACTIONS OR OMISSIONS OF THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT, THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, OR AN AGENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES;**

(ii) [the alleged abuser or neglecter has been charged with a crime related to a report of child abuse or neglect; and

(iii)] the child named in a report of abuse or neglect has [died or] suffered a [serious physical injury, as defined in § 3–201 of the Criminal Law Article] **FATALITY OR NEAR FATALITY; AND**

(III) 1. THE LOCAL DIRECTOR OR THE SECRETARY HAS CONSULTED THE STATE’S ATTORNEY’S OFFICE; AND

2. THE STATE’S ATTORNEY’S OFFICE HAS ADVISED THE LOCAL DIRECTOR OR THE SECRETARY THAT DISCLOSURE OF THE INFORMATION WOULD NOT JEOPARDIZE OR PREJUDICE A RELATED INVESTIGATION OR PROSECUTION.

(2) [In determining whether disclosure is contrary to the best interests of the child, the child’s siblings, or other children in the household, family, or care of the alleged abuser or neglecter under paragraph (1)(i) of this subsection, the local director or the Secretary shall consider the effect that disclosure may have on the provision of services to the child, the child’s household or family members, and any children in the care of the alleged abuser or neglecter.]

(I) IF THE LOCAL DIRECTOR OR THE SECRETARY DOES NOT DISCLOSE INFORMATION UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION BECAUSE THE STATE'S ATTORNEY HAS ADVISED THAT DISCLOSURE OF THE INFORMATION WOULD JEOPARDIZE OR PREJUDICE A RELATED INVESTIGATION OR PROSECUTION, THE STATE'S ATTORNEY SHALL NOTIFY THE LOCAL DIRECTOR OR THE SECRETARY WITHIN 10 DAYS AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF THE RELATED INVESTIGATION OR PROSECUTION.

(II) WITHIN 30 DAYS AFTER NOTIFICATION FROM THE STATE'S ATTORNEY UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, THE LOCAL DIRECTOR OR THE SECRETARY SHALL DISCLOSE INFORMATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SECTION.

(c) Before disclosing the information:

(1) the local director or the Secretary shall consult the [primary law enforcement agency and the] State's Attorney's office [concerning whether disclosure of the information would jeopardize or prejudice any related investigation or prosecution]; and

(2) the local director and the Secretary shall consult each other.

(d) [The] **SUBJECT TO SUBSECTION (E) OF THIS SECTION, THE** local director or the Secretary [may] **SHALL** disclose:

(1) the name of the allegedly abused or neglected child **WHO HAS SUFFERED A FATALITY ~~OR NEAR FATALITY~~**;

(2) the date of the report of the alleged child abuse or neglect and of any prior or subsequent reports;

(3) the findings made by the local department at the conclusion of its investigation and the disposition made by the local department based on its findings;

(4) any services provided to the alleged abuser or neglecter, the allegedly abused or neglected child, and the household or family members;

(5) the number of referrals for professional services for the alleged abuser or neglecter, the allegedly abused or neglected child, and the household or family members;

(6) any prior adjudication as a child in need of assistance of the allegedly abused or neglected child, a sibling of the child, or another child in the household, family, or care of the alleged abuser or neglecter; [and]

(7) THE STATUS OF ANY CASE INVOLVING THE CHILD THAT WAS OPEN AT THE TIME OF THE FATALITY OR NEAR FATALITY;

(8) A SUMMARY OF THE FACTS OF THE FATALITY OR NEAR FATALITY, INCLUDING THE DATE OF THE FATALITY OR NEAR FATALITY AND, IN THE CASE OF A FATALITY, THE CAUSE OF DEATH REPORTED BY THE MEDICAL EXAMINER; AND

[(7)] (9) any information concerning the circumstances of the alleged child abuse or neglect and the investigation of the circumstances, if the local director or the Secretary determines that the disclosure is consistent with the public interest.

(e) (1) The local director or the Secretary may not:

(i) disclose the identity of or provide an identifying description of the person who made the report;

(ii) disclose the name of a **CHILD WHO HAS SUFFERED A NEAR FATALITY**, A sibling of the allegedly abused or neglected child, a parent of the allegedly abused or neglected child, an individual legally responsible for the child, **THE ALLEGED ABUSER OR NEGLECTOR**, or another household or family member[, other than the alleged abuser or neglector];

(iii) except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, disclose a medical report; or

(iv) except for the information described in subsection (d) of this section, disclose the file relating to the allegedly abused or neglected child.

(2) Notwithstanding Title 4, Subtitle 3 of the Health – General Article, the local director or the Secretary may disclose a medical report related to the cause of the child’s injury or death as a result of the alleged abuse or neglect.

(f) In consultation with the local directors, the Secretary shall develop a form for disclosure of the information described in subsection (d) of this section.

(g) This section does not grant a right to any person to receive the information described in subsection (d) of this section.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2010.

Approved by the Governor, May 20, 2010.