



**Sub. S.B. 171**

123rd General Assembly  
(As Passed by the General Assembly)

**Sens. Spada, Gardner, Kearns, Drake, Prentiss, Johnson, Fingerhut, Armbruster, Brady, DiDonato, Hottinger, Latell, Mumper, Schafrath, Wachtmann, Watts, Latta, Cupp, Nein, White, Espy, McLin, Herington**

**Reps. Winkler, Willamowski, O'Brien, Smith, Metzger, Grendell, Core, Pringle, Calvert, Flannery, Clancy, Terwilleger, Austria, Distel, Allen, Jolivette, Krupinski, Widener, Evans, Redfern, Bender, J. Beatty, Sykes, Patton, Salerno, Damschroder, Hartnett, Aslanides, Olman, Mettler, Perry, Stevens, Britton, Womer Benjamin, Trakas, Harris, Robinson, Schuler, Amstutz, Verich**

**Effective date:** \*

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**ACT SUMMARY**

- Requires the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities to create a registry of MR/DD employees found to have abused, neglected, or misappropriated the property of individuals with mental retardation or a developmental disability.
- Defines an "MR/DD employee" as an individual who is employed by the Department, a county board of mental retardation and developmental disabilities (county MR/DD board), or an intermediate care facility for the mentally retarded or employed in a position that involves providing specialized services to an individual with mental retardation or a developmental disability.
- Establishes due process procedures governing the registry.

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\* *The Legislative Service Commission had not received formal notification of the effective date at the time this analysis was prepared.*

- Prohibits a person or government entity from hiring, contracting with, or employing as an MR/DD employee an individual who is included in the registry.
- Requires that suspected abuse or neglect of children with mental retardation and developmental disabilities be reported to the Department, a county MR/DD board, or a law enforcement agency.
- Requires the Department to maintain reports of major unusual incidents.
- Requires the Department to establish committees to review and investigate reports of abuse, neglect, and major unusual incidents.
- Limits the duty of the Department and county MR/DD boards to notify a law enforcement agency regarding reports of abuse or neglect.
- Coordinates the definitions of abuse and neglect for purposes of reporting and investigation.

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## CONTENT AND OPERATION

### *Registry of certain MR/DD employees*

(secs. 5123.50 to 5123.54)

Under the act, the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities must establish a registry of MR/DD employees found by the Department to have engaged in abuse, neglect, or misappropriation of the property of an individual with mental retardation or a developmental disability.

For the purposes of the act, "MR/DD employee" means an employee of the Department or a county board of mental retardation and developmental disabilities (county MR/DD board); an individual who is employed by an intermediate care facility for the mentally retarded (ICF/MR) or provides services pursuant to a contract or as a volunteer with an ICF/MR; or an individual who is employed in a position that includes providing specialized services to individuals with mental retardation or a developmental disability.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *"Specialized services" means a program or service designed and operated to serve primarily individuals with mental retardation or a developmental disability.*

"Abuse" is defined for purposes of the act as (1) the use of physical force that can reasonably be expected to result in physical harm or serious physical harm, (2) unlawful sexual conduct or sexual contact, or (3) purposely using words to threaten, coerce, intimidate, harass, or humiliate an individual. "Neglect" means, when there is a duty to do so, failing to provide an individual with any treatment, care, goods, or services that are necessary to maintain the health and safety of the individual. "Misappropriation" means depriving, defrauding, or otherwise obtaining property by any means prohibited by the Revised Code.

**Procedure for reviewing reports**

(sec. 5123.51)

In addition to its duties concerning reports of abuse and neglect of adults with mental retardation or a developmental disability, the Department is required by the act to review each report it receives of abuse, neglect, or misappropriation of property of an individual (child or adult) with mental retardation or a developmental disability that includes an allegation that an MR/DD employee committed or was responsible for the abuse, neglect, or misappropriation. The Department is prohibited from reviewing a report it receives from a public children services agency until the agency has completed its investigation of the report. The Department must either investigate the allegation or adopt the findings of an investigation or review conducted by another person or government entity and determine whether there is a reasonable basis for the allegation. If the Department determines that a reasonable basis exists, it must conduct an adjudication under Revised Code Chapter 119. (the Administrative Procedure Act).

The Department must appoint an independent hearing officer to conduct the adjudication hearing and may not hold the hearing until any criminal proceeding or collective bargaining arbitration regarding the same allegation has concluded. If the hearing concerns an employee of the Department who is represented by a union, the Department and a union representative must jointly appoint the hearing officer.

In conducting the hearing, the hearing officer must determine whether there is clear and convincing evidence that the MR/DD employee has done any of the following:

- (1) Misappropriated the property of an individual with mental retardation or a developmental disability;
- (2) Knowingly abused or neglected such an individual;

(3) Recklessly abused or neglected such an individual, with resulting physical harm;

(4) Negligently abused or neglected such an individual, with resulting serious physical harm.

The act requires that the hearing officer give weight to the decision in any collective bargaining arbitration regarding the same allegation.

The act provides that files and records of the Department's investigation are not public records, but the Department must provide copies of those files and records to the Attorney General, a county prosecutor, or a law enforcement agency on request.

**Inclusion in the registry**

(secs. 5123.51 and 5123.52)

In general, the act requires the Director to include in the registry the name of an MR/DD employee if the Director finds that there is clear and convincing evidence that the employee has done any of the things listed in (1) through (4) under "**Procedure for reviewing reports**" above.

The Director is not permitted to include in the registry an individual who has been found not guilty by a court or jury of an offense arising from the same facts and is not required to include an MR/DD employee if the Director determines that there are extenuating circumstances. The act requires that the Director consider as an extenuating circumstance whether the use of physical force by an MR/DD employee was necessary as self-defense. In the case of an allegation concerning a Department employee, the Director of Health or that director's designee must review the hearing officer's decision to determine whether the employee should be included in the registry. The Director of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is required to include the employee in the registry on notice from the Director of Health.

When an MR/DD employee is included in the registry, the Director of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities must notify (1) the employee, (2) the person or government entity that employs or contracts with the employee, (3) the individual who was the subject of the report that caused the employee to be included in the registry and the individual's legal guardian, if any, (4) the Attorney General, county prosecutor, or another appropriate law enforcement agency, and (5) if the employee authorized to engage in a profession, the entity responsible for regulating the employee's professional practice.

**Prohibition employing or contracting with individuals included in the registry**

(secs. 5123.52 and 5126.28)

The act prohibits any person or government entity from hiring, contracting with, or employing as an MR/DD employee an individual who is included in the registry established by the act. The prohibition does not apply if a collective bargaining agreement that is in effect on the act's effective date provides otherwise, but prevails over subsequent collective bargaining agreements. Except in cases of gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct, a person or government entity that fails to hire or retain an individual as an employee because the individual is included in the registry is immune from civil liability. An individual who is fired because of being included in the registry is considered to be discharged for just cause for the purposes of unemployment compensation benefits.

The act prohibits the Department and county MR/DD boards from entering into a new contract or renewing a contract with a person or government entity that fails to comply with the prohibition on hiring, contracting with, or employing such individuals, until the Department or board is satisfied that the person or government entity will comply.

**Inquiries regarding the registry**

(sec. 5123.52)

The information contained in the registry is a public record. When the Department receives an inquiry regarding whether an individual is included in the registry, it must inform the person making the inquiry whether the individual is included in the registry.

The act requires a person or government entity to inquire whether an individual is included in the registry before hiring, contracting with, or employing the individual as an MR/DD employee.

**Removal from registry for good cause**

(sec. 5123.53)

An individual included in the registry may petition the Director for removal from the registry. The Director is authorized to remove an individual from the registry if good cause exists, which includes meeting rehabilitation standards the Department establishes by rule as required by the act.

**Rule-making authority**

(sec. 5123.54)

The act requires the Director to adopt rules under Revised Code Chapter 119. to implement the MR/DD employee registry. The rules must establish rehabilitation standards and specify other circumstances that constitute good cause for the purpose of removal from the registry.

**Registry office**

(sec. 5123.61)

Current law requires the Department to establish a registry office for the purpose of maintaining reports of abuse and neglect. The act requires that the registry office also maintain reports of major unusual incidents. The act does not define that term or give the Department the authority to define it. The Department is also required by the act to establish committees to review reports of abuse, neglect, and other major unusual incidents.

**Reporting and investigation of abuse or neglect**

(secs. 5123.61, 5123.31, 5126.32, and 5126.33)

Continuing law requires certain persons who have reason to believe that a mentally retarded or developmentally disabled adult has suffered any wound, injury, disability, or condition that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect to immediately report that information or cause it to be reported to a law enforcement agency or to the county MR/DD board.<sup>2</sup> If the report concerns a resident of a

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<sup>2</sup> *This requirement applies to physicians, including hospital interns or residents; dentists; podiatrists; chiropractors; practitioners of a limited branch of medicine; hospital administrators and employees; nurses; employees of ambulatory health facilities; employees of home health agencies; employees of adult care facilities; employees of community mental health facilities; school teachers or school authorities; social workers; psychologists; attorneys; peace officers; coroners; clergymen; resident's rights advocates; superintendents, board members, or employees of a county MR/DD board; administrators, board members, or employees of residential facilities for persons with mental retardation or a developmental disability; administrators, board members, or employees of any other public or private provider of services to an adult with mental retardation or a developmental disability; members of citizen's advisory councils established at an institution of the Department; and persons rendering spiritual treatment through prayer in accordance with the tenets of a well-recognized religion. Members of the Legal Rights Service Commission and employees of the Legal Rights Service are exempt from the reporting requirement.*

facility operated by the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, the report must be made to either a law enforcement agency or the Department. The law also permits any person with reasonable cause to believe that an adult with mental retardation or a developmental disability has suffered abuse or neglect to report that belief.

When the Department or the county MR/DD board receives a report of abuse or neglect, it is required to notify a law enforcement agency.<sup>3</sup> A county MR/DD board must also notify the Department. The law enforcement agency must investigate all reports of abuse or neglect of adults with mental retardation or a developmental disability and make a report of its findings to the Department or county MR/DD board. The Department must investigate reports regarding residents of facilities it operates and submit a report of its investigation to the law enforcement agency. A county MR/DD board is required to review reports of abuse and neglect it receives and submit a report to the law enforcement agency responsible for investigating the report and to the Department.

The act adds MR/DD employees to the persons required to report abuse or neglect. The act expands mandatory reporting to include reports concerning children with mental retardation or a developmental disability. The Revised Code currently requires that the Department and county MR/DD boards receive only reports of abuse and neglect that concern adults. Reports of abuse or neglect concerning children, including mentally or physically handicapped persons under age 21, are made to a public children services agency or county peace officer. The act requires that reports involving such children be made, in addition, to a law enforcement agency, county MR/DD board, or the Department.<sup>4</sup>

Under the act, the Department is required to notify a law enforcement agency and the county MR/DD board is required to notify the Department and a law enforcement agency of a report only if the report includes an allegation of an action or inaction that may be criminal under federal or Ohio law.

**Coordinating definitions for abuse and neglect reporting and investigations**

(secs. 5123.50, 5123.61, and 5126.30)

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<sup>3</sup> "Law enforcement agency" means the state highway patrol, the police department of a municipal corporation, or a county sheriff.

<sup>4</sup> If the law enforcement agency is also the county peace officer, the person would only have to make one report.

As described above, county MR/DD boards must review reports of abuse or neglect concerning adults with mental retardation or a developmental disability. The Department must investigate reports of abuse or neglect involving residents of facilities it operates. For purposes of the county MR/DD board reviews, prior law defined "abuse" to mean any of the following:

- An act, or a failure to act, that results or could result in emotional or physical injury to an adult, unless the act is done in self defense or by accident;
- An act that constitutes sexual activity as defined in the Criminal Code for sex offenses and would constitute a sex offense;
- Insulting or coarse language or gestures directed toward an adult that subject him to humiliation or degradation;
- An act that deprives an adult of real or personal property by fraudulent or illegal means.

"Neglect" was defined as the failure of an adult or caretaker to provide goods and services necessary for an adult with mental retardation or a developmental disability to avoid physical harm. The Revised Code did not provide a definition of abuse or neglect for purposes of the Department's investigations of abuse or neglect reports.

The act establishes definitions for abuse and neglect that are applicable to investigations by the Department. The definitions are the same as those established under the act for the MR/DD employee registry (as described above), with the exception that "abuse" includes misappropriation as defined under the act for the registry. The act also makes the definitions of abuse and neglect that are applicable to Department investigations applicable to county MR/DD board investigations.

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## HISTORY

ACTION	DATE	JOURNAL ENTRY
Introduced	07-13-99	p. 887
Reported, S. Health, Human Services & Aging	03-16-00	p. 1464
Passed Senate (33-0)	03-16-00	p. 1468
Reported, H. Children and Family Services	05-10-00	p. 1937
Passed House (96-0)	05-16-00	pp. 1958-1959
Senate concurred in House amendments (33-0)	05-17-00	pp. 1732-1733

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