

SENATE BILL NO. 376—COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

(OH BEHALF OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON
CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE)

MARCH 26, 2021

Referred to Committee on Health and Human Services

SUMMARY—Revises provisions relating to child welfare.
(BDR 38-503)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: May have Fiscal Impact.
Effect on the State: Yes.

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EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

AN ACT relating to child welfare; requiring an agency which provides child welfare services to assign a certain disposition for each report concerning the possible abuse or neglect of a child received or referred to the agency; defining the types of dispositions for purposes of this requirement; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.

Legislative Counsel's Digest:

Existing law requires an agency which provides child welfare services to determine, for each report concerning the possible abuse or neglect of a child received or referred to the agency: (1) whether an investigation is warranted; and (2) if so, whether the allegations concerning abuse or neglect contained in the report are substantiated or unsubstantiated. (NRS 432B.260, 432B.300) Existing law also requires an agency, upon completion of an investigation, to report the disposition to the Statewide Central Registry for the Collection of Information Concerning the Abuse or Neglect of a Child. (NRS 432.100, 432B.310) **Section 1** of this bill requires an agency which provides child welfare services to assign one of the following dispositions to a report upon determining that an investigation is not warranted or upon the conclusion of an investigation: (1) substantiated; (2) unsubstantiated; (3) unable to complete; (4) unable to determine; and (5) administrative closure. **Section 1** also defines each of these case dispositions for purposes of this requirement. **Sections 2-6** of this bill make conforming changes relating to the requirement that an agency assign a disposition to a report pursuant to **section 1**.



THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, REPRESENTED IN
SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Chapter 432B of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto a new section to read as follows:

1. An agency which provides child welfare services shall, upon determining that an investigation is not warranted or upon the conclusion of an investigation of a report concerning the possible abuse or neglect of a child, assign one of the following dispositions to the report:

- (a) Substantiated.*
- (b) Unsubstantiated.*
- (c) Unable to complete.*
- (d) Unable to determine.*
- (e) Administrative closure.*

2. As used in this section:

(a) "Administrative closure" means that the agency has determined, by a preponderance of the evidence, without conducting an investigation, that the alleged abuse or neglect did not occur.

(b) "Substantiated" means that the agency has determined by a preponderance of the evidence that the alleged abuse or neglect occurred and was committed by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect.

(c) "Unable to complete" means that the agency was unable to complete the investigation and therefore cannot make a determination regarding whether the report concerning abuse or neglect of a child is substantiated or unsubstantiated.

(d) "Unable to determine" means that the agency has determined that some credible evidence that abuse or neglect occurred exists, but not enough to support substantiation.

(e) "Unsubstantiated" means that the agency has determined by a preponderance of the evidence that the alleged abuse or neglect did not occur or was not committed by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect.

Sec. 2. NRS 432B.290 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.290 1. Information maintained by an agency which provides child welfare services must be maintained by the agency which provides child welfare services as required by federal law as a condition of the allocation of federal money to this State.

2. Except as otherwise provided in this section and NRS 432B.165, 432B.175 and 432B.513, information maintained by an agency which provides child welfare services may, at the discretion of the agency which provides child welfare services, be made available only to:



(a) A physician, if the physician has before him or her a child who the physician has reasonable cause to believe has been abused or neglected;

(b) A person authorized to place a child in protective custody, if the person has before him or her a child who the person has reasonable cause to believe has been abused or neglected and the person requires the information to determine whether to place the child in protective custody;

(c) An agency, including, without limitation, an agency in another jurisdiction, responsible for or authorized to undertake the care, treatment or supervision of:

(1) The child; or

(2) The person responsible for the welfare of the child;

(d) A district attorney or other law enforcement officer who requires the information in connection with an investigation or prosecution of the abuse or neglect of a child;

(e) Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (f), a court other than a juvenile court, for in camera inspection only, unless the court determines that public disclosure of the information is necessary for the determination of an issue before it;

(f) A court, as defined in NRS 159A.015, to determine whether a guardian or successor guardian of a child should be appointed pursuant to chapter 159A of NRS or NRS 432B.466 to 432B.468, inclusive;

(g) A person engaged in bona fide research or an audit, but information identifying the subjects of a report must not be made available to the person;

(h) The attorney and the guardian ad litem of the child, if the information is reasonably necessary to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of the child;

(i) A person who files or intends to file a petition for the appointment of a guardian or successor guardian of a child pursuant to chapter 159A of NRS or NRS 432B.466 to 432B.468, inclusive, if the identity of the person responsible for reporting the abuse or neglect of the child to a public agency is kept confidential and the information is reasonably necessary to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of the child;

(j) The proposed guardian or proposed successor guardian of a child over whom a guardianship is sought pursuant to chapter 159A of NRS or NRS 432B.466 to 432B.468, inclusive, if the identity of the person responsible for reporting the abuse or neglect of the child to a public agency is kept confidential and the information is reasonably necessary to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of the child;



(k) A grand jury upon its determination that access to these records and the information is necessary in the conduct of its official business;

(l) A federal, state or local governmental entity, or an agency of such an entity, or a juvenile court, that needs access to the information to carry out its legal responsibilities to protect children from abuse and neglect;

(m) A person or an organization that has entered into a written agreement with an agency which provides child welfare services to provide assessments or services and that has been trained to make such assessments or provide such services;

(n) A team organized pursuant to NRS 432B.350 for the protection of a child;

(o) A team organized pursuant to NRS 432B.405 to review the death of a child;

(p) A parent or legal guardian of the child and an attorney of a parent or guardian of the child, including, without limitation, the parent or guardian of a child over whom a guardianship is sought pursuant to chapter 159A of NRS or NRS 432B.466 to 432B.468, inclusive, if the identity of the person responsible for reporting the abuse or neglect of the child to a public agency is kept confidential and the information is reasonably necessary to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of the child and is limited to information concerning that parent or guardian;

(q) The child over whom a guardianship is sought pursuant to chapter 159A of NRS or NRS 432B.466 to 432B.468, inclusive, if:

(1) The child is 14 years of age or older; and

(2) The identity of the person responsible for reporting the abuse or neglect of the child to a public agency is kept confidential and the information is reasonably necessary to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of the child;

(r) The persons or agent of the persons who are the subject of a report, if the information is reasonably necessary to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of the child and is limited to information concerning those persons;

(s) An agency that is authorized by law to license foster homes or facilities for children or to investigate persons applying for approval to adopt a child, if the agency has before it an application for that license or is investigating an applicant to adopt a child;

(t) Upon written consent of the parent, any officer of this State or a city or county thereof or Legislator authorized by the agency or department having jurisdiction or by the Legislature, acting within its jurisdiction, to investigate the activities or programs of an agency which provides child welfare services if:



(1) The identity of the person making the report is kept confidential; and

(2) The officer, Legislator or a member of the family of the officer or Legislator is not the person alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect;

(u) The Division of Parole and Probation of the Department of Public Safety for use pursuant to NRS 176.135 in making a presentence investigation and report to the district court or pursuant to NRS 176.151 in making a general investigation and report;

(v) Any person who is required pursuant to NRS 432B.220 to make a report to an agency which provides child welfare services or to a law enforcement agency;

(w) A local advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children created pursuant to NRS 432B.604;

(x) The panel established pursuant to NRS 432B.396 to evaluate agencies which provide child welfare services;

(y) An employer in accordance with subsection 3 of NRS 432.100;

(z) A team organized or sponsored pursuant to NRS 217.475 or 228.495 to review the death of the victim of a crime that constitutes domestic violence;

(aa) The Committee on Domestic Violence appointed pursuant to NRS 228.470; or

(bb) The Committee to Review Suicide Fatalities created by NRS 439.5104.

3. An agency investigating a report of the abuse or neglect of a child shall, upon request, provide to a person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child:

(a) A copy of:

(1) Any statement made in writing to an investigator for the agency by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child; or

(2) Any recording made by the agency of any statement made orally to an investigator for the agency by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child; or

(b) A written summary of the allegations made against the person who is named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child. The summary must not identify the person responsible for reporting the alleged abuse or neglect or any collateral sources and reporting parties.

4. Except as otherwise provided by subsection 6, before releasing any information maintained by an agency which provides child welfare services pursuant to this section, an agency which provides child welfare services shall take whatever precautions it determines are reasonably necessary to protect the identity and



safety of any person who reports child abuse or neglect and to protect any other person if the agency which provides child welfare services reasonably believes that disclosure of the information would cause a specific and material harm to an investigation of the alleged abuse or neglect of a child or the life or safety of any person.

5. The provisions of this section must not be construed to require an agency which provides child welfare services to disclose information maintained by the agency which provides child welfare services if, after consultation with the attorney who represents the agency, the agency determines that such disclosure would cause a specific and material harm to a criminal investigation.

6. A person who is the subject of ~~[an unsubstantiated]~~ a report of child abuse or neglect made pursuant to this chapter *that is assigned a disposition other than substantiated pursuant to section 1 of this act* and who believes that the report was made in bad faith or with malicious intent may petition a district court to order the agency which provides child welfare services to release information maintained by the agency which provides child welfare services. The petition must specifically set forth the reasons supporting the belief that the report was made in bad faith or with malicious intent. The petitioner shall provide notice to the agency which provides child welfare services so that the agency may participate in the action through its counsel. The district court shall review the information which the petitioner requests to be released and the petitioner shall be allowed to present evidence in support of the petition. If the court determines that there is a reasonable question of fact as to whether the report was made in bad faith or with malicious intent and that the disclosure of the identity of the person who made the report would not be likely to endanger the life or safety of the person who made the report, the court shall provide a copy of the information to the petitioner and the original information is subject to discovery in a subsequent civil action regarding the making of the report.

7. If an agency which provides child welfare services receives any information that is deemed confidential by law, the agency which provides child welfare services shall maintain the confidentiality of the information as prescribed by applicable law.

8. Pursuant to this section, a person may authorize the release of information maintained by an agency which provides child welfare services about himself or herself, but may not waive the confidentiality of such information concerning any other person.

9. An agency which provides child welfare services may provide a summary of the outcome of an investigation of the alleged abuse or neglect of a child to the person who reported the suspected abuse or neglect.



10. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, any person who is provided with information maintained by an agency which provides child welfare services and who further disseminates the information or makes the information public is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. This subsection does not apply to:

(a) A district attorney or other law enforcement officer who uses the information solely for the purpose of initiating legal proceedings;

(b) An employee of the Division of Parole and Probation of the Department of Public Safety making a presentence investigation and report to the district court pursuant to NRS 176.135 or making a general investigation and report pursuant to NRS 176.151; or

(c) An employee of a juvenile justice agency who provides the information to the juvenile court.

11. An agency which provides child welfare services may charge a fee for processing costs reasonably necessary to prepare information maintained by the agency which provides child welfare services for release pursuant to this section.

12. An agency which provides child welfare services shall adopt rules, policies or regulations to carry out the provisions of this section.

13. As used in this section, "juvenile justice agency" means the Youth Parole Bureau or a director of juvenile services.

Sec. 3. NRS 432B.300 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.300 If an agency which provides child welfare services determines that an investigation of a report concerning the possible abuse or neglect of a child is warranted pursuant to NRS 432B.260, the agency shall determine, without limitation:

1. The composition of the family, household or facility, including the name, address, age, sex and race of each child named in the report, any siblings or other children in the same place or under the care of the same person, the persons responsible for the children's welfare and any other adult living or working in the same household or facility;

2. Whether there is reasonable cause to believe any child is abused or neglected or threatened with abuse or neglect, the nature and extent of existing or previous injuries, abuse or neglect and any evidence thereof, and the person apparently responsible;

3. Whether there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered a fatality as a result of abuse or neglect regardless of whether or not there are any siblings of the child or other children who are residing in the same household as the child who is believed to have suffered a fatality as a result of abuse or neglect;



4. If there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is abused or neglected, the immediate and long-term risk to the child if the child remains in the same environment; *and*

5. The treatment and services which appear necessary to help prevent further abuse or neglect and to improve the environment of the child and the ability of the person responsible for the child's welfare to care adequately for the child. ~~[- and~~

~~— 6. — Whether the report concerning the possible abuse or neglect of a child is substantiated or unsubstantiated.]~~

Sec. 4. NRS 432B.310 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.310 1. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 6 of NRS 432B.260, the agency investigating a report of abuse or neglect of a child shall, upon completing the investigation, report to the Central Registry:

(a) Identifying and demographic information on the child alleged to be abused or neglected, the parents of the child, any other person responsible for the welfare of the child and the person allegedly responsible for the abuse or neglect;

(b) The facts of the alleged abuse or neglect, including the date and type of alleged abuse or neglect, the manner in which the abuse was inflicted, the severity of the injuries and, if applicable, any information concerning the death of the child; and

(c) The disposition ~~[of the case.]~~ *assigned to the report pursuant to section 1 of this act.*

2. An agency which provides child welfare services shall not report to the Central Registry any information concerning a child identified as being affected by a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or prenatal substance use disorder or as having withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal substance exposure unless the agency determines that a person has abused or neglected the child after the child was born.

Sec. 5. NRS 432B.315 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.315 If an agency which provides child welfare services ~~[determines pursuant to NRS 432B.300 that]~~ *assigns a disposition of substantiated to* a report made pursuant to NRS 432B.220, ~~[is substantiated,]~~ the agency shall provide written notification to the person responsible for the child's welfare who is named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child which includes statements indicating that:

1. The report which was made against the person has been substantiated and the agency which provides child welfare services intends to place the person's name in the Central Registry pursuant to NRS 432B.310; and

2. The person may request an administrative appeal of the substantiation of the report and the agency's intention to place the



person's name in the Central Registry by submitting a written request to the agency which provides child welfare services within the time required pursuant to NRS 432B.317.

Sec. 6. NRS 392.337 is hereby amended to read as follows:

392.337 1. An agency which provides child welfare services investigating a report made pursuant to NRS 392.303 shall, upon completing the investigation, ~~{determine whether the report is substantiated or unsubstantiated and}~~ notify the parent or guardian of the child who is the subject of the report of ~~[that determination.]~~ *the disposition assigned to the report pursuant to section 1 of this act.*

2. If the report is substantiated, the agency shall:

(a) Forward the report to the Department of Education, the board of trustees of the school district in which the school is located or the governing body of the charter school or private school, as applicable, the appropriate local law enforcement agency within the county and the district attorney's office within the county for further investigation.

(b) Provide written notification to the person who is named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child or violating NRS 201.540, 201.560, 392.4633 or 394.366 which includes statements indicating that:

(1) The report made against the person has been substantiated and the agency which provides child welfare services intends to place the person's name in the Central Registry pursuant to paragraph (a); and

(2) The person may request an administrative appeal of the substantiation of the report and the agency's intention to place the person's name in the Central Registry by submitting a written request to the agency which provides child welfare services within the time required by NRS 392.345.

(c) After the conclusion of any administrative appeal pursuant to NRS 392.345 or the expiration of the time period prescribed by that section for requesting an administrative appeal, whichever is later, report to the Central Registry:

(1) Identifying and demographic information on the child who is the subject of the report, the parents of the child, any other person responsible for the welfare of the child and the person allegedly responsible for the conduct alleged in the report;

(2) The facts of the alleged conduct, including the date and type of alleged conduct, a description of the alleged conduct, the severity of any injuries and, if applicable, any information concerning the death of the child; and

(3) The disposition of the case.



(d) Provide to the parent or guardian of the child who is the subject of the report:

(1) A written summary of the outcome of the investigation of the allegations in the report which must not identify the person who made the report, any child witnesses to the allegations in the report or any collateral sources and reporting parties; and

(2) A summary of any disciplinary action taken against the person who is named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child or violating NRS 201.540, 201.560, 392.4633 or 394.366 which is known by the agency, including, without limitation, whether the name of such person will be placed in the Central Registry.

3. A parent or guardian who receives information pursuant to paragraph (d) of subsection 2 may disclose the information to an attorney for the child who is the subject of the report or the parent or guardian of the child.

Sec. 7. Notwithstanding the provisions of NRS 218D.430 and 218D.435, a committee, other than the Assembly Standing Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Standing Committee on Finance, may vote on this act before the expiration of the period prescribed for the return of a fiscal note in NRS 218D.475. This section applies retroactively from and after March 22, 2021.

Sec. 8. 1. This section becomes effective upon passage and approval.

2. Sections 1 to 7, inclusive, of this act become effective:

(a) Upon passage and approval for the purposes of adopting regulations and performing any other preparatory tasks that are necessary to carry out the provisions of this act; and

(b) On October 1, 2021, for all other purposes.

