

## Chapter 185

(Senate Bill 559)

AN ACT concerning

**Child Protection – ~~Mandatory Reporting of Children Regularly in Contact with Persons Convicted of Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse~~ Living with or in the Regular Presence of Registered Child Sexual Offenders**

FOR the purpose of ~~requiring certain professionals~~ authorizing an individual to notify the local department of social services or the appropriate law enforcement agency if the ~~professionals have~~ individual has reason to believe that a parent, guardian, or caregiver allows a child to reside with or ~~regularly associate with~~ be in the regular presence of a certain individual; ~~providing certain exceptions~~ providing for the manner of reporting; describing the information that is to be included in a certain report; providing for the receipt and investigation of a certain report ~~that a child is at substantial risk of abuse~~; requiring the Secretary of Human Resources to adopt certain regulations; requiring the local department ~~or~~ and the appropriate law enforcement agency to take certain actions within a certain time period after receiving a certain report; requiring an investigation to be completed within a certain time period; ~~authorizing and~~ requiring the local department to take certain actions ~~after completion~~ as part of an investigation; ~~providing for expungement of certain reports~~; providing certain immunity for certain persons who make or participate in making certain reports; and generally relating to ~~mandatory~~ reporting of children ~~regularly in contact~~ living with or in the regular presence of certain persons.

BY adding to

Article – Family Law  
Section 5–704.1 and 5–706.2  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2006 Replacement Volume and 2009 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Family Law  
Section ~~5–707(b)~~ and 5–708  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2006 Replacement Volume and 2009 Supplement)

### Preamble

~~WHEREAS, No child should suffer injury or death from maltreatment resulting from regular association with a person with a known criminal record of child abuse or child injury; and~~

~~WHEREAS, A child's regular association with a person with a history of abuse or criminal injury to a child presents a preventable threat to the safety of Maryland's children; and~~

~~WHEREAS, Maryland courts have consistently held that a child can be adjudicated a child in need of assistance under certain circumstances without waiting until a child suffers maltreatment before protecting the child; and~~

~~WHEREAS, A court is unlikely to have the information necessary to protect a child who is regularly exposed to a person with a history of harming children unless a local department of social services petitions the court to find that the child is in need of assistance; and~~

~~WHEREAS, The Office of the Attorney General has interpreted the statutory scheme requiring a local department of social services to investigate abuse to be incident based and, thus, not in harmony with the child in need of assistance statute; and~~

~~WHEREAS, To prevent death and injuries to children at substantial risk of harm, local departments of social services should have an affirmative obligation to assess risk and protect children; now, therefore,~~

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

### Article – Family Law

#### 5-704.1.

~~(A) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION AND NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF LAW, INCLUDING ANY LAW ON PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATIONS, EACH HEALTH PRACTITIONER, POLICE OFFICER, PAROLE AND PROBATION AGENT, EDUCATOR, OR HUMAN SERVICE WORKER, ACTING IN A PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY IN THIS STATE, SHALL AN~~ INDIVIDUAL MAY NOTIFY THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT OR THE APPROPRIATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY IF THE INDIVIDUAL HAS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT A PARENT, GUARDIAN, OR CAREGIVER OF A CHILD ALLOWS THE CHILD TO RESIDE ~~OR REGULARLY ASSOCIATE~~ WITH OR BE IN THE REGULAR PRESENCE OF AN INDIVIDUAL, OTHER THAN THE CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN, WHO:

(1) IS REGISTERED UNDER TITLE 11, SUBTITLE 7 OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ARTICLE AS A CHILD SEXUAL OFFENDER BASED ON THE COMMISSION OF AN OFFENSE AGAINST A CHILD; AND

(2) BASED ON ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, POSES A SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE TO THE CHILD.

~~(1) IS IDENTIFIED IN THE CENTRAL REGISTRY UNDER § 5-714 OF THIS SUBTITLE AS AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE; OR~~

~~(2) HAS BEEN CONVICTED IN THE STATE WITHIN THE PAST 10 YEARS OF:~~

~~(i) CHILD ABUSE UNDER § 3-601 OF THE CRIMINAL LAW ARTICLE; OR~~

~~(ii) CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE UNDER § 3-602 OF THE CRIMINAL LAW ARTICLE.~~

~~(B) AN INDIVIDUAL IS NOT REQUIRED TO PROVIDE NOTICE UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION:~~

~~(1) IN VIOLATION OF THE PRIVILEGE DESCRIBED UNDER § 9-108 OF THE COURTS ARTICLE;~~

~~(2) IF THE NOTICE WOULD DISCLOSE MATTER COMMUNICATED IN CONFIDENCE BY A CLIENT TO THE CLIENT'S ATTORNEY OR OTHER INFORMATION RELATING TO THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CLIENT; OR~~

~~(3) IN VIOLATION OF ANY CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL.~~

~~(C) (1) AN INDIVIDUAL WHO NOTIFIES THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION SHALL MAKE:~~

~~(i) AN ORAL REPORT, BY TELEPHONE OR DIRECT COMMUNICATION, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, TO THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT OR APPROPRIATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY; AND~~

~~(ii) A WRITTEN REPORT NOT LATER THAN 48 HOURS AFTER THE CONTACT, EXAMINATION, ATTENTION, OR TREATMENT THAT CAUSED THE INDIVIDUAL TO BELIEVE THAT THE CHILD IS AT SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF ABUSE BECAUSE THE CHILD IS ALLOWED TO RESIDE OR REGULARLY ASSOCIATE WITH AN INDIVIDUAL DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION.~~

(B) (1) A REPORT UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION MAY BE ORAL OR IN WRITING.

(2) IF ACTING AS A STAFF MEMBER OF A HOSPITAL, PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY, CHILD CARE INSTITUTION, JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER, SCHOOL, OR SIMILAR INSTITUTION, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO NOTIFIES THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION IMMEDIATELY SHALL NOTIFY AND GIVE ALL OF THE INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THIS SECTION TO THE HEAD OF THE INSTITUTION OR THE DESIGNEE OF THE HEAD OF THE INSTITUTION.

~~(D)~~ (C) TO THE EXTENT REASONABLY POSSIBLE, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO MAKES A REPORT UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL INCLUDE IN THE REPORT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

(1) THE NAME, AGE, AND HOME ADDRESS OF THE CHILD;

(2) THE NAME AND HOME ADDRESS OF THE CHILD'S PARENT OR OTHER PERSON WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHILD'S CARE;

(3) THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE CHILD;

(4) THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF THE CHILD, INCLUDING ANY EVIDENCE OR INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE REPORTER CONCERNING POSSIBLE PREVIOUS INSTANCES OF SEXUAL ABUSE; AND

(5) ANY OTHER INFORMATION THAT WOULD HELP TO DETERMINE:

(I) THE CAUSE OF THE SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE; AND

(II) THE IDENTITY OF ANY INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE.

#### 5-706.2.

(A) (1) A LOCAL DEPARTMENT OR A LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY MAY RECEIVE A REPORT UNDER § 5-704.1 OF THIS SUBTITLE THAT A CHILD IS AT SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE.

(2) ~~(A)~~ IF A LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY RECEIVES THE REPORT, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY SHALL IMMEDIATELY REFER THE REPORT TO THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT.

~~(H) ON REQUEST OF THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY SHALL, WITHIN 48 HOURS, PROVIDE ANY NECESSARY INFORMATION TO CONFIRM OR DENY CONVICTIONS ALLEGED IN THE REPORT AS DESCRIBED IN § 5-704.1(A)(2) OF THIS SUBTITLE.~~

(3) THE SECRETARY OF HUMAN RESOURCES SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS GOVERNING:

(I) HOW STAFF IN A LOCAL DEPARTMENT SHOULD ELICIT INFORMATION WHEN RECEIVING A REPORT UNDER § 5-704.1 OF THIS SUBTITLE; AND

(II) THE DEFINITION OF SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE AS USED IN ~~§ 5-704.1~~ OF THIS SUBTITLE.

(B) (1) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, AFTER CONFIRMING THAT THE ALLEGATIONS IN THE REPORT REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL'S HISTORY ARE ~~TRUE~~ ACCURATE AND THAT THERE IS SPECIFIC INFORMATION THAT THE CHILD IS AT SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE, THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT SHALL MAKE A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION TO PROTECT THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF ANY CHILD OR CHILDREN WHO MAY BE AT SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE.

(2) THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT ~~MAY~~ SHALL CONDUCT THE INVESTIGATION JOINTLY WITH AN APPROPRIATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.

(3) IF A SUBSEQUENT REPORT IS RECEIVED REGARDING AN INDIVIDUAL WITH A HISTORY OF ~~CHILD~~ SEXUAL ABUSE THAT ALLEGES SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME FACTS AS A REPORT THAT THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT HAS PREVIOUSLY INVESTIGATED, THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT MAY DECLINE TO MAKE AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SUBSEQUENT REPORT.

(C) WITHIN 5 DAYS AFTER RECEIVING THE REPORT, THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT ~~OR~~ AND THE APPROPRIATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY SHALL:

(1) SEE THE CHILD IN PERSON;

(2) ATTEMPT TO HAVE AN ON-SITE INTERVIEW WITH THE CHILD'S CAREGIVER AND THE INDIVIDUAL IDENTIFIED IN THE REPORT AS ~~HAVING A HISTORY OF ABUSE A CHILD SEXUAL OFFENDER~~ AN INDIVIDUAL REGISTERED UNDER TITLE 11, SUBTITLE 7 OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ARTICLE BASED ON THE COMMISSION OF AN OFFENSE AGAINST A CHILD;

(3) DECIDE ON THE SAFETY AND LEVEL OF RISK OF THE CHILD, WHEREVER THE CHILD IS, AND OF OTHER CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD; AND

(4) DECIDE ON THE SAFETY AND LEVEL OF RISK OF OTHER CHILDREN IN THE CARE OR CUSTODY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IDENTIFIED IN THE REPORT AS ~~HAVING A HISTORY OF ABUSE~~ A CHILD SEXUAL OFFENDER AN INDIVIDUAL REGISTERED UNDER TITLE 11, SUBTITLE 7 OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ARTICLE BASED ON THE COMMISSION OF AN OFFENSE AGAINST A CHILD.

(D) ~~(1)~~ TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, AN INVESTIGATION UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL BE COMPLETED ~~WITHIN 10~~ AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE BUT NOT LATER THAN 30 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF THE REPORT.

~~(2) AN INVESTIGATION THAT IS NOT COMPLETED WITHIN 30 DAYS SHALL BE COMPLETED WITHIN 60 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF THE REPORT.~~

~~(E) IF, AFTER THE INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETED, THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT DETERMINES THAT THE CHILD IS NOT SAFE OR IS AT SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF ABUSE, THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT SHALL:~~

~~(1) OFFER SERVICES TO THE FAMILY; AND~~

~~(2) IMMEDIATELY DECIDE WHETHER TO FILE A PETITION ALLEGING THAT THE CHILD IS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE.~~

~~(F) WITHIN 30 DAYS AFTER THE COMPLETION OF AN INVESTIGATION UNDER THIS SECTION, THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT SHALL NOTIFY IN WRITING THE CHILD'S CAREGIVER AND THE INDIVIDUAL IDENTIFIED IN THE REPORT AS HAVING A HISTORY OF ABUSE OF THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT'S DETERMINATION ON THE SAFETY AND LEVEL OF RISK OF THE CHILD.~~

(E) AS PART OF THE INVESTIGATION, THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT SHALL:

(1) DETERMINE WHETHER THE CHILD IS SAFE;

(2) DETERMINE WHETHER SEXUAL ABUSE OF THE CHILD HAS OCCURRED;

(3) IF APPROPRIATE, OFFER SERVICES TO THE FAMILY; AND

(4) IMMEDIATELY DECIDE WHETHER TO FILE A PETITION ALLEGING THAT THE CHILD IS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE.

~~5-707.~~

~~(b) The local department shall expunge a report of suspected abuse or neglect OR OF SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF ABUSE and all assessments and investigative findings:~~

~~(1) within 5 years after the date of referral if the investigation under § 5-706 OR § 5-706.2 of this subtitle concludes that the report is unsubstantiated, and no further reports of abuse or neglect OR OF SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF ABUSE are received during the 5 years; and~~

~~(2) within 120 days after the date of referral if the report is ruled out, and no further reports of abuse or neglect OR OF SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF ABUSE are received during the 120 days.~~

5-708.

Any person who makes or participates in making a report of abuse or neglect under § 5-704, § 5-705, or § 5-705.1 of this subtitle **OR A REPORT OF SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF SEXUAL ABUSE UNDER § 5-704.1 OF THIS SUBTITLE** or participates in an investigation or a resulting judicial proceeding shall have the immunity described under § 5-620 of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article from civil liability or criminal penalty.

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

**Approved by the Governor, May 4, 2010.**