

H.622

An act relating to obligations for reporting child abuse and neglect and cooperating in investigations of child abuse and neglect

The Senate proposes to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 33 V.S.A. § 4913 is amended to read:

§ 4913. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT; REMEDIAL  
ACTION

\* \* \*

(c) Any mandated reporter who reasonably suspects abuse or neglect of a child shall report in accordance with the provisions of section 4914 of this title within 24 hours of the time information regarding the suspected abuse or neglect was first received or observed.

\* \* \*

(h)(1) A person who violates subsection ~~(a)~~(c) of this section shall be fined not more than \$500.00.

(2) A person who violates subsection ~~(a)~~(c) of this section with the intent to conceal abuse or neglect of a child shall be imprisoned not more than six months or fined not more than \$1,000.00, or both.

(3) This section shall not be construed to prohibit a prosecution under any other provision of law.

(4) It shall be an affirmative defense to a charge under subsection (c) of this section that the mandated reporter did not report in accordance with subsection (c) because the person had written confirmation that the same incident of suspected abuse or neglect was already reported and the mandated reporter was reasonably certain that he or she had no additional information to report. The burden shall be on the defendant to prove the affirmative defense by a preponderance of the evidence. The affirmative defense shall not apply to a person who violates subsection (c) of this section with the intent to conceal abuse or neglect of a child.

(5) Prior to charging a mandated reporter under subsection (c) of this section, the prosecutor shall make a reasonable inquiry into whether the mandated reporter had written confirmation that the same incident of suspected abuse or neglect was already reported and whether the mandated reporter was reasonably certain that he or she had no additional information to report.

(i) Except as provided in subsection ~~(h)~~(j) of this section, a person may not refuse to make a report required by this section on the grounds that making the report would violate a privilege or disclose a confidential communication.

(j) A member of the clergy shall not be required to make a report under this section if the report would be based upon information received in a communication which is:

(1) made to a member of the clergy acting in his or her capacity as spiritual advisor;

(2) intended by the parties to be confidential at the time the communication is made;

(3) intended by the communicant to be an act of contrition or a matter of conscience; and

(4) required to be confidential by religious law, doctrine, or tenet.

(k) When a member of the clergy receives information about abuse or neglect of a child in a manner other than as described in subsection ~~(h)~~(j) of this section, he or she is required to report on the basis of that information even though he or she may have also received a report of abuse or neglect about the same person or incident in the manner described in subsection ~~(h)~~(j) of this section.

## Sec. 2. JOINT LEGISLATIVE CHILD PROTECTION OVERSIGHT

### COMMITTEE; 2016 INTERIM RESPONSIBILITIES; PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATIONS

During the 2016 legislative interim, the Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee shall:

(1) review issues related to patient privilege, confidentiality of patient records and information, and the statutes and rules governing professional conduct; and

(2) analyze the extent to which those professional obligations identified in subdivision (1) interfere with the ability of certain professional mandated reporters to cooperate with the Department for Children and Families, law enforcement, and prosecutors during an ongoing child protection assessment, investigation, or proceeding.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.