

HOUSE BILL No. 2628

AN ACT concerning children and minors; relating to child fatality records; requiring the secretary for children and families to release certain information related to a child fatality when criminal charges are filed with a court alleging that a person caused such fatality; amending K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 38-2212 and repealing the existing section.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

Section 1. K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 38-2212 is hereby amended to read as follows: 38-2212. (a) *Principle of appropriate access.* Information contained in confidential agency records concerning a child alleged or adjudicated to be in need of care may be disclosed as provided in this section and shall be disclosed as provided in subsection (e). Disclosure shall in all cases be guided by the principle of providing access only to persons or entities with a need for information that is directly related to achieving the purposes of this code.

(b) *Free exchange of information.* Pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2210, and amendments thereto, the secretary and juvenile intake and assessment agencies shall participate in the free exchange of information concerning a child who is alleged or adjudicated to be in need of care.

(c) *Necessary access.* The following persons or entities shall have access to information from agency records. Access shall be limited to information reasonably necessary to carry out their lawful responsibilities, to maintain their personal safety and the personal safety of individuals in their care, or to educate, diagnose, treat, care for or protect a child alleged to be in need of care. Information authorized to be disclosed pursuant to this subsection shall not contain information that identifies a reporter of a child who is alleged or adjudicated to be a child in need of care.

(1) A child named in the report or records, a guardian ad litem appointed for the child and the child's attorney.

(2) A parent or other person responsible for the welfare of a child, or such person's legal representative.

(3) A court-appointed special advocate for a child, a citizen review board or other advocate that reports to the court.

(4) A person licensed to practice the healing arts or mental health profession in order to diagnose, care for, treat or supervise:

(A) A child whom such service provider reasonably suspects may be in need of care;

(B) a member of the child's family; or

(C) a person who allegedly abused or neglected the child.

(5) A person or entity licensed or registered by the secretary of health and environment or approved by the secretary for children and families to care for, treat or supervise a child in need of care.

(6) A coroner or medical examiner when such person is determining the cause of death of a child.

(7) The state child death review board established under K.S.A. 22a-243, and amendments thereto.

(8) An attorney for a private party who files a petition pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2233(b), and amendments thereto.

(9) A foster parent, prospective foster parent, permanent custodian, prospective permanent custodian, adoptive parent or prospective adoptive parent. In order to assist such persons in making an informed decision regarding acceptance of a particular child, to help the family anticipate problems that may occur during the child's placement, and to help the family meet the needs of the child in a constructive manner, the secretary shall seek and shall provide the following information to such persons as the information becomes available to the secretary:

(A) Strengths, needs and general behavior of the child;

- (B) circumstances that necessitated placement;
- (C) information about the child's family and the child's relationship to the family that may affect the placement;
- (D) important life experiences and relationships that may affect the child's feelings, behavior, attitudes or adjustment;
- (E) medical history of the child, including third-party coverage that may be available to the child; and
- (F) education history, to include present grade placement, special strengths and weaknesses.

(10) The state protection and advocacy agency as provided by K.S.A. 65-5603(a)(10) or K.S.A. 74-5515(a)(2)(A) and (B), and amendments thereto.

(11) Any educational institution to the extent necessary to enable the educational institution to provide the safest possible environment for its pupils and employees.

(12) Any educator to the extent necessary to enable the educator to protect the personal safety of the educator and the educator's pupils.

(13) Any other federal, state or local government executive branch entity or any agent of such entity, having a need for such information in order to carry out such entity's responsibilities under the law to protect children from abuse and neglect.

(d) *Specified access.* The following persons or entities shall have access to information contained in agency records as specified. Information authorized to be disclosed pursuant to this subsection shall not contain information that identifies a reporter of a child who is alleged or adjudicated to be a child in need of care.

(1) Information from confidential agency records of the Kansas department for children and families, a law enforcement agency or any juvenile intake and assessment worker of a child alleged or adjudicated to be in need of care shall be available to members of the standing house or senate committee on judiciary, house committee on corrections and juvenile justice, house committee on appropriations, senate committee on ways and means, legislative post audit committee and any joint committee with authority to consider children's and families' issues, when carrying out such member's or committee's official functions in accordance with K.S.A. 75-4319, and amendments thereto, in a closed or executive meeting. Except in limited conditions established by $\frac{2}{3}$ of the members of such committee, records and reports received by the committee shall not be further disclosed. Unauthorized disclosure may subject such member to discipline or censure from the house of representatives or senate. The secretary for children and families shall not summarize the outcome of department actions regarding a child alleged to be a child in need of care in information available to members of such committees.

(2) The secretary for children and families may summarize the outcome of department actions regarding a child alleged to be a child in need of care to a person having made such report.

(3) Information from confidential reports or records of a child alleged or adjudicated to be a child in need of care may be disclosed to the public when:

(A) The individuals involved or their representatives have given express written consent; or

(B) the investigation of the abuse or neglect of the child or the filing of a petition alleging a child to be in need of care has become public knowledge, ~~provided, however,~~ *except* that the agency shall limit disclosure to confirmation of procedural details relating to the handling of the case by professionals.

(e) *Law enforcement access.* The secretary shall disclose confidential agency records of a child alleged or adjudicated to be a child in need of care, as described in K.S.A. 38-2209, and amendments thereto, to the law enforcement agency investigating the alleged or substantiated report or investigation of abuse or neglect, regardless of the disposition of such report or investigation. Such records shall include, but not be limited to, any information regarding such report or

investigation, records of past reports or investigations concerning such child and such child's siblings and the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator and the name and contact information of the reporter or persons alleging abuse or neglect and case managers, investigators or contracting agency employees assigned to or investigating such report. Such records shall only be used for the purposes of investigating the alleged or substantiated report or investigation of abuse or neglect.

(f) *Court order.* Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, a court of competent jurisdiction, after in camera inspection, may order disclosure of confidential agency records pursuant to a determination that the disclosure is in the best interests of the child who is the subject of the reports or that the records are necessary for the proceedings of the court. The court shall specify the terms of disclosure and impose appropriate limitations.

(g) (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, except as provided in paragraph (6), in the event that child abuse or neglect results in a child fatality or near fatality, reports or records of a child alleged or adjudicated to be in need of care received by the secretary, a law enforcement agency or any juvenile intake and assessment worker shall become a public record and subject to disclosure pursuant to K.S.A. 45-215, and amendments thereto.

(2) Within seven days of receipt of a request in accordance with the procedures adopted under K.S.A. 45-220, and amendments thereto, the secretary shall notify any affected individual that an open records request has been made concerning such records. The secretary or any affected individual may file a motion requesting the court to prevent disclosure of such record or report, or any select portion thereof. Notice of the filing of such motion shall be provided to all parties requesting the records or reports, and such party or parties shall have a right to hearing, upon request, prior to the entry of any order on such motion. If the affected individual does not file such motion within seven days of notification, and the secretary has not filed a motion, the secretary shall release the reports or records. If such motion is filed, the court shall consider the effect such disclosure may have upon an ongoing criminal investigation, a pending prosecution, or the privacy of the child, if living, or the child's siblings, parents or guardians, and the public's interest in the disclosure of such records or reports. The court shall make written findings on the record justifying the closing of the records and shall provide a copy of the journal entry to the affected parties and the individual requesting disclosure pursuant to the Kansas open records act, K.S.A. 45-215 et seq., and amendments thereto.

(3) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (2), in the event that child abuse or neglect results in a child fatality *or criminal charges are filed with a court alleging that a person caused a child fatality*, the secretary shall release the following information in response to an open records request made pursuant to the Kansas open records act, within seven business days of receipt of such request, as allowed by applicable law:

- (A) Age and sex of the child;
- (B) date of the fatality;
- (C) a summary of any previous reports of abuse or neglect received by the secretary involving the child, along with the findings of such reports; and
- (D) any department recommended services provided to the child.

(4) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (2), in the event that a child fatality occurs while such child was in the custody of the secretary for children and families, the secretary shall release the following information in response to an open records request made pursuant to the Kansas open records act, within seven business days of receipt of such request, as allowed by applicable law:

- (A) Age and sex of the child;
 - (B) date of the fatality; and
 - (C) a summary of the facts surrounding the death of the child.
- (5) For reports or records requested pursuant to this subsection,

the time limitations specified in this subsection shall control to the extent of any inconsistency between this subsection and K.S.A. 45-218, and amendments thereto. As used in this section, "near fatality" means an act that, as certified by a person licensed to practice medicine and surgery, places the child in serious or critical condition.

(6) Nothing in this subsection shall allow the disclosure of reports, records or documents concerning the child and such child's biological parents that were created prior to such child's adoption. Nothing herein is intended to require that an otherwise privileged communication lose its privileged character.

Sec. 2. K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 38-2212 is hereby repealed.

Sec. 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.

I hereby certify that the above BILL originated in the HOUSE, and passed that body

Speaker of the House.

Chief Clerk of the House.

Passed the SENATE _____

President of the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate.

APPROVED _____

Governor.