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SENATE BILL NO. 35

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled November 19, 2025

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-274 and 16.1-278.8 of the Code of Virginia, relating to juvenile and domestic relations district courts; delinquent juveniles; mental health or disability evaluations.

Patron—Favola

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That §§ 16.1-274 and 16.1-278.8 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 16.1-274. Time for filing of reports; copies furnished to attorneys; amended reports; fees.**

A. Whenever any court directs an investigation pursuant to subdivision A of § 16.1-237 or § 16.1-273 or 9.1-153, or an evaluation pursuant to § 16.1-278.5 or subsection C of § 16.1-278.8, the probation officer, court-appointed special advocate, or other agency conducting such investigation shall file such report with the clerk of the court directing the investigation. The clerk shall furnish a copy of such report to all attorneys representing parties in the matter before the court no later than 72 hours, and in cases of child custody, 15 days, prior to the time set by the court for hearing the matter. If such probation officer or other agency discovers additional information or a change in circumstance after the filing of the report, an amended report shall be filed forthwith and a copy sent to each person who received a copy of the original report. Whenever such a report is not filed or an amended report is filed, the court shall grant such continuance of the proceedings as justice requires. All attorneys receiving such report or amended report shall return such to the clerk upon the conclusion of the hearing and shall not make copies of such report or amended report or any portion thereof. However, the chief judge of each juvenile and domestic relations district court may provide for an alternative means of copying and distributing reports or amended reports referenced above.

B. Notwithstanding the provisions of §§ 16.1-69.48:2 and 17.1-275, when the court directs the appropriate local department of social services to conduct supervised visitation or directs the appropriate local department of social services or court services unit to conduct an investigation pursuant to § 16.1-273 or to provide mediation services in matters involving a child's custody, visitation, or support, the court shall assess a fee against the petitioner, the respondent, or both, in accordance with fee schedules established by the appropriate local board of social services when the service is provided by a local department of social services or by a court services unit. The fee schedules shall include (i) standards for determining the paying party's or parties' ability to pay and (ii) a scale of fees based on the paying party's or parties' income and family size and the actual cost of the services provided. The fee charged shall not exceed the actual cost of the service. The fee shall be assessed as a cost of the case and shall be paid as prescribed by the court to the local department of social services, locally operated court services unit or Department of Juvenile Justice, whichever performed the service, unless payment is waived. The method and medium for payment for such services shall be determined by the local department of social services, Department of Juvenile Justice, or the locally operated court services unit that provided the services.

C. When a local department of social services or any court services unit is requested by another local department or court services unit in the Commonwealth or by a similar department or entity in another state to conduct an investigation involving a child's custody, visitation or support pursuant to § 16.1-273 or, in the case of a request from another state pursuant to a provision corresponding to § 16.1-273, or to provide mediation services, or for a local department of social services to provide supervised visitation, the local department or the court services unit performing the service may require payment of fees prior to conducting the investigation or providing mediation services or supervised visitation.

D. In any matter in which the court appoints a guardian ad litem to represent a child, such guardian ad litem shall conduct an investigation in accordance with the Standards to Govern the Performance of Guardians Ad Litem for Children established by the Judicial Council of Virginia. Prior to the commencement of the dispositional hearing of any such matter, the guardian ad litem shall file with the court, with a copy to all attorneys representing parties to such matter and all parties proceeding pro se in such matter, a certification of the guardian ad litem's compliance with the Standards to Govern the Performance of Guardians Ad Litem for Children established by the Judicial Council of Virginia, specifically addressing compliance with such standards requiring face-to-face contact with the child in such certification. The guardian ad litem shall document the hours spent satisfying such face-to-face contact requirements in such certification, which shall be compensated at the same rate as that for in-court service.

§ 16.1-278.8. Delinquent juveniles.

A. If a juvenile is found to be delinquent, except where such finding involves a refusal to take a breath test

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in violation of § 18.2-268.2 or a similar ordinance, the juvenile court or the circuit court may make any of the following orders of disposition for his supervision, care and rehabilitation:

1. Enter an order pursuant to the provisions of § 16.1-278;
2. Permit the juvenile to remain with his parent, subject to such conditions and limitations as the court may order with respect to the juvenile and his parent;
3. Order the parent of a juvenile living with him to participate in such programs, cooperate in such treatment or be subject to such conditions and limitations as the court may order and as are designed for the rehabilitation of the juvenile and his parent;
4. Defer disposition for a specific period of time established by the court with due regard for the gravity of the offense and the juvenile's history, after which time the charge may be dismissed by the judge if the juvenile exhibits good behavior during the period for which disposition is deferred;
5. Without entering a judgment of guilty and with the consent of the juvenile and his attorney, defer disposition of the delinquency charge for a specific period of time established by the court with due regard for the gravity of the offense and the juvenile's history, and place the juvenile on probation under such conditions and limitations as the court may prescribe. Upon fulfillment of the terms and conditions, the court shall discharge the juvenile and dismiss the proceedings against him. Discharge and dismissal under these provisions shall be without adjudication of guilt;
6. Order the parent of a juvenile with whom the juvenile does not reside to participate in such programs, cooperate in such treatment or be subject to such conditions and limitations as the court may order and as are designed for the rehabilitation of the juvenile where the court determines this participation to be in the best interest of the juvenile and other parties concerned and where the court determines it reasonable to expect the parent to be able to comply with such order;
7. Place the juvenile on probation under such conditions and limitations as the court may prescribe;
- 7a. Place the juvenile on probation and order treatment for the abuse or dependence on alcohol or drugs in a program licensed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services for the treatment of juveniles for substance abuse provided that (i) the juvenile has received a substance abuse screening and assessment pursuant to § 16.1-273 and that such assessment reasonably indicates that the commission of the offense was motivated by, or closely related to, the habitual use of alcohol or drugs and indicates that the juvenile is in need of treatment for this condition; (ii) the juvenile has not previously been and is not currently being adjudicated for a violent juvenile felony; and (iii) such facility is available. Upon the juvenile's withdrawal, removal, or refusal to comply with the conditions of participation in the program, he shall be brought before the court for a hearing at which the court may impose any other disposition authorized by this section. The court shall review such placements at 30-day intervals;
8. Impose a fine not to exceed \$500 upon such juvenile;
9. Suspend the motor vehicle and driver's license of such juvenile or impose a curfew on the juvenile as to the hours during which he may operate a motor vehicle. Any juvenile whose driver's license is suspended may be referred for an assessment and subsequent referral to appropriate services, upon such terms and conditions as the court may order. The court, in its discretion and upon a demonstration of hardship, may authorize the use of a restricted permit to operate a motor vehicle by any juvenile who enters such program for any of the purposes set forth in subsection E of § 18.2-271.1 or for travel to and from school. The restricted permit shall be issued in accordance with the provisions of such subsection. However, only an abstract of the court order that identifies the juvenile and the conditions under which the restricted license is to be issued shall be sent to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

If a curfew is imposed, the juvenile shall surrender his driver's license, which shall be held in the physical custody of the court during any period of curfew restriction. The court shall send an abstract of any order issued under the provisions of this section to the Department of Motor Vehicles, which shall preserve a record thereof. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 12 (§ 16.1-299 et seq.) of this chapter or the provisions of Title 46.2, this record shall be available only to all law-enforcement officers, attorneys for the Commonwealth and courts. A copy of the court order, upon which shall be noted all curfew restrictions, shall be provided to the juvenile and shall contain such information regarding the juvenile as is reasonably necessary to identify him. The juvenile may operate a motor vehicle under the court order in accordance with its terms.
- Any juvenile who operates a motor vehicle in violation of any restrictions imposed pursuant to this section is guilty of a violation of § 46.2-301.
- The Department of Motor Vehicles shall refuse to issue a driver's license to any juvenile denied a driver's license until such time as is stipulated in the court order or until notification by the court of withdrawal of the order imposing the curfew;
10. Require the juvenile to make restitution or reparation to the aggrieved party or parties for actual damages or loss caused by the offense for which the juvenile was found to be delinquent;
11. Require the juvenile to participate in a public service project under such conditions as the court prescribes;
12. In case of traffic violations, impose only those penalties that are authorized to be imposed on adults

for such violations. However, for those violations punishable by confinement if committed by an adult, confinement shall be imposed only as authorized by this title;

13. Transfer legal custody to any of the following:

a. A relative or other individual who, after study, is found by the court to be qualified to receive and care for the juvenile;

b. A child welfare agency, private organization or facility that is licensed or otherwise authorized by law to receive and provide care for such juvenile. The court shall not transfer legal custody of a delinquent juvenile to an agency, organization or facility outside of the Commonwealth without the approval of the Director; or

c. The local board of social services of the county or city in which the court has jurisdiction or, at the discretion of the court, to the local board of the county or city in which the juvenile has residence if other than the county or city in which the court has jurisdiction. The board shall accept the juvenile for care and custody, provided that it has been given reasonable notice of the pendency of the case and an opportunity to be heard. However, in an emergency in the county or city in which the court has jurisdiction, such local board may be required to temporarily accept a juvenile for a period not to exceed 14 days without prior notice or an opportunity to be heard if the judge entering the placement order describes the emergency and the need for such temporary placement in the order. Nothing in this subdivision shall prohibit the commitment of a juvenile to any local board of social services in the Commonwealth when such local board consents to the commitment. The board to which the juvenile is committed shall have the final authority to determine the appropriate placement for the juvenile. Nothing herein shall limit the authority of the court to review the child's status in foster care in accordance with subsection G of § 16.1-281 or to review the foster care plan through a petition filed pursuant to subsection A of § 16.1-282. Any order authorizing removal from the home and transferring legal custody of a juvenile to a local board of social services as provided in this subdivision shall be entered only upon a finding by the court that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent removal and that continued placement in the home would be contrary to the welfare of the juvenile, and the order shall so state;

14. Unless waived by an agreement between the attorney for the Commonwealth and the juvenile and his attorney or other legal representative, upon consideration of the results of an investigation completed pursuant to § 16.1-273, commit the juvenile to the Department of Juvenile Justice, but only if (i) he is 11 years of age or older and has been adjudicated delinquent of an act enumerated in subsection B or C of § 16.1-269.1 or (ii) he is 14 years of age or older and the current offense is (a) an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, (b) an offense that would be a Class 1 misdemeanor if committed by an adult and the juvenile has previously been found to be delinquent based on an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, or (c) an offense that would be a Class 1 misdemeanor if committed by an adult and the juvenile has previously been adjudicated delinquent of three or more offenses that would be a Class 1 misdemeanor if committed by an adult, and each such offense was not a part of a common act, transaction or scheme;

15. Impose the penalty authorized by § 16.1-284;

16. Impose the penalty authorized by § 16.1-284.1;

17. Unless waived by an agreement between the attorney for the Commonwealth and the juvenile and his attorney or other legal representative, upon consideration of the results of an investigation completed pursuant to § 16.1-273, impose the penalty authorized by § 16.1-285.1;

18. Impose the penalty authorized by § 16.1-278.9; or

19. Require the juvenile to participate in a gang-activity prevention program including, but not limited to, programs funded under the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act pursuant to § 16.1-309.7, if available, when a juvenile has been found delinquent of any of the following violations: § 18.2-51, 18.2-51.1, 18.2-52, 18.2-53, 18.2-55, 18.2-56, 18.2-57, 18.2-57.2, 18.2-121, 18.2-127, 18.2-128, 18.2-137, 18.2-138, 18.2-146, or 18.2-147, or any violation of a local ordinance adopted pursuant to § 15.2-1812.2.

B. If the court finds a juvenile delinquent of any of the following offenses, the court shall require the juvenile to make at least partial restitution or reparation for any property damage, for loss caused by the offense, or for actual medical expenses incurred by the victim as a result of the offense: § 18.2-51, 18.2-51.1, 18.2-52, 18.2-53, 18.2-55, 18.2-56, 18.2-57, 18.2-57.2, 18.2-121, 18.2-127, 18.2-128, 18.2-137, 18.2-138, 18.2-146, or 18.2-147; or for any violation of a local ordinance adopted pursuant to § 15.2-1812.2. The court shall further require the juvenile to participate in a community service project under such conditions as the court prescribes.

C. If a court finds a juvenile to be delinquent, the court may, before final disposition of the case, direct the appropriate public agency to evaluate the juvenile's mental health or disability needs using an interdisciplinary team approach. Such interdisciplinary team shall consist of qualified personnel who are reasonably available from the appropriate local department of social services, community services board, court service unit, and other appropriate and available public agencies and may be the family assessment and planning team established pursuant to § 2.2-5207. A report of the evaluation shall be filed by the evaluating agency with the appropriate clerk of court. The clerk shall furnish a copy of such report to all

183 attorneys representing parties in the matter before the court no later than 72 hours prior to the time set by
184 the court for hearing the matter. If such evaluating agency discovers additional information or a change in
185 circumstance after the filing of the report, an amended report shall be filed forthwith and a copy sent to each
186 person who received a copy of the original report. Whenever such a report is not filed or an amended report
187 is filed, the court may grant such continuance of the proceedings as justice requires. All attorneys receiving
188 such report or amended report shall return such report or amended report to the clerk upon the conclusion of
189 the hearing and shall not make copies of such report or amended report or any portion thereof. However, the
190 chief judge of each juvenile and domestic relations district court may provide for an alternative means of
191 copying and distributing such reports or amended reports. In lieu of directing an evaluation to be made, the
192 court may consider the report concerning the juvenile of an interdisciplinary team that met not more than 90
193 days prior to the court's making a finding that the juvenile is delinquent.