

STATE OF TENNESSEE

PUBLIC CHAPTER NO. 425

HOUSE BILL NO. 2233

By Representative Coleman

Substituted for: Senate Bill No. 2109

By Senators Overbey, Norris, Finney

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 29-26-121, relative to health care liability.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 29-26-121, is amended by deleting it in its entirety and by substituting instead the following:

(a)

(1) Any person, or that person's authorized agent, asserting a potential claim for medical malpractice shall give written notice of the potential claim to each health care provider who will be a named defendant at least sixty (60) days before the filing of a complaint based upon medical malpractice in any court of this state.

(2) The notice shall include:

(A) The full name and date of birth of the patient whose treatment is at issue;

(B) The name and address of the claimant authorizing the notice and the relationship to the patient, if the notice is not sent by the patient;

(C) The name and address of the attorney sending the notice, if applicable;

(D) A list of the name and address of all providers being sent a notice; and

(E) A HIPAA compliant medical authorization permitting the provider receiving the notice to obtain complete medical records from each other provider being sent a notice.

(3) The requirement of service of written notice prior to suit is deemed satisfied if, within the statutes of limitations and statutes of repose applicable to the provider, one of the following occurs, as

established by the specified proof of service, which shall be filed with the complaint:

(A) Personal delivery of the notice to the health care provider or an identified individual whose job function includes receptionist for deliveries to the provider or for arrival of the provider's patients at the provider's current practice location. Delivery must be established by an affidavit stating that such notice was personally delivered, and the identity of the individual to whom the notice was delivered; or

(B) Mailing of the notice:

(i) To an individual health care provider at both the address listed for the provider on the Tennessee department of health website and the provider's current business address, if different from the address maintained by the Tennessee department of health; provided that, if the mailings are returned undelivered from both such addresses, then, within five (5) business days after receipt of the second undelivered letter, the notice shall be mailed in the specified manner to the provider's office or business address at the location where the provider last provided a medical service to the patient;

(ii) To a health care provider that is a corporation or other business entity at both the address for the agent for service of process; and the provider's current business address, if different from that of the agent for service of process; provided that, if the mailings are returned undelivered from both addresses, then, within five (5) business days after receipt of the second undelivered letter, the notice shall be mailed in the specified manner to the provider's office or business address at the location where the provider last provided a medical service to the patient;

(4) Compliance with the provisions of subdivision (a)(3)(B) shall be demonstrated by filing a certificate of mailing from the U.S. postal service stamped with the date of mailing, and an affidavit of the party mailing the notice, establishing that the specified notice was timely mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested. A copy of the notice sent shall be attached to the affidavit. It is not necessary that the addressee of the notice sign or return the return receipt card that accompanies a letter sent by certified mail for service to be effective.

(b) If a complaint is filed in any court alleging a claim for medical malpractice, the pleadings shall state whether each party has complied with subsection (a) and shall provide the documentation specified in subdivision (a)(2). The court may require additional evidence of compliance to determine if

the provisions of this section have been met. The court has discretion to excuse compliance with this section only for extraordinary cause shown.

(c) When notice is given to a provider as provided in this section, the applicable statutes of limitations and repose shall be extended for a period of one hundred twenty (120) days from the date of expiration of the statute of limitations and statute of repose applicable to that provider. Personal service is effective on the date of that service. Service by mail is effective on the first day that service by mail is made in compliance with subdivision (a)(2)(B). In no event shall this section operate to shorten or otherwise extend the statutes of limitations or repose applicable to any action asserting a claim for medical malpractice, nor shall more than one (1) extension be applicable to any provider. Once a complaint is filed alleging a claim for medical malpractice, the notice provisions of this section shall not apply to any person or entity that is made a party to the action thereafter by amendment to the pleadings as a result of a defendant's alleging comparative fault.

(d) All parties in an action covered by this section shall be entitled to obtain complete copies of the claimant's medical records from any other provider receiving notice. A party shall provide a copy of the specified portions of the claimant's medical records as of the date of the receipt of a legally authorized written request for the records within thirty (30) days thereafter. The claimant complies with this requirement by providing the providers with the authorized HIPAA compliant medical authorization required to accompany the notice. The provider may comply with this section by:

(1) Mailing a copy of the requested portions of the records with a statement for the cost of duplication of the records to the individual requesting the records;

(2) Informing the individual requesting the records that the records will be mailed only upon advance payment for the records for the stated cost of the records, calculated as provided in § 63-2-102. Any request for advance payment must be made in writing twenty (20) days after the receipt of the request for medical records. The provider must send the records within three (3) business days after receipt of payment for the records; or

(3) Fulfilling such other method as the provider and the individual requesting the records shall agree to in writing.

The records received by the parties shall be treated as confidential, to be used only by the parties, their counsel, and their consultants.

(e) In the event that a complaint is filed in good faith reliance on the extension of the statute of limitations or repose granted by this section and it is later determined that the claim is not a medical malpractice claim, the extension of the statute of limitations and repose granted by this subsection is still available to the plaintiff.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 29-26-122(a), is amended by deleting the first clause in its entirety and by substituting instead the following:

(a) In any medical malpractice action in which expert testimony is required by § 29-26-115, the plaintiff or plaintiff's counsel shall file a certificate of good faith with the complaint. If the certificate is not filed with the complaint, the complaint shall be dismissed, as provided in subsection (c), absent a showing that such failure was due to the failure of the provider to timely provide copies of the claimant's records requested as provided in § 29-26-121 or demonstrated extraordinary cause. The certificate of good faith shall state that:

SECTION 3. If any provision of this act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to that end the provisions of this act are declared to be severable.

SECTION 4. Section 1 of this act shall take effect and apply to notice given on or after July 1, 2009, in all medical malpractice actions, the public welfare requiring it. Section 2 of this act shall take effect on July 1, 2009, and shall apply only to those actions in which the required notice is given on or after July 1, 2009, pursuant to Section 1, the public welfare requiring it. In the event that notice is successfully given more than once to a provider, the effect of the notice is determined by the law in effect on the date of the first successful notice.

PASSED: June 4, 2009


KENT WILLIAMS, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES


RON RAMSEY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

APPROVED this 11th day of June 2009


PHIL BREDESEN, GOVERNOR