

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2005

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HOUSE BILL 277*

Short Title: Establish Child Assessment Responses. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Glazier, Alexander, Carney (Primary Sponsors); B. Allen and Insko.

Referred to: Judiciary IV.

February 17, 2005

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR FAMILY ASSESSMENT RESPONSES IN CASES IN WHICH CHILDREN ARE REPORTED TO BE NEGLECTED OR DEPENDENT AND FOR INVESTIGATIVE ASSESSMENT RESPONSES IN CASES IN WHICH CHILDREN ARE REPORTED TO BE ABUSED.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 7B-101 reads as rewritten:

"§ 7B-101. Definitions.

As used in this Subchapter, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following words have the listed meanings:

- (1) Abused juveniles. – Any juvenile less than 18 years of age whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker:
 - a. Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the juvenile a serious physical injury by other than accidental means;
 - b. Creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of serious physical injury to the juvenile by other than accidental means;
 - c. Uses or allows to be used upon the juvenile cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or cruel or grossly inappropriate devices to modify behavior;
 - d. Commits, permits, or encourages the commission of a violation of the following laws by, with, or upon the juvenile: first-degree rape, as provided in G.S. 14-27.2; second degree rape as provided in G.S. 14-27.3; first-degree sexual offense, as provided in G.S. 14-27.4; second degree sexual offense, as provided in G.S. 14-27.5; sexual act by a custodian, as provided in G.S. 14-27.7; crime against nature, as provided in G.S. 14-177; incest, as provided in ~~G.S. 14-178~~ and ~~G.S. 14-179~~; G.S. 14-178; preparation of obscene photographs,

- 1 slides, or motion pictures of the juvenile, as provided in
2 G.S. 14-190.5; employing or permitting the juvenile to assist in
3 a violation of the obscenity laws as provided in G.S. 14-190.6;
4 dissemination of obscene material to the juvenile as provided in
5 G.S. 14-190.7 and G.S. 14-190.8; displaying or disseminating
6 material harmful to the juvenile as provided in G.S. 14-190.14
7 and G.S. 14-190.15; first and second degree sexual exploitation
8 of the juvenile as provided in G.S. 14-190.16 and
9 G.S. 14-190.17; promoting the prostitution of the juvenile as
10 provided in G.S. 14-190.18; and taking indecent liberties with
11 the juvenile, as provided in ~~G.S. 14-202.1, regardless of the age~~
12 ~~of the parties; G.S. 14-202.1;~~
- 13 e. Creates or allows to be created serious emotional damage to the
14 juvenile; serious emotional damage is evidenced by a juvenile's
15 severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior
16 toward himself or others; or
- 17 f. Encourages, directs, or approves of delinquent acts involving
18 moral turpitude committed by the juvenile.
- 19 (2) Aggravated circumstances. – Any circumstance attending to the
20 commission of an act of abuse or neglect which increases its enormity
21 or adds to its injurious consequences, including, but not limited to,
22 abandonment, torture, chronic abuse, or sexual abuse.
- 23 (3) Caretaker. – Any person other than a parent, guardian, or custodian
24 who has responsibility for the health and welfare of a juvenile in a
25 residential setting. A person responsible for a juvenile's health and
26 welfare means a stepparent, foster parent, an adult member of the
27 juvenile's household, an adult relative entrusted with the juvenile's
28 care, any person such as a house parent or cottage parent who has
29 primary responsibility for supervising a juvenile's health and welfare
30 in a residential child care facility or residential educational facility, or
31 any employee or volunteer of a division, institution, or school operated
32 by the Department of Health and Human Services. "Caretaker" also
33 means any person who has the responsibility for the care of a juvenile
34 in a child care facility as defined in Article 7 of Chapter 110 of the
35 General Statutes and includes any person who has the approval of the
36 care provider to assume responsibility for the juveniles under the care
37 of the care provider. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to
38 impose a legal duty of support under Chapter 50 or Chapter 110 of the
39 General Statutes. The duty imposed upon a caretaker as defined in this
40 subdivision shall be for the purpose of this Subchapter only.
- 41 (4) Clerk. – Any clerk of superior court, acting clerk, or assistant or
42 deputy clerk.
- 43 (5) Community-based program. – A program providing nonresidential or
44 residential treatment to a juvenile in the community where the

- 1 juvenile's family lives. A community-based program may include
2 specialized foster care, family counseling, shelter care, and other
3 appropriate treatment.
- 4 (6) Court. – The district court division of the General Court of Justice.
5 (7) Court of competent jurisdiction. – A court having the power and
6 authority of law to act at the time of acting over the subject matter of
7 the cause.
- 8 (7a) "Criminal history" means a local, State, or federal criminal history of
9 conviction or pending indictment of a crime, whether a misdemeanor
10 or a felony, involving violence against a person.
- 11 (8) Custodian. – The person or agency that has been awarded legal
12 custody of a juvenile by a court or a person, other than parents or legal
13 guardian, who has assumed the status and obligation of a parent
14 without being awarded the legal custody of a juvenile by a court.
- 15 (9) Dependent juvenile. – A juvenile in need of assistance or placement
16 because the juvenile has no parent, guardian, or custodian responsible
17 for the juvenile's care or supervision or whose parent, guardian, or
18 custodian is unable to provide for the care or supervision and lacks an
19 appropriate alternative child care arrangement.
- 20 (10) Director. – The director of the county department of social services in
21 the county in which the juvenile resides or is found, or the director's
22 representative as authorized in G.S. 108A-14.
- 23 (11) District. – Any district court district as established by G.S. 7A-133.
- 24 (11a) Family assessment response. – A response to reports of child neglect
25 and dependency utilizing a family centered approach that is protection
26 and prevention oriented and that evaluates the family's strengths and
27 needs, as well as the condition of the juvenile.
- 28 (11b) Investigative assessment response. – A response to reports of child
29 abuse and selected reports of child neglect and dependency using a
30 formal information gathering process to determine whether a juvenile
31 is abused, neglected, or dependent.
- 32 (12) Judge. – Any district court judge.
- 33 (13) Judicial district. – Any district court district as established by
34 G.S. 7A-133.
- 35 (14) Juvenile. – A person who has not reached the person's eighteenth
36 birthday and is not married, emancipated, or a member of the armed
37 forces of the United States.
- 38 (15) Neglected juvenile. – A juvenile who does not receive proper care,
39 supervision, or discipline from the juvenile's parent, guardian,
40 custodian, or caretaker; or who has been abandoned; or who is not
41 provided necessary medical care; or who is not provided necessary
42 remedial care; or who lives in an environment injurious to the
43 juvenile's welfare; or who has been placed for care or adoption in
44 violation of law. In determining whether a juvenile is a neglected

1 juvenile, it is relevant whether that juvenile lives in a home where
2 another juvenile has died as a result of suspected abuse or neglect or
3 lives in a home where another juvenile has been subjected to abuse or
4 neglect by an adult who regularly lives in the home.

5 (16) Petitioner. – The individual who initiates court action, whether by the
6 filing of a petition or of a motion for review alleging the matter for
7 adjudication.

8 (17) Prosecutor. – The district attorney or assistant district attorney
9 assigned by the district attorney to juvenile proceedings.

10 (18) Reasonable efforts. – The diligent use of preventive or reunification
11 services by a department of social services when a juvenile's remaining
12 at home or returning home is consistent with achieving a safe,
13 permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time. If
14 a court of competent jurisdiction determines that the juvenile is not to
15 be returned home, then reasonable efforts means the diligent and
16 timely use of permanency planning services by a department of social
17 services to develop and implement a permanent plan for the juvenile.

18 (19) Safe home. – A home in which the juvenile is not at substantial risk of
19 physical or emotional abuse or neglect.

20 (20) Shelter care. – The temporary care of a juvenile in a physically
21 unrestricting facility pending court disposition.

22 The singular includes the plural, the masculine singular includes the feminine
23 singular and masculine and feminine plural unless otherwise specified."

24 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 7B-300 reads as rewritten:

25 **"§ 7B-300. Protective services.**

26 The director of the department of social services in each county of the State shall
27 establish protective services for juveniles alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent.

28 Protective services shall include the ~~investigation and screening of complaints,~~
29 reports, assessments using either a family assessment response or an investigative
30 assessment response, casework, or other counseling services to parents, guardians, or
31 other caretakers as provided by the director to help the parents, guardians, or other
32 caretakers and the court to prevent abuse or neglect, to improve the quality of child care,
33 to be more adequate parents, guardians, or caretakers, and to preserve and stabilize
34 family life.

35 The provisions of this Article shall also apply to child care facilities as defined in
36 G.S. 110-86."

37 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 7B-301 reads as rewritten:

38 **"§ 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to**
39 **maltreatment.**

40 Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused,
41 neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of
42 maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of
43 social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be
44 made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is

1 known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name
2 and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the
3 names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile
4 if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting
5 from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person
6 making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective
7 services or court intervention. If the report is made orally or by telephone, the person
8 making the report shall give the person's name, address, and telephone number. Refusal
9 of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's
10 ~~investigation-~~ assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result
11 of maltreatment.

12 Upon receipt of any report of sexual abuse of the juvenile in a child care facility, the
13 director shall notify the State Bureau of Investigation within 24 hours or on the next
14 workday. If sexual abuse in a child care facility is not alleged in the initial report, but
15 during the course of the ~~investigation-~~ assessment there is reason to suspect that sexual
16 abuse has occurred, the director shall immediately notify the State Bureau of
17 Investigation. Upon notification that sexual abuse may have occurred in a child care
18 facility, the State Bureau of Investigation may form a task force to investigate the
19 report."

20 **SECTION 4.** G.S. 7B-302 reads as rewritten:

21 "**§ 7B-302. ~~Investigation—Assessment~~ by director; access to confidential**
22 **information; notification of person making the report.**

23 (a) When a report of abuse, neglect, or dependency is received, the director of the
24 department of social services shall make a prompt and thorough ~~investigation~~
25 assessment, using either a family assessment response or an investigative assessment
26 response, in order to ascertain the facts of the case, the extent of the abuse or neglect,
27 and the risk of harm to the juvenile, in order to determine whether protective services
28 should be provided or the complaint filed as a petition. When the report alleges abuse,
29 the director shall immediately, but no later than 24 hours after receipt of the report,
30 initiate the ~~investigation-~~ assessment. When the report alleges neglect or dependency,
31 the director shall initiate the ~~investigation-~~ assessment within 72 hours following receipt
32 of the report. When the report alleges abandonment, the director shall immediately
33 initiate an investigation, take appropriate steps to assume temporary custody of the
34 juvenile, and take appropriate steps to secure an order for nonsecure custody of the
35 juvenile. The ~~investigation-~~ assessment and evaluation shall include a visit to the place
36 where the juvenile ~~resides-~~ resides and an inquiry into the identity of and contact
37 information for the juvenile's extended maternal and paternal family, except when a
38 report involves a child care facility as defined in Article 7 of Chapter 110 of the General
39 Statutes. When the report alleges abandonment, the investigation shall include a request
40 from the director to law enforcement officials to investigate through the North Carolina
41 Center for Missing Persons and other national and State resources whether the juvenile
42 is a missing child. All information received by the department of social services,
43 including the identity of the reporter, shall be held in strictest confidence by the
44 department.

1 (b) When a report of a juvenile's death as a result of suspected maltreatment or a
2 report of suspected abuse, neglect, or dependency of a juvenile in a noninstitutional
3 setting is received, the director of the department of social services shall immediately
4 ascertain if other juveniles live in the home, and, if so, initiate an ~~investigation~~
5 assessment in order to determine whether they require protective services or whether
6 immediate removal of the juveniles from the home is necessary for their protection.
7 When a report of a juvenile's death as a result of maltreatment or a report of suspected
8 abuse, neglect, or dependency of a juvenile in an institutional setting such as a
9 residential child care facility or residential educational facility is received, the director
10 of the department of social services shall immediately ascertain if other juveniles remain
11 in the facility subject to the alleged perpetrator's care or supervision, and, if so, assess
12 the circumstances of those juveniles in order to determine whether they require
13 protective services or whether immediate removal of those juveniles from the facility is
14 necessary for their protection.

15 (c) If the ~~investigation~~ assessment indicates that abuse, neglect, or dependency
16 has occurred, the director shall decide whether immediate removal of the juvenile or any
17 other juveniles in the home is necessary for their protection. If immediate removal does
18 not seem necessary, the director shall immediately provide or arrange for protective
19 services. If the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker refuses to accept the protective
20 services provided or arranged by the director, the director shall sign a complaint seeking
21 to invoke the jurisdiction of the court for the protection of the juvenile or juveniles.

22 (d) If immediate removal seems necessary for the protection of the juvenile or
23 other juveniles in the home, the director shall sign a complaint which alleges the
24 applicable facts to invoke the jurisdiction of the court. Where the ~~investigation~~
25 assessment shows that it is warranted, a protective services worker may assume
26 temporary custody of the juvenile for the juvenile's protection pursuant to Article 5 of
27 this Chapter.

28 (d1) Whenever a juvenile is removed from the home of a parent, guardian,
29 custodian, stepparent, or adult relative entrusted with the juvenile's care due to physical
30 abuse, the director shall conduct a thorough review of the background of the alleged
31 abuser or abusers. This review shall include a criminal history check and a review of
32 any available mental health records. If the review reveals that the alleged abuser or
33 abusers have a history of violent behavior against people, the director shall petition the
34 court to order the alleged abuser or abusers to submit to a complete mental health
35 evaluation by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist.

36 (e) In performing any duties related to the ~~investigation~~ assessment of the
37 ~~complaint~~ report or the provision or arrangement for protective services, the director
38 may consult with any public or private agencies or individuals, including the available
39 State or local law enforcement officers who shall assist in the ~~investigation~~ assessment
40 and evaluation of the seriousness of any report of abuse, neglect, or dependency when
41 requested by the director. The director or the director's representative may make a
42 written demand for any information or reports, whether or not confidential, that may in
43 the director's opinion be relevant to the ~~investigation of or the provision for~~ assessment
44 or provision of protective services. Upon the director's or the director's representative's

1 request and unless protected by the attorney-client privilege, any public or private
2 agency or individual shall provide access to and copies of this confidential information
3 and these records to the extent permitted by federal law and regulations. If a custodian
4 of criminal investigative information or records believes that release of the information
5 will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant
6 to receive a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation, it may seek
7 an order from a court of competent jurisdiction to prevent disclosure of the information.
8 In such an action, the custodian of the records shall have the burden of showing by a
9 preponderance of the evidence that disclosure of the information in question will
10 jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to
11 receive a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation. Actions brought
12 pursuant to this paragraph shall be set down for immediate hearing, and subsequent
13 proceedings in the actions shall be accorded priority by the trial and appellate courts.

14 (f) Within five working days after receipt of the report of abuse, neglect, or
15 dependency, the director shall give written notice to the person making the report,
16 unless requested by that person not to give notice, as to whether the report was accepted
17 for ~~investigation~~ assessment and whether the report was referred to the appropriate
18 State or local law enforcement agency.

19 (g) Within five working days after completion of the protective services
20 ~~investigation~~, assessment, the director shall give subsequent written notice to the person
21 making the report, unless requested by that person not to give notice, as to whether there
22 is a finding of abuse, neglect, or dependency, whether the county department of social
23 services is taking action to protect the juvenile, and what action it is taking, including
24 whether or not a petition was filed. The person making the report shall be informed of
25 procedures necessary to request a review by the prosecutor of the director's decision not
26 to file a petition. A request for review by the prosecutor shall be made within five
27 working days of receipt of the second notification. The second notification shall include
28 notice that, if the person making the report is not satisfied with the director's decision,
29 the person may request review of the decision by the prosecutor within five working
30 days of receipt. The person making the report may waive the person's right to this
31 notification, and no notification is required if the person making the report does not
32 identify himself to the director.

33 (h) The director or the director's representative may not enter a private residence
34 for ~~investigation~~ assessment purposes without at least one of the following:

- 35 (1) The reasonable belief that a juvenile is in imminent danger of death or
36 serious physical injury.
- 37 (2) The permission of the parent or person responsible for the juvenile's
38 care.
- 39 (3) The accompaniment of a law enforcement officer who has legal
40 authority to enter the residence.
- 41 (4) An order from a court of competent jurisdiction."

42 **SECTION 5.** G.S. 7B-303 reads as rewritten:

43 "**§ 7B-303. Interference with ~~investigation~~. assessment.**

1 (a) If any person obstructs or interferes with an ~~investigation~~ assessment
2 required by G.S. 7B-302, the director may file a petition naming ~~said~~ that person as
3 respondent and requesting an order directing the respondent to cease such obstruction or
4 interference. The petition shall contain the name and date of birth and address of the
5 juvenile who is the subject of the ~~investigation~~, assessment; shall describe the basis for
6 the director's reasonable belief that a juvenile may be abused, neglected, or dependent;
7 shall specifically describe the conduct alleged to constitute obstruction of or
8 interference with the ~~investigation~~, assessment; and shall be verified.

9 (b) For purposes of this section, obstruction of or interference with an
10 ~~investigation~~ assessment means refusing to disclose the whereabouts of the juvenile,
11 refusing to allow the director to have personal access to the juvenile, refusing to allow
12 the director to observe or interview the juvenile in private, refusing to allow the director
13 access to confidential information and records upon request pursuant to G.S. 7B-302,
14 refusing to allow the director to arrange for an evaluation of the juvenile by a physician
15 or other expert, or other conduct that makes it impossible for the director to carry out
16 the duty to ~~investigate~~. assess the juvenile's condition.

17 (c) Upon filing of the petition, the court shall schedule a hearing to be held not
18 less than five days after service of the petition and summons on the respondent. Service
19 of the petition and summons and notice of hearing shall be made as provided by the
20 Rules of Civil Procedure on the respondent; the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian,
21 or caretaker; and any other person determined by the court to be a necessary party. If at
22 the hearing on the petition the court finds by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence that
23 the respondent, without lawful excuse, has obstructed or interfered with an ~~investigation~~
24 assessment required by G.S. 7B-302, the court may order the respondent to cease such
25 obstruction or interference. The burden of proof shall be on the petitioner.

26 (d) If the director has reason to believe that the juvenile is in need of immediate
27 protection or assistance, the director shall so allege in the petition and may seek an ex
28 parte order from the court. If the court, from the verified petition and any inquiry the
29 court makes of the director, finds probable cause to believe both that the juvenile is at
30 risk of immediate harm and that the respondent is obstructing or interfering with the
31 director's ability to ~~investigate to determine~~ assess the juvenile's condition, the court
32 may enter an ex parte order directing the respondent to cease such obstruction or
33 interference. The order shall be limited to provisions necessary to enable the director to
34 conduct an ~~investigation~~ assessment sufficient to determine whether the juvenile is in
35 need of immediate protection or assistance. Within 10 days after the entry of an ex parte
36 order under this subsection, a hearing shall be held to determine whether there is good
37 cause for the continuation of the order or the entry of a different order. An order entered
38 under this subsection shall be served on the respondent along with a copy of the
39 petition, summons, and notice of hearing.

40 (e) The director may be required at a hearing under this section to reveal the
41 identity of any person who made a report of suspected abuse, neglect, or dependency as
42 required by G.S. 7B-301.

43 (f) An order entered pursuant to this section is enforceable by civil or criminal
44 contempt as provided in Chapter 5A of the General Statutes."

1 **SECTION 6.** G.S. 7B-305 reads as rewritten:

2 "**§ 7B-305. Request for review by prosecutor.**

3 The person making the report shall have five working days, from receipt of the
4 decision of the director of the department of social services not to petition the court, to
5 notify the prosecutor that the person is requesting a review. The prosecutor shall notify
6 the person making the report and the director of the time and place for the review, and
7 the director shall immediately transmit to the prosecutor a copy of ~~the investigation~~
8 ~~report.~~ a summary of the assessment."

9 **SECTION 7.** G.S. 7B-307 reads as rewritten:

10 "**§ 7B-307. Duty of director to report evidence of abuse, neglect; investigation by**
11 **local law enforcement; notification of Department of Health and Human**
12 **Services and State Bureau of Investigation.**

13 (a) If the director finds evidence that a juvenile may have been abused as defined
14 by G.S. 7B-101, the director shall make an immediate oral and subsequent written
15 report of the findings to the district attorney or the district attorney's designee and the
16 appropriate local law enforcement agency within 48 hours after receipt of the report.
17 The local law enforcement agency shall immediately, but no later than 48 hours after
18 receipt of the information, initiate and coordinate a criminal investigation with the
19 protective services ~~investigation- assessment~~ being conducted by the county department
20 of social services. Upon completion of the investigation, the district attorney shall
21 determine whether criminal prosecution is appropriate and may request the director or
22 the director's designee to appear before a magistrate.

23 If the director receives information that a juvenile may have been physically harmed
24 in violation of any criminal statute by any person other than the juvenile's parent,
25 guardian, custodian, or caretaker, the director shall make an immediate oral and
26 subsequent written report of that information to the district attorney or the district
27 attorney's designee and to the appropriate local law enforcement agency within 48 hours
28 after receipt of the information. The local law enforcement agency shall immediately,
29 but no later than 48 hours after receipt of the information, initiate a criminal
30 investigation. Upon completion of the investigation, the district attorney shall determine
31 whether criminal prosecution is appropriate.

32 If the report received pursuant to G.S. 7B-301 involves abuse or neglect of a juvenile
33 in child care, the director shall notify the Department of Health and Human Services
34 within 24 hours or on the next working day of receipt of the report.

35 (b) If the director finds evidence that a juvenile has been abused or neglected as
36 defined by G.S. 7B-101 in a child care facility, the director shall immediately so notify
37 the Department of Health and Human Services and, in the case of sexual abuse, the
38 State Bureau of Investigation, in such a way as does not violate the law guaranteeing the
39 confidentiality of the records of the department of social services.

40 (c) Upon completion of the ~~investigation- assessment~~, assessment, the director shall give the
41 Department written notification of the results of the ~~investigation- assessment~~
42 by G.S. 7B-302. Upon completion of an ~~investigation- assessment~~ of sexual abuse in a
43 child care facility, the director shall also make written notification of the results of the
44 ~~investigation- assessment~~ assessment to the State Bureau of Investigation.

1 The director of the department of social services shall submit a report of alleged
2 abuse, neglect, or dependency cases or child fatalities that are the result of alleged
3 maltreatment to the central registry under the policies adopted by the Social Services
4 Commission."

5 **SECTION 8.** G.S. 7B-308(b) reads as rewritten:

6 "(b) Immediately upon receipt of judicial authority to retain custody, the
7 physician, the administrator, or that person's designee shall so notify the director of
8 social services for the county in which the facility is located. The director shall treat this
9 notification as a report of suspected abuse and shall immediately begin an ~~investigation~~
10 assessment of the case.

11 (1) If the ~~investigation~~ assessment reveals (i) that it is the opinion of the
12 certifying physician that the juvenile is in need of medical treatment to
13 cure or alleviate physical distress or to prevent the juvenile from
14 suffering serious physical injury, and (ii) that it is the opinion of the
15 physician that the juvenile should for these reasons remain in the
16 custody of the facility for 12 hours, but (iii) that the juvenile's parent,
17 guardian, custodian, or caretaker cannot be reached or, upon request,
18 will not consent to the treatment within the facility, the director shall
19 within the initial 12-hour period file a juvenile petition alleging abuse
20 and setting forth supporting allegations and shall seek a nonsecure
21 custody order. A petition filed and a nonsecure custody order obtained
22 in accordance with this subdivision shall come on for hearing under
23 the regular provisions of this Subchapter unless the director and the
24 certifying physician together voluntarily dismiss the petition.

25 (2) In all cases except those described in subdivision (1) above, the
26 director shall conduct the ~~investigation~~ assessment and may initiate
27 juvenile proceedings and take all other steps authorized by the regular
28 provisions of this Subchapter. If the director decides not to file a
29 petition, the physician, the administrator, or that person's designee may
30 ask the prosecutor to review this decision according to the provisions
31 of G.S. 7B-305 and G.S. 7B-306."

32 **SECTION 9.** G.S. 7B-309 reads as rewritten:

33 "§ 7B-309. **Immunity of persons reporting and cooperating in an ~~investigation-~~**
34 **assessment.**

35 Anyone who makes a report pursuant to this Article, cooperates with the county
36 department of social services in a protective services ~~inquiry or investigation,~~
37 assessment, testifies in any judicial proceeding resulting from a protective services
38 report or ~~investigation,~~ assessment, or otherwise participates in the program authorized
39 by this Article, is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be
40 incurred or imposed for that action provided that the person was acting in good faith. In
41 any proceeding involving liability, good faith is presumed."

42 **SECTION 10.** G.S. 7B-404(a) reads as rewritten:

43 "(a) When the office of the clerk is closed, a magistrate may be authorized by the
44 chief district court judge to draw, verify, and issue petitions as follows:

- 1 (1) When the director of the department of social services requests a
2 petition alleging a juvenile to be abused, neglected, or dependent, or
3 (2) When the director of the department of social services requests a
4 petition alleging the obstruction of or interference with an
5 ~~investigation~~ assessment required by G.S. 7B-302."

6 **SECTION 11.** G.S. 7B-506(h)(3) reads as rewritten:

7 "(3) Inquire as to whether there are other juveniles remaining in the home
8 from which the juvenile was removed and, if there are, inquire as to
9 the specific findings of the ~~investigation~~ assessment conducted under
10 G.S. 7B-302 and any actions taken or services provided by the director
11 for the protection of the other juveniles."

12 **SECTION 12.** G.S. 108A-14(a)(11) reads as rewritten:

13 **"§ 108A-14. Duties and responsibilities.**

14 (a) The director of social services shall have the following duties and
15 responsibilities:

16 ...

17 (11) To ~~investigate~~ assess reports of child abuse and neglect and to take
18 appropriate action to protect such children pursuant to the Child Abuse
19 Reporting Law, Article 3 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes;".

20 **SECTION 13.** This act becomes effective October 1, 2005.