House Engrossed

FILED

KEN BENNETT
SECRETARY OF STATE

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Fiftieth Legislature
Second Regular Session
2012

CHAPTER 168

HOUSE BILL 2754

AN ACT

AMENDING SECTION 32-1451, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES; RELATING TO THE ARIZONA MEDICAL BOARD.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

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

Section 1. Section 32-1451, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to read:

32-1451. Grounds for disciplinary action; duty to report; immunity; proceedings; board action; notice requirements

A. The board on its own motion may investigate any evidence that appears to show that a doctor of medicine is or may be medically incompetent, is or may be guilty of unprofessional conduct or is or may be mentally or physically unable safely to engage in the practice of medicine. On written request of a complainant, the board shall review a complaint that has been administratively closed by the executive director and take any action it deems appropriate. Any person may, and a doctor of medicine, the Arizona medical association, a component county society of that association and any health care institution shall, report to the board any information that appears to show that a doctor of medicine is or may be medically incompetent, is or may be guilty of unprofessional conduct or is or may be mentally or physically unable safely to engage in the practice of medicine. The board or the executive director shall notify the doctor as to the content of the complaint as soon as reasonable. Any person or entity that reports or provides information to the board in good faith is not subject to an action for civil damages. If requested, the board shall not disclose the name of a person who supplies information regarding a licensee's drug or alcohol impairment. It is an act of unprofessional conduct for any doctor of medicine to fail to report as required by this section. The board shall report any health care institution that fails to report as required by this section to that institution's licensing agency.

B. The chief executive officer, the medical director or the medical chief of staff of a health care institution shall inform the board if the privileges of a doctor to practice in that health care institution are denied, revoked, suspended or limited because of actions by the doctor that appear to show that the doctor is or may be medically incompetent, is or may be guilty of unprofessional conduct or is or may be mentally or physically unable to safely engage in the practice of medicine, along with a general statement of the reasons, including patient chart numbers, that led the health care institution to take the action. The chief executive officer, the medical director or the medical chief of staff of a health care institution shall inform the board if a doctor under investigation resigns or if a doctor resigns in lieu of disciplinary action by the health care institution. Notification shall include a general statement of the reasons for the resignation, including patient chart numbers. The board shall inform all appropriate health care institutions in this state as defined in section 36-401 and the Arizona health care cost containment system administration of a resignation, denial, revocation, suspension or limitation, and the general reason for that action, without divulging the name of the reporting health

care institution. A person who reports information in good faith pursuant to this subsection is not subject to civil liability.

C. The board or, if delegated by the board, the executive director shall require, at the doctor's expense, any combination of mental, physical or oral or written medical competency examinations and conduct necessary investigations, including investigational interviews between representatives of the board and the doctor to fully inform itself with respect to any information filed with the board under subsection A of this section. These examinations may include biological fluid testing and other examinations known to detect the presence of alcohol or other drugs. The board or, if delegated by the board, the executive director may require the doctor, at the doctor's expense, to undergo assessment by a board approved rehabilitative, retraining or assessment program. ~~Nothing in~~ This subsection ~~creates~~ DOES NOT ESTABLISH a cause of action against any person, facility or program that conducts an assessment, examination or investigation in good faith pursuant to this subsection.

D. If the board finds, based on the information it receives under subsections A and B of this section, that the public health, safety or welfare imperatively requires emergency action, and incorporates a finding to that effect in its order, the board may restrict a license or order a summary suspension of a license pending proceedings for revocation or other action. If the board takes action pursuant to this subsection, it shall also serve the licensee with a written notice that states the charges and that the licensee is entitled to a formal hearing before the board or an administrative law judge within sixty days.

E. If, after completing its investigation, the board finds that the information provided pursuant to subsection A of this section is not of sufficient seriousness to merit disciplinary action against the license of the doctor, the board or a board committee may take any of the following actions:

1. Dismiss if, in the opinion of the board, the information is without merit.

2. Require the licensee to complete designated continuing medical education courses.

3. File an advisory letter. The licensee may file a written response with the board within thirty days after receiving the advisory letter.

F. If the board finds that it can take rehabilitative or disciplinary action without the presence of the doctor at a formal interview, it may enter into a consent agreement with the doctor to limit or restrict the doctor's practice or to rehabilitate the doctor in order to protect the public and ensure the doctor's ability to safely engage in the practice of medicine. The board may also require the doctor to successfully complete a board approved rehabilitative, retraining or assessment program at the doctor's own expense.

G. The board shall not disclose the name of the person who provided information regarding a licensee's drug or alcohol impairment or the name of the person who files a complaint if that person requests anonymity.

H. If after completing its investigation the board believes that the information is or may be true, it may request a formal interview with the doctor. If the doctor refuses the invitation for a formal interview or accepts and the results indicate that grounds may exist for revocation or suspension of the doctor's license for more than twelve months, the board shall issue a formal complaint and order that a hearing be held pursuant to title 41, chapter 6, article 10. If after completing a formal interview the board finds that the protection of the public requires emergency action, it may order a summary suspension of the license pending formal revocation proceedings or other action authorized by this section.

I. If after completing the formal interview the board finds the information provided under subsection A of this section is not of sufficient seriousness to merit suspension for more than twelve months or revocation of the license, it may take the following actions:

1. Dismiss if, in the opinion of the board, the complaint is without merit.

2. Require the licensee to complete designated continuing medical education courses.

3. File an advisory letter. The licensee may file a written response with the board within thirty days after the licensee receives the advisory letter.

4. Enter into an agreement with the doctor to restrict or limit the doctor's practice or professional activities or to rehabilitate, retrain or assess the doctor in order to protect the public and ensure the doctor's ability to safely engage in the practice of medicine. The board may also require the doctor to successfully complete a board approved rehabilitative, retraining or assessment program at the doctor's own expense pursuant to subsection F of this section.

5. File a letter of reprimand.

6. Issue a decree of censure. A decree of censure is an official action against the doctor's license and may include a requirement for restitution of fees to a patient resulting from violations of this chapter or rules adopted under this chapter.

7. Fix a period and terms of probation best adapted to protect the public health and safety and rehabilitate or educate the doctor concerned. Probation may include temporary suspension for not to exceed twelve months, restriction of the doctor's license to practice medicine, a requirement for restitution of fees to a patient or education or rehabilitation at the licensee's own expense. If a licensee fails to comply with the terms of probation, the board shall serve the licensee with a written notice that states that the licensee is subject to a formal hearing based on the information considered by the board at the formal interview and any other

acts or conduct alleged to be in violation of this chapter or rules adopted by the board pursuant to this chapter, including noncompliance with the term of probation, a consent agreement or a stipulated agreement. A licensee shall pay the costs associated with probation monitoring each year during which the licensee is on probation. The board may adjust this amount on an annual basis. The board may allow a licensee to make payments on an installment plan if a financial hardship occurs. A licensee who does not pay these costs within thirty days after the due date prescribed by the board violates the terms of probation.

J. If the board finds that the information provided in subsection A of this section warrants suspension or revocation of a license issued under this chapter, it shall initiate formal proceedings pursuant to title 41, chapter 6, article 10.

K. In a formal interview pursuant to subsection H of this section or in a hearing pursuant to subsection J of this section, the board in addition to any other action may impose a civil penalty in the amount of not less than one thousand dollars nor more than ten thousand dollars for each violation of this chapter or a rule adopted under this chapter.

L. An advisory letter is a public document.

M. Any doctor of medicine who after a formal hearing is found by the board to be guilty of unprofessional conduct, to be mentally or physically unable safely to engage in the practice of medicine or to be medically incompetent is subject to censure, probation as provided in this section, suspension of license or revocation of license or any combination of these, including a stay of action, and for a period of time or permanently and under conditions as the board deems appropriate for the protection of the public health and safety and just in the circumstance. The board may charge the costs of formal hearings to the licensee who it finds to be in violation of this chapter.

N. If the board acts to modify any doctor of medicine's prescription writing privileges, the board shall immediately notify the state board of pharmacy of the modification.

O. If the board, during the course of any investigation, determines that a criminal violation may have occurred involving the delivery of health care, it shall make the evidence of violations available to the appropriate criminal justice agency for its consideration.

P. The board may divide into review committees of not less than three members, including a public member. The committees shall review complaints not dismissed by the executive director and may take the following actions:

1. Dismiss the complaint if a committee determines that the complaint is without merit.

2. Issue an advisory letter. The licensee may file a written response with the board within thirty days after the licensee receives the advisory letter.

3. Conduct a formal interview pursuant to subsection H of this section. This includes initiating formal proceedings pursuant to subsection J of this section and imposing civil penalties pursuant to subsection K of this section.

4. Refer the matter for further review by the full board.

Q. Pursuant to sections 35-146 and 35-147, the board shall deposit all monies collected from civil penalties paid pursuant to this chapter in the state general fund.

R. Notice of a complaint and hearing is effective by a true copy of it being sent by certified mail to the doctor's last known address of record in the board's files. Notice of the complaint and hearing is complete on the date of its deposit in the mail. The board shall begin a formal hearing within one hundred twenty days of that date.

S. A physician who submits an independent medical examination pursuant to an order by a court is not subject to a complaint for unprofessional conduct unless a complaint is made or referred by a court to the board. For the purposes of this subsection, "independent medical examination" means a professional analysis of medical status based on a person's past and present physical and psychiatric history and conducted by a licensee or group of licensees on a contract basis for a court.

T. The board may accept the surrender of an active license from a person who admits in writing to any of the following:

1. Being unable to safely engage in the practice of medicine.

2. Having committed an act of unprofessional conduct.

3. Having violated this chapter or a board rule.

U. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action under this section, the board shall consider all previous nondisciplinary and disciplinary actions against a licensee.

V. IN DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE ACTION UNDER THIS SECTION, THE BOARD MAY CONSIDER A DIRECT OR INDIRECT COMPETITIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMPLAINANT AND THE RESPONDENT AS A MITIGATING FACTOR.

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR APRIL 3, 2012.

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE APRIL 3, 2012.

Passed the House March 7, 2012

by the following vote: 58 Ayes,

0 Nays, 2 Not Voting

Speaker of the House

Chief Clerk of the House

Passed the Senate March 28, 2012

by the following vote: 30 Ayes,

0 Nays, 0 Not Voting

President of the Senate

Secretary of the Senate

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR

This Bill received by the Governor this

29 day of March, 2012

at 1:15 o'clock P M.

Secretary to the Governor

Approved this 3rd [redacted] day of

April

at 10:55 o'clock A. M.

Governor of Arizona

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE

This Bill received by the Secretary of State

this 3rd day of April, 2012

at 1:16 o'clock P M.

Secretary of State

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