

State of Arkansas
92nd General Assembly
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As Engrossed: H2/21/19 H2/25/19
A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1380

By: Representatives C. Fite, McCullough

By: Senator Irvin

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CREATING A PRIVILEGE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE PERSONNEL OF A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER OR CENTER; TO MAKE CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN A VICTIM AND A VICTIM ADVOCATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

CREATING A PRIVILEGE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE PERSONNEL OF A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER OR CENTER; AND TO MAKE CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN A VICTIM AND A VICTIM ADVOCATE.

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

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 9, Chapter 6, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

9-6-112. Privileged communications made by victim of domestic violence.

(a) As used in this section:

(1) "Advocate for victims of domestic violence" means an employee, supervisor, administrator, or volunteer of a shelter or center for victims of domestic violence authorized and regulated under this chapter;

(2) "Communication" means verbal, written, or electronic communications of any kind;



(3) "Deviate sexual activity" means the same as defined in § 5-14-101;

(4) "Domestic violence" means:

(A) Physical harm, bodily harm causing injury, or an assault against a person caused by:

(i) A family or household member; or

(ii) Another person with whom a person is in a dating relationship;

(B) Mental or emotional harm to a person caused by:

(i) A family or household member; or

(ii) Another person with whom a person is in a dating relationship; or

(C) Sexual abuse against a person by another person;

(5) "Mentally defective" means the same as defined in § 5-14-101;

(6) "Mentally incapacitated" means the same as defined in § 5-14-101;

(7) "Physically helpless" means the same as defined in § 5-14-101;

(8) "Sexual abuse" means:

(A) Sexual intercourse, deviate sexual activity, or sexual contact by means of forcible compulsion; or

(B) Sexual intercourse, deviate sexual activity, or sexual contact with a person who is:

(i) Physically helpless;

(ii) Mentally incapacitated;

(iii) Mentally defective; or

(iv) Less than sixteen (16) years of age, if the age of the other person committing the sexual intercourse, deviate sexual activity, or sexual contact is twenty (20) years of age or older;

(9) "Sexual contact" means the same as defined in § 5-14-101;

(10) "Sexual intercourse" means the same as defined in § 5-14-101;

(11) "Shelter or center for victims of domestic violence" means a domestic violence shelter that is authorized and regulated under this chapter; and

(12) "Victim of domestic violence" means a person who has been subjected to domestic violence by another person and who has sought out an advocate for victims of domestic violence or a shelter or center for victims of domestic violence.

(b)(1) Except as provided under subsection (e) of this section, communication between a victim of domestic violence and an advocate for victims of domestic violence is privileged and shall not be disclosed by the advocate for victims of domestic violence without the consent of the victim of domestic violence.

(2) A victim of domestic violence or an advocate for victims of domestic violence may not be compelled to disclose the contents of any communication made to the advocate for victims of domestic violence by the victim of domestic violence.

(c) The privilege under this section only applies when the communication was made to the advocate for victims of domestic violence while the victim of domestic violence was seeking or in the course of advocacy, help, refuge, treatment, housing, support, therapy, legal advice, counseling, medical advice, or any other assistance related to the domestic violence to which the victim of domestic violence was subjected.

(d) The privilege under this section may be claimed by:

(1) The victim of domestic violence, his or her attorney, or his or her parent or guardian if the victim of domestic violence is less than eighteen (18) years of age; and

(2) An advocate for victims of domestic violence on behalf of the victim of domestic violence.

(e) A communication privileged under this section may be disclosed if:

(1) The communication is made to another person employed by or volunteering at a shelter or center for victims of domestic violence and the disclosure is for the purposes of furthering the advocacy process; or

(2) A court compels disclosure after an in-camera hearing when the probative value of the evidence outweighs the effect on:

(A) The victim of domestic violence;

(B) The treatment relationship between the victim of domestic violence and the advocate for victims of domestic violence; and

(C) Treatment services provided by a shelter or center for

victims of domestic violence.

(f) The privilege under this section is waived if:

(1) The advocate for victims of domestic violence was a witness or a party to the incident that prompted the providing of assistance by the advocate for victims of domestic violence and the communication is required by law enforcement to investigate the incident;

(2) The communication reveals the intended commission of a crime or harmful act and the disclosure is determined to be necessary by the advocate for victims of domestic violence to protect any person from a clear, imminent risk of serious mental or physical harm or injury or to forestall a serious threat to the public safety; or

(3) The victim of domestic violence waives the privilege created under this section by voluntarily disclosing or consenting to disclosure of any significant part of the privileged communication.

(g) A claim of privilege under this section is not defeated by a disclosure that was erroneously, unlawfully, or improperly compelled or made without opportunity to claim the privilege.

/s/C. Fite

APPROVED: 3/18/19