

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2016 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4317

BY DELEGATES FOSTER, MCGEEHAN, BUTLER, IHLE,

AZINGER, FAST, MOFFATT, J. NELSON, SUMMERS,

WAXMAN AND MILLER

[Introduced January 28, 2016; referred to the
committee on the Judiciary.]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §48-9-209 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
 2 to limiting factors in parenting plans; and changing language relating to parental activity of
 3 “making repeated fraudulent reports of domestic abuse” to making “one or more” such
 4 reports as a factor a court may consider in imposing limits on a parenting plan in order to
 5 protect a child from harm.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

1 That §48-9-209 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended and
 2 reenacted to read as follows:

**ARTICLE 9. ALLOCATION OF CUSTODIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND DECISION-
 MAKING RESPONSIBILITY OF CHILDREN.**

PART 2 – PARENTING PLANS

§48-9-209. Parenting plan; limiting factors.

1 (a) If either of the parents so requests, or upon receipt of credible information thereof, the
 2 court shall determine whether a parent who would otherwise be allocated responsibility under a
 3 parenting plan:

- 4 (1) Has abused, neglected or abandoned a child, as defined by state law;
- 5 (2) Has sexually assaulted or sexually abused a child as those terms are defined in articles
 6 eight-b and eight-d, chapter sixty-one of this code;
- 7 (3) Has committed domestic violence, as defined in section 27-202;
- 8 (4) Has interfered persistently with the other parent's access to the child, except in the
 9 case of actions taken for the purpose of protecting the safety of the child or the interfering parent
 10 or another family member, pending adjudication of the facts underlying that belief; or
- 11 (5) Has ~~repeatedly made fraudulent reports of domestic violence or child abuse~~ made one
 12 or more fraudulent reports of domestic violence.

13 (b) If a parent is found to have engaged in any activity specified by subsection (a) of this

14 section, the court shall impose limits that are reasonably calculated to protect the child or child's
15 parent from harm. The limitations that the court shall consider include, but are not limited to:

16 (1) An adjustment of the custodial responsibility of the parents, including but not limited to:

17 (A) Increased parenting time with the child to make up for any parenting time the other
18 parent lost as a result of the proscribed activity;

19 (B) An additional allocation of parenting time in order to repair any adverse effect upon
20 the relationship between the child and the other parent resulting from the proscribed activity; or

21 (C) The allocation of exclusive custodial responsibility to one of them;

22 (2) Supervision of the custodial time between a parent and the child;

23 (3) Exchange of the child between parents through an intermediary, or in a protected
24 setting;

25 (4) Restraints on the parent from communication with or proximity to the other parent or
26 the child;

27 (5) A requirement that the parent abstain from possession or consumption of alcohol or
28 nonprescribed drugs while exercising custodial responsibility and in the twenty-four hour period
29 immediately preceding such exercise;

30 (6) Denial of overnight custodial responsibility;

31 (7) Restrictions on the presence of specific persons while the parent is with the child;

32 (8) A requirement that the parent post a bond to secure return of the child following a
33 period in which the parent is exercising custodial responsibility or to secure other performance
34 required by the court;

35 (9) A requirement that the parent complete a program of intervention for perpetrators of
36 domestic violence, for drug or alcohol abuse, or a program designed to correct another factor; or

37 (10) Any other constraints or conditions that the court deems necessary to provide for the
38 safety of the child, a child's parent or any person whose safety immediately affects the child's
39 welfare.

40 (c) If a parent is found to have engaged in any activity specified in subsection (a) of this
41 section, the court may not allocate custodial responsibility or decision-making responsibility to
42 that parent without making special written findings that the child and other parent can be
43 adequately protected from harm by such limits as it may impose under subsection (b) of this
44 section. The parent found to have engaged in the behavior specified in subsection (a) of this
45 section has the burden of proving that an allocation of custodial responsibility or decision-making
46 responsibility to that parent will not endanger the child or the other parent.

47 (d) If the court determines, based on the investigation described in part three of this article
48 or other evidence presented to it, that an accusation of child abuse or neglect, or domestic
49 violence made during a child custody proceeding is false and the parent making the accusation
50 knew it to be false at the time the accusation was made, the court may order reimbursement to
51 be paid by the person making the accusations of costs resulting from defending against the
52 accusations. Such reimbursement may not exceed the actual reasonable costs incurred by the
53 accused party as a result of defending against the accusation and reasonable attorney's fees
54 incurred.

55 (e) (1) A parent who believes he or she is the subject of activities by the other parent
56 described in subdivision (5) of subsection (a), may move the court pursuant to subdivision (4),
57 subsection (b), section one, article seven, chapter forty-nine of this code for the Department of
58 Health and Human Resources to disclose whether the other parent was the source of the
59 allegation and, if so, whether the department found the report to be:

- 60 (A) Substantiated;
- 61 (B) Unsubstantiated;
- 62 (C) Inconclusive; or
- 63 (D) Still under investigation.

64 (2) If the court grants a motion pursuant to this subsection, disclosure by the Department
65 of Health and Human Resources shall be in camera. The court may disclose to the parties

66 information received from the department only if it has reason to believe a parent knowingly made
67 a false report.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to change language relating to the activity of a parent who makes “repeated fraudulent reports of domestic abuse” to the activity of making “one or more” such reports. This is one of the actions that a court may consider in imposing limits on a parenting plan to protect a child from harm.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.