WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2023 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 178

By Senator Rucker

[Introduced January 13, 2023; referred to
 the Committee on the Judiciary; and then to the Committee on Finance]

A BILL to amend and reenact §17C-5A-3 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to the addition of grievance and appellate procedures and judicial review for individuals participating in, or who have participated in, the Division of Motor Vehicles’ Safety and Treatment Program; and authorizing the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles to promulgate a rule to add such procedures and judicial review for participants of the Safety and Treatment Program.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5A. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR SUSPENSION AND REVOCATION OF LICENSES FOR DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL, CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES OR DRUGS.

§17C-5A-3. Safety and Treatment Program; reissuance of license.

(a) The Division of Motor Vehicles shall administer a comprehensive Safety and Treatment Program for persons whose licenses have been revoked under the provisions of this article, or §17C-5-7, or §17B-3-5(6) of this code and shall also establish the minimum qualifications for mental health facilities, day report centers, community corrections centers, or other public agencies or private entities conducting the Safety and Treatment Program: *Provided*, That the Division of Motor Vehicles may establish standards whereby the division will accept or approve participation by violators in another treatment program which provides the same or substantially similar benefits as the Safety and Treatment Program established pursuant to this section.

(b) The program shall include, but not be limited to, treatment of alcoholism, alcohol and drug abuse, psychological counseling, educational courses on the dangers of alcohol and drugs as they relate to driving, defensive driving, or other safety driving instruction, and other programs designed to properly educate, train, and rehabilitate the offender: *Provided*, That successful compliance with the substance abuse and counseling program prescribed in §61-11-26a of this code is sufficient to meet the requirements of this section.

(c) The Division of Motor Vehicles shall provide for the preparation of an educational and treatment program for each person whose license has been revoked under the provisions of this article, or §17C-5-7 or §17B-3-5(6) of this code which shall contain the following: (1) A listing and evaluation of the offender’s prior traffic record; (2) the characteristics and history of alcohol or drug use, if any; (3) his or her amenability to rehabilitation through the alcohol safety program; and (4) a recommendation as to treatment or rehabilitation and the terms and conditions of the treatment or rehabilitation. The program shall be prepared by persons knowledgeable in the diagnosis of alcohol or drug abuse and treatment.

(d) There is hereby created a special revenue account within the State Treasury known as the Division of Motor Vehicles Safety and Treatment Fund. The account shall be administered by the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles for the purpose of administering the comprehensive Safety and Treatment Program established by subsection (a) of this section. The account may be invested and all earnings and interest accruing shall be retained in the account. The Auditor shall conduct an audit of the fund at least every three fiscal years.

Effective July 1, 2019, all moneys held in the Department of Health and Human Resources Safety and Treatment Fund shall be transferred to the Division of Motor Vehicles Safety and Treatment Fund.

(e) (1) The program provider shall collect the established fee from each participant upon enrollment unless the division has determined that the participant is an indigent based upon criteria established pursuant to legislative rule authorized in this section.

(2) If the division determined that a participant is an indigent based upon criteria established pursuant to the legislative rule authorized by this section, the department shall provide the applicant with proof of its determination regarding indigency, which proof the applicant shall present to the interlock provider as part of the application process provided in §17C-5A-3a of this code and/or the rules promulgated pursuant thereto.

(3) Program providers shall remit to the Division of Motor Vehicles a portion of the fee collected, which shall be deposited by the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles into the Division of Motor Vehicles Safety and Treatment Fund. The Division of Motor Vehicles shall reimburse enrollment fees to program providers for each eligible indigent offender.

(f) On or before January 15 of each year, the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles shall report to the Legislature on:

(1) The total number of offenders participating in the Safety and Treatment Program during the prior year;

(2) The total number of indigent offenders participating in the Safety and Treatment Program during the prior year;

(3) The total number of program providers during the prior year; and

(4) The total amount of reimbursements paid to program providers during the prior year.

(g) The Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles, after giving due consideration to the program developed for the offender, shall prescribe the necessary terms and conditions for the reissuance of the license to operate a motor vehicle in this state revoked under this article, or §17C-5-7 or §17B-3-5(6) of this code which shall include successful completion of the educational, treatment, or rehabilitation program, subject to the following:

(1) When the period of revocation is six months, the license to operate a motor vehicle in this state may not be reissued until: (A) At least 90 days have elapsed from the date of the initial revocation, during which time the revocation was actually in effect; (B) the offender has successfully completed the program; (C) all costs of the program and administration have been paid; and (D) all costs assessed as a result of a revocation hearing have been paid.

(2) When the period of revocation is for a period of one year or for more than a year, the license to operate a motor vehicle in this state may not be reissued until: (A) At least one half of the time period has elapsed from the date of the initial revocation, during which time the revocation was actually in effect; (B) the offender has successfully completed the program; (C) all costs of the program and administration have been paid; and (D) all costs assessed as a result of a revocation hearing have been paid. Notwithstanding any provision in this code, a person whose license is revoked for refusing to take a chemical test as required by §17C-5-7 of this code for a first offense is not eligible to reduce the revocation period by completing the Safety and Treatment Program.

(3) When the period of revocation is for life, the license to operate a motor vehicle in this state may not be reissued until: (A) At least 10 years have elapsed from the date of the initial revocation, during which time the revocation was actually in effect; (B) the offender has successfully completed the program; (C) all costs of the program and administration have been paid; and (D) all costs assessed as a result of a revocation hearing have been paid.

(4) Notwithstanding any provision of this code or any rule, any mental health facilities or other public agencies or private entities conducting the Safety and Treatment Program when certifying that a person has successfully completed a Safety and Treatment Program shall only have to certify that the person has successfully completed the program.

(h) (1) The Division of Motor Vehicles shall provide for the preparation of an educational program for each person whose license has been suspended for 60 days pursuant to the provisions of §17C-5A-2(n) of this code. The educational program shall consist of not less than 12 nor more than 18 hours of actual classroom time.

(2) When a 60-day period of suspension has been ordered, the license to operate a motor vehicle may not be reinstated until: (A) At least 60 days have elapsed from the date of the initial suspension, during which time the suspension was in effect; (B) the offender has successfully completed the educational program; (C) all costs of the program and administration have been paid; and (D) all costs assessed as a result of a suspension hearing have been paid.

(i) A required component of the treatment program provided in §17C-5A-3(b) of this code and the education program provided for in §17C-5A-3(c) of this code shall be participation by the violator with a victim impact panel program providing a forum for victims of alcohol and drug-related offenses and offenders to share first-hand experiences on the impact of alcohol and drug-related offenses in their lives. The Division of Motor Vehicles shall propose and implement a plan for victim impact panels where appropriate numbers of victims are available and willing to participate and shall establish guidelines for other innovative programs which may be substituted where the victims are not available to assist persons whose licenses have been suspended or revoked for alcohol and drug-related offenses to gain a full understanding of the severity of their offenses in terms of the impact of the offenses on victims and offenders. The plan shall require, at a minimum, discussion and consideration of the following:

(1) Economic losses suffered by victims or offenders;

(2) Death or physical injuries suffered by victims or offenders;

(3) Psychological injuries suffered by victims or offenders;

(4) Changes in the personal welfare or familial relationships of victims or offenders; and

(5) Other information relating to the impact of alcohol and drug-related offenses upon victims or offenders.

The Division of Motor Vehicles shall ensure that any meetings between victims and offenders shall be nonconfrontational and ensure the physical safety of the persons involved.

(j)(1) The Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles shall promulgate a rule for legislative approval in accordance with §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code to administer the provisions of this section and establish a fee to be collected from each offender enrolled in the Safety and Treatment Program. The rule shall include: (A) A reimbursement mechanism to program providers of required fees for the safety and treatment program for indigent offenders, criteria for determining eligibility of indigent offenders, and any necessary application forms; and (B) program standards that encompass provider criteria including minimum professional training requirements for providers, curriculum approval, minimum course length requirements, and other items that may be necessary to properly implement the provisions of this section.

(2) The Legislature finds that an emergency exists and, therefore, the commissioner shall file by July 1, 2019, an emergency rule to implement this section pursuant to the provisions of §29A-3-15 of this code.

(k) Nothing in this section may be construed to prohibit day report or community corrections programs, authorized pursuant to §62-11C-1 *et seq.* of this code, from administering a comprehensive Safety and Treatment Program pursuant to this section.

(l) The Division of Motor Vehicles shall provide fair, impartial, and expeditious grievance and appellate procedures for participants of the safety and treatment program who wish to challenge an adverse decision by the agency or other entity conducting the program that negatively affects, or unnecessarily delays, the participants’ outcome in that program. After all administrative remedies provided by this article or its related promulgated rules have been exhausted, participants who have been deemed unsuccessful in the program, rendering them ineligible for license reinstatement, or whose outcomes in the program have been unnecessarily delayed, are entitled to judicial review of the adverse decision, pursuant to §29A-5-4 of this code. The Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles is hereby authorized to promulgate rules related to the grievance and appellate procedures referenced in this subsection under the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq*. of this code.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to add grievance and appellate procedures and judicial review for participants in the Division of Motor Vehicles’ Safety and Treatment Program. The bill also authorizes the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles to promulgate rules to add such procedures and review for participants of the safety and treatment program.

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