

622.10 Communications in professional confidence — exceptions — required consent to release of medical records after commencement of legal action — application to court.

1. A practicing attorney, counselor, physician, surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, mental health professional, or the stenographer or confidential clerk of any such person, who obtains information by reason of the person's employment, or a member of the clergy shall not be allowed, in giving testimony, to disclose any confidential communication properly entrusted to the person in the person's professional capacity, and necessary and proper to enable the person to discharge the functions of the person's office according to the usual course of practice or discipline.

2. The prohibition does not apply to cases where the person in whose favor the prohibition is made waives the rights conferred; nor does the prohibition apply to physicians or surgeons, physician assistants, advanced registered nurse practitioners, mental health professionals, or to the stenographer or confidential clerk of any physicians or surgeons, physician assistants, advanced registered nurse practitioners, or mental health professionals, in a civil action in which the condition of the person in whose favor the prohibition is made is an element or factor of the claim or defense of the person or of any party claiming through or under the person. The evidence is admissible upon trial of the action only as it relates to the condition alleged.

3. a. In a civil action in which the condition of the plaintiff in whose favor the prohibition is made is an element or factor of the claim or defense of the adverse party or of any party claiming through or under the adverse party, the adverse party shall make a written request for records relating to the condition alleged upon the plaintiff's attorney for a legally sufficient patient's waiver under federal and state law. Upon receipt of a written request, the plaintiff shall execute a legally sufficient patient's waiver and release it to the adverse party making the request within sixty days of receipt of the written request. The patient's waiver may require a physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional to do all of the following:

(1) Provide a complete copy of the patient's records including but not limited to any reports or diagnostic imaging relating to the condition alleged.

(2) Consult with the attorney for the adverse party prior to providing testimony regarding the plaintiff's medical history and the condition alleged and opinions regarding health etiology and prognosis for the condition alleged subject to the limitations in paragraphs "c" and "e".

b. If a plaintiff fails to sign a waiver within the prescribed time period, the court may order disclosure or compliance. The failure of a party to comply with the court's order may be grounds for dismissal of the action or any other relief authorized under the rules of civil procedure.

c. Any physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional who provides records, provides information during consultation, or otherwise responds in good faith to a request pursuant to paragraph "a" shall be immune with respect to all civil or criminal penalties, claims, or actions of any kind with respect to this section.

d. Any physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional who provides records or consults with the attorney for any party shall be entitled to charge a reasonable fee for production of the records, diagnostic imaging, and consultation. Any party seeking consultation shall be responsible for payment of all charges. The fees for copies of any records shall be as specified in subsection 6.

e. Defendant's counsel shall provide a written notice to plaintiff's attorney in a manner consistent with the Iowa rules of civil procedure providing for notice of deposition at least ten days prior to any meeting with plaintiff's physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional. Plaintiff's attorney has the right to be present at all such meetings, or participate in telephonic communication with the physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional and attorney for the defendant. Prior to scheduling any meeting or engaging in any communication with the physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional, attorney for the defendant shall

confer with plaintiff's attorney to determine a mutually convenient date and time for such meeting or telephonic communication. Plaintiff's attorney may seek a protective order structuring all communication by making application to the court at any time.

f. The provisions of this subsection do not apply to actions or claims brought pursuant to chapter 85, 85A, or 85B.

4. a. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the confidentiality privilege under this section shall be absolute with regard to a criminal action and this section shall not be construed to authorize or require the disclosure of any privileged records to a defendant in a criminal action unless either of the following occur:

(1) The privilege holder voluntarily waives the confidentiality privilege.

(2) (a) The defendant seeking access to privileged records under this section files a motion demonstrating in good faith a reasonable probability that the information sought is likely to contain exculpatory information that is not available from any other source and for which there is a compelling need for the defendant to present a defense in the case. Such a motion shall be filed not later than forty days after arraignment under seal of the court. Failure of the defendant to timely file such a motion constitutes a waiver of the right to seek access to privileged records under this section, but the court, for good cause shown, may grant relief from such waiver.

(b) Upon a showing of a reasonable probability that the privileged records sought may likely contain exculpatory information that is not available from any other source, the court shall conduct an in camera review of such records to determine whether exculpatory information is contained in such records.

(c) If exculpatory information is contained in such records, the court shall balance the need to disclose such information against the privacy interest of the privilege holder.

(d) Upon the court's determination, in writing, that the privileged information sought is exculpatory and that there is a compelling need for such information that outweighs the privacy interests of the privilege holder, the court shall issue an order allowing the disclosure of only those portions of the records that contain the exculpatory information. The court's order shall also prohibit any further dissemination of the information to any person, other than the defendant, the defendant's attorney, and the prosecutor, unless otherwise authorized by the court.

b. Privileged information obtained by any means other than as provided in paragraph "a" shall not be admissible in any criminal action.

5. If an adverse party desires the oral deposition, either discovery or evidentiary, of a physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional to which the prohibition would otherwise apply or the stenographer or confidential clerk of a physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional or desires to call a physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional to which the prohibition would otherwise apply or the stenographer or confidential clerk of a physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional as a witness at the trial of the action, the adverse party shall file an application with the court for permission to do so. The court upon hearing, which shall not be ex parte, shall grant permission unless the court finds that the evidence sought does not relate to the condition alleged. At the request of any party or at the request of the deponent, the court shall fix a reasonable fee to be paid to a physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or mental health professional by the party taking the deposition or calling the witness.

6. At any time, upon a written request from a patient, a patient's legal representative or attorney, or an adverse party pursuant to subsection 3, any provider shall provide copies of the requested records or images to the requester within thirty days of receipt of the written request. The written request shall be accompanied by a legally sufficient patient's waiver unless the request is made by the patient or the patient's legal representative or attorney.

a. The fee charged for the cost of producing the requested records or images shall be based upon the actual cost of production. If the written request and accompanying patient's waiver, if required, authorizes the release of all of the patient's records for the requested

time period, including records relating to the patient's mental health, substance abuse, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome-related conditions, the amount charged shall not exceed the rates established by the workers' compensation commissioner for copies of records in workers' compensation cases. If requested, the provider shall include an affidavit certifying that the records or images produced are true and accurate copies of the originals for an additional fee not to exceed ten dollars.

b. A patient or a patient's legal representative or a patient's attorney is entitled to one copy free of charge of the patient's complete billing statement, subject only to a charge for the actual costs of postage or delivery charges incurred in providing the statement. If requested, the provider or custodian of the record shall include an affidavit certifying the billing statements produced to be true and accurate copies of the originals for an additional fee not to exceed ten dollars.

c. Fees charged pursuant to this subsection are exempt from the sales tax pursuant to section 423.3, subsection 96. A provider providing the records or images may require payment in advance if an itemized statement demanding such is provided to the requesting party within fifteen days of the request. Upon a timely request for payment in advance, the time for providing the records or images shall be extended until the greater of thirty days from the date of the original request or ten days from the receipt of payment.

d. If a provider does not provide to the requester all records or images encompassed by the request or does not allow a patient access to all of the patient's medical records encompassed by the patient's request to examine the patient's records, the provider shall give written notice to the requester or the patient that providing the requested records or images would be a violation of the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-191.

e. As used in this subsection:

(1) "Records" and "images" include electronic media and data containing a patient's health or billing information and "copies" includes patient records or images provided in electronic form, regardless of the form of the originals. If consented to by the requesting party, records and images produced pursuant to this subsection may be produced on electronic media.

(2) "Provider" means any physician or surgeon, physician assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, mental health professional, hospital, nursing home, or other person, entity, facility, or organization that furnishes, bills, or is paid for health care in the normal course of business.

7. For the purposes of this section, "mental health professional" means a psychologist licensed under chapter 154B, a registered nurse licensed under chapter 152, a social worker licensed under chapter 154C, a marital and family therapist licensed under chapter 154D, a mental health counselor licensed under chapter 154D, or an individual holding at least a master's degree in a related field as deemed appropriate by the board of behavioral science.

8. A qualified school guidance counselor, who is licensed by the board of educational examiners under chapter 272 and who obtains information by reason of the counselor's employment as a qualified school guidance counselor, shall not be allowed, in giving testimony, to disclose any confidential communications properly entrusted to the counselor by a pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian in the counselor's capacity as a qualified school guidance counselor and necessary and proper to enable the counselor to perform the counselor's duties as a qualified school guidance counselor.

[C51, §2393, 2394; R60, §3985, 3986; C73, §3643; C97, §4608; S13, §4608; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §11263; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §622.10; 82 Acts, ch 1242, §1]

88 Acts, ch 1134, §107; 88 Acts, ch 1262, §10; 91 Acts, ch 229, §11; 97 Acts, ch 197, §8, 16; 2007 Acts, ch 10, §179; 2008 Acts, ch 1031, §67; 2008 Acts, ch 1191, §81 – 83; 2011 Acts, ch 8, §2, 3; 2012 Acts, ch 1110, §22

Referred to in §2C.9, 228.6, 232.68, 232.74, 235A.15, 272C.6, 423.3, 514B.30

[P] Wounds and burn injuries connected to criminal offenses; §147.112 and 147.113A

[P] Disclosures of mental health and psychological information, see chapter 228