

# CHAPTER 235A

## CHILD ABUSE

Referred to in [§135.43](#), [232.2](#), [232.71D](#), [232.96](#), [272.2](#)

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### SUBCHAPTER I

#### CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

##### **235A.1 Child abuse prevention program.**

1. *a.* A program for the prevention of child abuse is established within the state department of human services. Any moneys appropriated by the general assembly for child abuse prevention shall be used by the department of human services solely for the purposes of child abuse prevention and shall not be expended for treatment or other service delivery programs regularly maintained by the department. Moneys appropriated for child abuse prevention shall be used by the department through contract with an agency or organization which shall administer the funds with maximum use of voluntary administrative services for the following:

(1) Matching federal funds to purchase services relating to community-based programs for the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

(2) Funding the establishment or expansion of community-based prevention projects or educational programs for the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

(3) To study and evaluate community-based prevention projects and educational programs for the problems of families and children.

*b.* Funds for the programs or projects shall be applied for and received by a community-based volunteer coalition or council.

2. The director of human services may accept grants, gifts, and bequests from any source for the purposes designated in [subsection 1](#). The director shall remit funds so received to the treasurer of state who shall deposit them in the general fund of the state for the use of the child abuse prevention program.

[82 Acts, ch 1259, §1]

83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159; 87 Acts, ch 153, §8; 2009 Acts, ch 41, §263; 2010 Acts, ch 1031, §392

Referred to in [§144.13A](#), [217.3A](#), [235A.2](#)

##### **235A.2 Child abuse prevention program fund.**

1. A child abuse prevention program fund is created in the state treasury under the control of the department of human services. The fund is composed of moneys appropriated or available to and obtained or accepted by the treasurer of state for deposit in the fund. The fund shall include moneys transferred to the fund pursuant to an income tax checkoff provided in

chapter 422, subchapter II, if applicable. All interest earned on moneys in the fund shall be credited to and remain in the fund. Section 8.33 does not apply to moneys in the fund.

2. Moneys in the fund that are authorized by the department for expenditure are appropriated, and shall be used, for the purposes described in section 235A.1 of preventing child abuse and neglect.

2008 Acts, ch 1129, §4, 8, 9; 2010 Acts, ch 1193, §158, 163; 2012 Acts, ch 1097, §3, 6; 2020 Acts, ch 1062, §94

Referred to in §422.12K

**235A.3 through 235A.11** Reserved.

## SUBCHAPTER II

### CHILD ABUSE INFORMATION REGISTRY

Referred to in §232.68

#### **235A.12 Legislative findings and purposes.**

1. The general assembly finds and declares that a central registry is required to provide a single source for the statewide collection, maintenance, and dissemination of child abuse information. The existence of the central registry is imperative for increased effectiveness in dealing with the problem of child abuse. The general assembly also finds that vigorous protection of rights of individual privacy is an indispensable element of a fair and effective system of collecting, maintaining, and disseminating child abuse information.

2. The purposes of this section and sections 235A.13 through 235A.24 are to facilitate the identification of victims or potential victims of child abuse by making available a single, statewide source of child abuse data; to facilitate research on child abuse by making available a single, statewide source of child abuse data; and to provide maximum safeguards against the unwarranted invasions of privacy which such a registry might otherwise entail.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.12]

84 Acts, ch 1035, §1; 2004 Acts, ch 1153, §2

#### **235A.13 Definitions.**

As used in chapter 232, subchapter III, part 2, and this subchapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “Assessment data” means any of the following information pertaining to the department’s evaluation of a family:

a. Identification of the strengths and needs of the child, and of the child’s parent, home, and family.

b. Identification of services available from the department and informal and formal services and other support available in the community to meet identified strengths and needs.

2. “Child abuse information” means any or all of the following data maintained by the department in a manual or automated data storage system and individually identified:

a. Report data.

b. Assessment data.

c. Disposition data.

3. “Confidentiality” means the withholding of information from any manner of communication, public or private.

4. “Department” means the department of human services.

5. “Disposition data” means information pertaining to an opinion or decision as to the occurrence of child abuse, including:

a. Any intermediate or ultimate opinion or decision reached by assessment personnel.

b. Any opinion or decision reached in the course of judicial proceedings.

c. The present status of any case.

6. “Expungement” means the process of destroying child abuse information.

7. “Individually identified” means any report, assessment, or disposition data which names the person or persons responsible or believed responsible for the child abuse.

8. “*Multidisciplinary team*” means a group of individuals who possess knowledge and skills related to the diagnosis, assessment, and disposition of child abuse cases and who are professionals practicing in the disciplines of medicine, nursing, public health, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, social work, child development, education, law, juvenile probation, or law enforcement, or a group established pursuant to [section 235B.1, subsection 1](#).

9. “*Near fatality*” means an injury to a child that, as certified by a physician, placed the child in serious or critical condition.

10. “*Report data*” means any of the following information pertaining to an assessment of an allegation of child abuse in which the department has determined the alleged child abuse meets the definition of child abuse:

a. The name and address of the child and the child’s parents or other persons responsible for the child’s care.

b. The age of the child.

c. The nature and extent of the injury, including evidence of any previous injury.

d. Additional information as to the nature, extent, and cause of the injury, and the identity of the person or persons alleged to be responsible for the injury.

e. The names and conditions of other children in the child’s home.

f. A recording made of an interview conducted under [chapter 232](#) in association with a child abuse assessment.

g. Any other information believed to be helpful in establishing the information in paragraph “d”.

11. “*Sealing*” means the process of removing child abuse information from authorized access as provided by [this chapter](#).

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.13; 82 Acts, ch 1066, §1]

84 Acts, ch 1035, §2; 87 Acts, ch 153, §9; 87 Acts, ch 182, §1; 92 Acts, ch 1143, §2; 97 Acts, ch 35, §13, 25; 97 Acts, ch 176, §6, 7, 27 – 31, 43; 99 Acts, ch 96, §26; 2000 Acts, ch 1137, §5, 14; 2002 Acts, ch 1074, §2; 2003 Acts, ch 44, §51; 2003 Acts, ch 62, §1; 2004 Acts, ch 1153, §3; 2018 Acts, ch 1041, §122; 2020 Acts, ch 1062, §94

Referred to in §135.43, 217.30, 232.68, 232.71B, 235A.12, 331.909

For additional definitions, see §232.68

### **235A.14 Creation and maintenance of a central registry.**

1. There is created within the state department of human services a central registry for certain child abuse information. The department shall organize and staff the registry and adopt rules for its operation.

2. The registry shall collect, maintain and disseminate child abuse information as provided for by [this chapter](#).

3. The department shall maintain a toll-free telephone line, which shall be available on a twenty-four hour a day, seven-day a week basis and which the department of human services and all other persons may use to report cases of suspected child abuse and that all persons authorized by [this chapter](#) may use for obtaining child abuse information.

4. An oral report of suspected child abuse initially made to the central registry shall be immediately transmitted by the department to the appropriate county department of social services or law enforcement agency, or both.

5. The registry, upon receipt of a report of suspected child abuse, shall search the records of the registry, and if the records of the registry reveal any previous report of child abuse involving the same child or any other child in the same family, or if the records reveal any other pertinent information with respect to the same child or any other child in the same family, the appropriate office of the department of human services or law enforcement agency shall be immediately notified of that fact.

6. The central registry shall include report data and disposition data which is subject to placement in the central registry under [section 232.71D](#). The central registry shall not include assessment data.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.14]

83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159; 97 Acts, ch 176, §8; 2013 Acts, ch 115, §11, 19

Referred to in §232.68, 235A.12, 279.13, 279.69, 321.375

**235A.15 Authorized access — procedures involving other states.**

1. Notwithstanding [chapter 22](#), the confidentiality of all child abuse information shall be maintained, except as specifically provided by [this section](#).

2. Access to report data and disposition data subject to placement in the central registry pursuant to [section 232.71D](#) is authorized only to the following persons or entities:

a. Subjects of a report as follows:

(1) To a child named in a report as a victim of abuse or to the child's attorney or guardian ad litem.

(2) To a parent or to the attorney for the parent of a child named in a report as a victim of abuse.

(3) To a guardian or legal custodian, or that person's attorney, of a child named in a report as a victim of abuse.

(4) To a person or the attorney for the person named in a report as having abused a child.

b. Persons involved in an assessment of child abuse as follows:

(1) To a health practitioner or mental health professional who is examining, attending, or treating a child whom such practitioner or professional believes or has reason to believe has been the victim of abuse or to a health practitioner or mental health professional whose consultation with respect to a child believed to have been the victim of abuse is requested by the department.

(2) To an employee or agent of the department of human services responsible for the assessment of a child abuse report.

(3) To a law enforcement officer responsible for assisting in an assessment of a child abuse allegation or for the temporary emergency removal of a child from the child's home.

(4) To a multidisciplinary team, or to parties to an interagency agreement entered into pursuant to [section 280.25](#), if the department of human services approves the composition of the multidisciplinary team or the relevant provisions of the interagency agreement and determines that access to the team or to the parties to the interagency agreement is necessary to assist the department in the diagnosis, assessment, and disposition of a child abuse case.

(5) In an individual case, to each mandatory reporter who reported the child abuse.

(6) To the county attorney.

(7) To the juvenile court.

(8) To a licensing authority for a facility providing care to a child named in a report, if the licensing authority is notified of a relationship between facility policy and the alleged child abuse under [section 232.71B](#).

(9) To the child protection assistance team established in accordance with [section 915.35](#) for the county in which the report was made.

c. Individuals, agencies, or facilities providing care to a child, but only with respect to disposition data and, if authorized in law to the extent necessary for purposes of an employment evaluation, report data, for cases of founded child abuse placed in the central registry in accordance with [section 232.71D](#) as follows:

(1) To an administrator of a psychiatric medical institution for children licensed under [chapter 135H](#).

(2) To an administrator of a child foster care facility licensed under [chapter 237](#) if the data concerns a person employed or being considered for employment by the facility.

(3) To an administrator of a child care facility registered or licensed under [chapter 237A](#) if the data concerns a person employed or being considered for employment by or living in the facility.

(4) To the superintendent of the Iowa braille and sight saving school if the data concerns a person employed or being considered for employment or living in the school.

(5) To the superintendent of the Iowa school for the deaf if the data concerns a person employed or being considered for employment or living in the school.

(6) To an administrator of a community mental health center accredited under [chapter 230A](#) if the data concerns a person employed or being considered for employment by the center.

(7) To an administrator of a facility or program operated by the state, a city, or a county

which provides services or care directly to children, if the data concerns a person employed by or being considered for employment by the facility or program.

(8) To an administrator of an agency certified by the department of human services to provide services under a medical assistance home and community-based services waiver, if the data concerns a person employed by or being considered by the agency for employment.

(9) To the administrator of an agency providing mental health, intellectual disability, or developmental disability services under a regional service system management plan implemented in accordance with [section 331.393](#), if the data concerns a person employed by or being considered by the agency for employment.

(10) To an administrator of a child care resource and referral agency which has entered into an agreement authorized by the department to provide child care resource and referral services. Access is authorized if the data concerns a person providing child care services or a person employed by a provider of such services and the agency includes the provider as a referral or the provider has requested to be included as a referral.

(11) To an administrator of a hospital licensed under [chapter 135B](#) if the data concerns a person employed or being considered for employment by the hospital.

(12) To an area education agency or other person responsible for providing early intervention services to children that is funded under part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

(13) To a federal, state, or local governmental unit, or agent of the unit, that has a need for the information in order to carry out its responsibilities under law to protect children from abuse and neglect.

(14) To a nursing program that is approved by the state board of nursing under [section 152.5](#), if the data relates to a record check performed pursuant to [section 152.5A](#).

d. Report data and disposition data, and assessment data to the extent necessary for resolution of the proceeding, relating to judicial and administrative proceedings as follows:

(1) To a juvenile court involved in an adjudication or disposition of a child named in a report or a child that is the subject of a guardianship proceeding under [chapter 232D](#).

(2) To a district court upon a finding that data is necessary for the resolution of an issue arising in any phase of a case involving child abuse or guardianship proceedings for a child under [chapter 232D](#).

(3) To a court or the department hearing an appeal for correction of report data and disposition data as provided in [section 235A.19](#).

(4) To an expert witness at any stage of an appeal necessary for correction of report data and disposition data as provided in [section 235A.19](#).

(5) To a probation or parole officer, juvenile court officer, court appointed special advocate as defined in [section 232.2](#), or adult correctional officer having custody or supervision of, or conducting an investigation for a court or the board of parole regarding, a person named in a report as a victim of child abuse or as having abused a child.

(6) To the department of justice for purposes of review by the prosecutor's review committee or the commitment of sexually violent predators as provided in [chapter 229A](#).

(7) Each licensing board specified under [chapter 147](#) and the Iowa department of public health for the purpose of licensure, certification or registration, disciplinary investigation, or the renewal of licensure, certification or registration, or disciplinary proceedings of health care professionals.

e. Others as follows, but only with respect to report data and disposition data for cases of founded child abuse subject to placement in the registry pursuant to [section 232.71D](#):

(1) To a person conducting bona fide research on child abuse, but without data identifying individuals named in a child abuse report, unless having that data open to review is essential to the research or evaluation and the authorized registry officials give prior written approval and the child, the child's guardian or guardian ad litem and the person named in a report as having abused a child give permission to release the data.

(2) To registry or department personnel when necessary to the performance of their official duties or to a person or agency under contract with the department to carry out official duties and functions of the department.

(3) To the department of justice for the sole purpose of the filing of a claim for restitution

or compensation pursuant to [sections 915.21](#) and [915.84](#). Data provided pursuant to this subparagraph is subject to the provisions of [section 915.90](#).

(4) To a legally constituted child protection agency of another state which is investigating or assessing or treating a child named in a report as having been abused or which is investigating or assessing or treating a person named as having abused a child.

(5) To a public or licensed child-placing agency of another state responsible for an adoptive or foster care preplacement or placement evaluation.

(6) To the attorney for the department of human services who is responsible for representing the department.

(7) To the child advocacy and local citizen foster care review boards created pursuant to [sections 237.16](#) and [237.19](#).

(8) To an employee or agent of the department of human services regarding a person who is providing child care if the person is not registered or licensed to operate a child care facility.

(9) To the board of educational examiners created under [chapter 272](#) for purposes of determining whether a license, certificate, or authorization should be issued, denied, or revoked.

(10) To a legally constituted child protection agency in another state if the agency is conducting a records check of a person who is providing care or has applied to provide care to a child in the other state.

(11) To the legally authorized protection and advocacy agency recognized in [section 135C.2](#), if a person identified in the information as a victim or a perpetrator of abuse resides in or receives services from a facility or agency because the person is diagnosed as having a developmental disability or a mental illness.

(12) To the department of human services for a record check relating to employment or residence pursuant to [section 218.13](#).

(13) To the Iowa board for the treatment of sexual abusers for purposes of certifying sex offender treatment providers.

(14) To an employee or agent of the department responsible for registering or licensing or approving the registration or licensing of an agency or facility, or to an individual providing care to a child and regulated by the department.

(15) To an employee of the department responsible for an adoptive placement, a certified adoption investigator, or licensed child-placing agency responsible for an adoptive placement.

(16) To the superintendent, or the superintendent's designee, of a school district or to the authorities in charge of an accredited nonpublic school for purposes of a volunteer or employment record check.

(17) To the department of inspections and appeals for purposes of record checks of applicants for employment with the department of inspections and appeals.

(18) To a person or agency responsible for the care or supervision of a child named in a report as an alleged victim of abuse or a person named in a report as having allegedly abused a child, if the juvenile court or department deems access to report data and disposition data by the person or agency to be necessary.

(19) To the Iowa veterans home for purposes of record checks of potential volunteers and volunteers in the Iowa veterans home.

(20) To the administrator of a certified nurse aide program, if the data relates to a record check of a student of the program performed pursuant to [section 135C.33](#).

(21) To the administrator of a juvenile detention or shelter care home, if the data relates to a record check of an existing or prospective employee, resident, or volunteer for or in the home.

(22) To the employer or prospective employer of a school bus driver for purposes of an employment record check.

(23) To the administrator of a family support program receiving public funds, if the data relates to a record check of an employee working directly with families.

(24) To an intake officer making a preliminary inquiry pursuant to [section 232.28, subsection 3](#).

(25) To a free clinic as defined in [section 135.24A](#) for purposes of record checks of potential volunteers and existing volunteers at the free clinic.

f. Only with respect to disposition data for cases of founded child abuse subject to placement in the central registry pursuant to [section 232.71D](#), to a person who submits written authorization from an individual allowing the person access to data pursuant to [this subsection](#) on behalf of the individual in order to verify whether the individual is named in a founded child abuse report as having abused a child.

3. Access to report data and disposition data for a case of child abuse determined to meet the definition of child abuse, which data is not subject to placement in the central registry pursuant to [section 232.71D](#), is authorized only to the following persons:

- a. Subjects of a report identified in [subsection 2](#), paragraph “a”.
- b. Persons involved in an assessment of child abuse identified in [subsection 2](#), paragraph “b”, subparagraphs (2), (3), (4), (6), and (7).
- c. Others identified in [subsection 2](#), paragraph “e”, subparagraphs (2), (3), (6), and (18).
- d. The department of justice for purposes of review by the prosecutor’s review committee or the commitment of sexually violent predators as provided in [chapter 229A](#).

4. Access to report data for a case of child abuse determined to not meet the definition of child abuse, which data is not subject to placement in the central registry pursuant to [section 232.71D](#), is authorized only to the following:

- a. Subjects of a report identified in [subsection 2](#), paragraph “a”.
- b. Persons involved in an assessment of child abuse identified in [subsection 2](#), paragraph “b”, subparagraphs (2), (6), and (7).
- c. Others identified in [subsection 2](#), paragraph “e”, subparagraphs (2) and (18).
- d. The department of justice for purposes of review by the prosecutor’s review committee or the commitment of sexually violent predators as provided in [chapter 229A](#).

5. Access to disposition data subject to placement in the central registry pursuant to [section 232.71D](#) is authorized to the department of administrative services or to the personnel office of a public employer, as defined in [section 20.3](#), as necessary for presentation in grievance or arbitration procedures provided for in [sections 8A.415](#) and [20.18](#). Disposition data introduced into a grievance or arbitration proceeding shall not be considered a part of the public record of a case.

6. a. If a child who is a legal resident of another state is present in this state and a report of child abuse is made concerning the child, the department shall act to ensure the safety of the child. The department shall contact the child’s state of legal residency to coordinate the assessment of the report. If the child’s state of residency refuses to conduct an assessment, the department shall commence an appropriate assessment.

b. If a report of child abuse is made concerning an alleged perpetrator who resides in this state and a child who resides in another state, the department shall assist the child’s state of residency in conducting an assessment of the report. The assistance shall include but is not limited to an offer to interview the alleged perpetrator and any other relevant source. If the child’s state of residency refuses to conduct an assessment of the report, the department shall commence an appropriate assessment. The department shall seek to develop protocols with states contiguous to this state for coordination in the assessment of a report of child abuse when a person involved with the report is a resident of another state.

7. If the director of human services receives a written request for information regarding a specific case of child abuse involving a fatality or near fatality to a child from the majority or minority leader of the senate or the speaker or the minority leader of the house of representatives, the director or the director’s designee shall arrange for a confidential meeting with the requestor or the requestor’s designee. In the confidential meeting the director or the director’s designee shall share all pertinent information concerning the case, including but not limited to child abuse information. Any written document distributed by the director or the director’s designee at the confidential meeting shall not be removed from the meeting and a participant in the meeting shall be subject to the restriction on dissemination of confidential information applicable to a person under [section 235A.17, subsection 3](#), for confidential information disclosed to the participant at the meeting. A participant in the meeting may issue a report to the governor or make general public statements concerning the department’s handling of the case of child abuse.

8. Upon the request of the governor, the department shall disclose child abuse information

to the governor or the governor's designee relating to a specific case of child abuse reported to the department.

9. If, apart from a request made pursuant to [subsection 7 or 8](#), the department receives from a member of the public a request for information relating to a case of founded child abuse involving a fatality or near fatality to a child, the response to the request shall be made in accordance with [this subsection](#) and [subsections 10 and 11](#). If the request is received before or during performance of an assessment of the case in accordance with [section 232.71B](#), the director of human services or the director's designee shall initially disclose whether or not the assessment will be or is being performed. Otherwise, within five business days of receiving the request or completing the assessment, whichever is later, the director of human services or the director's designee shall consult with the county attorney responsible for prosecution of any alleged perpetrator of the fatality or near fatality and shall disclose information, including but not limited to child abuse information, relating to the case, except for the following:

a. The substance or content of any mental health or psychological information that is confidential under [chapter 228](#).

b. Information that constitutes the substance or contains the content of an attorney work product or is a privileged communication under [section 622.10](#).

c. Information that would reveal the identity of any individual who provided information relating to a report of child abuse or an assessment of such a report involving the child.

d. Information that the director or the director's designee reasonably believes is likely to cause mental or physical harm to a sibling of the child or to another child residing in the child's household.

e. Information that the director or the director's designee reasonably believes is likely to jeopardize the prosecution of any alleged perpetrator of the fatality or near fatality.

f. Information that the director or the director's designee reasonably believes is likely to jeopardize the rights of any alleged perpetrator of the fatality or near fatality to a fair trial.

g. Information that the director or the director's designee reasonably believes is likely to undermine an ongoing or future criminal investigation.

h. Information, the release of which is a violation of federal law or regulation.

10. The information released by the director of human services or the director's designee pursuant to a request made under [subsection 9](#) relating to a case of founded child abuse involving a fatality or near fatality to a child shall include all of the following, unless such information is excepted from disclosure under [subsection 9](#):

a. Any relevant child abuse information concerning the cause of and circumstances surrounding the child fatality or near fatality, including the age and gender of the child and the department's response and findings.

b. Information describing any previous child abuse or neglect investigations of the caregivers responsible for the child abuse or neglect that are pertinent to the child abuse or neglect that led to the child fatality or near fatality, and the results of any such investigations.

c. A summary of information, that would otherwise be confidential under [section 217.30](#), as to whether or not the child or a member of the child's family was utilizing social services provided by the department at the time of the child fatality or near fatality or within the five-year period preceding the fatality or near fatality.

d. Any recommendations made by the department to the county attorney or the juvenile court.

e. The services provided by and actions of the state on behalf of the child that are pertinent to the child abuse or neglect that led to the child fatality or near fatality.

11. a. If a person who made a request for information under [subsection 9](#) does not believe the department has substantially complied with the request, the person may apply to the juvenile court under [section 235A.24](#) for an order for disclosure of additional information.

b. If release of social services information in addition to that released under [subsection 10](#), paragraph "c", is believed to be in the public's interest and right to know, the director of human services or the director's designee may apply to the court under [section 235A.24](#) requesting a review of the information proposed for release and an order authorizing release of the information. A release of information that would otherwise be confidential under [section 217.30](#) concerning social services provided to the child or the child's family shall not



include information concerning financial or medical assistance provided to the child or the child's family.

12. If an individual who is the subject of a child abuse report listed in [subsection 2](#), paragraph "a", or another party involved in an assessment under [section 232.71B](#) releases in a public forum or to the media information concerning a case of child abuse including but not limited to child abuse information which would otherwise be confidential, the director of human services, or the director's designee, may respond with relevant information concerning the case of child abuse that was the subject of the release. Prior to releasing the response, the director or the director's designee shall consult with the child's parent or guardian, or the child's guardian ad litem, and apply to the court under [section 235A.24](#) requesting a review of the information proposed for release and an order authorizing release of the information.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.15; 82 Acts, ch 1066, §2]

83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159; 85 Acts, ch 173, §16; 85 Acts, ch 174, §1; 86 Acts, ch 1177, §2; 87 Acts, ch 153, §10, 11; 88 Acts, ch 1158, §53; 89 Acts, ch 65, §1; 89 Acts, ch 283, §25; 90 Acts, ch 1221, §3, 4; 90 Acts, ch 1248, §1; 90 Acts, ch 1249, §1; 91 Acts, ch 97, §30; 91 Acts, ch 138, §5, 6; 92 Acts, ch 1141, §4; 92 Acts, ch 1143, §3, 4; 93 Acts, ch 76, §3, 4; 94 Acts, ch 1023, §43; 94 Acts, ch 1156, §1; 95 Acts, ch 93, §1 – 3; 95 Acts, ch 182, §15, 16; 96 Acts, ch 1175, §4; 96 Acts, ch 1183, §28; 97 Acts, ch 176, §9, 32 – 37, 43; 98 Acts, ch 1090, §64, 84; 98 Acts, ch 1100, §97; 98 Acts, ch 1115, §3; 99 Acts, ch 61, §10 – 12, 14; 99 Acts, ch 111, §8; 99 Acts, ch 141, §31; 99 Acts, ch 192, §33; 2000 Acts, ch 1123, §3; 2000 Acts, ch 1137, §6 – 9, 14; 2000 Acts, ch 1153, §1; 2001 Acts, ch 8, §2; 2002 Acts, ch 1034, §2; 2002 Acts, ch 1162, §19; 2003 Acts, ch 107, §2; 2003 Acts, ch 145, §217, 286; 2004 Acts, ch 1116, §27; 2004 Acts, ch 1153, §4 – 7; 2005 Acts, ch 19, §37; 2005 Acts, ch 121, §4 – 8; 2006 Acts, ch 1008, §2; 2006 Acts, ch 1152, §1; 2007 Acts, ch 10, §166; 2007 Acts, ch 22, §55; 2009 Acts, ch 93, §2; 2011 Acts, ch 98, §8; 2012 Acts, ch 1019, §94; 2012 Acts, ch 1047, §1; 2012 Acts, ch 1132, §7; 2013 Acts, ch 42, §13; 2013 Acts, ch 115, §12, 19; 2015 Acts, ch 56, §21; 2015 Acts, ch 69, §74; 2017 Acts, ch 104, §1, 2; 2018 Acts, ch 1104, §2, 5; 2019 Acts, ch 56, §32, 44, 45; 2020 Acts, ch 1102, §10

Referred to in §135.43, 216A.136, 217.30, 232.28, 232.71B, 232.71D, 235A.12, 235A.16, 235A.17, 235A.19, 235A.21, 235A.24, 237.21

Order for disclosure or release of child abuse information, see §235A.24

2019 amendment to subsection 2, paragraph d, subparagraphs (1) and (2), is effective January 1, 2020, and applies to guardianships and guardianship proceedings of minors established or pending before, on, or after that date; 2019 Acts, ch 56, §44, 45

### **235A.16 Requests for child abuse information.**

1. Requests for child abuse information shall be in writing on forms prescribed by the department, except as otherwise provided by [subsection 2](#). Request forms shall require information sufficient to demonstrate authorized access.

2. a. Requests for child abuse information may be made orally by telephone where a person making such a request believes that the information is needed immediately and where information sufficient to demonstrate authorized access is provided. In the event that a request is made orally by telephone, a written request form shall nevertheless be filed within seventy-two hours.

b. The department of inspections and appeals may provide access to the single contact repository established under [section 135C.33](#), [subsection 7](#), for criminal and abuse history checks made by those employers, agencies, and other persons that are authorized access to child abuse information under [section 235A.15](#) and are required by law to perform such checks.

3. [Subsections 1 and 2](#) do not apply to child abuse information that is disseminated to an employee of the department of human services, to a juvenile court, or to the attorney representing the department as authorized by [section 235A.15](#).

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.16]

87 Acts, ch 153, §12; 2001 Acts, ch 191, §40

Referred to in §216A.136, 235A.12

### **235A.17 Redissemination of child abuse information.**

1. A person, agency, or other recipient of child abuse information authorized to receive

such information shall not redisseminate such information, except that redissemination shall be permitted when all of the following conditions apply:

a. The redissemination is for official purposes in connection with prescribed duties or, in the case of a health practitioner, pursuant to professional responsibilities.

b. The person to whom such information would be redisseminated would have independent access to the same information under [section 235A.15](#).

c. A written record is made of the redissemination, including the name of the recipient and the date and purpose of the redissemination.

d. The written record is forwarded to the registry within thirty days of the redissemination.

2. The department of human services may notify orally the mandatory reporter in an individual child abuse case of the results of the case assessment and of the confidentiality provisions of [sections 235A.15](#) and [235A.21](#). The department shall subsequently transmit a written notice to the mandatory reporter of the results and confidentiality provisions. If the report data and disposition data have been placed in the registry as founded child abuse pursuant to [section 232.71D](#), a copy of the written notice shall be transmitted to the registry and shall be maintained by the registry as provided in [section 235A.18](#). Otherwise, a copy of the written notice shall be retained by the department with the case file.

3. a. For the purposes of [this subsection](#), “*subject of a child abuse report*” means any individual listed in [section 235A.15](#), [subsection 2](#), paragraph “a”, other than the attorney or guardian ad litem of such individual.

b. An individual who is the subject of a child abuse report may redisseminate to the governor or the governor’s designee or to a member of the general assembly or an employee of the general assembly designated by the member, child abuse information that was disseminated to the individual by the department or other official source. The child abuse information may also include the following related information that the individual is allowed under law to possess:

(1) Department of human services information described in [section 217.30](#), [subsection 2](#).

(2) Mental health information as defined in [section 228.1](#).

(3) Juvenile court social records and other information in official juvenile court records described in [section 232.147](#).

c. A person who receives confidential child abuse information and related information redisseminated under [this subsection](#) shall not further disseminate, communicate, or attempt to communicate the information to a person who is not authorized by [this section](#) or other provision of law to have access to the information.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.17]

[84 Acts, ch 1279, §23](#); [87 Acts, ch 153, §13](#); [97 Acts, ch 35, §17, 25](#); [97 Acts, ch 176, §10, 38, 43](#); [2000 Acts, ch 1137, §10, 14](#); [2015 Acts, ch 29, §35](#); [2019 Acts, ch 125, §3](#)

Referred to in [§216A.136](#), [235A.12](#), [235A.15](#), [235A.21](#)

### **235A.18 Sealing and expungement of founded child abuse information.**

1. Report data and disposition data relating to a particular case of alleged abuse which has been determined to be founded child abuse and placed in the central registry in accordance with [section 232.71D](#) shall be maintained in the registry as follows:

a. (1) Report and disposition data relating to a particular case of alleged child abuse shall be sealed ten years after the initial placement of the data in the registry unless good cause be shown why the data should remain open to authorized access. If a subsequent report of an alleged case of child abuse involving the child named in the initial data placed in the registry as the victim of abuse or a person named in the data as having abused a child is received by the department within this ten-year period, or within the period in which the person’s name is in the central registry, the data shall be sealed ten years after receipt of the subsequent report unless good cause be shown why the data should remain open to authorized access. Report and disposition data shall be made available to the department of justice if the department requests access to the alleged child abuse records for purposes of review by the prosecutor’s review committee or commitment of sexually violent predators under [chapter 229A](#).

(2) Notwithstanding subparagraph (1), a person named in the initial data placed in the registry as having abused a child shall have the person’s name removed from the registry after

ten years, if not previously removed from the registry pursuant to the other provisions of [this subsection](#), if that person has not had a subsequent case of alleged abuse which resulted in the person's name being placed in the registry as the person responsible for the abuse within the ten-year period.

(3) (a) A person named in the initial data placed in the registry as having abused a child shall have the person's name removed from the registry after five years if the department determined in the report and disposition data that the person committed child abuse as defined in [section 232.68, subsection 2](#), paragraph "a", subparagraph (1), (4), or (6).

(b) Subparagraph division (a) shall not apply, and the name of a person named in the initial data as having abused a child shall remain in the registry as described in subparagraph (1), if the department determined in the initial report and disposition data that the person committed child abuse as defined in [section 232.68, subsection 2](#), paragraph "a", subparagraph (1), (4), or (6), and the child abuse resulted in the child's death or a serious injury.

b. Data sealed in accordance with [this section](#) shall be expunged eight years after the date the data was sealed. However, if the report data and the disposition data involve child abuse as defined in [section 232.68, subsection 2](#), paragraph "a", subparagraph (3) or (5), the data shall not be expunged for a period of thirty years. Sealed data shall be made available to the department of justice upon request if the prosecutor's review committee is reviewing records or if a prosecuting attorney has filed a petition to commit a sexually violent predator under [chapter 229A](#).

2. The juvenile or district court and county attorney shall expunge child abuse information upon notice from the registry. The supreme court shall prescribe rules establishing the period of time child abuse information is retained by the juvenile and district courts. A county attorney shall not retain child abuse information in excess of the time period the information would be retained under the rules prescribed by the supreme court. Child abuse information relating to a particular case of child abuse placed in the central registry that a juvenile or district court determines is unfounded in a written finding based upon a preponderance of evidence shall be expunged from the central registry.

3. The department of human services shall adopt rules establishing the period of time child abuse information which is not maintained in the central registry is retained by the department.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.18]

[83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159; 84 Acts, ch 1279, §24; 85 Acts, ch 173, §17; 89 Acts, ch 230, §20; 90 Acts, ch 1221, §5, 6; 93 Acts, ch 76, §5, 6; 97 Acts, ch 176, §11; 99 Acts, ch 61, §13, 14; 2000 Acts, ch 1137, §11, 14; 2000 Acts, ch 1154, §18; 2011 Acts, ch 28, §5; 2012 Acts, ch 1082, §2; 2013 Acts, ch 115, §13, 19, 20; 2014 Acts, ch 1026, §52](#)

Referred to in [§216A.136, 235A.12, 235A.17, 235A.20, 235A.21](#)

### **235A.19 Examination, requests for correction or expungement and appeal.**

1. A subject of a child abuse report, as identified in [section 235A.15, subsection 2](#), paragraph "a", shall have the right to examine report data and disposition data which refers to the subject. The department may prescribe reasonable hours and places of examination. A subject of a child abuse report may provide additional information to the department that is relevant to the report data and disposition data and may request that the department revise the report data and disposition data.

2. At the time the notice of the results of a child abuse assessment performed in accordance with [section 232.71B](#) is issued, the department shall provide notice to a person named in the report as having abused a child of the right to a contested case hearing and shall provide notice to subjects other than the person named in the report as having abused a child of the right to intervene in a contested case proceeding, as provided in [subsection 3](#).

3. a. A subject of a child abuse report may file with the department within ninety days of the date of the notice of the results of a child abuse assessment performed in accordance with [section 232.71B](#), a written statement to the effect that report data and disposition data referring to the subject is in whole or in part erroneous, and may request a correction of that data or of the findings of the child abuse assessment report.

b. The department shall provide a person named in a child abuse report as having abused a child, who has been adversely affected by a founded child abuse disposition, notwithstanding the placement of the report data in the central registry pursuant to [section 232.71D](#), with an opportunity for a contested case hearing pursuant to [chapter 17A](#) to correct the data or the findings, unless the department corrects the data or findings as requested.

c. The department shall provide a subject of a child abuse report, other than the person named in the report as having abused a child, with an opportunity to file a motion to intervene in the contested case proceeding.

d. The department may defer the hearing until the conclusion of the adjudicatory phase of a pending juvenile or district court case relating to the data or findings. Upon request of any party to the contested case proceeding, the presiding officer may stay the hearing until the conclusion of the adjudicatory phase of a pending juvenile or district court case relating to the data or findings. An adjudication of a child in need of assistance or a criminal conviction in a district court case relating to the child abuse data or findings may be determinative in a contested case proceeding.

e. A party to a contested case proceeding shall file an appeal of the presiding officer's proposed decision to the director within ten days of the presiding officer's proposed decision. If an appeal is not filed within ten days from the date of a proposed decision, the proposed decision shall be the final agency action. If a party files an appeal within ten days from the date of the proposed decision, the director has forty-five days from the date of the proposed decision to issue a ruling. Upon the director's failure to issue a ruling within forty-five days of the date of the proposed decision, the proposed decision shall be the final agency action.

f. The department shall not disclose any report data or disposition data until the conclusion of the proceeding to correct the data or findings, except as follows:

- (1) As necessary for the proceeding itself.
- (2) To the parties and attorneys involved in a judicial proceeding.
- (3) For the regulation of child care or child placement.
- (4) Pursuant to court order.
- (5) To the subject of an assessment or a report.
- (6) For the care or treatment of a child named in a report as a victim of abuse.
- (7) To persons involved in an assessment of child abuse.
- (8) For statutorily authorized record checks for employment of an individual by a provider of adult home care, adult health facility care, or other adult placement facility care.
- (9) For others identified in [section 235A.15, subsection 2](#), paragraph "d", subparagraph (7), and [section 235A.15, subsection 2](#), paragraph "e", subparagraphs (9) and (16).

4. A person named in a child abuse report as having abused a child, who has been adversely affected by a founded child abuse disposition, notwithstanding the placement of the report data in the central registry pursuant to [section 232.71D](#), may appeal the decision resulting from a hearing held pursuant to [subsection 3](#) to the district court of Polk county or to the district court of the district in which the person named in the report as having abused a child resides. Immediately upon appeal the court shall order the department to file with the court a certified copy of the report data or disposition data. Appeal shall be taken in accordance with [chapter 17A](#).

5. Upon the request of the appellant, the record and evidence in such cases shall be closed to all but the court and its officers, and access to the record and evidence shall be prohibited unless otherwise ordered by the court. The clerk shall maintain a separate docket for such actions. A person other than the appellant shall not permit a copy of any of the testimony or pleadings or the substance of the testimony or pleadings to be made available to any person other than a party to the action or the party's attorney. Violation of the provisions of [this subsection](#) shall be a public offense punishable under [section 235A.21](#).

6. Whenever the department corrects or eliminates data as requested or as ordered by the court, the department shall advise all persons who have received the incorrect data of such fact. Upon application to the court and service of notice on the department, any subject of a child abuse report may request and obtain a list of all persons who have received report data or disposition data referring to the subject.

7. In the course of any proceeding provided for by [this section](#), the identity of the person

who reported the disputed data and the identity of any person who has been reported as having abused a child may be withheld upon a determination by the department that disclosure of their identities would be detrimental to their interests.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.19]

85 Acts, ch 173, §18; 89 Acts, ch 230, §21; 92 Acts, ch 1143, §5; 94 Acts, ch 1130, §10; 95 Acts, ch 49, §3; 97 Acts, ch 35, §21, 25; 97 Acts, ch 176, §12, 39, 40, 43; 98 Acts, ch 1100, §98; 2000 Acts, ch 1067, §2; 2005 Acts, ch 121, §9; 2011 Acts, ch 28, §6; 2012 Acts, ch 1082, §3 – 5; 2013 Acts, ch 115, §14, 15, 19

Referred to in §216A.136, 232.71B, 232.71D, 235A.12, 235A.15

#### **235A.20 Civil remedy.**

Any aggrieved person may institute a civil action for damages under [chapter 669](#) or [670](#) or to restrain the dissemination of child abuse information in violation of [this chapter](#), and any person, agency or other recipient proven to have disseminated or to have requested and received child abuse information in violation of [this chapter](#), or any employee of the department who knowingly destroys assessment data except in accordance with rule as established by the department for retention of child abuse information under [section 235A.18](#) shall be liable for actual damages and exemplary damages for each violation and shall be liable for court costs, expenses, and reasonable attorney's fees incurred by the party bringing the action. In no case shall the award for damages be less than one hundred dollars.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.20]

97 Acts, ch 176, §13, 41, 43

Referred to in §235A.12

#### **235A.21 Criminal penalties.**

1. Any person who willfully requests, obtains, or seeks to obtain child abuse information under false pretenses, or who willfully communicates or seeks to communicate child abuse information to any agency or person except in accordance with [sections 235A.15](#) and [235A.17](#), or any person connected with any research authorized pursuant to [section 235A.15](#) who willfully falsifies child abuse information or any records relating to child abuse information, or any employee of the department who knowingly destroys assessment data except in accordance with rule as established by the department for retention of child abuse information under [section 235A.18](#) is guilty of a serious misdemeanor. Any person who knowingly, but without criminal purposes, communicates or seeks to communicate child abuse information except in accordance with [sections 235A.15](#) and [235A.17](#) shall be guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

2. Any reasonable grounds for belief that a person has violated any provision of [this chapter](#) shall be grounds for the immediate withdrawal of any authorized access such person might otherwise have to child abuse information.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.21]

97 Acts, ch 176, §14, 42, 43

Referred to in §235A.12, 235A.17, 235A.19

#### **235A.22 Education program.**

The department of human services shall require an educational program for employees of the department with access to child abuse information on the proper use and control of child abuse information.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.22]

97 Acts, ch 176, §15

Referred to in §235A.12

#### **235A.23 Reports.**

1. The department of human services may compile statistics, conduct research, and issue reports on child abuse, provided identifying details of the subject of child abuse reports are deleted from any report issued.

2. The department shall issue an annual report on its administrative operation, including information as to the number of requests for child abuse data, the proportion of requests

attributable to each type of authorized access, the frequency and nature of irregularities, and other pertinent matters.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §235A.23]

[87 Acts, ch 153, §14](#); [97 Acts, ch 176, §16](#)

Referred to in [§235A.12](#)

**235A.24 Order for disclosure or release of child abuse information.**

1. *a.* If a person's request for information relating to a case of founded child abuse under [section 235A.15, subsection 9](#), is denied or such person does not believe the department has substantially complied with the request and seeks additional information, the person may apply to the juvenile court for an order compelling disclosure of the information.

*b.* The director of human services or the director's designee may apply, if the conditions under [section 235A.15, subsection 11 or 12](#), are met, to the court requesting a review of confidential information proposed for release and an order authorizing the release of information. A release of information that would otherwise be confidential under [section 217.30](#) concerning social services provided to the child or the child's family shall not include information concerning financial or medical assistance provided to the child or the child's family.

2. The application shall state in reasonable detail the factors in support of the application. The juvenile court shall have jurisdiction to issue the order. A hearing shall be set immediately upon filing of an application under [this section](#) and subsequent proceedings shall be accorded priority by other courts.

3. In considering the application, the court shall weigh the public's interest and right to know the information against the privacy rights of the victim of the child abuse and other individuals who may be affected by the release of the information relating to the case of child abuse.

4. After the court has reviewed the information relating to the case in camera, unless the court finds that a restriction listed in [section 235A.15, subsection 9](#), is applicable, the court may issue an order compelling disclosure or authorizing release of the information relating to the case.

[2000 Acts, ch 1137, §12, 14](#); [2004 Acts, ch 1153, §8](#)

Referred to in [§235A.12, 235A.15](#)