

**135C.16 Inspections.**

1. In addition to the inspections required by [sections 135C.9](#) and [135C.38](#), the department shall make or cause to be made such further unannounced inspections as it deems necessary to adequately enforce [this chapter](#). At least one general unannounced inspection shall be conducted for each health care facility within a thirty-month period. The inspector shall show identification to the person in charge of the facility and state that an inspection is to be made before beginning the inspection. An employee of the department who gives unauthorized advance notice of an inspection made or planned to be made under [this subsection](#) or [section 135C.38](#) shall be disciplined as determined by the director, except that if the employee is employed pursuant to the merit system provisions of [chapter 8A, subchapter IV](#), the discipline shall not exceed the discipline authorized pursuant to that subchapter.

2. *a.* The department shall prescribe by rule that any licensee or applicant for license desiring to make specific types of physical or functional alterations or additions to its facility or to construct new facilities shall, before commencing the alteration or additions or new construction, submit plans and specifications to the department for preliminary inspection and approval or recommendations with respect to compliance with the department's rules and standards.

*b.* When the plans and specifications have been properly approved by the department or other appropriate state agency, for a period of at least five years from completion of the construction or alteration, the facility or the portion of the facility constructed or altered in accord with the plans and specifications shall not be considered deficient or ineligible for licensing by reason of failure to meet any rule or standard established subsequent to approval of the plans and specifications.

*c.* When construction or alteration of a facility or portion of a facility has been completed in accord with plans and specifications submitted as required by [this subsection](#) and properly approved by the department or other appropriate state agency, and it is discovered that the facility or portion of a facility is not in compliance with a requirement of [this chapter](#) or of the rules or standards adopted pursuant to it and in effect at the time the plans and specifications were submitted, and the deficiency was apparent from the plans and specifications submitted but was not noted or objected to by the department or other appropriate state agency, the department or agency responsible for the oversight shall either waive the requirement or reimburse the licensee or applicant for any costs which are necessary to bring the new or reconstructed facility or portion of a facility into compliance with the requirement and which the licensee or applicant would not have incurred if the facility or portion of the facility had been constructed in compliance with the requirements of [this chapter](#) or of the rules or standards adopted pursuant to it and in effect at the time the plans and specifications were submitted.

*d.* If within two years from the completion of the construction or alteration of the facility or portion thereof, a department or agency of the state orders that the new or reconstructed facility or portion thereof be brought into compliance with the requirements of [this chapter](#) or the rules or standards adopted pursuant to it and in effect at the time the plans and specifications were submitted, the state shall have a claim for damages to the extent of any reimbursement paid to the licensee or applicant against any person who designed the facility or portion thereof for negligence in the preparation of the plans and specifications therefor, subject to all defenses based upon the negligence of the state in reviewing and approving those plans and specifications, but not thereafter.

*e.* The provisions of [this subsection](#) shall not apply where the deficiency presents a clear and present danger to the safety of the residents of the facility.

3. An authorized representative of the department may enter any licensed health care facility without a warrant, and may examine all records pertaining to the care provided residents of the facility. An authorized representative of the department may contact or interview any resident, employee, or any other person who might have knowledge about the operation of a health care facility. An authorized representative of the department of health and human services shall have the same right with respect to any facility where one or more residents are cared for entirely or partially at public expense, and an authorized

representative of the designated protection and advocacy agency shall have the same right with respect to any facility where one or more residents have developmental disabilities or mental illnesses, and the director shall have the same right of entry into any facility and the right to inspect any records pertinent to fire safety practices and conditions within that facility, and an authorized representative of the office of long-term care ombudsman shall have the same right with respect to any nursing facility or residential care facility. If any such authorized representative has probable cause to believe that any institution, building, or agency not licensed as a health care facility is in fact a health care facility as defined by [this chapter](#), and upon producing identification that the individual is an authorized representative is denied entry to the facility for the purpose of making an inspection, the authorized representative may, with the assistance of the county attorney of the county in which the purported health care facility is located, apply to the district court for an order requiring the owner or occupant to permit entry and inspection of the premises to determine whether there have been any violations of [this chapter](#).

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §135C.16; 82 Acts, ch 1065, §1]

83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159; 84 Acts, ch 1227, §1; 87 Acts, ch 234, §427; 90 Acts, ch 1204, §15; 92 Acts, ch 1242, §26; 2000 Acts, ch 1180, §1; 2003 Acts, ch 145, §187; 2009 Acts, ch 41, §47; 2014 Acts, ch 1040, §8; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §172, 1616

See Code editor's note on simple harmonization at the beginning of this Code volume  
Subsection 3 amended