

CHAPTER 668A

PUNITIVE OR EXEMPLARY DAMAGES

Referred to in [§554.3513](#), [659A.6](#)

668A.1 Punitive or exemplary damages.

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1. In a trial of a claim involving the request for punitive or exemplary damages, the court shall instruct the jury to answer special interrogatories or, if there is no jury, shall make findings, indicating all of the following:

a. Whether, by a preponderance of clear, convincing, and satisfactory evidence, the conduct of the defendant from which the claim arose constituted willful and wanton disregard for the rights or safety of another.

b. Whether the conduct of the defendant was directed specifically at the claimant, or at the person from which the claimant's claim is derived.

2. An award for punitive or exemplary damages shall not be made unless the answer or finding pursuant to [subsection 1](#), paragraph "a", is affirmative. If such answer or finding is affirmative, the jury, or court if there is no jury, shall fix the amount of punitive or exemplary damages to be awarded, and such damages shall be ordered paid as follows:

a. If the answer or finding pursuant to [subsection 1](#), paragraph "b", is affirmative, or if the claim is against any physician and surgeon, osteopathic physician and surgeon, dentist, podiatric physician, optometrist, pharmacist, chiropractor, physician assistant, or nurse, licensed under [chapter 147](#), or a hospital licensed under [chapter 135B](#), arising out of patient care, or if the claim is part of a civil action involving the operation of a commercial motor vehicle, then the full amount of the punitive or exemplary damages awarded shall be paid to the claimant.

b. If the answer or finding pursuant to [subsection 1](#), paragraph "b", is negative, and if the claim is not against any physician and surgeon, osteopathic physician and surgeon, dentist, podiatric physician, optometrist, pharmacist, chiropractor, physician assistant, or nurse, licensed under [chapter 147](#), or a hospital licensed under [chapter 135B](#), arising out of patient care, and if the claim is not part of a civil action involving the operation of a commercial motor vehicle, then after payment of all applicable costs and fees, an amount not to exceed twenty-five percent of the punitive or exemplary damages awarded may be ordered paid to the claimant, with the remainder of the award to be ordered paid into a civil reparations trust fund administered by the state court administrator. Funds placed in the civil reparations trust shall be under the control and supervision of the executive council, and shall be disbursed only for purposes of indigent civil litigation programs or insurance assistance programs.

3. The mere allegation or assertion of a claim for punitive damages shall not form the basis for discovery of the wealth or ability to respond in damages on behalf of the party from whom punitive damages are claimed until such time as the claimant has established that sufficient admissible evidence exists to support a prima facie case establishing the requirements of [subsection 1](#), paragraph "a".

[86 Acts, ch 1211, §42](#); [87 Acts, ch 157, §10](#); [2023 Acts, ch 4, §4 – 6](#); [2023 Acts, ch 84, §3](#)

2023 amendment to subsection 2, paragraphs a and b, by [2023 Acts, ch 4](#), applies to causes of action accrued on or after February 16, 2023; [2023 Acts, ch 4, §6](#)

Subsection 2, paragraphs a and b amended