

**235B.2 Definitions.**

As used in [this chapter](#), unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “*Caretaker*” means a related or nonrelated person who has the responsibility for the protection, care, or custody of a dependent adult as a result of assuming the responsibility voluntarily, by contract, through employment, or by order of the court.
2. “*Court*” means the district court.
3. “*Department*” means the department of health and human services.
4. “*Dependent adult*” means a person eighteen years of age or older who is unable to protect the person’s own interests or unable to adequately perform or obtain services necessary to meet essential human needs, as a result of a physical or mental condition which requires assistance from another, or as defined by departmental rule.
5. a. “*Dependent adult abuse*” means:
  - (1) Any of the following as a result of the willful or negligent acts or omissions of a caretaker:
    - (a) Physical injury to, or injury which is at a variance with the history given of the injury, or unreasonable confinement, unreasonable punishment, or assault of a dependent adult.
    - (b) The commission of a sexual offense under [chapter 709](#) or [section 726.2](#) with or against a dependent adult.
    - (c) Exploitation of a dependent adult which means a fraudulent or otherwise illegal, unauthorized, or improper attempt, act, or process by a caretaker or fiduciary to use the physical or financial resources of a dependent adult for any of the following purposes:
      - (i) Monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain.
      - (ii) To deprive the dependent adult of the use of the dependent adult’s physical or financial resources, including any benefits, belongings, or assets.
    - (d) The deprivation of the minimum food, shelter, clothing, supervision, physical or mental health care, or other care necessary to maintain a dependent adult’s life or health.
  - (2) The deprivation of the minimum food, shelter, clothing, supervision, physical or mental health care, and other care necessary to maintain a dependent adult’s life or health as a result of the acts or omissions of the dependent adult.
  - (3) (a) Sexual exploitation of a dependent adult by a caretaker.
  - (b) “*Sexual exploitation*” means any consensual or nonconsensual sexual conduct with a dependent adult which includes but is not limited to kissing; touching of the clothed or unclothed inner thigh, breast, groin, buttock, anus, pubes, or genitals; or a sex act, as defined in [section 702.17](#). “*Sexual exploitation*” includes the transmission, display, taking of electronic images of the unclothed breast, groin, buttock, anus, pubes, or genitals of a dependent adult by a caretaker for a purpose not related to treatment or diagnosis or as part of an ongoing assessment, evaluation, or investigation. Sexual exploitation does not include touching which is part of a necessary examination, treatment, or care by a caretaker acting within the scope of the practice or employment of the caretaker; the exchange of a brief touch or hug between the dependent adult and a caretaker for the purpose of reassurance, comfort, or casual friendship; or touching between spouses.
  - (4) (a) Personal degradation of a dependent adult by a caretaker.
  - (b) (i) “*Personal degradation*” means a willful act or statement by a caretaker intended to shame, degrade, humiliate, or otherwise harm the personal dignity of a dependent adult, or where the caretaker knew or reasonably should have known the act or statement would cause shame, degradation, humiliation, or harm to the personal dignity of a reasonable person. “*Personal degradation*” includes the taking, transmission, or display of an electronic image of a dependent adult by a caretaker, where the caretaker’s actions constitute a willful act or statement intended to shame, degrade, humiliate, or otherwise harm the personal dignity of the dependent adult, or where the caretaker knew or reasonably should have known the act would cause shame, degradation, humiliation, or harm to the personal dignity of a reasonable person.
  - (ii) “*Personal degradation*” does not include any of the following:
    - (A) The taking, transmission, or display of an electronic image of a dependent adult for the purpose of reporting dependent adult abuse to law enforcement, the department, or any

other regulatory agency that oversees caretakers or enforces abuse or neglect provisions, or for the purpose of treatment or diagnosis or as part of an ongoing investigation.

(B) The taking, transmission, or display of an electronic image by a caretaker who takes, transmits, or displays the electronic image in accordance with the confidentiality policy and release of information or consent policies of a contractor, employer, or facility or program not covered under [section 235E.1, subsection 5](#), paragraph “a”, subparagraph (3).

(C) A statement by a caretaker who is the spouse of a dependent adult that is not intended to shame, degrade, humiliate, or otherwise harm the personal dignity of the dependent adult spouse.

b. “*Dependent adult abuse*” does not include any of the following:

(1) Circumstances in which the dependent adult declines medical treatment if the dependent adult holds a belief or is an adherent of a religion whose tenets and practices call for reliance on spiritual means in place of reliance on medical treatment.

(2) Circumstances in which the dependent adult’s caretaker, acting in accordance with the dependent adult’s stated or implied consent, declines medical treatment if the dependent adult holds a belief or is an adherent of a religion whose tenets and practices call for reliance on spiritual means in place of reliance on medical treatment.

(3) The withholding or withdrawing of health care from a dependent adult who is terminally ill in the opinion of a licensed physician, when the withholding or withdrawing of health care is done at the request of the dependent adult or at the request of the dependent adult’s next of kin, attorney in fact, or guardian pursuant to the applicable procedures under [chapter 125, 144A, 144B, 222, 229, or 633](#).

6. “*Director*” means the director of health and human services.

7. “*Emergency shelter services*” means and includes, but is not limited to, secure crisis shelters or housing for victims of dependent adult abuse.

8. “*Family or household member*” means a spouse, a person cohabiting with the dependent adult, a parent, or a person related to the dependent adult by consanguinity or affinity, but does not include children of the dependent adult who are less than eighteen years of age.

9. “*Immediate danger to health or safety*” means a situation in which death or severe bodily injury could reasonably be expected to occur without intervention.

10. “*Individual employed as an outreach person*” means a natural person who, in the course of employment, makes regular contacts with dependent adults regarding available community resources.

11. “*Legal holiday*” means a legal public holiday as defined in [section 1C.1](#).

12. “*Person*” means person as defined in [section 4.1](#).

13. “*Recklessly*” means that a person acts or fails to act with respect to a material element of a public offense, when the person is aware of and consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk that the material element exists or will result from the act or omission. The risk must be of such a nature and degree that disregard of the risk constitutes a gross deviation from the standard conduct that a reasonable person would observe in the situation.

14. “*Serious injury*” means the same as defined in [section 702.18](#).

15. “*Support services*” includes but is not limited to community-based services including area agency on aging assistance, mental health services, fiscal management, home health services, housing-related services, counseling services, transportation services, adult day services, respite services, legal services, and advocacy services.

[87 Acts, ch 182, §9; 88 Acts, ch 1238, §3; 91 Acts, ch 231, §2; 92 Acts, ch 1143, §6, 7; 93 Acts, ch 76, §7; 95 Acts, ch 51, §3; 96 Acts, ch 1130, §2; 2001 Acts, ch 64, §7; 2006 Acts, ch 1030, §26; 2008 Acts, ch 1093, §3; 2009 Acts, ch 107, §1; 2010 Acts, ch 1073, §1; 2019 Acts, ch 39, §1; 2019 Acts, ch 122, §1; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §716; 2025 Acts, ch 135, §41](#)

Referred to in [§235B.3, 235B.16A, 249A.4, 502.801, 633B.116, 633B.118, 692A.102, 726.26, 726.28, 915.84](#)  
Subsection 5, paragraph a, subparagraph (1), subparagraph division (c) amended