

235E.1 Definitions.

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

1. “*Caretaker*” means a person who is a staff member of a facility or program who provides care, protection, or services to a dependent adult voluntarily, by contract, through employment, or by order of the court.

2. “*Court*” means the district court.

3. “*Department*” means the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing.

4. “*Dependent adult*” means a person eighteen years of age or older whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for the person’s own care or protection is impaired, either temporarily or permanently.

5. a. “*Dependent adult abuse*” means:

(1) Any of the following as a result of the willful misconduct or gross negligence or reckless acts or omissions of a caretaker, taking into account the totality of the circumstances:

(a) 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 which involves a breach of skill, care, and learning ordinarily exercised by a caretaker in similar circumstances. “*Assault of a dependent adult*” means the commission of any act which is generally intended to cause pain or injury to a dependent adult, or which is generally intended to result in physical contact which would be considered by a reasonable person to be insulting or offensive or any act which is intended to place another in fear of immediate physical contact which will be painful, injurious, insulting, or offensive, coupled with the apparent ability to execute the act.

(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. “*Exploitation*” means a caretaker who knowingly obtains, uses, endeavors to obtain to use, or who misappropriates, a dependent adult’s funds, assets, medications, or property with the intent to temporarily or permanently deprive a dependent adult of the use, benefit, or possession of the funds, assets, medication, or property for the benefit of someone other than the dependent adult.

(d) Neglect of a dependent adult. “*Neglect of a dependent adult*” means 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 physical or mental health.

(2) Sexual exploitation of a dependent adult by a caretaker whether within a facility or program or at a location outside of a facility or program. “*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 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 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 or domestic partners in an intimate relationship.

(3) Personal degradation of a dependent adult. “*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. “*Personal*

degradation” does not include 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 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 evaluation or investigation. “*Personal degradation*” also does not include the taking, transmission, or display of an electronic image by a caretaker in accordance with the facility’s or program’s confidentiality policy and release of information or consent policies.

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 or care.

(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. “*Facility*” means a health care facility as defined in [section 135C.1](#) or a hospital as defined in [section 135B.1](#).

7. “*Intimate relationship*” means a significant romantic involvement between two persons that need not include sexual involvement, but does not include a casual social relationship or association in a business or professional capacity. In determining whether persons are in an intimate relationship, the court may consider the following nonexclusive list of factors:

a. The duration of the relationship.

b. The frequency of interaction.

c. Whether the relationship has been terminated.

d. The nature of the relationship, characterized by either person’s expectation of sexual or romantic involvement.

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

9. “*Program*” means an elder group home as defined in [section 231B.1](#), an assisted living program certified under [section 231C.3](#), or an adult day services program as defined in [section 231D.1](#).

10. “*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.

11. “*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.

[2008 Acts, ch 1093, §11; 2017 Acts, ch 25, §1, 2; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1947; 2024 Acts, ch 1073, §2](#)

Referred to in [§231B.10, 231C.10, 231D.5, 235B.2, 235B.5, 235B.6, 235E.2, 235F.1, 633B.116, 633B.118, 726.26](#)