
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that child sexual abuse
2 is extremely prevalent and that most children do not immediately
3 disclose the fact that they were abused. In the United States,
4 one in five girls and one in twenty boys is a victim of
5 childhood sexual abuse, and studies show that between sixty and
6 eighty per cent of survivors withhold disclosure. Of those who
7 delay disclosure until adulthood, the average delay has been
8 found to be approximately twenty years, with some survivors
9 delaying up to fifty years.

10 The legislature further finds that there are many reasons
11 children delay disclosing sexual abuse. These reasons range
12 from their particular stage of cognitive development, limited
13 capacity to understand what happened, inability to recognize
14 that the sexual abuse may cause dysfunction in their adult life,
15 confusion about their feelings, or limited ability to adequately
16 express complaints, to the fact that a majority of survivors
17 know the perpetrator and may fear retaliation or harmful impacts



1 on their family or community. Moreover, when survivors disclose
2 abuse, they may also be subjected to disbelief, accusations,
3 silencing, and retraumatizing reactions by the recipients of the
4 disclosure.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 6 (1) Expand the time period by which a civil action for
7 childhood sexual abuse committed on or after July 1,
8 2024, may be initiated; and
9 (2) Allow a court to order the personnel of a legal entity
10 against whom a claim is brought to undergo training on
11 trauma-informed response to allegations of sexual
12 abuse.

13 This Act shall not be deemed retroactive. This Act shall
14 only apply prospectively and does not revive any action that has
15 passed the existing statute of limitations.

16 SECTION 2. Section 657-1.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
17 amended to read as follows:

18 **"§657-1.8 Civil action arising from sexual offenses;**
19 **application; certificate of merit[-]; trauma-informed response.**

20 (a) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, [~~except as~~
21 ~~provided under subsection (b),~~] no action for recovery of



1 damages based on physical, psychological, or other injury or
2 condition suffered by a victim when the victim was a minor,
3 arising from the sexual abuse of the [~~minor~~] victim by any
4 person when the victim was a minor, shall be commenced against
5 the person who committed the act of sexual abuse more than:

6 (1) For sexual abuse committed before July 1, 2024:

7 [~~(1)~~] (A) Eight years after the eighteenth
8 birthday of the [~~minor or the person who~~
9 ~~committed the act of sexual abuse attains the age~~
10 ~~of majority, whichever occurs later;~~] victim; or

11 [~~(2)~~] (B) Three years after the date the [~~minor~~]
12 victim discovers or reasonably should have
13 discovered that psychological injury or illness
14 occurring after the [~~minor's~~] victim's eighteenth
15 birthday was caused by the sexual abuse,
16 whichever [~~comes~~] occurs later[~~-~~]; or

17 (2) For sexual abuse committed on or after July 1, 2024:

18 (A) Thirty-two years after the eighteenth birthday of
19 the victim; or

20 (B) Five years after the date the victim discovers or
21 reasonably should have discovered that



1 psychological injury or illness occurring after
2 the victim's eighteenth birthday was caused by
3 the sexual abuse,
4 whichever occurs later.

5 A civil cause of action for the sexual abuse of a victim
6 when the victim was a minor shall be based upon sexual acts that
7 constituted or would have constituted a criminal offense under
8 part V or VI of chapter 707.

9 (b) ~~[For a period of eight years after April 24, 2012, a~~
10 ~~victim of child sexual abuse that occurred in this State may~~
11 ~~file a claim in a circuit court of this State against the person~~
12 ~~who committed the act of sexual abuse if the victim is barred~~
13 ~~from filing a claim against the victim's abuser due to the~~
14 ~~expiration of the applicable civil statute of limitations that~~
15 ~~was in effect prior to April 24, 2012.]~~

16 A claim may also be brought under this [subsection] section
17 against a legal entity if:

18 (1) The person who committed the act of sexual abuse
19 against the victim was employed by an institution,
20 agency, firm, business, corporation, or other public



1 or private legal entity that owed a duty of care to
2 the victim; or

3 (2) The person who committed the act of sexual abuse and
4 the victim were engaged in an activity over which the
5 legal entity had a degree of responsibility or
6 control.

7 Damages against the legal entity shall be awarded under
8 this subsection only if there is a finding of gross negligence
9 on the part of the legal entity.

10 (c) A defendant against whom a civil action is commenced
11 may recover attorney's fees if the court determines that a false
12 accusation was made with no basis in fact and with malicious
13 intent. A verdict in favor of the defendant shall not be the
14 sole basis for a determination that an accusation had no basis
15 in fact and was made with malicious intent. The court shall
16 make an independent finding of an improper motive [~~prior to~~
17 before awarding attorney's fees under this section.

18 (d) In any civil action filed pursuant to subsection (a)
19 or (b), a certificate of merit shall be filed by the attorney
20 for the plaintiff, and shall be sealed and remain confidential.



1 The certificate of merit shall include a notarized statement by
2 a:

- 3 ~~[(1) Psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 465;~~
- 4 ~~+(2)]~~ (1) Marriage and family therapist licensed pursuant
5 to chapter 451J;
- 6 ~~[(3)]~~ (2) Mental health counselor licensed pursuant to
7 chapter 453D; ~~[or]~~
- 8 (3) Psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 465; or
- 9 (4) Clinical social worker licensed pursuant to chapter
10 467E~~[+]~~,

11 who is knowledgeable in the relevant facts and issues involved
12 in the action, and who is not a party to the action.

13 The notarized statement included in the certificate of
14 merit shall set forth in reasonable detail the facts and
15 opinions relied upon to conclude that there is a reasonable
16 basis to believe that the plaintiff was subject to one or more
17 acts that would result in an injury or condition specified in
18 ~~[+]~~subsection~~[+]~~ (a).

19 (e) With respect to a legal entity against whom a claim is
20 brought pursuant to subsection (b), a plaintiff may request, and
21 a court may order, the personnel of the legal entity to undergo



1 training on trauma-informed response to allegations of sexual
2 abuse. As used in this subsection, "trauma-informed response"
3 may include:

4 (1) Fully integrating research about the effects and
5 impacts of trauma into policies, procedures, and
6 practices;

7 (2) Understanding the ways in which stress and trauma may
8 affect attention, cognition, behavior, and memory
9 processes;

10 (3) Creating an environment that is safe, non-judgmental,
11 and free of gratuitous re-triggering; and

12 (4) Listening to and documenting victims' statements
13 without judgment."

14 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
15 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

16 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.



Report Title:

Sexual Abuse; Minors; Civil Action; Statute of Limitations;
Trauma-Informed Response

Description:

Expands the time period by which a civil action for childhood sexual abuse committed on or after July 1, 2024, may be initiated. Authorizes a court to require personnel of legal entities to undergo training on trauma-informed response. (HD1)

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