

Effective 5/8/2018

Superseded 5/4/2022

78B-2-308 Legislative findings -- Civil actions for sexual abuse of a child -- Window for revival of time barred claims.

(1) The Legislature finds that:

- (a) child sexual abuse is a crime that hurts the most vulnerable in our society and destroys lives;
- (b) research over the last 30 years has shown that it takes decades for children and adults to pull their lives back together and find the strength to face what happened to them;
- (c) often the abuse is compounded by the fact that the perpetrator is a member of the victim's family and when such abuse comes out, the victim is further stymied by the family's wish to avoid public embarrassment;
- (d) even when the abuse is not committed by a family member, the perpetrator is rarely a stranger and, if in a position of authority, often brings pressure to bear on the victim to ensure silence;
- (e) in 1992, when the Legislature enacted the statute of limitations requiring victims to sue within four years of majority, society did not understand the long-lasting effects of abuse on the victim and that it takes decades for the healing necessary for a victim to seek redress;
- (f) the Legislature, as the policy-maker for the state, may take into consideration advances in medical science and understanding in revisiting policies and laws shown to be harmful to the citizens of this state rather than beneficial; and
- (g) the Legislature has the authority to change old laws in the face of new information, and set new policies within the limits of due process, fairness, and justice.

(2) As used in this section:

- (a) "Child" means an individual under 18 years of age.
- (b) "Discovery" means when a victim knows or reasonably should know that the injury or illness was caused by the intentional or negligent sexual abuse.
- (c) "Injury or illness" means either a physical injury or illness or a psychological injury or illness. A psychological injury or illness need not be accompanied by physical injury or illness.
- (d) "Molestation" means that an individual, with the intent to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of any individual, touches the anus, buttocks, pubic area, or genitalia of any child, or the breast of a female child, or takes indecent liberties with a child as defined in Section 76-5-416.
- (e) "Negligently" means a failure to act to prevent the child sexual abuse from further occurring or to report the child sexual abuse to law enforcement when the adult who could act knows or reasonably should know of the child sexual abuse and is the victim's parent, stepparent, adoptive parent, foster parent, legal guardian, ancestor, descendant, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, grandparent, stepgrandparent, or any individual cohabiting in the child's home.
- (f) "Perpetrator" means an individual who has committed an act of sexual abuse.
- (g) "Sexual abuse" means acts or attempted acts of sexual intercourse, sodomy, or molestation by an adult directed towards a child.
- (h) "Victim" means an individual who was intentionally or negligently sexually abused. It does not include individuals whose claims are derived through another individual who was sexually abused.

(3)

- (a) A victim may file a civil action against a perpetrator for intentional or negligent sexual abuse suffered as a child at any time.
- (b) A victim may file a civil action against a non-perpetrator for intentional or negligent sexual abuse suffered as a child:

- (i) within four years after the individual attains the age of 18 years; or
 - (ii) if a victim discovers sexual abuse only after attaining the age of 18 years, that individual may bring a civil action for such sexual abuse within four years after discovery of the sexual abuse, whichever period expires later.
- (4) The victim need not establish which act in a series of continuing sexual abuse incidents caused the injury complained of, but may compute the date of discovery from the date of discovery of the last act by the same perpetrator which is part of a common scheme or plan of sexual abuse.
- (5) The knowledge of a custodial parent or guardian may not be imputed to an individual under the age of 18 years.
- (6) A civil action may be brought only against a living individual who:
 - (a) intentionally perpetrated the sexual abuse;
 - (b) would be criminally responsible for the sexual abuse in accordance with Section 76-2-202; or
 - (c) negligently permitted the sexual abuse to occur.
- (7) A civil action against an individual described in Subsection (6)(a) or (b) for sexual abuse that was time barred as of July 1, 2016, may be brought within 35 years of the victim's 18th birthday, or within three years of the effective date of this Subsection (7), whichever is longer.
- (8) A civil action may not be brought as provided in Subsection (7) for:
 - (a) any claim that has been litigated to finality on the merits in a court of competent jurisdiction prior to July 1, 2016, however termination of a prior civil action on the basis of the expiration of the statute of limitations does not constitute a claim that has been litigated to finality on the merits; and
 - (b) any claim where a written settlement agreement was entered into between a victim and a defendant or perpetrator, unless the settlement agreement was the result of fraud, duress, or unconscionability. There is a rebuttable presumption that a settlement agreement signed by the victim when the victim was not represented by an attorney admitted to practice law in this state at the time of the settlement was the result of fraud, duress, or unconscionability.