

ACT No. 370

2017 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 395

BY REPRESENTATIVE DUSTIN MILLER

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 28:54(A) and (C), 55(A) through (D) and (E)(1) and (5), 56(C)
3 and (G)(4), 59(A) through (C), 454.6(A)(introductory paragraph), (5), and (6) and
4 (B) and to enact R.S. 28:454.6(A)(7), relative to involuntary mental health treatment;
5 to make technical corrections; to provide for judicial commitment hearings; to
6 provide for commitment of prisoners; to establish an effective date; and to provide
7 for related matters.

8 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

9 Section 1. R.S. 28:54(A) and (C), 55(A) through (D) and (E)(1) and (5), 56(C) and
10 (G)(4), 59(A) through (C), 454.6(A)(introductory paragraph), (5), and (6) and (B) are hereby
11 amended and reenacted and R.S. 28:454.6(A)(7) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

12 §54. Judicial commitment; procedure

13 A. ~~Any~~ The department or any person of legal age may file with the court
14 a petition which asserts his belief that a person is suffering from mental illness which
15 contributes or causes that person to be a danger to himself or others or to be gravely
16 disabled, or is suffering from substance abuse which contributes or causes that
17 person to be a danger to himself or others or to be gravely disabled and may thereby
18 request a hearing. The petition may be filed in the judicial district in which the
19 respondent is confined, or if not confined, in the judicial district where he resides or

1 B. The court shall provide the respondent a reasonable opportunity to select
2 his own counsel. In the event the respondent does not select counsel and is unable
3 to pay for counsel, or in the event counsel selected by the respondent refuses to
4 represent ~~said~~ the respondent or is not available for such representation, then the
5 court shall appoint counsel for the respondent provided by the mental health
6 advocacy service. Reasonable compensation of appointed counsel shall be
7 established by the court and may be ordered paid by the respondent or the petitioner
8 in the discretion of the court if either is found financially capable. If it is determined
9 by the court that the costs shall not be borne by the respondent or the petitioner, then
10 compensation to the attorney shall be paid from funds appropriated to the judiciary.

11 C.(1) The respondent shall have the right to privately ~~retained~~ retain and ~~paid~~
12 pay counsel at any time. However, all respondents must be represented by counsel
13 as early as possible in every proceeding. If attorneys are available through the
14 ~~mental health advocacy service~~ Mental Health Advocacy Service, the court shall
15 contact the ~~office of the~~ Mental Health Advocacy service Service and request the
16 assignment of an attorney who will be appointed. In cases where the Mental Health
17 Advocacy service Service is unable to provide representation, the court shall select
18 and appoint an attorney to represent the respondent, whose fee shall be set by the
19 court.

20 (2) An attorney appointed to represent a person by a court pursuant to this
21 Title has a continuing duty toward that person even after admission. That duty shall
22 include, but not be limited to, follow-up investigation of the circumstances of the
23 person and representation in subsequent proceedings relating to admission, status,
24 and discharge. The duty shall continue until it is terminated by the court making the
25 appointment.

26 D. On the day appointed, the hearing shall take precedence over all other
27 matters, ~~except pending cases of the same type,~~ and shall be a closed hearing. The
28 court shall conduct the hearing in as formal a manner as is possible under the
29 circumstances and shall admit evidence according to the usual rules of evidence.
30 Witnesses and evidence tending to show that the person who is the subject of the

1 petition is a proper subject for judicial commitment shall be presented first. The
2 respondent has a right to be present unless the court finds that he knowingly,
3 voluntarily, and intelligently waives his presence. The respondent or his counsel
4 shall have the right to present evidence and ~~cross-examine~~ cross-examine witnesses
5 who may testify at the hearing. If the department is not the petitioner, the
6 department or its counsel may present evidence, call witnesses, and cross-examine
7 any witness testifying at the hearing regarding the placement of the respondent. If
8 the respondent is present at the hearing and is medicated, the court shall be informed
9 of the medication and its common effects. If the respondent or his attorney notifies
10 the court not less than three days before the hearing that he wishes to ~~cross-examine~~
11 cross-examine the examining physicians, the court shall order such physicians to
12 appear in person or by deposition. The court shall cause a recording of the testimony
13 of the hearing to be made, which shall be transcribed only in the event of an appeal
14 from the judgment. A copy of such transcript shall be furnished without charge, to
15 any appellant whom the court finds unable to pay for the same. The cost of ~~such~~ the
16 transcript shall be paid from funds appropriated to the judicial department.

17 E.(1) If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the respondent
18 is dangerous to self or others or is gravely disabled, as a result of substance abuse or
19 mental illness, it shall render a judgment for his commitment. After considering all
20 relevant circumstances, including clinical recommendations and any preference of
21 the respondent or his family, the court shall determine whether the respondent should
22 be committed to a treatment facility which is medically suitable and least restrictive
23 of the respondent's liberty. However, if the placement determined by the court is
24 unavailable, the court ~~shall~~ may commit the respondent to the Louisiana Department
25 of Health for appropriate placement in a state treatment facility subject to availability
26 of department resources until such time as an opening is available for transfer to the
27 treatment center determined by the court, ~~unless the respondent waives the~~
28 ~~requirement for such transfer.~~ ~~Within fifteen days following an alternative~~
29 ~~placement, the department shall submit a report to the court stating the reasons for~~
30 ~~such placement and seeking court approval of the placement.~~ If the department is

1 not the petitioner, the parties shall first consult with the department or its counsel
2 before entering into a judgment stipulating to a commitment of the respondent to the
3 department.

4 * * *

5 (5) The court order shall order a suitable person to convey ~~such person~~ the
6 respondent to the treatment facility and deliver ~~respondent, together with~~ a copy of
7 the judgment and certificates, with the respondent, to the director. In appointing a
8 person to execute the order, the court should give preference to a near relative or
9 friend of the respondent.

10 * * *

11 §56. Judicial commitment; review; appeals

12 * * *

13 C. Notwithstanding an order of judicial commitment, the director of the
14 treatment facility to which the individual is committed is encouraged to explore
15 treatment measures that are medically appropriate and less restrictive. The ~~director~~
16 ~~may at any time convert an involuntary commitment~~ may be converted to a voluntary
17 ~~one should he deem that action medically appropriate. He~~ in accordance with R.S.
18 28:52 or 52.2. The director or administrator of the treatment facility shall inform the
19 court of any action in that regard. The director may discharge any patient if in his
20 opinion, or upon recommendation of the treating physician, discharge is appropriate.
21 The director shall not be legally responsible to any person for the subsequent acts or
22 behavior of a patient discharged in good faith.

23 * * *

24 G.

25 * * *

26 (4) An extension of a conditional discharge may be granted upon application
27 by the department or by the director of the treatment facility to the court and
28 notification to respondent's counsel of record. The court may grant the extension of
29 the conditional discharge for a period of up to one hundred twenty days. No further
30 extension may be made without a contradictory hearing. The burden of proof is on

