

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Enhance the Newborn Hearing Program

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §42, sub-§5, as amended by PL 2001, c. 407, §1, is further amended to read:

5. Confidentiality of records containing certain medical information. Department records that contain personally identifying medical information that are created or obtained in connection with the department's public health activities or programs are confidential. These records include, but are not limited to, information on genetic, communicable, occupational or environmental disease entities, and information gathered from public health nurse activities, or any program for which the department collects personally identifying medical information.

The department's confidential records may not be open to public inspection, are not public records for purposes of Title 1, chapter 13, subchapter H and may not be examined in any judicial, executive, legislative or other proceeding as to the existence or content of any individual's records obtained by the department.

Exceptions to this subsection include release of medical and epidemiologic information in such a manner that an individual can not be identified; disclosures that are necessary to carry out the provisions of chapter 250; disclosures made upon written authorization by the subject of the record, except as otherwise provided in this section; and disclosures that are specifically provided for by statute or by departmental rule. The department may participate in a regional or national tracking system as provided in section 8824 or both.

Nothing in this subsection precludes the department, during the data collection phase of an epidemiologic investigation, from refusing to allow the inspection or copying of any record or survey instrument, including any redacted record or survey instrument, containing information pertaining to an identifiable individual that has been collected in the course of that investigation. The department's refusal is not reviewable.

Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §8824, first ¶, as amended by PL 2007, c. 236, §1, is further amended to read:

The department is authorized to implement a tracking system that provides the information necessary to effectively plan, establish and evaluate a comprehensive system of developmentally appropriate services for newborn infants and children up to 3 years of age who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and to ensure that all families are given information regarding the availability of hearing screening for their infants. The services must be designed to reduce the likelihood of associated disabling conditions for these children. The tracking system must be integrated with any national database or similar system developed by the Federal Government or with any regional database or with both.

SUMMARY

This bill gives the Department of Health and Human Services the authority to participate in a national or regional database or both for tracking information about newborns and children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing so as to plan more effectively for developmentally appropriate services to further the goals of the Newborn Hearing Program.