

Introduced by

Senators J. Lee, Hogan, Poolman

Representatives Beadle, Dockter

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact chapter 50-25.3 of the North Dakota Century Code,
2 relating to family visitation rights.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1.** Chapter 50-25.3 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as
5 follows:

6 **50-25.3-01. Definitions.**

7 As used in this chapter:

- 8 1. "Caregiver" means a person that has assumed the legal responsibility or a contractual
9 obligation for the care of a vulnerable adult or has voluntarily assumed responsibility
10 for the care of a vulnerable adult. The term includes a facility operated by a public or
11 private agency, organization, or institution which provides services to, and has
12 assumed responsibility for the care of, a vulnerable adult.
- 13 2. "Clergy member" means a member of the clergy or spiritual counselor who has
14 provided a vulnerable adult with religious or spiritual care who represents a religious
15 organization to which a vulnerable adult is a member.
- 16 3. "Family member" means an individual related by blood, marriage, or adoption to a
17 vulnerable adult.
- 18 4. "Friend" means an individual who is in a dating relationship with a vulnerable adult or
19 any other individual with whom a vulnerable adult has an established relationship.
- 20 5. "Substantial functional impairment" means, because of physical limitations, a
21 substantial incapability of living independently or providing self-care as determined
22 through observation, diagnosis, evaluation, or assessment.
- 23 6. "Substantial mental impairment" means a substantial disorder of thought, mood,
24 perception, orientation, or memory which grossly impairs judgment, behavior, or ability.

1 to live independently or provide self-care as revealed by observation, diagnosis,
2 evaluation, or assessment.

3 7. "Vulnerable adult" means an adult who has a substantial mental or functional
4 impairment or an adult who is experiencing visitation restrictions while under the care
5 of a caregiver.

6 **50-25.3-02. Visitation of a vulnerable adult by family members, friends, or clergy**
7 **member.**

8 A caregiver may not unreasonably or arbitrarily deny or restrict visitation to a family
9 member, friend, or clergy member or communication or interaction between a vulnerable adult
10 and a family member, friend, or clergy member.

11 **50-25.3-03. Petition for visitation.**

12 1. A family member, friend, or clergy member who has had visitation unreasonably or
13 arbitrarily denied or restricted by a caregiver may file with the district court located in
14 the county wherein the vulnerable adult resides a petition to compel visitation.

15 2. The petition must state:

16 a. The petitioner's relationship to the vulnerable adult;

17 b. Whether the caregiver is unreasonably or arbitrarily denying or restricting
18 visitation between the petitioner and the vulnerable adult; and

19 c. The facts supporting the petitioner's allegation that the caregiver is unreasonably
20 or arbitrarily denying or restricting visitation between the petitioner and the
21 vulnerable adult.

22 3. The court shall fix a time and place for hearing the petition. At least twenty days before
23 the date of hearing, the petitioner shall provide to the caregiver, vulnerable adult and
24 other interested parties notice of the filing of the petition and of the time and place of
25 hearing.

26 4. The court shall conduct an in camera interview of the vulnerable adult to determine the
27 wishes of the vulnerable adult. The in camera interview may be on the record. The
28 court shall give deference to the vulnerable adult's preference in making decisions.

29 5. The court may not issue an order compelling visitation if the court finds the vulnerable
30 adult, while having the capacity to evaluate and communicate decisions regarding
31 visitation, expresses a desire to not have visitation with the petitioner.

- 1 6. If the court grants the petition for visitation, the court may impose conditions on
2 visitation between the petitioner and the vulnerable adult after consultation with the
3 vulnerable adult and based on the minimum visitation necessary to allow the
4 vulnerable adult to maintain maximum self-reliance and independence. The petitioner
5 is responsible for paying costs associated with the visitation, including transportation
6 and supervision costs. Visitation may not occur in a manner that negatively impacts
7 the medical or treatment needs of the vulnerable adult.
- 8 7. The court may prohibit contact between the petitioner and the vulnerable adult when
9 contact is not in the best interest of the vulnerable adult.
- 10 8. The court shall impose the cost of filing the petition for visitation and reasonable
11 attorney's fees incurred by the petitioner on the caregiver, if the court finds during a
12 hearing under this section that:
- 13 a. The caregiver unreasonably or arbitrarily denied or restricted visitation to a family
14 member, friend, or clergy member; and
- 15 b. The caregiver denied or restricted visitation between the petitioner and the
16 vulnerable adult in bad faith.
- 17 9. The court may not impose costs or fees under subsection 6 on the vulnerable adult or
18 a caregiver that in good faith denied or restricted visitation to a family member, friend,
19 or clergy member. Costs, fees, or other sanctions imposed under subsection 6 may
20 not be paid from the vulnerable adult's finances or estate.

21 **50-25.3-04. Expedited hearing.**

22 If a petition for visitation states the vulnerable adult's health is in significant decline or the
23 vulnerable adult's death may be imminent, the court shall conduct an emergency hearing on the
24 petition as soon as practicable and no later than fourteen days after the date the petition is filed
25 with the court, or at a later date upon a showing of good cause.