

PEER REVIEW PROTECTION ACT
Act of Jul. 20, 1974, P.L. 564, No. 193
AN ACT

Cl. 35

Providing for the increased use of peer review groups by giving protection to individuals and data who report to any review group.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short Title.--This act may be cited as the "Peer Review Protection Act."

Section 2. Definitions.--As used in this act:

"Peer review" means the procedure for evaluation by professional health care providers of the quality and efficiency of services ordered or performed by other professional health care providers, including practice analysis, inpatient hospital and extended care facility utilization review, medical audit, ambulatory care review, claims review, and the compliance of a hospital, nursing home or convalescent home or other health care facility operated by a professional health care provider with the standards set by an association of health care providers and with applicable laws, rules and regulations. Peer review, as it applies to veterinarians, shall mean the procedure for evaluation by licensed doctors of veterinary medicine of the quality and efficiency of veterinary medicine ordered or performed by other doctors of veterinary medicine with the standards set by an association of doctors of veterinary medicine and with applicable laws, rules and regulations.

"Professional health care provider" means:

(1) individuals or organizations who are approved, licensed or otherwise regulated to practice or operate in the health care field under the laws of the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to, the following individuals or organizations:

- (i) a physician;
- (ii) a dentist;
- (iii) a podiatrist;
- (iv) a chiropractor;
- (v) an optometrist;
- (vi) a psychologist;
- (vii) a pharmacist;
- (viii) a registered or practical nurse;
- (ix) a physical therapist;
- (x) an administrator of a hospital, nursing or convalescent home or other health care facility; or
- (xi) a corporation or other organization operating a hospital, nursing or convalescent home or other health care facility; or

(2) individuals licensed to practice veterinary medicine under the laws of this Commonwealth.

"Professional society" includes medical, veterinary, psychological, nursing, dental, optometric, pharmaceutical,

chiropractic and podiatric organizations having as members at least a majority of the eligible licentiates in the area or health care facility or agency served by the particular society.

"Review organization" means any committee engaging in peer review, including a hospital utilization review committee, a hospital tissue committee, a health insurance review committee, a hospital plan corporation review committee, a professional health service plan review committee, a dental review committee, a physicians' advisory committee, a veterinary review committee, a nursing advisory committee, any committee established pursuant to the medical assistance program, and any committee established by one or more State or local professional societies, to gather and review information relating to the care and treatment of patients for the purposes of (i) evaluating and improving the quality of health care rendered; (ii) reducing morbidity or mortality; or (iii) establishing and enforcing guidelines designed to keep within reasonable bounds the cost of health care. It shall also mean any hospital board, committee or individual reviewing the professional qualifications or activities of its medical staff or applicants for admission thereto. It shall also mean a committee of an association of professional health care providers reviewing the operation of hospitals, nursing homes, convalescent homes or other health care facilities.

(2 amended Dec. 4, 1996, P.L.896, No.142)

Section 3. Immunity from Liability.--(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person providing information to any review organization shall be held, by reason of having provided such information, to have violated any criminal law, or to be civilly liable under any law, unless:

(1) such information is unrelated to the performance of the duties and functions of such review organization, or

(2) such information is false and the person providing such information knew, or had reason to believe, that such information was false.

(b) (1) No individual who, as a member or employee of any review organization or who furnishes professional counsel or services to such organization, shall be held by reason of the performance by him of any duty, function, or activity authorized or required of review organizations, to have violated any criminal law, or to be civilly liable under any law, provided he has exercised due care.

(2) The provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection shall not apply with respect to any action taken by any individual if such individual, in taking such action, was motivated by malice toward any person affected by such action.

Section 4. Confidentiality of Review Organization's Records.--The proceedings and records of a review committee shall be held in confidence and shall not be subject to discovery or introduction into evidence in any civil action against a professional health care provider arising out of the matters which are the subject of evaluation and review by such committee and no person who was in attendance at a meeting of such committee shall be permitted or required to testify in any such civil action as to any evidence or other matters produced

or presented during the proceedings of such committee or as to any findings, recommendations, evaluations, opinions or other actions of such committee or any members thereof: Provided, however, That information, documents or records otherwise available from original sources are not to be construed as immune from discovery or used in any such civil action merely because they were presented during proceedings of such committee, nor should any person who testifies before such committee or who is a member of such committee be prevented from testifying as to matters within his knowledge, but the said witness cannot be asked about his testimony before such a committee or opinions formed by him as a result of said committee hearings.

(4 amended Oct. 5, 1978, P.L.1121, No.262)

Section 5. Effective Date.--This act shall take effect immediately.