

§ 122C-24.1. Penalties; remedies.

(a) Violation Classification and Penalties. – The Department of Health and Human Services shall impose an administrative penalty in accordance with provisions of this Article on any facility licensed under this Article which is found to be in violation of Article 2 or 3 of this Chapter or applicable State and federal laws and regulations. Citations for violations shall be classified and penalties assessed according to the nature of the violation as follows:

(1) "Type A1 Violation" means a violation by a facility of the regulations, standards, and requirements set forth in Article 2 or 3 of this Chapter or applicable State or federal laws and regulations governing the licensure or certification of a facility which results in death or serious physical harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation. The person making the findings shall do the following:

- a. Orally and immediately inform the facility of the Type A1 Violation and the specific findings.
- a1. Require a written plan of protection regarding how the facility will immediately abate the Type A1 Violation in order to protect clients from further risk or additional harm.
- b. Within 15 working days of the investigation, send a report of the findings to the facility.
- c. Require a plan of correction to be submitted to the Department, based on a written report of the findings, that describes steps the facility will take to achieve and maintain compliance.

The Department shall impose a civil penalty in an amount not less than five hundred dollars (\$500.00) nor more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for each Type A1 Violation in facilities or programs that serve six or fewer persons. The Department shall impose a civil penalty in an amount not less than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) nor more than twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) for each Type A1 Violation in facilities or programs that serve seven or more persons. Where a facility has failed to correct a Type A1 Violation, the Department shall assess the facility a civil penalty in the amount of up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each day that the violation continues beyond the time specified for correction. The Department or its authorized representative shall determine whether the violation has been corrected.

(1a) "Type A2 Violation" means a violation by a facility of the regulations, standards, and requirements set forth in Article 2 or 3 of this Chapter or applicable State or federal laws and regulations governing the licensure or certification of a facility which results in substantial risk that death or serious physical harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation will occur. The person making the findings shall do the following:

- a. Orally and immediately inform the facility of the Type A2 Violation and the specific findings.
- b. Require a written plan of protection regarding how the facility will immediately abate the Type A2 Violation in order to protect clients or residents from further risk or additional harm.
- c. Within 15 working days of the investigation, send a report of the findings to the facility.
- d. Require a plan of correction to be submitted to the Department, based on the written report of the findings, that describes steps the facility will take to achieve and maintain compliance.

The violation or violations shall be corrected within the time specified for correction by the Department or its authorized representative. The Department may or may not assess a penalty taking into consideration the compliance history, preventative measures, and response to previous violations by the facility. Where a facility has failed to correct a Type A2 Violation, the Department shall assess the facility a civil penalty in the amount of up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each day that the deficiency continues beyond the time specified for correction by the Department or its authorized representative. The Department or its authorized representative shall determine whether the violation has been corrected.

(1b) Repealed by Session Laws 2016-50, s. 1, effective June 30, 2016.

(2) "Type B Violation" means a violation by a facility of the regulations, standards, and requirements set forth in Article 2 or 3 of this Chapter or applicable State or federal laws and regulations governing the licensure or certification of a facility which is detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of any client or patient, but which does not result in substantial risk that death or serious physical harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation will occur. The person making the findings shall do the following:

- a. Orally and immediately inform the facility of the Type B Violation and the specific findings.
- b. Require a written plan of protection regarding how the facility will immediately abate the Type B Violation in order to protect clients or residents from further risk or additional harm.
- c. Within 15 working days of the investigation, send a report of the findings to the facility.
- d. Require a plan of correction to be submitted to the Department, based on the written report of the findings, that describes steps the facility will take to achieve and maintain compliance.

Where a facility has failed to correct a Type B Violation within the time specified for correction by the Department or its authorized representative, the Department shall assess the facility a civil penalty in the amount of up to four hundred dollars (\$400.00) for each day that the violation continues beyond the date specified for correction without just reason for the failure. The Department or its authorized representative shall ensure that the violation has been corrected.

(2a) A Type A1, Type A2, or Type B Violation as defined above shall not include a violation by a facility of the regulations, standards, and requirements set forth in Article 2 or 3 of this Chapter or applicable State or federal laws and regulations governing the licensure or certification of a facility if all of the following criteria are met:

- a. The violation was discovered by the facility.
- b. The Department determines that the violation was abated immediately.
- c. The violation was corrected prior to inspection by the Department.
- d. The Department determines that reasonable preventative measures were in place prior to the violation.
- e. The Department determines that subsequent to the violation, the facility implemented corrective measures to achieve and maintain compliance.

- (2b) As used in this section, "substantial risk" shall mean the risk of an outcome that is substantially certain to materialize if immediate action is not taken.
- (3) Repeat Violations. – The Department shall impose a civil penalty which is treble the amount assessed under this subsection when a facility under the same management or ownership has received a citation during the previous 12 months for which the appeal rights are exhausted and penalty payment is expected or has occurred, and the current violation is for the same specific provision of a statute or regulation for which it received a violation during the previous 12 months.
- (b) Repealed by Session Laws 2011-249, s. 1, effective June 23, 2011.
- (c) Factors to Be Considered in Determining Amount of Initial Penalty. – In determining the amount of the initial penalty to be imposed under this section, the Department shall consider the following factors:
 - (1) There is substantial risk that serious physical harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation will occur, and this has not been corrected within the time specified by the Department or its authorized representative;
 - (2) Serious physical harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation, without substantial risk for client death, did occur;
 - (3) Serious physical harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation, with substantial risk for client death, did occur;
 - (3a) A client died;
 - (3b) A client died and there is substantial risk to others for serious physical harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation;
 - (3c) A client died and there is substantial risk for further client death;
 - (4) The reasonable diligence exercised by the licensee to comply with G.S. 131E-256 and other applicable State and federal laws and regulations;
 - (5) Efforts by the licensee to correct violations;
 - (6) The number and type of previous violations committed by the licensee within the past 36 months; and
 - (7) Repealed by Session Laws 2011-249, s. 1, effective June 23, 2011.
 - (8) The number of clients or patients put at risk by the violation.
- (d) The facts found to support the factors in subsection (c) of this section shall be the basis in determining the amount of the penalty. The Department shall document the findings in written record and shall make the written record available to all affected parties including:
 - (1) The licensee involved;
 - (2) The clients or patients affected; and
 - (3) The family members or guardians of the clients or patients affected.
- (e) The Department shall impose a civil penalty of fifty dollars (\$50.00) per day on any facility which refuses to allow an authorized representative of the Department to inspect the premises and records of the facility.
- (f) Any facility wishing to contest a penalty shall be entitled to an administrative hearing as provided in Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. A petition for a contested case shall be filed within 30 days after the Department mails a notice of penalty to a licensee. At least the following specific issues shall be addressed at the administrative hearing:
 - (1) The reasonableness of the amount of any civil penalty assessed, and
 - (2) The degree to which each factor has been evaluated pursuant to subsection (c) of this section to be considered in determining the amount of an initial penalty.

If a civil penalty is found to be unreasonable or if the evaluation of each factor is found to be incomplete, the hearing officer may recommend that the penalty be adjusted accordingly.

- (g) Any penalty imposed by the Department of Health and Human Services under this section shall commence on the date of the letter of notification of the penalty amount.
- (h) The Secretary may bring a civil action in the superior court of the county wherein the violation occurred to recover the amount of the administrative penalty whenever a facility:
- (1) Which has not requested an administrative hearing fails to pay the penalty within 60 days after being notified of the penalty, or
 - (2) Which has requested an administrative hearing fails to pay the penalty within 60 days after receipt of a written copy of the decision as provided in G.S. 150B-37.
- (i) In lieu of assessing all or some of the administrative penalty, the Secretary may order a facility to provide staff training, or consider the approval of training completed by the facility after the violation, if all of the following criteria are met:
- (1) The training is determined by the Department to be specific to the violation.
 - (2) The training is approved by the Department.
 - (3) The training is taught by someone approved by the Department.
 - (4) The facility has corrected the violation and continues to remain in compliance with the regulation.
- (j) The clear proceeds of civil penalties provided for in this section shall be remitted to the State Treasurer for deposit in accordance with State law.
- (k) In considering renewal of a license, the Department shall not renew a license if outstanding fines and penalties imposed by the Department against the facility or program have not been paid. Fines and penalties for which an appeal is pending are exempt from consideration for nonrenewal under this subsection. (2000-55, s. 4; 2005-276, ss. 10.40A(e), 10.40A(f); 2011-249, s. 1; 2011-398, s. 39; 2016-50, s. 1.)