

Assembly Bill No. 2611

CHAPTER 886

An act to amend Section 368 of the Penal Code, and to amend Sections 15656 and 15657 of, and to add Section 15657.5 to, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to elder and dependent adult abuse.

[Approved by Governor September 29, 2004. Filed
with Secretary of State September 29, 2004.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2611, Simitian. Elder and dependent adult abuse.

(1) Existing law proscribes crimes against elder and dependent adults involving physical and financial abuse.

Existing law establishes criminal penalties for the willful abuse of an elder or dependent adult, when the person who permits or inflicts the abuse has knowledge that the victim is an elder or dependent adult.

Under existing law, with respect to theft, embezzlement, forgery, fraud, or identity theft perpetrated against an elder or dependent adult by certain persons, the applicable fine or imprisonment is determined based on whether the money, labor, goods, services, or real or personal property taken or obtained exceeds a value of \$400.

This bill would make technical changes to these provisions. This bill would also raise the \$400 threshold amount to \$800, only if AB 2705 is enacted and becomes effective on or before January 1, 2005. This bill would provide that in any case in which a person is convicted of violating these provisions the court may order, as a condition of probation, that the defendant be placed in an appropriate counseling program. This bill would require the defendant to pay the expense of his or her participation in the counseling program, as specified.

By changing the definition of an existing crime and increasing probation supervision duties, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(2) Existing law includes provisions relating to the award of attorney's fees and costs, and damages to a plaintiff, when it is proven by clear and convincing evidence that a defendant is liable for physical abuse, neglect, or financial abuse, and the defendant has also been guilty of recklessness, oppression, fraud, or malice in the commission of the abuse.

This bill would revise these provisions to change the standard of proof for the commission of financial abuse to a preponderance of the

evidence, but to permit additional recovery where there is clear and convincing evidence of recklessness, oppression, fraud, or malice.

(3) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 368 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

368. (a) The Legislature finds and declares that crimes against elders and dependent adults are deserving of special consideration and protection, not unlike the special protections provided for minor children, because elders and dependent adults may be confused, on various medications, mentally or physically impaired, or incompetent, and therefore less able to protect themselves, to understand or report criminal conduct, or to testify in court proceedings on their own behalf.

(b) (1) Any person who knows or reasonably should know that a person is an elder or dependent adult and who, under circumstances or conditions likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any elder or dependent adult to suffer, or inflicts thereon unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or having the care or custody of any elder or dependent adult, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured, or willfully causes or permits the elder or dependent adult to be placed in a situation in which his or her person or health is endangered, is punishable by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by a fine not to exceed six thousand dollars (\$6,000), or by both that fine and imprisonment, or by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or four years.

(2) If in the commission of an offense described in paragraph (1), the victim suffers great bodily injury, as defined in Section 12022.7, the defendant shall receive an additional term in the state prison as follows:

(A) Three years if the victim is under 70 years of age.

(B) Five years if the victim is 70 years of age or older.

(3) If in the commission of an offense described in paragraph (1), the defendant proximately causes the death of the victim, the defendant shall receive an additional term in the state prison as follows:

(A) Five years if the victim is under 70 years of age.

(B) Seven years if the victim is 70 years of age or older.



(c) Any person who knows or reasonably should know that a person is an elder or dependent adult and who, under circumstances or conditions other than those likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any elder or dependent adult to suffer, or inflicts thereon unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or having the care or custody of any elder or dependent adult, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured or willfully causes or permits the elder or dependent adult to be placed in a situation in which his or her person or health may be endangered, is guilty of a misdemeanor. A second or subsequent violation of this subdivision is subject to a fine not to exceed two thousand dollars (\$2,000), or by imprisonment in a county jail not to exceed one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment.

(d) Any person who is not a caretaker who violates any provision of law proscribing theft, embezzlement, forgery, or fraud, or who violates Section 530.5 proscribing identity theft, with respect to the property or personal identifying information of an elder or a dependent adult, and who knows or reasonably should know that another person is an elder or dependent adult, is subject to imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or in the state prison for two, three, or four years, when the money, labor, goods, services, or real or personal property taken or obtained is of a value exceeding four hundred dollars (\$400); and by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment, when the money, labor, goods, services, or real or personal property taken or obtained is of a value not exceeding four hundred dollars (\$400).

(e) Any caretaker of an elder or a dependent adult who violates any provision of law proscribing theft, embezzlement, forgery, or fraud, or who violates Section 530.5 proscribing identity theft, with respect to the property or personal identifying information of that elder or dependent adult, is subject to imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or in the state prison for two, three, or four years when the money, labor, goods, services, or real or personal property taken or obtained is of a value exceeding four hundred dollars (\$400), and by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment, when the money, labor, goods, services, or real or personal property taken or obtained is of a value not exceeding four hundred dollars (\$400).

(f) Any person who commits the false imprisonment of an elder or a dependent adult by the use of violence, menace, fraud, or deceit is subject to imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or four years.



(g) As used in this section, “elder” means any person who is 65 years of age or older.

(h) As used in this section, “dependent adult” means any person who is between the ages of 18 and 64, who has physical or mental limitations which restrict his or her ability to carry out normal activities or to protect his or her rights, including, but not limited to, persons who have physical or developmental disabilities or whose physical or mental abilities have diminished because of age. “Dependent adult” includes any person between the ages of 18 and 64 who is admitted as an inpatient to a 24-hour health facility, as defined in Sections 1250, 1250.2, and 1250.3 of the Health and Safety Code.

(i) As used in this section, “caretaker” means any person who has the care, custody, or control of, or who stands in a position of trust with, an elder or a dependent adult.

(j) Nothing in this section shall preclude prosecution under both this section and Section 187 or 12022.7 or any other provision of law. However, a person shall not receive an additional term of imprisonment under both paragraphs (2) and (3) of subdivision (b) for any single offense, nor shall a person receive an additional term of imprisonment under both Section 12022.7 and paragraph (2) or (3) of subdivision (b) for any single offense.

(k) In any case in which a person is convicted of violating these provisions, the court may require him or her to receive appropriate counseling as a condition of probation. Any defendant ordered to be placed in a counseling program shall be responsible for paying the expense of his or her participation in the counseling program as determined by the court. The court shall take into consideration the ability of the defendant to pay, and no defendant shall be denied probation because of his or her inability to pay.

SEC. 1.5. Section 368 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

368. (a) The Legislature finds and declares that crimes against elders and dependent adults are deserving of special consideration and protection, not unlike the special protections provided for minor children, because elders and dependent adults may be confused, on various medications, mentally or physically impaired, or incompetent, and therefore less able to protect themselves, to understand or report criminal conduct, or to testify in court proceedings on their own behalf.

(b) (1) Any person who knows or reasonably should know that a person is an elder or dependent adult and who, under circumstances or conditions likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any elder or dependent adult to suffer, or inflicts thereon unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or having the care or custody of any elder or dependent adult, willfully causes or permits the



person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured, or willfully causes or permits the elder or dependent adult to be placed in a situation in which his or her person or health is endangered, is punishable by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by a fine not to exceed six thousand dollars (\$6,000), or by both that fine and imprisonment, or by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or four years.

(2) If in the commission of an offense described in paragraph (1), the victim suffers great bodily injury, as defined in Section 12022.7, the defendant shall receive an additional term in the state prison as follows:

(A) Three years if the victim is under 70 years of age.

(B) Five years if the victim is 70 years of age or older.

(3) If in the commission of an offense described in paragraph (1), the defendant proximately causes the death of the victim, the defendant shall receive an additional term in the state prison as follows:

(A) Five years if the victim is under 70 years of age.

(B) Seven years if the victim is 70 years of age or older.

(c) Any person who knows or reasonably should know that a person is an elder or dependent adult and who, under circumstances or conditions other than those likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any elder or dependent adult to suffer, or inflicts thereon unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or having the care or custody of any elder or dependent adult, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured or willfully causes or permits the elder or dependent adult to be placed in a situation in which his or her person or health may be endangered, is guilty of a misdemeanor. A second or subsequent violation of this subdivision is punishable by a fine not to exceed two thousand dollars (\$2,000), or by imprisonment in a county jail not to exceed one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment.

(d) Any person who is not a caretaker who violates any provision of law proscribing theft, embezzlement, forgery, or fraud, or who violates Section 530.5 proscribing identity theft, with respect to the property or personal identifying information of an elder or a dependent adult, and who knows or reasonably should know that the victim is an elder or a dependent adult, is subject to imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or in the state prison for two, three, or four years, when the money, labor, goods, services, or real or personal property taken or obtained is of a value exceeding eight hundred dollars (\$800); and by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment, when the money, labor, goods, services, or real or



personal property taken or obtained is of a value not exceeding eight hundred dollars (\$800).

(e) Any caretaker of an elder or a dependent adult who violates any provision of law proscribing theft, embezzlement, forgery, or fraud, or who violates Section 530.5 proscribing identity theft, with respect to the property or personal identifying information of that elder or dependent adult, is subject to imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or in the state prison for two, three, or four years when the money, labor, goods, services, or real or personal property taken or obtained is of a value exceeding eight hundred dollars (\$800), and by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment, when the money, labor, goods, services, or real or personal property taken or obtained is of a value not exceeding eight hundred dollars (\$800).

(f) Any person who commits the false imprisonment of an elder or a dependent adult by the use of violence, menace, fraud, or deceit is subject to imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or four years.

(g) As used in this section, “elder” means any person who is 65 years of age or older.

(h) As used in this section, “dependent adult” means any person who is between the ages of 18 and 64, who has physical or mental limitations which restrict his or her ability to carry out normal activities or to protect his or her rights, including, but not limited to, persons who have physical or developmental disabilities or whose physical or mental abilities have diminished because of age. “Dependent adult” includes any person between the ages of 18 and 64 who is admitted as an inpatient to a 24-hour health facility, as defined in Sections 1250, 1250.2, and 1250.3 of the Health and Safety Code.

(i) As used in this section, “caretaker” means any person who has the care, custody, or control of, or who stands in a position of trust with, an elder or a dependent adult.

(j) Nothing in this section shall preclude prosecution under both this section and Section 187 or 12022.7 or any other provision of law. However, a person shall not receive an additional term of imprisonment under both paragraphs (2) and (3) of subdivision (b) for any single offense, nor shall a person receive an additional term of imprisonment under both Section 12022.7 and paragraph (2) or (3) of subdivision (b) for any single offense.

SEC. 2. Section 15656 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

15656. (a) Any person who knows or reasonably should know that a person is an elder or dependent adult and who, under circumstances or conditions likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes



or permits any elder or dependent adult to suffer, or inflicts unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering upon him or her, or having the care or custody of any elder or dependent adult, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured, or willfully causes or permits the elder or dependent adult to be placed in a situation such that his or her person or health is endangered, is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year, or in the state prison for two, three, or four years.

(b) Any person who knows or reasonably should know that a person is an elder or dependent adult and who, under circumstances or conditions other than those likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any elder or dependent adult to suffer, or inflicts unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering on him or her, or having the care or custody of any elder or dependent adult, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured or willfully causes or permits the elder or dependent adult to be placed in a situation such that his or her person or health may be endangered, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(c) Any caretaker of an elder or a dependent adult who violates any provision of law prescribing theft or embezzlement, with respect to the property of that elder or dependent adult, is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year, or in the state prison for two, three, or four years when the money, labor, or real or personal property taken is of a value exceeding four hundred dollars (\$400), and by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that imprisonment and fine, when the money, labor, or real or personal property taken is of a value not exceeding four hundred dollars (\$400).

(d) As used in this section, “caretaker” means any person who has the care, custody, or control of or who stands in a position of trust with, an elder or a dependent adult.

(e) Conduct covered in subdivision (b) of Section 15610.57 shall not be subject to this section.

SEC. 2.5. Section 15656 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

15656. (a) Any person who knows or reasonably should know that a person is an elder or dependent adult and who, under circumstances or conditions likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any elder or dependent adult to suffer, or inflicts unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering upon him or her, or having the care or custody of any elder or dependent adult, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured, or willfully causes or permits the elder or dependent adult to be placed in a situation



such that his or her person or health is endangered, is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year, or in the state prison for two, three, or four years.

(b) Any person who knows or reasonably should know that a person is an elder or dependent adult and who, under circumstances or conditions other than those likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any elder or dependent adult to suffer, or inflicts unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering on him or her, or having the care or custody of any elder or dependent adult, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured or willfully causes or permits the elder or dependent adult to be placed in a situation such that his or her person or health may be endangered, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(c) Any caretaker of an elder or a dependent adult who violates any provision of law prescribing theft or embezzlement, with respect to the property of that elder or dependent adult, is subject to imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year, or in the state prison for two, three, or four years when the money, labor, or real or personal property taken is of a value exceeding eight hundred dollars (\$800), and by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that imprisonment and fine, when the money, labor, or real or personal property taken is of a value not exceeding eight hundred dollars (\$800).

(d) As used in this section, “caretaker” means any person who has the care, custody, or control of or who stands in a position of trust with, an elder or a dependent adult.

(e) Conduct covered in subdivision (b) of Section 15610.57 shall not be subject to this section.

SEC. 3. Section 15657 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

15657. Where it is proven by clear and convincing evidence that a defendant is liable for physical abuse as defined in Section 15610.63, or neglect as defined in Section 15610.57, and that the defendant has been guilty of recklessness, oppression, fraud, or malice in the commission of this abuse, the following shall apply, in addition to all other remedies otherwise provided by law:

(a) The court shall award to the plaintiff reasonable attorney’s fees and costs. The term “costs” includes, but is not limited to, reasonable fees for the services of a conservator, if any, devoted to the litigation of a claim brought under this article.

(b) The limitations imposed by Section 377.34 of the Code of Civil Procedure on the damages recoverable shall not apply. However, the damages recovered shall not exceed the damages permitted to be



recovered pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 3333.2 of the Civil Code.

(c) The standards set forth in subdivision (b) of Section 3294 of the Civil Code regarding the imposition of punitive damages on an employer based upon the acts of an employee shall be satisfied before any damages or attorney's fees permitted under this section may be imposed against an employer.

SEC. 4. Section 15657.5 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

15657.5. (a) Where it is proven by a preponderance of the evidence that a defendant is liable for financial abuse, as defined in Section 15610.30, in addition to all other remedies otherwise provided by law, the court shall award to the plaintiff reasonable attorney's fees and costs. The term "costs" includes, but is not limited to, reasonable fees for the services of a conservator, if any, devoted to the litigation of a claim brought under this article.

(b) Where it is proven by a preponderance of the evidence that a defendant is liable for financial abuse, as defined in Section 15610.30, and where it is proven by clear and convincing evidence that the defendant has been guilty of recklessness, oppression, fraud, or malice in the commission of the abuse, in addition to reasonable attorney's fees and costs set forth in subdivision (a), and all other remedies otherwise provided by law, the following shall apply:

(1) The limitations imposed by Section 377.34 of the Code of Civil Procedure on the damages recoverable shall not apply.

(2) The standards set forth in subdivision (b) of Section 3294 of the Civil Code regarding the imposition of punitive damages on an employer based upon the acts of an employee shall be satisfied before any damages or attorney's fees permitted under this section may be imposed against an employer.

(c) Nothing in this section affects the award of punitive damages under Section 3294 of the Civil Code.

SEC. 5. Sections 1.5 and 2.5 of this act shall only become operative if Assembly Bill 2705 is enacted and becomes effective on or before January 1, 2005, in which case Sections 1 and 2 of this act shall not become operative.

SEC. 6. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or



changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

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