

Introduced by Senator Beall
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Skinner)

January 24, 2013

An act to amend Section 340.1 of the Code of Civil Procedure, relating to damages.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 131, as introduced, Beall. Damages: childhood sexual abuse: statute of limitations.

Existing law requires that an action for recovery of damages suffered as a result of childhood sexual abuse, as defined, be commenced within 8 years of the date the plaintiff attains the majority or within 3 years of the date the plaintiff discovers or reasonably should have discovered that psychological injury or illness occurring after the age of majority was caused by sexual abuse, whichever occurs later. Existing law provides that certain actions may be commenced on and after the plaintiff's 26th birthday if specified conditions are met.

This bill would recast these provisions of law relating to the recovery of damages in childhood sexual abuse actions. The bill would provide that actions not barred by law in effect prior to January 1, 2014 are not subject to a statute of limitations and that an action for recovery of damages suffered as a result of childhood sexual abuse may be commenced at any time. With regard to an action barred by the law in effect prior to January 1, 2014, the bill would provide that those actions may be commenced within 30 years of the date the plaintiff attains the age of majority or within five years of the date of the fact of the injury and its causal connection to the sexual abuse is first communicated to the plaintiff by a practicing physician, psychologist, or clinical psychologist, whichever period expires later. The bill would also repeal

the requirement that a plaintiff 26 years of age or older at the time the action is filed file a certificate of merit and would repeal other procedural requirements relating to the action.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

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

1 SECTION 1. Section 340.1 of the Code of Civil Procedure is
2 amended to read:

3 ~~340.1. (a) In an action for recovery of damages suffered as a~~
4 ~~result of childhood sexual abuse, the time for commencement of~~
5 ~~the action shall be within eight years of the date the plaintiff attains~~
6 ~~the age of majority or within three years of the date the plaintiff~~
7 ~~discovers or reasonably should have discovered that psychological~~
8 ~~injury or illness occurring after the age of majority was caused by~~
9 ~~the sexual abuse, whichever period expires later, for any of the~~
10 ~~following actions:~~

11 ~~(1) An action against any person for committing an act of~~
12 ~~childhood sexual abuse.~~

13 ~~(2) An action for liability against any person or entity who owed~~
14 ~~a duty of care to the plaintiff, where a wrongful or negligent act~~
15 ~~by that person or entity was a legal cause of the childhood sexual~~
16 ~~abuse which resulted in the injury to the plaintiff.~~

17 ~~(3) An action for liability against any person or entity where an~~
18 ~~intentional act by that person or entity was a legal cause of the~~
19 ~~childhood sexual abuse which resulted in the injury to the plaintiff.~~

20 ~~(b) (1) No action described in paragraph (2) or (3) of~~
21 ~~subdivision (a) may be commenced on or after the plaintiff's 26th~~
22 ~~birthday.~~

23 ~~(2) This subdivision does not apply if the person or entity knew~~
24 ~~or had reason to know, or was otherwise on notice, of any unlawful~~
25 ~~sexual conduct by an employee, volunteer, representative, or agent,~~
26 ~~and failed to take reasonable steps, and to implement reasonable~~
27 ~~safeguards, to avoid acts of unlawful sexual conduct in the future~~
28 ~~by that person, including, but not limited to, preventing or avoiding~~
29 ~~placement of that person in a function or environment in which~~
30 ~~contact with children is an inherent part of that function or~~
31 ~~environment. For purposes of this subdivision, providing or~~

1 requiring counseling is not sufficient, in and of itself, to constitute
2 a reasonable step or reasonable safeguard.

3 ~~(e) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any claim for~~
4 ~~damages described in paragraph (2) or (3) of subdivision (a) that~~
5 ~~is permitted to be filed pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision~~
6 ~~(b) that would otherwise be barred as of January 1, 2003, solely~~
7 ~~because the applicable statute of limitations has or had expired, is~~
8 ~~revived, and, in that case, a cause of action may be commenced~~
9 ~~within one year of January 1, 2003. Nothing in this subdivision~~
10 ~~shall be construed to alter the applicable statute of limitations~~
11 ~~period of an action that is not time barred as of January 1, 2003.~~

12 ~~(d) Subdivision (e) does not apply to either of the following:~~

13 ~~(1) Any claim that has been litigated to finality on the merits in~~
14 ~~any court of competent jurisdiction prior to January 1, 2003.~~
15 ~~Termination of a prior action on the basis of the statute of~~
16 ~~limitations does not constitute a claim that has been litigated to~~
17 ~~finality on the merits.~~

18 ~~(2) Any written, compromised settlement agreement which has~~
19 ~~been entered into between a plaintiff and a defendant where the~~
20 ~~plaintiff was represented by an attorney who was admitted to~~
21 ~~practice law in this state at the time of the settlement, and the~~
22 ~~plaintiff signed the agreement.~~

23 ~~(e) “Childhood sexual abuse” as used in this section includes~~
24 ~~any act committed against the plaintiff that occurred when the~~
25 ~~plaintiff was under the age of 18 years and that would have been~~
26 ~~proscribed by Section 266j of the Penal Code; Section 285 of the~~
27 ~~Penal Code; paragraph (1) or (2) of subdivision (b), or of~~
28 ~~subdivision (c), of Section 286 of the Penal Code; subdivision (a)~~
29 ~~or (b) of Section 288 of the Penal Code; paragraph (1) or (2) of~~
30 ~~subdivision (b), or of subdivision (c), of Section 288a of the Penal~~
31 ~~Code; subdivision (h), (i), or (j) of Section 289 of the Penal Code;~~
32 ~~Section 647.6 of the Penal Code; or any prior laws of this state of~~
33 ~~similar effect at the time the act was committed. Nothing in this~~
34 ~~subdivision limits the availability of causes of action permitted~~
35 ~~under subdivision (a), including causes of action against persons~~
36 ~~or entities other than the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.~~

37 ~~(f) Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the~~
38 ~~otherwise applicable burden of proof, as defined in Section 115~~
39 ~~of the Evidence Code, that a plaintiff has in a civil action subject~~
40 ~~to this section.~~

1 ~~(g) Every plaintiff 26 years of age or older at the time the action~~
2 ~~is filed shall file certificates of merit as specified in subdivision~~
3 ~~(h):~~

4 ~~(h) Certificates of merit shall be executed by the attorney for~~
5 ~~the plaintiff and by a licensed mental health practitioner selected~~
6 ~~by the plaintiff declaring, respectively, as follows, setting forth~~
7 ~~the facts which support the declaration:~~

8 ~~(1) That the attorney has reviewed the facts of the case, that the~~
9 ~~attorney has consulted with at least one mental health practitioner~~
10 ~~who is licensed to practice and practices in this state and who the~~
11 ~~attorney reasonably believes is knowledgeable of the relevant facts~~
12 ~~and issues involved in the particular action, and that the attorney~~
13 ~~has concluded on the basis of that review and consultation that~~
14 ~~there is reasonable and meritorious cause for the filing of the action.~~
15 ~~The person consulted may not be a party to the litigation.~~

16 ~~(2) That the mental health practitioner consulted is licensed to~~
17 ~~practice and practices in this state and is not a party to the action,~~
18 ~~that the practitioner is not treating and has not treated the plaintiff,~~
19 ~~and that the practitioner has interviewed the plaintiff and is~~
20 ~~knowledgeable of the relevant facts and issues involved in the~~
21 ~~particular action, and has concluded, on the basis of his or her~~
22 ~~knowledge of the facts and issues, that in his or her professional~~
23 ~~opinion there is a reasonable basis to believe that the plaintiff had~~
24 ~~been subject to childhood sexual abuse.~~

25 ~~(3) That the attorney was unable to obtain the consultation~~
26 ~~required by paragraph (1) because a statute of limitations would~~
27 ~~impair the action and that the certificates required by paragraphs~~
28 ~~(1) and (2) could not be obtained before the impairment of the~~
29 ~~action. If a certificate is executed pursuant to this paragraph, the~~
30 ~~certificates required by paragraphs (1) and (2) shall be filed within~~
31 ~~60 days after filing the complaint.~~

32 ~~(i) Where certificates are required pursuant to subdivision (g),~~
33 ~~the attorney for the plaintiff shall execute a separate certificate of~~
34 ~~merit for each defendant named in the complaint.~~

35 ~~(j) In any action subject to subdivision (g), no defendant may~~
36 ~~be served, and the duty to serve a defendant with process does not~~
37 ~~attach, until the court has reviewed the certificates of merit filed~~
38 ~~pursuant to subdivision (h) with respect to that defendant, and has~~
39 ~~found, in camera, based solely on those certificates of merit, that~~
40 ~~there is reasonable and meritorious cause for the filing of the action~~

1 against that defendant. At that time, the duty to serve that defendant
2 with process shall attach.

3 ~~(k) A violation of this section may constitute unprofessional
4 conduct and may be the grounds for discipline against the attorney.~~

5 ~~(l) The failure to file certificates in accordance with this section
6 shall be grounds for a demurrer pursuant to Section 430.10 or a
7 motion to strike pursuant to Section 435.~~

8 ~~(m) In any action subject to subdivision (g), no defendant may
9 be named except by “Doe” designation in any pleadings or papers
10 filed in the action until there has been a showing of corroborative
11 fact as to the charging allegations against that defendant.~~

12 ~~(n) At any time after the action is filed, the plaintiff may apply
13 to the court for permission to amend the complaint to substitute
14 the name of the defendant or defendants for the fictitious
15 designation, as follows:~~

16 ~~(1) The application shall be accompanied by a certificate of
17 corroborative fact executed by the attorney for the plaintiff. The
18 certificate shall declare that the attorney has discovered one or
19 more facts corroborative of one or more of the charging allegations
20 against a defendant or defendants, and shall set forth in clear and
21 concise terms the nature and substance of the corroborative fact.
22 If the corroborative fact is evidenced by the statement of a witness
23 or the contents of a document, the certificate shall declare that the
24 attorney has personal knowledge of the statement of the witness
25 or of the contents of the document, and the identity and location
26 of the witness or document shall be included in the certificate. For
27 purposes of this section, a fact is corroborative of an allegation if
28 it confirms or supports the allegation. The opinion of any mental
29 health practitioner concerning the plaintiff shall not constitute a
30 corroborative fact for purposes of this section.~~

31 ~~(2) Where the application to name a defendant is made prior to
32 that defendant’s appearance in the action, neither the application
33 nor the certificate of corroborative fact by the attorney shall be
34 served on the defendant or defendants, nor on any other party or
35 their counsel of record.~~

36 ~~(3) Where the application to name a defendant is made after
37 that defendant’s appearance in the action, the application shall be
38 served on all parties and proof of service provided to the court,
39 but the certificate of corroborative fact by the attorney shall not
40 be served on any party or their counsel of record.~~

1 ~~(o) The court shall review the application and the certificate of~~
2 ~~corroborative fact in camera and, based solely on the certificate~~
3 ~~and any reasonable inferences to be drawn from the certificate,~~
4 ~~shall, if one or more facts corroborative of one or more of the~~
5 ~~charging allegations against a defendant has been shown, order~~
6 ~~that the complaint may be amended to substitute the name of the~~
7 ~~defendant or defendants.~~

8 ~~(p) The court shall keep under seal and confidential from the~~
9 ~~public and all parties to the litigation, other than the plaintiff, any~~
10 ~~and all certificates of corroborative fact filed pursuant to~~
11 ~~subdivision (n).~~

12 ~~(q) Upon the favorable conclusion of the litigation with respect~~
13 ~~to any defendant for whom a certificate of merit was filed or for~~
14 ~~whom a certificate of merit should have been filed pursuant to this~~
15 ~~section, the court may, upon the motion of a party or upon the~~
16 ~~court's own motion, verify compliance with this section by~~
17 ~~requiring the attorney for the plaintiff who was required by~~
18 ~~subdivision (h) to execute the certificate to reveal the name,~~
19 ~~address, and telephone number of the person or persons consulted~~
20 ~~with pursuant to subdivision (h) that were relied upon by the~~
21 ~~attorney in preparation of the certificate of merit. The name,~~
22 ~~address, and telephone number shall be disclosed to the trial judge~~
23 ~~in camera and in the absence of the moving party. If the court finds~~
24 ~~there has been a failure to comply with this section, the court may~~
25 ~~order a party, a party's attorney, or both, to pay any reasonable~~
26 ~~expenses, including attorney's fees, incurred by the defendant for~~
27 ~~whom a certificate of merit should have been filed.~~

28 ~~(r) The amendments to this section enacted at the 1990 portion~~
29 ~~of the 1989-90 Regular Session shall apply to any action~~
30 ~~commenced on or after January 1, 1991, including any action~~
31 ~~otherwise barred by the period of limitations in effect prior to~~
32 ~~January 1, 1991, thereby reviving those causes of action which~~
33 ~~had lapsed or technically expired under the law existing prior to~~
34 ~~January 1, 1991.~~

35 ~~(s) The Legislature declares that it is the intent of the Legislature,~~
36 ~~in enacting the amendments to this section enacted at the 1994~~
37 ~~portion of the 1993-94 Regular Session, that the express language~~
38 ~~of revival added to this section by those amendments shall apply~~
39 ~~to any action commenced on or after January 1, 1991.~~

1 ~~(t) Nothing in the amendments to this section enacted at the~~
2 ~~1998 portion of the 1997–98 Regular Session is intended to create~~
3 ~~a new theory of liability.~~

4 ~~(u) The amendments to subdivision (a) of this section, enacted~~
5 ~~at the 1998 portion of the 1997–98 Regular Session, shall apply~~
6 ~~to any action commenced on or after January 1, 1999, and to any~~
7 ~~action filed prior to January 1, 1999, and still pending on that date,~~
8 ~~including any action or causes of action which would have been~~
9 ~~barred by the laws in effect prior to January 1, 1999. Nothing in~~
10 ~~this subdivision is intended to revive actions or causes of action~~
11 ~~as to which there has been a final adjudication prior to January 1,~~
12 ~~1999.~~

13 *340.1. (a) In an action for recovery of damages suffered as a*
14 *result of childhood sexual abuse that was not barred by the law*
15 *in effect prior to January 1, 2014, there shall be no statute of*
16 *limitations and any of the following actions may be commenced*
17 *at any time:*

18 *(1) An action against any person or entity for directly or*
19 *vicariously committing an act of childhood sexual abuse.*

20 *(2) An action for liability against any person or entity who owed*
21 *a duty of care to the plaintiff, where a wrongful or negligent act*
22 *by that person or entity was a legal cause of the childhood sexual*
23 *abuse which resulted in injury to the plaintiff.*

24 *(3) An action for liability against any person or entity where*
25 *an intentional act by that person or entity was a legal cause of the*
26 *childhood sexual abuse which resulted in injury to the plaintiff.*

27 *(b) In an action for recovery of damages suffered as a result of*
28 *childhood sexual abuse that was barred by the law in effect prior*
29 *to January 1, 2014, the time for commencement of the action shall*
30 *be within 30 years of the date the plaintiff attains the age of*
31 *majority or within five years of the date the fact of the injury and*
32 *its causal connection to the sexual abuse is first communicated to*
33 *the plaintiff by a physician, psychologist, or clinical psychologist*
34 *licensed to practice and practicing within the state, whichever*
35 *period expires later, for any of the following actions:*

36 *(1) An action against any person or entity for directly or*
37 *vicariously committing an act of childhood sexual abuse.*

38 *(2) An action for liability against any person or entity who owed*
39 *a duty of care to the plaintiff, where a wrongful or negligent act*

1 *by that person or entity was a legal cause of the childhood sexual*
2 *abuse which resulted in injury to the plaintiff.*

3 *(3) An action for liability against any person or entity where*
4 *an intentional act by that person or entity was a legal cause of the*
5 *childhood sexual abuse which resulted in injury to the plaintiff.*

6 *(c) Any claim for damages that may not be timely commenced*
7 *under subdivision (a) or subdivision (b), as amended January 1,*
8 *2014, is revived and a cause of action may be commenced within*
9 *one year of January 1, 2014. Nothing in this subdivision is intended*
10 *to alter the applicable statute of limitations for any claim described*
11 *in subdivision (a) or (b) that is not time barred by the amendments*
12 *taking effect on January 1, 2014.*

13 *(d) “Childhood sexual abuse” as used in this section includes*
14 *any act committed against the plaintiff that occurred when the*
15 *plaintiff was under the age of 18 years and that would have been*
16 *proscribed by Section 266j of the Penal Code; Section 285 of the*
17 *Penal Code; paragraph (1) or (2) of subdivision (b), or of*
18 *subdivision (c), of Section 286 of the Penal Code; subdivision (a)*
19 *or (b) of Section 288 of the Penal Code; paragraph (1) or (2) of*
20 *subdivision (b), or subdivision (c), of Section 288a of the Penal*
21 *Code; subdivision (h), (I), or (j) of Section 289 of the Penal Code;*
22 *Section 647.6 of the Penal Code; or any prior laws of this state of*
23 *similar effect at the time the act was committed.*

24 *(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the*
25 *otherwise applicable burden of proof, as defined in Section 115*
26 *of the Evidence Code, that a plaintiff has in a civil action subject*
27 *to this section.*

28 *(f) Nothing in this section is intended to create a new theory of*
29 *liability.*

30 *(g) Nothing in this section is intended to alter the decision in*
31 *Shirk v. Vista Unified School Dist., (2007) 42 Cal.4th 201.*

32 *(h) Nothing in this section is intended to revive any action or*
33 *cause of action that has been litigated to finality on the merits in*
34 *any court of competent jurisdiction prior to January 1, 2014.*