

House Bill No. 313

An act relating to dating violence; providing a short title; amending s. 784.046, F.S.; revising provisions relating to dating violence incidents to provide requirements for investigations, notice to victims, and reporting similar to those for incidents of domestic violence and to apply certain immunity provisions thereto; prohibiting certain willful violations of conditions of pretrial release; providing penalties; amending s. 901.15, F.S.; providing for warrantless arrests of persons for dating violence; conforming provisions; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. This act may be cited as the “Barwick-Ruschak Act.”

Section 2. Subsection (11) of section 784.046, Florida Statutes, is renumbered as subsection (16), and a new subsection (11) and subsections (12), (13), (14), and (15) are added to that section, to read:

~~784.046 Action by victim of repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence for protective injunction; dating violence investigations, notice to victims, and reporting; pretrial release violations powers and duties of court and clerk of court; filing and form of petition; notice and hearing; temporary injunction; issuance; statewide verification system; enforcement.—~~

(11) Any law enforcement officer who investigates an alleged incident of dating violence shall assist the victim to obtain medical treatment if such is required as a result of the alleged incident to which the officer responds. Any law enforcement officer who investigates an alleged incident of dating violence shall advise the victim of such violence that there is a domestic violence center from which the victim may receive services. The law enforcement officer shall give the victim immediate notice of the legal rights and remedies available on a standard form developed and distributed by the Department of Law Enforcement. As necessary, the Department of Law Enforcement shall revise the Legal Rights and Remedies Notice to Victims to include a general summary of this section, using simple English as well as Spanish, and shall distribute the notice as a model form to be used by all law enforcement agencies throughout the state. The notice shall include:

(a) The resource listing, including telephone number, for the area domestic violence center designated by the Department of Children and Family Services; and

(b) A copy of the following statement: “IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF DATING VIOLENCE, you may ask the state attorney to file a criminal complaint. You also have the right to go to court and file a petition requesting an injunction for protection from dating violence which may include, but need not be limited to, provisions that restrain the abuser from further acts of abuse; direct the abuser to leave your household; and prevent the abuser from entering your residence, school, business, or place of employment.”

(12) When a law enforcement officer investigates an allegation that an incident of dating violence has occurred, the officer shall handle the incident pursuant to the arrest policy provided in s. 901.15(7), and as developed in accordance with subsections (13), (14), and (16). Whether or not an arrest is made, the officer shall make a written police report that is complete and clearly indicates that the alleged offense was an incident of dating violence. Such report shall be given to the officer's supervisor and filed with the law enforcement agency in a manner that will permit data on dating violence cases to be compiled. Such report must include:

(a) A description of physical injuries observed, if any.

(b) If a law enforcement officer decides not to make an arrest or decides to arrest two or more parties, the grounds for not arresting anyone or for arresting two or more parties.

(c) A statement which indicates that a copy of the legal rights and remedies notice was given to the victim.

Whenever possible, the law enforcement officer shall obtain a written statement from the victim and witnesses concerning the alleged dating violence. The officer shall submit the report to the supervisor or other person to whom the employer's rules or policies require reports of similar allegations of criminal activity to be made. The law enforcement agency shall, without charge, send a copy of the initial police report, as well as any subsequent, supplemental, or related report, which excludes victim or witness statements or other materials that are part of an active criminal investigation and are exempt from disclosure under chapter 119, to the nearest locally certified domestic violence center within 24 hours after the agency's receipt of the report. The report furnished to the domestic violence center must include a narrative description of the dating violence incident.

(13) Whenever a law enforcement officer determines upon probable cause that an act of dating violence has been committed within the jurisdiction, the officer may arrest the person or persons suspected of its commission and charge such person or persons with the appropriate crime. The decision to arrest and charge shall not require consent of the victim or consideration of the relationship of the parties.

(14)(a) When complaints are received from two or more parties, the officers shall evaluate each complaint separately to determine whether there is probable cause for arrest.

(b) If a law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe that two or more persons have committed a misdemeanor or felony, or if two or more persons make complaints to the officer, the officer shall try to determine who was the primary aggressor. Arrest is the preferred response only with respect to the primary aggressor and not the preferred response with respect to a person who acts in a reasonable manner to protect or defend himself or herself or another family or household member from dating violence.

(15) A person who willfully violates a condition of pretrial release provided in s. 903.047, when the original arrest was for an act of dating violence

as defined in this section, commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, and shall be held in custody until his or her first appearance.

(16)(11) A law enforcement officer acting in good faith under this section and the officer's employing agency shall be immune from all liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed by reason of the officer's or agency's actions in carrying out the provisions of this section.

Section 3. Subsection (7) of section 901.15, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

901.15 When arrest by officer without warrant is lawful.—A law enforcement officer may arrest a person without a warrant when:

(7) There is probable cause to believe that the person has committed an act of domestic violence, as defined in s. 741.28, or dating violence, as provided in s. 784.046. The decision to arrest shall not require consent of the victim or consideration of the relationship of the parties. It is the public policy of this state to strongly discourage arrest and charges of both parties for domestic violence or dating violence on each other and to encourage training of law enforcement and prosecutors in these areas ~~this area~~. A law enforcement officer who acts in good faith and exercises due care in making an arrest under this subsection, under s. 741.31(4) or s. 784.047, or pursuant to a foreign order of protection accorded full faith and credit pursuant to s. 741.315, is immune from civil liability that otherwise might result by reason of his or her action.

Section 4. This act shall take effect October 1, 2008.

Approved by the Governor July 2, 2008.

Filed in Office Secretary of State July 2, 2008.