

§997. Conduct and issuance of program evaluation reports

The director and the office shall adhere to the following provisions relative to conducting and issuing program evaluation reports under this chapter. [PL 2001, c. 702, §2 (NEW).]

1. Review and response. Prior to the presentation of a program evaluation under this chapter to the committee by the office, the director of the evaluated state agency or other entity must have an opportunity to review a draft of the program evaluation report. Within 15 calendar days of receipt of the draft report, the director of the evaluated state agency or other entity may provide to the office comments on the draft report. If provided to the office by the comment deadline, the comments must be included in the final report when it is presented to the committee. Failure by the director of an evaluated agency or other entity to submit its comments on the draft report by the comment deadline may not delay the submission of a report to the committee or its release to the public.

All documents, writings, drafts, electronic communications and information transmitted pursuant to this subsection are confidential and may not be released to the public. A person violating the provisions of this subsection regarding confidentiality is guilty of a Class E crime. [PL 2019, c. 667, Pt. A, §4 (AMD).]

2. Submission of final report to committee. The director shall notify the committee when each final program evaluation report under this chapter is completed. The report must then be placed on the agenda for a future committee meeting. At the meeting where a report appears on the agenda for the first time, the director will release that report to the committee and to the public simultaneously. The committee, at its discretion, may vote to endorse, to endorse in part or to decline to endorse the report submitted by the director. If the committee determines it is necessary, the committee may report out to the Legislature legislation to implement the findings and recommendations of any program evaluation report presented to it by the office.

[PL 2001, c. 702, §2 (NEW).]

3. Confidentiality. Working papers in the possession of the director or an entity with which the director has contracted for the conduct of program evaluations pursuant to section 995, subsection 2 are confidential and exempt from disclosure pursuant to Title 1, chapter 13, including disclosure to the Legislative Council or an agent or representative of the Legislative Council. All other records or materials in the possession of the director or an entity with which the director has contracted for the conduct of program evaluations pursuant to section 995, subsection 2 that would otherwise be confidential or exempt from disclosure are exempt from disclosure pursuant to the provisions of Title 1, chapter 13. This subsection may not be construed to prohibit or prevent public access to the records of a state agency or other entity in the possession of the director that would otherwise be subject to disclosure pursuant to the provisions of Title 1, chapter 13. The director shall refer requests for access to those records directly to the state agency or other entity that is the official custodian of the requested records, which shall respond to the request for public records.

[PL 2019, c. 667, Pt. A, §5 (AMD).]

4. Information available to office. Upon request of the office and consistent with the conditions and procedures set forth in this section, state agencies or other entities subject to program evaluation must provide the office access to information that is privileged or confidential as defined by Title 1, chapter 13, which governs public records and proceedings.

A. Before beginning a program evaluation under this chapter that may require access to records containing confidential or privileged information, the office shall furnish a written statement of its determination that it is necessary for the office to access such records and consult with representatives of the state agency or other entity to discuss methods of identifying and protecting privileged or confidential information in those records. During that consultation, the state agency or other entity shall inform the office of all standards and procedures set forth in its policies or agreements to protect information considered to be confidential or privileged. The office shall limit

its access to information that is privileged or confidential by appropriate methods, which may include examining records without copying or removing them from the source. [PL 2003, c. 673, Pt. GGGG, §9 (AMD).]

B. Documentary or other information obtained by the office during the course of a program evaluation under this chapter is privileged or confidential to the same extent under law that that information would be privileged or confidential in the possession of the state agency or other entity providing the information. Any privilege or statutory provision, including penalties, concerning the confidentiality or obligation not to disclose information in the possession of a state agency or other entity or its officers or employees applies equally to the office. Privileged or confidential information obtained by the office during the course of a program evaluation may be disclosed only as provided by law and with the agreement of the state agency or other entity subject to the program evaluation that provided the information. [PL 2001, c. 702, §2 (NEW).]

C. If the office accesses information classified as privileged or confidential pursuant to state agency or other entity policy or procedures or by agreement, the office shall comply with the state agency's or other entity's standards or procedures for handling that information. The office may include in its working papers the excerpts from information classified as confidential or privileged as may be necessary to complete the program evaluation under this chapter, as long as the use does not infringe on department policies or procedures applicable to the original provision of information. [PL 2001, c. 702, §2 (NEW).]

[PL 2003, c. 673, Pt. GGGG, §9 (AMD).]

5. Disclosure to agency or entity subject to program evaluation. Except as provided in this subsection, working papers are confidential pursuant to subsection 3 and may not be disclosed to any person. Prior to the release of the final program evaluation report, the director has sole discretion to disclose working papers to the state agency or other entity subject to the program evaluation when disclosure will not prejudice the program evaluation. After release of the final program evaluation report, working papers may be released as necessary to the state agency or other entity that was subject to the program evaluation under this chapter.

[PL 2019, c. 667, Pt. A, §6 (AMD).]

6. Confidential sources. If data supplied by an individual are needed to initiate, continue or complete a program evaluation under this chapter, the director may, by written memorandum to the file, provide that the individual's identity will remain confidential and exempt from disclosure under Title 1, chapter 13, and this written memorandum protects the identity of the person from disclosure under Title 1, chapter 13, notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary.

[PL 2001, c. 702, §2 (NEW).]

7. Disposition of final report. A final copy of a program evaluation report under subsection 2, including recommendations and the evaluated state agency's or other entity's comments, must be submitted to the commissioner or director of the state agency or other entity examined at least one day prior to the report's public release, and must be made available to each member of the Legislature no later than one day following the report's receipt by the committee. The office may satisfy the requirement to provide each Legislator a copy of the report by furnishing the report directly by electronic means or by providing notice to each Legislator of the availability of the report on the office's publicly accessible site on the Internet.

[PL 2001, c. 702, §2 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2001, c. 702, §2 (NEW). PL 2003, c. 451, §KKK4 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 673, §GGGG9 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 667, Pt. A, §§4-6 (AMD).

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