§ 90-187.15. Board agreement for programs for impaired veterinary personnel.

(a) The Board may enter into agreements with organizations that have developed programs for impaired veterinary personnel. Activities to be covered by these agreements may include investigation, review, and evaluation of records, reports, complaints, litigation, and other information about the practices or the practice patterns of veterinary personnel licensed or registered by the Board as these matters may relate to impaired veterinary personnel. Organizations having programs for impaired veterinary personnel may include a statewide supervisory committee or various regional or local components or subgroups.

(b) Agreements authorized under this section shall include provisions for the impaired veterinary personnel organizations to: (i) receive relevant information from the Board and other sources; (ii) conduct any investigation, review, or evaluation in an expeditious manner; (iii) provide assurance of confidentiality of nonpublic information and of the process; (iv) make reports of investigations and evaluations to the Board; and (v) implement any other related activities for operating and promoting a coordinated and effective process. The agreement shall include provisions assuring basic due process for veterinary personnel who become involved.

(c) Organizations entering into agreements with the Board shall establish and maintain a program for impaired veterinary personnel licensed or registered by the Board for the purpose of identifying, reviewing, and evaluating the ability of those veterinarians or veterinary technicians to function as veterinarians or veterinary technicians and provide programs for treatment and rehabilitation. The Board may provide funds for the administration of these impaired veterinary personnel peer review programs. The Board may adopt rules pursuant to Chapter 150B of the General Statutes to apply to the operation of impaired veterinary personnel programs, with provisions for: (i) definitions of impairment; (ii) guidelines for program elements; (iii) procedures for receipt and use of information of suspected impairment; (iv) procedures for intervention and referral; (v) arrangements for monitoring treatment, rehabilitation, posttreatment support, and performance; (vi) reports of individual cases to the Board; (vii) periodic reporting of statistical information; (viii) assurance of confidentiality of nonpublic information and of the process; and (ix) other necessary measures.

(d) Upon investigation and review of a veterinarian licensed by the Board or a veterinary technician registered with the Board, or upon receipt of a complaint or other information, an impaired veterinary personnel organization that enters into an agreement with the Board shall report to the Board detailed information about any veterinarian licensed or veterinary technician registered by the Board if:

(1) The veterinarian or veterinary technician constitutes an imminent danger to the public, to patients, or to himself or herself.

(2) The veterinarian or veterinary technician refuses to cooperate with the program, refuses to submit to treatment, or is still impaired after treatment and exhibits professional incompetence.

(3) It reasonably appears that there are other grounds for disciplinary action.

(e) Any confidential information or other nonpublic information acquired, created, or used in good faith by an impaired veterinary personnel organization or the Board regarding a participant pursuant to this section shall remain confidential and shall not be subject to discovery or subpoena in a civil case, nor subject to disclosure as a public document by the Board pursuant to Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. No person participating in good faith in an impaired veterinary personnel program developed under this section shall be required in a civil case to disclose any information, including opinions, recommendations, or evaluations, acquired or developed solely in the course of participating in the program.

(f) Impaired veterinary personnel activities conducted in good faith pursuant to any program developed under this section shall not be grounds for civil action under the laws of

this State, and the activities are deemed to be State-directed and sanctioned and shall constitute "State action" for the purposes of application of antitrust laws. (2003-139, s. 1.)