**To: New Jersey Law Revision Commission**

**From: Jayne Johnson**

**Re: New Jersey Filial Responsibility Statutes**

**Date: July 6, 2015**

**MEMORANDUM**

**Executive Summary**

This Memorandum discusses the statutes governing filial responsibility in jurisdictions outside of New Jersey to provide the Commission additional information concerning the NJLRC project that examines the Title 44 statutes governing filial responsibility and support.

**Background**

Last month, the Commission revisited several issues, first presented by the Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly, concerning the Title 44 provisions governing filial responsibility.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Following an extensive discussion of the issues related to the New Jersey statutes, the Commission requested additional information concerning the statutes in other jurisdictions that govern filial responsibility and support. Staff submits this memorandum to present the research requested at the June meeting.

**Introduction**

Forty-five states enacted filial responsibility statutes based on the vestiges of the early colonial welfare laws. Today, thirty jurisdictions, including New Jersey, still maintain filial responsibility statutes.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Historically, a person was considered indigent if support was provided at public expense.[[3]](#footnote-3) American colonists extended this principle, by establishing, under the colonial welfare laws, a legal duty to care for indigent and poor family members.[[4]](#footnote-4) These laws were modeled after the 1601 Elizabethan Poor Relief Act, which required that “the father and grandfather and the mother and the grandmother, and the children of every poor, old, blind, lame, and impotent person” must support their indigent relative to extent they are best able.[[5]](#footnote-5)

After Medicaid was enacted in 1965, the motivation for states to enforce their filial responsibility statutes was severely lessened. This was due to the Federal Act’s prohibition of considering an applicant’s resources as well as those of a spouse or minor child, for eligibility purposes. In its final report on the bill, the Senate Finance Committee declared that states could not require contributions to an applicant’s medical care from family members beyond a spouse, parent of a minor child, or a parent of an adult child who is blind or totally disabled.

In 1977 and 1978, the Medicaid regulations were amended to expressly prohibit requests for reimbursement from anyone who was not the spouse of the person, or parent of the child, for whom benefits had been paid. In response to the amendments, many states attempting to guarantee the receipt of federal funding entirely stopped forcing their filial responsibility laws.[[6]](#footnote-6)

“To ensure compliance with the federal scheme, some states even repealed their filial responsibility statutes,” including New York, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.[[7]](#footnote-7)

More recently, Idaho repealed its filial responsibility in 2011.[[8]](#footnote-8) The statement of purpose indicates that the statute “was not a law of general applicability and violated the intent of Congress in establishing Medicaid and could subject Idaho to federal sanctions if implemented.” Instead, the statutes were found to be:

special laws directed at county indigency programs (32-1002) and Medicaid recipients (32-1008A). These statutes have not been enforced since [sic] [the Attorney General Opinions issued in 1986] were rendered. Therefore, this bill repeals those sections, removing the possibility that the laws could be used against citizens of the State of Idaho who are not aware of the said opinions, or in ignorance by county indigency programs or Medicaid.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Likewise, in 2013, New Hampshire repealed a provision requiring the child of an indigent individual to contribute to or pay the cost of support for an indigent parent. The New Hampshire Legislature also limited the obligation of a parent to support children over the age of 18, as follows:

Every person whose income or other resources are more than sufficient to provide for his or her reasonable subsistence compatible with decency or health owes a duty to support or contribute to the support of the following persons when in need: his or her wife, husband, or child ~~[,father or mother when in need~~] under the age of 18 or for as long as the department of health and human services has the authority to recover support for the child under Title IV of the Social Security Act.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Filial Responsibility Statutes in Other Jurisdictions**

Many of the states with surviving filial responsibility statutes require a reciprocal duty of care of parents and children. The Virginia statute is one such provision, opening with a general statement of duty and scope, it provides that:

[i]t shall be the … duty of all persons eighteen years of age or over, of sufficient earning capacity or income, after reasonably providing for his or her own immediate family, to assist in providing for the support and maintenance of his or her mother or father, he or she being then and there in necessitous circumstances.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The statute was amended after the enactment of Medicaid to “restrict primary filial responsibility, if the parent became eligible for public benefits under Medicaid, while permitting the state the option of seeking reimbursement from a child or children for ‘a parent receiving such assistance or services . . . as the court may determine to be reasonable.’ The reimbursement potential was capped in Virginia, providing that ‘children shall in no case be responsible for such costs for more than sixty months of institutionalization.’ ”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Several states have wrestled with the issue of whether the support of an indigent individual should be a private or public burden.[[13]](#footnote-13) Maryland’s filial responsibility law provides that if a destitute parent has an adult child who has or is able to earn sufficient means, the adult child may not neglect or refuse to provide the destitute parent with food, shelter and clothing.[[14]](#footnote-14) A "destitute parent" is defined as a parent who has “no means of subsistence and cannot be self-supporting due to old age or mental or physical infirmity” and can file a written complaint with the State's Attorney.[[15]](#footnote-15) Maryland, however, bars, nursing homes from holding children responsible for parent’s nursing home bills unless the children agreed in writing to be financially responsible.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Kentucky courts also construed the state statute to require a child to provide for the personal care of an indigent parent, but the courts held that the child is not liable to the ”providers of necessities” for the indigent parents.[[17]](#footnote-17)

South Dakota’s filial support statute also requires “[a]ny adult child, having the financial ability to do so, shall provide necessary food, clothing, shelter or medical attendance for a parent who is unable to provide for oneself.”[[18]](#footnote-18) South Dakota’s statute is unique in that it requires the indigent parent to provide written notice to the adult child indicating need before filing a claim.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The California Supreme Court held in 1971 under the state filial statute that “a person can qualify to receive aid [from the state]. . .yet not be so destitute that his children will owe him a duty of support.[[20]](#footnote-20) The legislature responded by amending the statute to clarify that adult children do, in fact, have a duty to support an indigent parent receiving state aid. The amendment distinguished between those deemed “poor” by the statutory definition and those “in need.” The statute requires a duty to support of parents in the latter group, it provides: [[21]](#footnote-21)

No relative shall be held legally liable to support or to contribute to the support of any applicant for or recipient of aid under this chapter. No relative shall be held liable to defray in whole or in part the cost of any medical care or hospital care or other service rendered to the recipient pursuant to any provision of this code if he is an applicant for or a recipient of aid under this chapter at the time such medical care or hospital care or other service is rendered.

Notwithstanding [Sections 3910](https://a.next.westlaw.com/Link/Document/FullText?findType=L&pubNum=1003409&cite=CAFAMS3910&originatingDoc=N41CE83308CB211D882FF83A3182D7B4A&refType=LQ&originationContext=document&transitionType=DocumentItem&contextData=(sc.UserEnteredCitation)), [4400](https://a.next.westlaw.com/Link/Document/FullText?findType=L&pubNum=1003409&cite=CAFAMS4400&originatingDoc=N41CE83308CB211D882FF83A3182D7B4A&refType=LQ&originationContext=document&transitionType=DocumentItem&contextData=(sc.UserEnteredCitation)), and [4401 of the Family Code](https://a.next.westlaw.com/Link/Document/FullText?findType=L&pubNum=1003409&cite=CAFAMS4401&originatingDoc=N41CE83308CB211D882FF83A3182D7B4A&refType=LQ&originationContext=document&transitionType=DocumentItem&contextData=(sc.UserEnteredCitation)), or [Section 270c of the Penal Code](https://a.next.westlaw.com/Link/Document/FullText?findType=L&pubNum=1000217&cite=CAPES270C&originatingDoc=N41CE83308CB211D882FF83A3182D7B4A&refType=LQ&originationContext=document&transitionType=DocumentItem&contextData=(sc.UserEnteredCitation)), or any other provision of this code, no demand shall be made upon any relative to support or contribute toward the support of any applicant for or recipient of aid under this chapter. No county or city and county or officer or employee thereof shall threaten any such relative with any legal action against him by or in behalf of the county or city and county or with any penalty whatsoever.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Connecticut also recently adopted a statute that permits debtors to collect from “transferors” or “transferees” if the resident was denied Medicaid due to a transfer of the resident’s assets or property.[[23]](#footnote-23)

On the other hand, under Pennsylvania’s statute, a person satisfying the definition of “indigent,” may not be considered destitute enough to qualify for public support.[[24]](#footnote-24) To be considered “indigent” in Pennsylvania, the person “need not be helpless and in extreme want, [or] so completely destitute of property, as to require assistance from the public.”[[25]](#footnote-25) Pennsylvania looks to the common law definition of “those who do not have sufficient means to pay for their own care and maintenance.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Pennsylvania’s filial support law requires an adult child to care for and financially assist an indigent parent.[[27]](#footnote-27) As evidenced in the *Health Care & Retirement Corp. of America v. Pittas* decision, a ruling that held an adult child liable for outstanding cost of a parent’s care in a long-term health care facility, the Pennsylvania statute is the most actively and ardently enforced state statute to date.[[28]](#footnote-28)

**Conclusion**

With the rise of long-term health care costs and federal funding shortages, long-term health care facilities and other “health care providers have increasing incentives to seek to compel” adult children to assist their parents financially or “be at risk for covering the costs” of their parents’ care.”[[29]](#footnote-29) Particularly, in situations “where the Medicaid reimbursement rate does not fully cover the shortfall amount between the resident’s income and the facility’s monthly rate.”

As the New Jersey Law Journal reported in an article following the *Pittas* decision that “New Jersey’s filial responsibility statute has rarely been enforced,” but acknowledged that, “[i]n this era of ‘runway’ Medicaid long-term care spending, it is certainly possible that the right facts could awaken this slumbering giant” in New Jersey.[[30]](#footnote-30)

The Commission determined at the June 2015 meeting to continue work on this project as a stand-alone project, and not to merge this project with the report concerning anachronistic statutes or other related projects as was suggested. Staff will conduct outreach to formulate a drafting approach that best addresses the issues concerning the filial responsibility and support provisions under Title 44.

**APPENDIX**

**State Survey – Filial Responsibility Statutes[[31]](#footnote-31)**

**(See pp. 7-9)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Statute** | **Relationship of Liable Party to Indigent Elder** | **Contribution Required** |
| **Alabama** | N/A |  |  |
| **Alaska** | Ak. Stat. § 25.20.030  Ak. Sec. 47-25-230 | Spouse, children, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, or siblings” | “Support” inc. necessary food, care, clothing, shelter, and medical attention |
| **Arizona** | No Existing Statute |  |  |
| **Arkansas** | Ark. Code Ann. § 20-47-106 | Duty limited to those liable for individual who receives state mental health services | Reimbursement for cost of providing mental health services |
| **California** | Cal. Fam. Code 4400-4405  Cal. Fam. Code 4410-4414  Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 12350  Cal. Penal Code § 270(c) | Child | Necessaries |
| **Colorado** | N/A |  |  |
| **Connecticut** | Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann §§ 46b-215, 53-304 | “Any person who neglects or refuses to furnish reasonably necessary support to the person's spouse . . . or parent under the age of sixty-five shall be deemed guilty of nonsupport and shall be imprisoned not more than one year” | “reasonably necessary support” in lieu of or in addition to criminal liability |
| **Delaware** | Del. Code Ann. Title 13 § 503 | “[S]pouse, parents, or children, in that order” | Monetary support, health care, arrearages, or reimbursement; inc. related costs/fees, interest, income withholding, atty's fees, and other relief |
| **Florida** | N/A |  |  |
| **Georgia** | Ga. Code Ann. § 36-12-3 | Father, mother, or child |  |
| **Hawaii** | N/A |  |  |
| **Idaho** | Repealed in 2011 |  |  |
| **Illinois** | N/A |  |  |
| **Indiana** | Ind. Code Ann. §§31-16-17-1 to -7  Ind. Code Ann. § 35-46-2-7 | Child |  |
| **Iowa** | Iowa Code Ann. § 252.1  Iowa Code Ann. § 252.2  Iowa Code Ann. § 252.5 | Father, mother, children, grandparents, or grandchildren (in that order) |  |
| **Kansas** | N/A |  |  |
| **Kentucky** | KY Rev. Stat.  Ann. § 530.050 | Child residing in Kentucky |  |
| **Louisiana** | La. R.S. 13:4731 | Parents and children have reciprocal duties to care; children born out of wedlock are expressly included |  |
| **Maine** | N/A |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Statute** | **Relationship of Liable Party to Indigent Elder** | **Contribution Required** |
| **Maryland** | MD. Code Ann. Fam. Law  §§ 13-101 to 13-109 | Parents and children have reciprocal duties | Necessary food, shelter, care, and clothing |
| **Massachusetts** | Mass. Gen. Laws Ann.  ch. 273, § 20 | Person over eighteen who unreasonably neglects his parent “ | Support and maintenance” |
| **Michigan** | N/A |  |  |
| **Minnesota** | Repealed in 1973 |  |  |
| **Mississippi** | Miss. Code Ann. § 43-31-25 | Parents, grandparents, siblings, and descendants | $150 per month for every month that the County maintained the indigent |
| **Missouri** | N/A |  |  |
| **Montana** | Mont. Code Ann. § 40-6-214  Mont. Code Ann. § 45-5-621 | Child that has reached the age of majority | Necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical attendance; burial, entombment, or cremation costs |
| **Nebraska** | N/A |  |  |
| **Nevada** | Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann § 428.070  Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 439B.310 | Child has duty under certain circumstances to reimburse County for hospitalization of parent | The total cost of hospitalization |
| **New Hampshire** | Repealed children’s obligation to parents in 2013  N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 546-2:2 (retaining parental obligation) |  |  |
| **New Jersey** | N.J. Stat. Ann. §§44:4-100  to § 44:4-103;  N.J. Stat. Ann. §§44:1-139  to § 44:1-142 | Parents, spouses, and children | Relieve and maintain  (N.J.S.A. 44:1-140) |
| **New Mexico** | N/A |  |  |
| **New York** | Repealed in 1966 |  |  |
| **North Carolina** | N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-326.1 | Child | Maintain and support |
| **North Dakota** | N.D. Cent. Code § 14-09-10 | Parents and children have reciprocal duties | Maintain |
| **Ohio** | Ohio Rev. Code Ann.  § 2919.21 | Spouse, child, or parent | Adequate support” |
| **Oklahoma** | N/A |  |  |
| **Oregon** | OR. Rev. Stat. § 109.010 | Parents and children have reciprocal duties | Duty to “maintain” and not abandon |
| **Pennsylvania** | 23 Pa. C.S.A. §§ 4601 to 4606 | Reciprocal duty of parents, spouses, and children | Amount deemed appropriate by a court of competent jurisdiction |
| **Rhode Island** | R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 15-10-1 to  15-10-7  R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 40-5-13 to  40-5-21 | Child (crime); father or grandfather, mother or grandmother, children or grandchildren, by consanguinity, or children by adoption (civil) | Relief and support | |
| **State** | **Civil Statute** | **Relationship of Liable Party to Indigent Elder** | **Contribution Required** | |
| **South Carolina** | N/A |  |  | |
| **South Dakota** | S.D. Codified Laws § 25-7-28  S.D. Codified Laws § 28-13-1.1 | Child | Necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical assistance | |
| **Tennessee** | Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-5-103  Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-5-115 | Parents, spouses, children, guardians of relative receiving medical assistance | Reimbursement for “medical assistance” | |
| **Texas** | N/A |  |  | |
| **Utah** | Utah Code Ann. § 17-14-2 | Children, parents, siblings, or grandchildren of indigent person (in that order) | Support | |
| **Vermont** | VT. Stat. Ann. Tit. 15, §§ 202-03 | Spouse, parent, or child | Support when the parent is destitute | |
| **Virginia** | VA. Code Ann. § 20-88 | Children | support or maintenance | |
| **Washington** | N/A |  |  | |
| **Wisconsin** | Repealed in 1973 |  |  | |
| **Wyoming** | N/A |  |  | |
| **West Virginia** | W. VA. Code § 9-5-9 | Children, father, sibling, and mother (in that order) | Support indigent individual “in the manner required by the department of welfare” | |
| **District of Columbia** | N/A |  |  | |
| **Puerto Rico** | 8 L.P.R.A. § 712 | Descendant of any kind | fair and reasonable” monetary or care contribution | |

1. N.J. Stat. Ann. §§ 44:4-100 to 44:4-103 (West 2014) (finding the identical language in N.J. Stat. Ann. §§ 44:1-139 to 44:1-142 - to be adopted by county referendum; “The provisions of this chapter shall be and remain inoperative as to a particular county until the chapter has been adopted upon referendum as provided in article 17 of this chapter) . [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Id.* at173-74; *see also Appendix,* pp. 7-9 (noting that twenty-nine states and Puerto Rico currently have filial responsibility statutes). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Allison E. Ross, Taking Care of Our Caretakers: Using Filial Responsibility Laws to Support the Elderly Beyond the Government’s Assistance, 16 Elder L.J. 167, 170 (2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Seymour Moskowitz, Filial Responsibility Statutes: Legal and Policy Considerations, 9 J.L. & Pol’y 709, 710-11 (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Id*. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. W. Wade Scott & Erica L. Sharp, The Wolf at the Door: Filial Responsibility, 20 Widener L. Rev. 239, 240-41 (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Id*.; *see also* Twyla Sketchley & Carter McMillan, Filial Responsibility: Breaking the Backbone of Today’s Long-Term Care System, 26 St. Thomas L. Rev. 131, 160 (2013) (noting the following states do not have filial responsibility statutes: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ID. Stat. Ann. §§ 32-1002, 32-1008A (West 2014); *see also* *Who Will Pay For Mom’s or Dad’s Nursing Home Bill? Filial Support Laws and Long-Term Care*,Forbes (Feb. 2, 2014), *available* at http://www.forbes.com/sites/northwesternmutual/2014/02/03/who-will-pay-for-moms-or-dads-nursing-home-bill-filial-support-laws-and-long-term-care/. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. S. B. 1043, Statement of Purpose (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 546-A:2 (West 2014)(emphasis added). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. VA. Code Ann. § 20-88 (West 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Katherine C. Pearson, [Filial Support Laws in the Modern Era: Domestic and International Comparison of Enforcement Practices for Laws Requiring Adult Children to Support Indigent Parents, 20 Elder L.J 269, 275-76 (2013)](https://a.next.westlaw.com/Link/Document/FullText?findType=Y&serNum=0385931968&pubNum=0102191&originatingDoc=Ifb23c5891ed511e498db8b09b4f043e0&refType=LR&fi=co_pp_sp_102191_273&originationContext=document&transitionType=DocumentItem&contextData=(sc.Keycite)#co_pp_sp_102191_273) (citing VA. Code Ann. § 20-88). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [The Parent Trap: Health Care & Ret. Corp. of Am. v. Pittas, How it Reinforced Filial Responsibility Laws and Whether Filial Responsibility Laws Can Really Make You Pay. 5 Est. Plan. & Community Prop. L.J. 441, 448-49 (2013)](https://a.next.westlaw.com/Link/Document/FullText?findType=Y&serNum=0391446822&pubNum=0210289&originatingDoc=I2d217e3edbc011e398db8b09b4f043e0&refType=LR&fi=co_pp_sp_210289_451&originationContext=document&transitionType=DocumentItem&contextData=(sc.Keycite)#co_pp_sp_210289_451) (citing M.D. Code Ann. Fam. Law. § 13-102 (West 2014)). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. M.D. Code Ann. Fam. Law. § 13-102 (West 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *See id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Vance v. Atheron*, 252 Ky. 591 (1934). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. S.D. Codified Laws § 25-7-27 (West 2014); *see also* Mom, Dad, Here’s Your Allowance: The Impending Reemergence of Pennsylvania’s Filial Support Statute and An Appeal for its Amendment, 86 Temp. L. Rev. 849, 860 (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. [Mom, Dad, Here’s Your Allowance: The Impending Reemergence of Pennsylvania’s Filial Support Statute and An Appeal for its Amendment, 86 Temp. L. Rev. 849, 860 (2014)](https://a.next.westlaw.com/Link/Document/FullText?findType=Y&serNum=0425125793&pubNum=0001566&originatingDoc=If23d8f6b04ff11e5a807ad48145ed9f1&refType=LR&fi=co_pp_sp_1566_874&originationContext=document&transitionType=DocumentItem&contextData=(sc.Keycite)#co_pp_sp_1566_874) (citing *Cnty. Of San Mateo v. Boss*, 479 P.2d 654, 659 (Cal. 1971), *overruled sub nom. Swoap v. Superior Ct.*, 516 P.2d 840 (Cal. 1973)). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. CA. FAM. CODE § 4400 (West 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. CA. WELF. & INST. CODE § 12350 (West 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Id*. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. §§ 46b-215 (West 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. 23 Pa. Const. Stat. § 4603(a)(1-2) (West 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *See id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Health Care & Retirement Corp. of America v. Pittas,* 2010 WL 8749722, (Pa.Com.Pl., Aug. 31, 2010), *aff’d by* *Health Care & Retirement Corp. of America v. Pittas*, 2012 Pa. Super. 96 (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Isele, 209 N.J.L.J. 373. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Twyla Sketchley & Carter McMillan, Filial Responsibility: Breaking the Backbone of Today’s Long-Term Care System, 26 St. Thomas L. Rev. 131, 160 -163 (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)