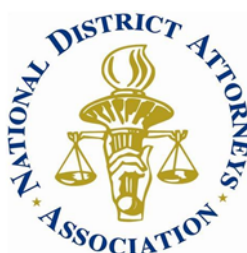


Religious Exemptions to Child Neglect

Last Updated June 2013



Summary of Content

37 states, the District of Columbia and Guam have laws providing that parents or caretakers who fail to provide medical assistance to a child because of their religious beliefs are not criminally liable for harm to the child. At the time Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act in 1974 to create a uniform approach to child abuse, it deferred to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (now Health and Human Services) to determine the religious exemption policies of the act.¹ HEW mandated that the states adopt religious exemptions to child neglect before they could receive federal funding for state child-protection programs.² Although the department adopted new regulations in 1983 striking down this requirement,³ few states have repealed these religious exemption laws. Most of these statutes require that religion be a recognized church or a religious denomination. The Supreme Court had not addressed whether or not neglect exemptions for religious purposes violate the Establishment Clause.⁴

Scope of Compilation

This document is a comprehensive compilation of Religious Exemption statutes from all U.S. jurisdictions including states, territories, and the federal government. It is up-to-date as of **June 2013**. Please note that we recommend checking both case law and current legislation for later modifications to the statutes listed below.

For further assistance, consult the National District Attorneys Association's National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse at 703.549.9222, or via the free online prosecution assistance service http://www.ndaa.org/ta_form.php

¹ Towards A New Lens of Analysis: The History and Future of Religious Exemptions to Child Neglect Statutes, 14 Rich. J.L. & Pub. Int. 375, 376 (2010).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.* at 394.

Table of Contents

Click on the state heading to go to the statutes section.

<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>ALABAMA</u>	<u>5</u>
ALA. CODE § 26-14-7.2 (2013). Investigations; Religious Exemption	5
Ala. Code § 13A-13-6 (2013). Endangering Welfare of Child	5
<u>ALASKA</u>	<u>5</u>
Alaska Stat. § 11.51.120 (2013). Criminal Nonsupport	5
<u>ARKANSAS</u>	<u>6</u>
ARK. CODE ANN. § 9-30-103 (2012). Neglect	6
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>	<u>6</u>
CAL. PENAL CODE § 11165.2. (2013). Neglect, Severe Neglect and General Neglect Defined	6
<u>COLORADO</u>	<u>7</u>
COLO. REV. STAT. § 19-3-103 (2012). Child Not Neglected—whent.	7
<u>CONNECTICUT</u>	<u>7</u>
CONN. GEN. STAT. § 17A-104 (2013). Treatment by Christian Science practitioner	7
<u>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</u>	<u>8</u>
D.C. Code § 4-1321.06 (2013). Exceptions for treatment solely by spiritual means	8
<u>FLORIDA</u>	<u>8</u>
FLA. STAT. ANN. § 39.01 (2013). DEFINITIONS	8
<u>GEORGIA</u>	<u>8</u>
GA. CODE ANN. § 49-5-180. (2012). Definitions	8
GA. CODE ANN. § 15-11-2. (2012). Definitions	9
<u>IDAHO</u>	<u>9</u>
IDAHO CODE ANN. § 18-1501 (2013). Injury to children	9
<u>ILLINOIS</u>	<u>10</u>
325 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/3 (2013). Definitions	10
325 ILL. COMP. STAT. 50/4 (2013). Persons required to report; privileged communications; transmitting false report	10
750 ILL. COMP. STAT. 50/1 (2013). Definitions	10
<u>INDIANA</u>	<u>11</u>
IND. CODE ANN. § 35-46-1-4 (2013). Neglect of a dependent; child selling	11
<u>IOWA</u>	<u>12</u>
IOWA CODE § 232.68 (2013). Definitions	12
<u>KANSAS</u>	<u>12</u>
KAN. STAT. ANN. § 21-5601 (2012). Endangering a child; aggravated endangering a child	12
<u>KENTUCKY</u>	<u>12</u>

KY. REV. STAT. ANN. § 600.020 (2012).	13
<u>LOUISIANA</u>	13
LA. REV. STAT. ANN. ART. 603 (2012).	13
<u>MAINE</u>	13
ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 22, § 4010 (2013). Spiritual Treatment	13
ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 17-A, § 557 (2013). Other Defenses.	13
<u>MICHIGAN</u>	14
MICH. COMP. LAWS § 722.634 (2013). Religious beliefs; medical treatment	14
<u>MINNESOTA</u>	14
MINN. STAT. § 626.556 (2013). Definitions	14
<u>MISSISSIPPI</u>	15
MISS. CODE ANN. § 43-21-105. (2012). Definitions	15
<u>MISSOURI</u>	15
MO. REV. STAT. § 568.040 (2013). Criminal nonsupport, penalty—payment of support as a condition of parole, prosecuting attorneys to report cases to division of child support enforcement	15
MO. REV. STAT. § 568.050 (2013). Endangering the welfare of a child in the second degree	16
<u>MONTANA</u>	16
MONT. CODE ANN. § 43-1-102. (2013). Definitions	16
<u>NEVADA</u>	16
NEV. REV. STAT. ANN. § 128.013 (2011). “Injury” defined	16
NEV. REV. STAT. ANN. § 200.5085 (2011). Use of nonmedical remedial treatment	17
<u>NEW HAMPSHIRE</u>	17
N.H. REV. STAT. ANN. § 169-C: 3 (2013). Definitions	17
N.H. REV. STAT. ANN. § 639:3 (2013). Endangering Welfare of Child or Incompetent	17
<u>NEW JERSEY</u>	17
N.J. Stat. Ann. § 9:6-1.1. (2013). Treatment of ill children according to religious tenets of church.	17
N.J. Stat. Ann. § 9:6-8.21. (2013). Definitions.	18
<u>NEW MEXICO</u>	18
N.M. STAT. ANN. § 32A-4-2. (2012). Definitions	18
<u>NEW YORK</u>	19
N.Y. PENAL LAW § 260.15 (2013). Endangering the welfare of a child; defense	19
<u>OHIO</u>	19
OHIO REV. CODE ANN. §2151.03 (2013). “Neglected child” defined	19
OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 2919.22 (2013). Endangering children.	20
<u>OKLAHOMA</u>	20
OKLA. STAT. ANN. TIT. 10A, §1-1-105 (2013). Definitions	20
<u>PENNSYLVANIA</u>	20

23 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 6303 (2013).	20
<u>RHODE ISLAND</u>	<u>20</u>
R.I. GEN. LAWS § 11-9-5 (2012). Cruelty to or neglect of child	20
R.I. GEN. LAWS § 40-11-15 (2012). Religious Practices	21
<u>TENNESSEE</u>	<u>21</u>
TENN. CODE ANN. § 39-15-402 (2013). Aggravated Child Abuse and Neglect; Aggravated child endangerment	21
<u>UTAH</u>	<u>22</u>
UTAH CODE ANN. § 76-5-109 (2012). Child abuse—child abandonment	22
UTAH CODE ANN. § 76-5-110 (2012). Abuse or neglect of a child with a disability	22
UTAH CODE ANN. § 78A-6-105 (2012). Definitions	22
<u>VERMONT</u>	<u>22</u>
Vt. STAT. ANN. tit. 33, § 4912 (2013). Definitions	22
<u>VIRGINIA</u>	<u>23</u>
VA. CODE ANN. § 18.2-371.1 (2012). Abuse and neglect of children; penalty; abandoned infant	23
VA. CODE ANN. § 63.2-100 (2013*). Definitions. *Effective July 1, 2013.	23
<u>WASHINGTON</u>	<u>23</u>
WASH. REV. CODE ANN. § 9A.42.005 (2013). Findings and Intent—Christian Science Treatment—Rules of Evidence	23
<u>WEST VIRGINIA</u>	<u>24</u>
W. VA. CODE ANN. § 61-8D-4 (2013). Child Neglect resulting in injury; child neglect creating risk of injury; criminal penalties	24
W. VA. CODE ANN. § 61-8D-4A (2013). Child Neglect resulting in death; criminal penalties	24
<u>WISCONSIN</u>	<u>24</u>
WIS. STAT. ANN. § 48.981 (2013). Abused or neglected children and abused unborn children	24
WIS. STAT. ANN. § 948.03 (2013). Physical abuse of a child	25
<u>WYOMING</u>	<u>25</u>
WYO. STAT. ANN. § 14-3-202 (2013). Definitions	25
<u>GUAM</u>	<u>25</u>
Guam Code Ann. tit. 19, § 13101 (Public Law 31-25). Definitions	25

ALABAMA

ALA. CODE § 26-14-7.2 (2013). Investigations; Religious Exemption

(a) When an investigation of child abuse or neglect by the Department of Human Resources determines that a parent or legal guardian legitimately practicing his or her religious beliefs has not provided specific medical treatment for a child, the parent or legal guardian shall not be considered a negligent parent or guardian for that reason alone. This exception shall not preclude a court from ordering that medical services be provided to the child when the child's health requires it.

(b) The department may, in any case, pursue any legal remedies, including the initiation of legal proceedings in a court of competent jurisdiction, as may be necessary to provide medical care or treatment for a child when the care or treatment is necessary to prevent or remedy serious harm to the child, or to prevent the withholding of medically indicated treatments from infants with disabilities and with life-threatening conditions. Upon application by the department, the court may issue prelitigation or pretrial discovery orders for persons, medical records, and other documents or materials.

Ala. Code § 13A-13-6 (2013). Endangering Welfare of Child

(a) A man or woman commits the crime of endangering the welfare of a child when:

(1) He or she knowingly directs or authorizes a child less than 16 years of age to engage in an occupation involving a substantial risk of danger to his life or health; or

(2) He or she, as a parent, guardian or other person legally charged with the care or custody of a child less than 18 years of age, fails to exercise reasonable diligence in the control of such child to prevent him or her from becoming a “dependent child” or a “delinquent child,” as defined in Section 12-15-1.

(b) A person does not commit an offense under Section 13A-13-4 or this section for the sole reason he provides a child under the age of 19 years or a dependent spouse with remedial treatment by spiritual means alone in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof in lieu of medical treatment.

ALASKA

Alaska Stat. § 11.51.120 (2013). Criminal Nonsupport

(a) A person commits the crime of criminal nonsupport if, being a person legally charged with the support of a child the person knowingly fails, without lawful excuse, to provide support for the child.

(b) As used in this section “support” includes necessary food, care, clothing, shelter, medical attention, and education. There is no failure to provide medical attention to a child if the child is

provided treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by an accredited practitioner of the church or denomination.

ARKANSAS

ARK. CODE ANN. § 9-30-103 (2012). Neglect

(5) “Neglect” means:

(A) Failure to provide, by those legally responsible for:

(i) The care and maintenance of the child and the proper or necessary support

(ii) Education, as required by law; or

(iii) Medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for his or her well-being; or

(B) Any maltreatment of the child. The term includes both acts and omissions. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to mean a child is neglected or abused for the sole reason he or she is being provided treatment by spiritual means through prayer alone in accordance with the tenets or practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof in lieu of medical or surgical treatment.

CALIFORNIA

CAL. PENAL CODE §11165.2. (2013).

Neglect, Severe Neglect and General Neglect Defined

As used in this article, “neglect” means the negligent treatment or the maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare. The term includes both acts and omissions on the part of the responsible person.

(a) “Severe neglect” means the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to protect the child from severe malnutrition or medically diagnosed nonorganic failure to thrive. “Severe neglect” also means those situations of neglect where any person having the care or custody of a child willfully causes or permits the person or health of the child to be placed in a situation such that his or her person or health is endangered, as proscribed by Section 11165.3, including the intentional failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

(b) “General neglect” means the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred.

For the purposes of this chapter, a child receiving treatment by spiritual means as provided in Section 16509.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code or not receiving specified medical treatment

for religious reasons, shall not for that reason alone be considered a neglected child. An informed and appropriate medical decision made by parent or guardian after consultation with a physician or physicians who have examined the minor does not constitute neglect.

COLORADO

COLO. REV. STAT. §19-3-103 (2012). Child Not Neglected—when

(1) No child who in lieu of medical treatment is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with a recognized method of religious healing shall, for that reason alone, be considered to have been neglected or dependent within the purview of this article. However, the religious rights of a parent, guardian, or legal custodian shall not limit the access of a child to medical care in a life-threatening situation or when the condition will result in serious disability. In order to make a determination as to whether the child is in a life-threatening situation or that the child's condition will result in serious disability, the court may, as provided under section 19-1-104(3), order a medical evaluation of the child. If the court determines, on the basis of any relevant evidence before the court, including the medical evaluation ordered pursuant to this section, that the child is in a life-threatening situation or that the child's condition will result in serious disability, the court may, as provided under section 19-1-104(3), order that medical treatment be provided for the child. A child whose parent, guardian, or legal custodian inhibits or interferes with the provision of medical treatment in accordance with a court order shall be considered to have been neglected or dependent for the purposes of this article and injured or endangered for the purposes of section 18-6-401, C.R.S.

(2) A method of religious healing shall be presumed to be a recognized method of religious healing if:

(a)(I) Fees and expenses incurred in connection with such treatment are permitted to be deducted from taxable income as medical expenses pursuant to regulations or rules promulgated by the United States internal revenue service; and

(II) Fees and expenses incurred in connection with such treatment are generally recognized as reimbursable health care expenses under medical policies of insurance issued by insurers licensed by this state; or

(b) Such treatment provides a rate of success in maintaining health and treating disease or injury that is equivalent to that of medical treatment.

CONNECTICUT

CONN. GEN. STAT. § 17A-104 (2013). Treatment by Christian Science practitioner

For the purposes of sections 17a-101 to 17a-103, inclusive, and section 46b-129a, the treatment

of any child by a Christian Science practitioner in lieu of treatment by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts shall not of itself constitute maltreatment.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

D.C. Code § 4-1321.06 (2013). Exceptions for treatment solely by spiritual means.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this subchapter, no child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall, for that reason alone, be considered to have been neglected within the purview of this subchapter.

FLORIDA

FLA. STAT. ANN. § 39.01 (2013).

(44) “Neglect” occurs when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired. The foregoing circumstances shall not be considered neglect if caused primarily by financial inability unless actual services for relief have been offered to and rejected by such person. A parent or legal custodian legitimately practicing religious beliefs in accordance with a recognized church or religious organization who thereby does not provide specific medical treatment for a child may not, for that reason alone, be considered a negligent parent or legal custodian; however, such an exception does not preclude a court from ordering the following services to be provided, when the health of the child so requires:

(a) Medical services from a licensed physician, dentist, optometrist, podiatric physician, or other qualified health care provider; or

(b) Treatment by a duly accredited practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing in accordance with the tenets and practices of a well-recognized church or religious organization.

Neglect of a child includes acts or omissions.

GEORGIA

GA. CODE ANN. § 49-5-180. (2012). Definitions

(5) “Child abuse” means:

(A) Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means, and this shall be deemed to be physical abuse for purposes of the classification required by paragraph (4) of subsection (b) of Code Section 49-5-183; provided, however, physical forms of discipline may be used as long as there is no physical injury to the child;

(B) Neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof if said neglect or exploitation consists of a lack of supervision, abandonment, or intentional or unintentional disregard by a parent or caretaker of a child's basic needs for food, shelter, medical care, or education as evidenced by repeated incidents or a single incident which places the child at substantial risk of harm, and this shall be deemed to be child neglect for purposes of the classification required by paragraph (4) of subsection (b) of Code Section 49-5-183; and

(C) Sexual abuse of a child, and this shall be deemed to be sexual abuse for purposes of the classification required by paragraph (4) of subsection (b) of Code Section 49-5-183.

No child who in good faith is being treated solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall, for that reason alone, be considered to be an abused child.

GA. CODE ANN. § 15-11-2. (2012). Definitions

(8) “Deprived child” means a child who:

(A) Is without proper parental care or control, subsistence, education as required by law, or other care or control necessary for the child's physical, mental, or emotional health or morals;

(B) Has been placed for care or adoption in violation of law;

(C) Has been abandoned by his or her parents or other legal custodian; or

(D) Is without a parent, guardian, or custodian.

No child who in good faith is being treated solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall, for that reason alone, be considered to be a “deprived child.”

IDAHO

IDAHO CODE ANN. § 18-1501 (2013). Injury to children

(1) Any person who, under circumstances or conditions likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any child to suffer, or inflicts thereon unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or having the care or custody of any child, willfully causes or permits the person or health of such child to be injured, or willfully causes or permits such child to be placed in such situation that its person or health is endangered, is punishable by imprisonment in the

county jail not exceeding one (1) year, or in the state prison for not less than one (1) year nor more than ten (10) years.

(2) Any person who, under circumstances or conditions other than those likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any child to suffer, or inflicts thereon unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or having the care or custody of any child, willfully causes or permits the person or health of such child to be injured, or willfully causes or permits such child to be placed in such situation that its person or health may be endangered, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(3) A person over the age of eighteen (18) years commits the crime of injury to a child if the person transports a minor in a motor vehicle or vessel as defined in section 67-7003, Idaho Code, while under the influence of alcohol, intoxicating liquor, a controlled substance, or any combination thereof, in violation of section 18-8004 or 67-7034, Idaho Code. Any person convicted of violating this subsection is guilty of a misdemeanor. If a child suffers bodily injury or death due to a violation of this subsection, the violation will constitute a felony punishable by imprisonment for not more than ten (10) years, unless a more severe penalty is otherwise prescribed by law.

(4) The practice of a parent or guardian who chooses for his child treatment by prayer or spiritual means alone shall not for that reason alone be construed to have violated the duty of care to such child.

(5) As used in this section, "willfully" means acting or failing to act where a reasonable person would know the act or failure to act is likely to result in injury or harm or is likely to endanger the person, health, safety or well-being of the child.

ILLINOIS

325 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/3 (2013). Definitions

A child shall not be considered neglected or abused for the sole reason that such child's parent or other person responsible for his or her welfare depends upon spiritual means through prayer alone for the treatment or cure of disease or remedial care as provided under Section 4 of this Act.

325 ILL. COMP. STAT. 50/4 (2013). Persons required to report; privileged communications; transmitting false report

A child whose parent, guardian or custodian in good faith selects and depends upon spiritual means through prayer alone for the treatment or cure of disease or remedial care may be considered neglected or abused, but not for the sole reason that his parent, guardian or custodian accepts and practices such beliefs

750 ILL. COMP. STAT. 50/1 (2013). Definitions

Q. “Neglected child” means any child whose parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare withholds or denies nourishment or medically indicated treatment including food or care denied solely on the basis of the present or anticipated mental or physical impairment as determined by a physician acting alone or in consultation with other physicians or otherwise does not provide the proper or necessary support, education as required by law, or medical or other remedial care recognized under State law as necessary for a child's well-being, or other care necessary for his or her well-being, including adequate food, clothing and shelter; or who is abandoned by his or her parents or other person responsible for the child's welfare.

A child shall not be considered neglected or abused for the sole reason that the child's parent or other person responsible for his or her welfare depends upon spiritual means through prayer alone for the treatment or cure of disease or remedial care as provided under Section 4 of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

INDIANA

IND. CODE ANN. § 35-46-1-4 (2013). Neglect of a dependent; child selling

(a) A person having the care of a dependent, whether assumed voluntarily or because of a legal obligation, who knowingly or intentionally:

- (1) places the dependent in a situation that endangers the dependent's life or health;
- (2) abandons or cruelly confines the dependent;
- (3) deprives the dependent of necessary support; or
- (4) deprives the dependent of education as required by law;

commits neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony.

(c) It is a defense to a prosecution based on an alleged act under this section that:

(1) the accused person left a dependent child who was, at the time the alleged act occurred, not more than thirty (30) days of age with an emergency medical provider who took custody of the child under IC 31-34-2.5 when:

(A) the prosecution is based solely on the alleged act of leaving the child with the emergency medical services provider; and

(B) the alleged act did not result in bodily injury or serious bodily injury to the child; or

(2) the accused person, in the legitimate practice of the accused person's religious belief, provided treatment by spiritual means through prayer, in lieu of medical care, to the accused person's dependent.

IOWA

IOWA CODE § 232.68 (2013). Definitions

2. a. “Child abuse” or “abuse” means:

(c) A parent or guardian legitimately practicing religious beliefs who does not provide specified medical treatment for a child for that reason alone shall not be considered abusing the child, however this provision shall not preclude a court from ordering that medical service be provided to the child where the child's health requires it.

KANSAS

KAN. STAT. ANN. § 21-5601 (2012). Endangering a child; aggravated endangering a child

(a) Endangering a child is knowingly and unreasonably causing or permitting a child under the age of 18 years to be placed in a situation in which the child's life, body or health may be endangered.

KAN. STAT. ANN. § 38-5601 (2012). Definitions

(t) “Neglect” means acts or omissions by a parent, guardian or person responsible for the care of a child resulting in harm to a child, or presenting a likelihood of harm, and the acts or omissions are not due solely to the lack of financial means of the child's parents or other custodian. Neglect may include, but shall not be limited to:

(1) Failure to provide the child with food, clothing or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child;

(2) failure to provide adequate supervision of a child or to remove a child from a situation which requires judgment or actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or a likelihood of harm to the child; or

(3) failure to use resources available to treat a diagnosed medical condition if such treatment will make a child substantially more comfortable, reduce pain and suffering, or correct or substantially diminish a crippling condition from worsening. A parent legitimately practicing religious beliefs who does not provide specified medical treatment for a child because of religious beliefs shall not for that reason be considered a negligent parent; however, this exception shall not preclude a court from entering an order pursuant to subsection (a)(2) of K.S.A. 38-2217, and amendments thereto.

KENTUCKY

KY. REV. STAT. ANN. § 600.020 (2012).

(1) “Abused or neglected child” means a child whose health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm when:

(a) His or her parent, guardian, person in a position of authority or special trust, as defined in KRS 532.045, or other person exercising custodial control or supervision of the child:

8. Does not provide the child with adequate care, supervision, food, clothing, shelter, and education or medical care necessary for the child's well-being. A parent or other person exercising custodial control or supervision of the child legitimately practicing the person's religious beliefs shall not be considered a negligent parent solely because of failure to provide specified medical treatment for a child for that reason alone. This exception shall not preclude a court from ordering necessary medical services for a child;

LOUISIANA

LA. REV. STAT. ANN. ART. 603 (2012).

(16) “Neglect” means the refusal or unreasonable failure of a parent or caretaker to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, care, treatment, or counseling for any injury, illness, or condition of the child, as a result of which the child's physical, mental, or emotional health and safety is substantially threatened or impaired. Neglect includes prenatal neglect. Consistent with Article 606(B), the inability of a parent or caretaker to provide for a child due to inadequate financial resources shall not, for that reason alone, be considered neglect. Whenever, in lieu of medical care, a child is being provided treatment in accordance with the tenets of a well-recognized religious method of healing which has a reasonable, proven record of success, the child shall not, for that reason alone, be considered to be neglected or maltreated. However, nothing herein shall prohibit the court from ordering medical services for the child when there is substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare.

MAINE

ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 22, § 4010 (2013). Spiritual Treatment

1. Treatment not considered abuse or neglect. Under subchapters I to VII, a child shall not be considered to be abused or neglected, in jeopardy of health or welfare or in danger of serious harm solely because treatment is by spiritual means by an accredited practitioner of a recognized religious organization.

ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 17-A, § 557 (2013). Other Defenses.

For the purposes of this chapter, a person who in good faith provides treatment for a child or

dependent person by spiritual means through prayer may not for that reason alone be determined to have knowingly endangered the welfare of that child or dependent person.

MICHIGAN

MICH. COMP. LAWS § 722.634 (2013). Religious beliefs; medical treatment

Sec. 14. A parent or guardian legitimately practicing his religious beliefs who thereby does not provide specified medical treatment for a child, for that reason alone shall not be considered a negligent parent or guardian. This section shall not preclude a court from ordering the provision of medical services or nonmedical remedial services recognized by state law to a child where the child's health requires it nor does it abrogate the responsibility of a person required to report child abuse or neglect.

MINNESOTA

MINN. STAT. § 626.556 (2013). Definitions

f) "Neglect" means the commission or omission of any of the acts specified under clauses (1) to (9), other than by accidental means:

- (1) failure by a person responsible for a child's care to supply a child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, health, medical, or other care required for the child's physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so;
- (2) failure to protect a child from conditions or actions that seriously endanger the child's physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so, including a growth delay, which may be referred to as a failure to thrive, that has been diagnosed by a physician and is due to parental neglect;
- (3) failure to provide for necessary supervision or child care arrangements appropriate for a child after considering factors as the child's age, mental ability, physical condition, length of absence, or environment, when the child is unable to care for the child's own basic needs or safety, or the basic needs or safety of another child in their care;
- (4) failure to ensure that the child is educated as defined in sections 120A.22 and 260C.163, subdivision 11, which does not include a parent's refusal to provide the parent's child with sympathomimetic medications, consistent with section 125A.091, subdivision 5;
- (5) nothing in this section shall be construed to mean that a child is neglected solely because the child's parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's care in good faith selects and depends upon spiritual means or prayer for treatment or care of disease or remedial care of the child in lieu of medical care; except that a parent, guardian, or caretaker, or a person mandated to report pursuant to subdivision 3, has a duty to report if a lack of medical care may cause serious danger to the child's health. This section does not impose upon persons, not otherwise legally

responsible for providing a child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, education, or medical care, a duty to provide that care;

MISSISSIPPI

MISS. CODE ANN. § 43-21-105. (2012). Definitions

(l) “Neglected child” means a child:

(i) Whose parent, guardian or custodian or any person responsible for his care or support, neglects or refuses, when able so to do, to provide for him proper and necessary care or support, or education as required by law, or medical, surgical, or other care necessary for his well-being; however, a parent who withholds medical treatment from any child who in good faith is under treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall not, for that reason alone, be considered to be neglectful under any provision of this chapter;

MISSOURI

MO. REV. STAT. § 210.115 (2013). Reports of abuse, neglect and under age eighteen deaths—persons required to report—deaths required to be reported to the division or child fatality review panel, when—report made to another state

3. Notwithstanding any other provision of sections 210.109 to 210.183, any child who does not receive specified medical treatment by reason of the legitimate practice of the religious belief of the child's parents, guardian, or others legally responsible for the child, for that reason alone, shall not be found to be an abused or neglected child, and such parents, guardian or other persons legally responsible for the child shall not be entered into the central registry. However, the division may accept reports concerning such a child and may subsequently investigate or conduct a family assessment as a result of that report. Such an exception shall not limit the administrative or judicial authority of the state to ensure that medical services are provided to the child when the child's health requires it.

MO. REV. STAT. § 568.040 (2013). Criminal nonsupport, penalty—payment of support as a condition of parole, prosecuting attorneys to report cases to division of child support enforcement

1. A person commits the crime of nonsupport if such person knowingly fails to provide adequate support for his or her spouse; a parent commits the crime of nonsupport if such parent knowingly fails to provide adequate support which such parent is legally obligated to provide for his or her child or stepchild who is not otherwise emancipated by operation of law.

2. For purposes of this section:

(4) It shall not constitute a failure to provide medical and surgical attention, if nonmedical

remedial treatment recognized and permitted under the laws of this state is provided.

MO. REV. STAT. § 568.050 (2013). Endangering the welfare of a child in the second degree

1. A person commits the crime of endangering the welfare of a child in the second degree if:

(1) He or she with criminal negligence acts in a manner that creates a substantial risk to the life, body or health of a child less than seventeen years old;

2. Nothing in this section shall be construed to mean the welfare of a child is endangered for the sole reason that he or she is being provided nonmedical remedial treatment recognized and permitted under the laws of this state.

MONTANA

MONT. CODE ANN. § 43-1-102. (2013). Definitions

3) “Abused or neglected” means the state or condition of a child who has suffered child abuse or neglect.

(4)(a) “Adequate health care” means any medical care or nonmedical remedial health care recognized by an insurer licensed to provide disability insurance under Title 33, including the prevention of the withholding of medically indicated treatment or medically indicated psychological care permitted or authorized under state law.

(b) This chapter may not be construed to require or justify a finding of child abuse or neglect for the sole reason that a parent or legal guardian, because of religious beliefs, does not provide adequate health care for a child. However, this chapter may not be construed to limit the administrative or judicial authority of the state to ensure that medical care is provided to the child when there is imminent substantial risk of serious harm to the child.

NEVADA

NEV. REV. STAT. ANN. § 128.013 (2011). “Injury” defined.

2. A child's health or welfare is not considered injured solely because the child's parent or guardian, in the practice of his or her religious beliefs, selects and depends upon nonmedical remedial treatment for the child, if such treatment is recognized and permitted under the laws of this State.

NEV. REV. STAT. ANN. § 200.5085 (2011). Use of nonmedical remedial treatment

A child is not abused or neglected, nor is the child's health or welfare harmed or threatened for the sole reason that his or her parent or guardian, in good faith, selects and depends upon nonmedical remedial treatment for such child, if such treatment is recognized and permitted under the laws of this State in lieu of medical treatment.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

N.H. REV. STAT. ANN. § 169-C: 3 (2013). Definitions

XIX. "Neglected child" means a child:

- (a) Who has been abandoned by his parents, guardian, or custodian; or
- (b) Who is without proper parental care or control, subsistence, education as required by law, or other care or control necessary for his physical, mental, or emotional health, when it is established that his health has suffered or is very likely to suffer serious impairment; and the deprivation is not due primarily to the lack of financial means of the parents, guardian or custodian; or
- (c) Whose parents, guardian or custodian are unable to discharge their responsibilities to and for the child because of incarceration, hospitalization or other physical or mental incapacity; Provided, that no child who is, in good faith, under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall, for that reason alone, be considered to be a neglected child under this chapter.

N.H. REV. STAT. ANN. § 639:3 (2013). Endangering Welfare of Child or Incompetent.

IV. A person who pursuant to the tenets of a recognized religion fails to conform to an otherwise existing duty of care or protection is not guilty of an offense under this section.

NEW JERSEY

N.J. Stat. Ann. § 9:6-1.1. (2013). Treatment of ill children according to religious tenets of church.

The article to which this act is a supplement shall not be construed to deny the right of a parent, guardian or person having the care, custody and control of any child to treat or provide treatment for an ill child in accordance with the religious tenets of any church as authorized by other statutes of this State; *provided*, that the laws, rules, and regulations relating to communicable diseases and sanitary matters are not violated.

N.J. Stat. Ann. § 9:6-8.21. (2013). Definitions.

c. "Abused or neglected child" means a child less than 18 years of age whose parent or guardian, as herein defined, (1) inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury by other than accidental means which causes or creates a substantial risk of death, or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted impairment of physical or emotional health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ; (2) creates or allows to be created a substantial or ongoing risk of physical injury to such child by other than accidental means which would be likely to cause death or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ; (3) commits or allows to be committed an act of sexual abuse against the child; (4) or a child whose physical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as the result of the failure of his parent or guardian, as herein defined, to exercise a minimum degree of care (a) in supplying the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, medical or surgical care though financially able to do so or though offered financial or other reasonable means to do so, or (b) in providing the child with proper supervision or guardianship, by unreasonably inflicting or allowing to be inflicted harm, or substantial risk thereof, including the infliction of excessive corporal punishment; or by any other acts of a similarly serious nature requiring the aid of the court; (5) or a child who has been willfully abandoned by his parent or guardian, as herein defined; (6) or a child upon whom excessive physical restraint has been used under circumstances which do not indicate that the child's behavior is harmful to himself, others, or property; (7) or a child who is in an institution and (a) has been placed there inappropriately for a continued period of time with the knowledge that the placement has resulted or may continue to result in harm to the child's mental or physical well-being or (b) who has been willfully isolated from ordinary social contact under circumstances which indicate emotional or social deprivation.

A child shall not be considered abused or neglected pursuant to paragraph (7) of subsection c. of this section if the acts or omissions described therein occur in a day school as defined in this section.

No child who in good faith is under treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall for this reason alone be considered to be abused or neglected.

NEW MEXICO

N.M. STAT. ANN. § 32A-4-2. (2012). Definitions

E. "neglected child" means a child:

(1) who has been abandoned by the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(2) who is without proper parental care and control or subsistence, education, medical or other care or control necessary for the child's well-being because of the faults or habits of the child's parent, guardian or custodian or the failure or refusal of the parent, guardian or custodian, when able to do so, to provide them;

(3) who has been physically or sexually abused, when the child's parent, guardian or custodian knew or should have known of the abuse and failed to take reasonable steps to protect the child from further harm;

(4) whose parent, guardian or custodian is unable to discharge that person's responsibilities to and for the child because of incarceration, hospitalization or physical or mental disorder or incapacity; or

(5) who has been placed for care or adoption in violation of the law; provided that nothing in the Children's Code shall be construed to imply that a child who is being provided with treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer, in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination, by a duly accredited practitioner thereof is for that reason alone a neglected child within the meaning of the Children's Code; and further provided that no child shall be denied the protection afforded to all children under the Children's Code;

NEW YORK

N.Y. PENAL LAW § 260.15 (2013). Endangering the welfare of a child; defense

In any prosecution for endangering the welfare of a child, pursuant to section 260.10 of this article, based upon an alleged failure or refusal to provide proper medical care or treatment to an ill child, it is an affirmative defense that the defendant (a) is a parent, guardian or other person legally charged with the care or custody of such child; and (b) is a member or adherent of an organized church or religious group the tenets of which prescribe prayer as the principal treatment for illness; and (c) treated or caused such ill child to be treated in accordance with such tenets.

OHIO

OHIO REV. CODE ANN. §2151.03 (2013). “Neglected child” defined.

(B) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as subjecting a parent, guardian, or custodian of a child to criminal liability when, solely in the practice of religious beliefs, the parent, guardian, or custodian fails to provide adequate medical or surgical care or treatment for the child. This division does not abrogate or limit any person's responsibility under section 2151.421 of the Revised Code to report child abuse that is known or reasonably suspected or believed to have occurred, child neglect that is known or reasonably suspected or believed to have occurred, and children who are known to face or are reasonably suspected or believed to be facing a threat of suffering abuse or neglect and does not preclude any exercise of the authority of the state, any political subdivision, or any court to ensure that medical or surgical care or treatment is provided to a child when the child's health requires the provision of medical or surgical care or treatment.

OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 2919.22 (2013). Endangering children.

(A) No person, who is the parent, guardian, custodian, person having custody or control, or person in loco parentis of a child under eighteen years of age or a mentally or physically handicapped child under twenty-one years of age, shall create a substantial risk to the health or safety of the child, by violating a duty of care, protection, or support. It is not a violation of a duty of care, protection, or support under this division when the parent, guardian, custodian, or person having custody or control of a child treats the physical or mental illness or defect of the child by spiritual means through prayer alone, in accordance with the tenets of a recognized religious body.

OKLAHOMA

OKLA. STAT. ANN. TIT. 10A, §1-1-105 (2013). Definitions

Nothing in the Oklahoma Children's Code shall be construed to mean a child is deprived for the sole reason the parent, legal guardian, or person having custody or control of a child, in good faith, selects and depends upon spiritual means alone through prayer, in accordance with the tenets and practice of a recognized church or religious denomination, for the treatment or cure of disease or remedial care of such child.

Nothing contained in this paragraph shall prevent a court from immediately assuming custody of a child and ordering whatever action may be necessary, including medical treatment, to protect the child's health or welfare;

PENNSYLVANIA

23 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 6303 (2013).

3) If, upon investigation, the county agency determines that a child has not been provided needed medical or surgical care because of seriously held religious beliefs of the child's parents, guardian or person responsible for the child's welfare, which beliefs are consistent with those of a bona fide religion, the child shall not be deemed to be physically or mentally abused. The county agency shall closely monitor the child and shall seek court-ordered medical intervention when the lack of medical or surgical care threatens the child's life or long-term health. In cases involving religious circumstances, all correspondence with a subject of the report and the records of the Department of Public Welfare and the county agency shall not reference "child abuse" and shall acknowledge the religious basis for the child's condition, and the family shall be referred for general protective services, if appropriate.

RHODE ISLAND

R.I. GEN. LAWS § 11-9-5 (2012). Cruelty to or neglect of child

(a) Every person having the custody or control of any child under the age of eighteen (18) years who shall abandon that child, or who shall treat the child with gross or habitual cruelty, or who shall wrongfully cause or permit that child to be an habitual sufferer for want of food, clothing, proper care, or oversight, or who shall use or permit the use of that child for any wanton, cruel, or improper purpose, or who shall compel, cause, or permit that child to do any wanton or wrongful act, or who shall cause or permit the home of that child to be the resort of lewd, drunken, wanton, or dissolute persons, or who by reason of neglect, cruelty, drunkenness, or depravity, shall render the home of that child a place in which it is unfit for that child to live, or who shall neglect or refuse to pay the reasonable charges for the support of that child, whenever the child shall be placed by him or her in the custody of, or be assigned by any court to, any individual, association, or corporation, shall be guilty of a felony and shall for every such offense be imprisoned for not less than one year nor more than three (3) years, or be fined not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or both, and the child may be proceeded against as a neglected child under the provisions of chapter 1 of title 14.

(b) In addition to any penalty provided in this section, any person convicted or placed on probation for this offense may be required to receive psychosociological counseling in child growth, care and development as a part of that sentence or probation. For purposes of this section, and in accordance with § 40-11-15, a parent or guardian practicing his or her religious beliefs which differ from general community standards who does not provide specified medical treatment for a child shall not, for that reason alone, be considered an abusive or negligent parent or guardian; provided, the provisions of this section shall not: (1) exempt a parent or guardian from having committed the offense of cruelty or neglect if the child is harmed under the provisions of (a) above; (2) exempt the department from the provisions of § 40-11-5; or (3) prohibit the department from filing a petition, pursuant to the provisions of § 40-11-15, for medical services for a child, where his or her health requires it.

R.I. GEN. LAWS § 40-11-15 (2012). Religious Practices

A parent or guardian practicing his or her religious beliefs which differ from general community standards who does not provide specified medical treatment for a child shall not, for that reason alone, be considered a negligent parent or guardian. However, nothing in this section shall: (1) prevent the child from being considered abused or neglected if the child is harmed or threatened with harm as described in § 40-11-2; or (2) preclude the court from ordering medical services or nonmedical services recognized by the laws of this state to be provided to the child where his or her health requires it.

TENNESSEE

TENN. CODE ANN. § 39-15-402 (2013). Aggravated Child Abuse and Neglect; Aggravated child endangerment

(c) Nothing in this part shall be construed to mean a child is abused, neglected, or endangered, or abused, neglected or endangered in an aggravated manner, for the sole reason the child is being provided treatment by spiritual means through prayer alone, in accordance with the tenets or practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner of the recognized church or religious denomination, in lieu of medical or surgical treatment.

UTAH

UTAH CODE ANN. § 76-5-109 (2012). Child abuse—child abandonment

(6) A parent or legal guardian who provides a child with treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer, in lieu of medical treatment, in accordance with the tenets and practices of an established church or religious denomination of which the parent or legal guardian is a member or adherent shall not, for that reason alone, be considered to have committed an offense under this section.

UTAH CODE ANN. § 76-5-110 (2012). Abuse or neglect of a child with a disability

(3)(a) A parent or legal guardian who provides a child with treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer, in lieu of medical treatment, in accordance with the tenets and practices of an established church or religious denomination of which the parent or legal guardian is a member or adherent shall not, for that reason alone, be considered to be in violation under this section.

UTAH CODE ANN. § 78A-6-105 (2012). Definitions

(c) A parent or guardian legitimately practicing religious beliefs and who, for that reason, does not provide specified medical treatment for a child, is not guilty of neglect.

VERMONT

VT. STAT. ANN. tit. 33, § 4912 (2013). Definitions

(3) “Harm” can occur by:

(A) Physical injury or emotional maltreatment;

(B) Failure to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or health care. For the purposes of this subchapter, “adequate health care” includes any medical or nonmedical remedial health care permitted or authorized under state law. Notwithstanding that a child might be found to be without proper parental care under chapter 55 of this title, a parent or other person responsible for a child's care legitimately practicing his or her religious beliefs who thereby does

not provide specified medical treatment for a child shall not be considered neglectful for that reason alone;

VIRGINIA

VA. CODE ANN. § 18.2-371.1 (2012). Abuse and neglect of children; penalty; abandoned infant

C. Any parent, guardian or other person having care, custody, or control of a minor child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall not, for that reason alone, be considered in violation of this section.

VA. CODE ANN. § 63.2-100 (2013*). Definitions.

**Effective July 1, 2013.*

“Abused or neglected child” means any child less than 18 years of age:

2. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care neglects or refuses to provide care necessary for his health. However, no child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall for that reason alone be considered to be an abused or neglected child. Further, a decision by parents who have legal authority for the child or, in the absence of parents with legal authority for the child, any person with legal authority for the child, who refuses a particular medical treatment for a child with a life-threatening condition shall not be deemed a refusal to provide necessary care if (i) such decision is made jointly by the parents or other person with legal authority and the child; (ii) the child has reached 14 years of age and is sufficiently mature to have an informed opinion on the subject of his medical treatment; (iii) the parents or other person with legal authority and the child have considered alternative treatment options; and (iv) the parents or other person with legal authority and the child believe in good faith that such decision is in the child's best interest. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to limit the provisions of § 16.1-278.4;

WASHINGTON

WASH. REV. CODE ANN. § 9A.42.005 (2013). Findings and Intent—Christian Science Treatment—Rules of Evidence

The legislature finds that there is a significant need to protect children and dependent persons, including frail elder and vulnerable adults, from abuse and neglect by their parents, by persons entrusted with their physical custody, or by persons employed to provide them with the basic necessities of life. The legislature further finds that such abuse and neglect often takes the forms of either withholding from them the basic necessities of life, including food, water, shelter, clothing, and health care, or abandoning them, or both. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature

that criminal penalties be imposed on those guilty of such abuse or neglect. It is the intent of the legislature that a person who, in good faith, is furnished Christian Science treatment by a duly accredited Christian Science practitioner in lieu of medical care is not considered deprived of medically necessary health care or abandoned. Prosecutions under this chapter shall be consistent with the rules of evidence, including hearsay, under law.

WEST VIRGINIA

W. VA. CODE ANN. § 61-8D-4 (2013). Child Neglect resulting in injury; child neglect creating risk of injury; criminal penalties

(d) The provisions of this section shall not apply to any parent, guardian or custodian who fails or refuses, or allows another person to fail or refuse, to supply a child under the care, custody or control of such parent, guardian or custodian with necessary medical care, when such medical care conflicts with the tenets and practices of a recognized religious denomination or order of which such parent, guardian or custodian is an adherent or member.

W. VA. CODE ANN. § 61-8D-4A (2013). Child Neglect resulting in death; criminal penalties

(b) No child who in lieu of medical treatment was under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with a recognized method of religious healing with a reasonable proven record of success shall, for that reason alone, be considered to have been neglected within the provisions of this section. A method of religious healing shall be presumed to be a recognized method of religious healing if fees and expenses incurred in connection with such treatment are permitted to be deducted from taxable income as “medical expenses” pursuant to regulations or rules promulgated by the United States internal revenue service.

WISCONSIN

WIS. STAT. ANN. § 48.981 (2013). Abused or neglected children and abused unborn children

4. The county department or, in a county having a population of 500,000 or more, the department or a licensed child welfare agency under contract with the department shall determine, within 60 days after receipt of a report that the county department, department, or licensed child welfare agency investigates under subd. 1., whether abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur. The determination shall be based on a preponderance of the evidence produced by the investigation. A determination that abuse or neglect has occurred may not be based solely on the fact that the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian in good faith selects and relies on prayer or other religious means for treatment of disease or for remedial care of the child. In making a determination that emotional damage has occurred, the county department or, in a county having a population of 500,000 or more, the department or a licensed child welfare agency under contract with the department shall give due regard to the culture of the subjects. This subdivision

does not prohibit a court from ordering medical services for the child if the child's health requires it.

WIS. STAT. ANN. § 948.03 (2013). Physical abuse of a child

(6) Treatment through prayer. A person is not guilty of an offense under this section solely because he or she provides a child with treatment by spiritual means through prayer alone for healing in accordance with the religious method of healing permitted under s. 48.981(3)(c)4. or 448.03(6) in lieu of medical or surgical treatment.

WYOMING

WYO. STAT. ANN. § 14-3-202 (2013). Definitions

(vii) “Neglect” means a failure or refusal by those responsible for the child's welfare to provide adequate care, maintenance, supervision, education or medical, surgical or any other care necessary for the child's well being. Treatment given in good faith by spiritual means alone, through prayer, by a duly accredited practitioner in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination is not child neglect for that reason alone;

FEDERAL LEGISLATION/U.S. TERRITORIES

GUAM

Guam Code Ann. tit. 19, § 13101 (Public Law 31-25). Definitions

(t) *Harm to a child's physical health or welfare* occurs in a case where there exists evidence of injury, including but not limited to:

(4) Any case where the physical health of the child is adversely affected because the person responsible for the child's welfare has not regularly provided the child, in a timely manner, with adequate food, clothing, shelter, psychological care, physical care, health care or supervision, when financially able to do so or if offered financial assistance or health care or other reasonable means to do so. “Adequate health care” includes any medical or non-medical health care permitted or authorized under territorial laws; provided, however, that a person responsible for the child's welfare who, while legitimately practicing his or her religious beliefs, does not specify medical treatment for a child should not for that reason alone be considered as harming or threatening harm to the child;