

## CHAPTER 595

## WITNESSES

595.02 Competency of witnesses.  
595.021 News media; protection of sources; citation.

595.022 Public policy.

**595.02 COMPETENCY OF WITNESSES.**

Every person of sufficient understanding, including a party, may testify in any action or proceeding, civil or criminal, in court or before any person who has authority to receive evidence, except as follows:

(1) A husband cannot be examined for or against his wife without her consent, nor a wife for or against her husband without his consent, nor can either, during the marriage or afterwards, without the consent of the other, be examined as to any communication made by one to the other during the marriage. This exception does not apply to a civil action or proceeding by one against the other, nor to a criminal action or proceeding for a crime committed by one against the other or against a child of either, nor to a criminal action or proceeding in which one is charged with homicide or an attempt to commit homicide and the date of the marriage of the defendant is subsequent to the date of the offense, nor to an action or proceeding for non-support, neglect, dependency, or termination of parental rights;

(2) An attorney cannot, without the consent of his client, be examined as to any communication made by the client to him or his advice given thereon in the course of professional duty; nor can any employee of the attorney be examined as to the communication or advice, without the client's consent;

(3) A clergyman or other minister of any religion shall not, without the consent of the party making the confession, be allowed to disclose a confession made to him in his professional character, in the course of discipline enjoined by the rules or practice of the religious body to which he belongs; nor shall a clergyman or other minister of any religion be examined as to any communication made to him by any person seeking religious or spiritual advice, aid, or comfort or his advice given thereon in the course of his professional character, without the consent of the person;

(4) A licensed physician or surgeon, dentist, or chiropractor shall not, without the consent of his patient, be allowed to disclose any information or any opinion based thereon which he acquired in attending the patient in a professional capacity, and which was necessary to enable him to act in that capacity; after the decease of the patient, in an action to recover insurance benefits, where the insurance has been in existence two years or more, the beneficiaries shall be deemed to be the personal representatives of the deceased person for the purpose of waiving this privilege, and no oral or written waiver of the privilege shall have any binding force or effect except when made upon the trial or examination where the evidence is offered or received;

(5) A public officer shall not be allowed to disclose communications made to him in official confidence when the public interest would suffer by the disclosure;

(6) Persons of unsound mind; persons intoxicated at the time of their production for examination, and children under ten years of age, who appear incapable of receiving just impressions of the facts respecting which they are examined, or of relating them truly, are not competent witnesses. This exception does not apply to a child under ten years of age, in a criminal proceeding for

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intrafamilial sexual abuse as defined in section 609.364, subdivision 10, or in a criminal proceeding under sections 609.342 clause (a), 609.343 clause (a), 609.344 clause (a), or 609.345 clause (a), who is able to describe or relate in language appropriate for a child of that age the events or facts respecting which the child is examined;

(7) A registered nurse, psychologist or consulting psychologist shall not, without the consent of his client, be allowed to disclose any information or opinion based thereon which he acquired in attending the client in a professional capacity, and which was necessary to enable him to act in that capacity;

(8) An interpreter for a person handicapped in communication shall not, without the consent of the person, be allowed to disclose any communication if the communication would, if the interpreter were not present, be privileged. For purposes of this section, a "person handicapped in communication" means a person who, because of a hearing, speech or other communication disorder, or because of the inability to speak or comprehend the English language, is unable to understand the proceedings in which he is required to participate. The presence of an interpreter as an aid to communication does not destroy an otherwise existing privilege;

(9) A parent or his minor child may not be examined as to any communication made in confidence by the minor to his parent. A communication is confidential if made out of the presence of persons not members of the child's immediate family living in the same household. This exception may be waived by express consent to disclosure by a parent entitled to claim the privilege or by the child who made the communication, or by failure of the child or parent to object when the contents of a communication are demanded. This exception does not apply to a civil action or proceeding by one spouse against the other or by a parent or child against the other, nor to a proceeding to commit either the child or parent to whom the communication was made or to place the person or property or either under the control of another because of his alleged mental or physical condition, nor to a criminal action or proceeding in which the parent is charged with a crime committed against the person or property of the communicating child, the parent's spouse, or a child of either the parent or the parent's spouse, or in which a child is charged with a crime or act of delinquency committed against the person or property of a parent or a child of a parent, nor to an action or proceeding for termination of parental rights, nor any other action or proceeding on a petition alleging child abuse, child neglect, abandonment or nonsupport by a parent.

**History:** 1981 c 131 s 3; 1981 c 262 s 1; 1981 c 273 s 3; 1Sp1981 c 4 art 4 s 8

## 595.021 NEWS MEDIA; PROTECTION OF SOURCES; CITATION.

Sections 595.021 to 595.025 may be cited as the Minnesota free flow of information act.

**History:** 1Sp1981 c 4 art 1 s 181

## 595.022 PUBLIC POLICY.

In order to protect the public interest and the free flow of information, the news media should have the benefit of a substantial privilege not to reveal sources of information or to disclose unpublished information. To this end, the freedom of press requires protection of the confidential relationship between the news gatherer and the source of information. The purpose of sections 595.021 to 595.025 is to insure and perpetuate, consistent with the public interest, the confidential relationship between the news media and its sources.

**History:** 1Sp1981 c 4 art 1 s 182