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609

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

(Prefiled)

January 6, 2021

Introduced by Sens. BENJAMIN, KAPLAN -- read twice and ordered printed,
and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Codes

AN ACT to amend the criminal procedure law, in relation to authorizing
the use of closed-circuit television for vulnerable domestic violence
victim witnesses

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assem-
bly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Article 65 of the criminal procedure law, as added by chap-
2 ter 505 of the laws of 1985, subdivision 1 of section 65.00, and subdi-
3 vision 7 and paragraph (k) of subdivision 10 of section 65.20 as amended
4 by chapter 320 of the laws of 2006, subdivision 9 of section 65.20 as
5 amended by section 4 of part LLL of chapter 59 of the laws of 2019,
6 subdivisions 11 and 12 of section 65.20 as amended by chapter 455 of the
7 laws of 1991, subdivision 1 of section 65.10 as amended, subdivision 2
8 of section 65.20 as added, the opening paragraph of subdivision 10 of
9 section 65.20 as amended, and subdivisions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12
10 and 13 of section 65.20 as renumbered by chapter 548 of the laws of
11 2007, is amended to read as follows:

12 ARTICLE 65
13 USE OF CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION FOR
14 CERTAIN [~~CHILD~~] WITNESSES

15 Section 65.00 Definitions.
16 65.10 Closed-circuit television; general rule; declaration of
17 vulnerability.
18 65.20 Closed-circuit television; procedure for application and
19 grounds for determination.
20 65.30 Closed-circuit television; special testimonial [~~proce-~~
21 ~~dure~~] procedures.
22 § 65.00 Definitions.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD04921-01-1

1 As used in this article:

2 1. "Child witness" means a person fourteen years old or less who is or
3 will be called to testify in a criminal proceeding, other than a grand
4 jury proceeding, concerning an offense defined in article one hundred
5 thirty of the penal law or section 255.25, 255.26 or 255.27 of such law
6 which is the subject of such criminal proceeding.

7 2. "Domestic violence victim witness" means an individual who is a
8 victim of a family offense, as defined in subdivision one of section
9 530.11 of this chapter.

10 3. "Vulnerable [~~child~~] witness" means a child witness or a domestic
11 violence victim witness whom a court has declared to be vulnerable.

12 [~~3-~~] 4. "Testimonial room" means any room, separate and apart from the
13 courtroom, which is furnished comfortably and less formally than a
14 courtroom and from which the testimony of a vulnerable child witness can
15 be transmitted to the courtroom by means of live, two-way closed-circuit
16 television.

17 [~~4-~~] 5. "Live, two-way closed-circuit television" means a simultaneous
18 transmission, by closed-circuit television, or other electronic means,
19 between the courtroom and the testimonial room in accordance with the
20 provisions of section 65.30 of this article.

21 [~~5-~~] 6. "Operator" means the individual authorized by the court to
22 operate the closed-circuit television equipment used in accordance with
23 the provisions of this article.

24 [~~6-~~] 7. A person occupies "a position of authority with respect to a
25 child" when he or she is a parent, guardian or other person responsible
26 for the custody or care of [~~the~~] a child at the relevant time or is any
27 other person who maintains an ongoing personal relationship with such
28 parent, guardian or other person responsible for custody or care, which
29 relationship involves his or her living, or his or her frequent and
30 repeated presence, in the same household or premises as the child.

31 § 65.10 Closed-circuit television; general rule; declaration of vulner-
32 ability.

33 1. A child witness or a domestic violence victim witness shall be
34 declared vulnerable when the court, in accordance with the provisions of
35 section 65.20 of this article, determines by clear and convincing
36 evidence that it is likely that such child witness or such domestic
37 violence victim witness will suffer serious mental or emotional harm if
38 required to testify at a criminal proceeding without the use of live,
39 two-way closed-circuit television and that the use of such live, two-way
40 closed-circuit television will diminish the likelihood or extent of,
41 such harm.

42 2. When the court declares a child witness or a domestic violence
43 victim witness to be vulnerable, it shall, except as provided in subdi-
44 vision four of section 65.30 of this article, authorize the taking of
45 the testimony of the vulnerable [~~child~~] witness from the testimonial
46 room by means of live, two-way closed-circuit television. Under no
47 circumstances shall the provisions of this article be construed to
48 authorize a closed-circuit television system by which events in the
49 courtroom are not transmitted to the testimonial room during the testi-
50 mony of the vulnerable [~~child~~] witness.

51 3. Nothing [~~herein~~] in this article shall be [~~contrued~~] construed to
52 preclude the court from exercising its power to close the courtroom or
53 from exercising any authority it otherwise may have to protect the well-
54 being of a witness and the rights of the defendant.

55 § 65.20 Closed-circuit television; procedure for application and grounds
56 for determination.

1 1. Prior to the commencement of a criminal proceeding[~~7~~], other than a
2 grand jury proceeding, either party may apply to the court for an order
3 declaring that a child witness or a domestic violence victim witness is
4 vulnerable.

5 2. A child witness or a domestic violence victim witness should be
6 declared vulnerable when the court, in accordance with the provisions of
7 this section, determines by clear and convincing evidence that the child
8 witness or the domestic violence victim witness would suffer serious
9 mental or emotional harm that would substantially impair the child
10 witness' or the domestic violence victim witness ability to communicate
11 with the finder of fact without the use of live, two-way closed-circuit
12 television.

13 3. A motion pursuant to subdivision one of this section must be made
14 in writing at least eight days before the commencement of trial or other
15 criminal proceeding upon reasonable notice to the other party and with
16 an opportunity to be heard.

17 4. The motion papers must state the basis for the motion and must
18 contain sworn allegations of fact which, if true, would support a deter-
19 mination by the court that the child witness or the domestic violence
20 victim witness is vulnerable. Such allegations may be based upon the
21 personal knowledge of the deponent or upon information and belief,
22 provided that, in the latter event, the sources of such information and
23 the grounds for such belief are stated.

24 5. The answering papers may admit or deny any of the alleged facts and
25 may, in addition, contain sworn allegations of fact relevant to the
26 motion, including the rights of the defendant, the need to protect the
27 child witness or the domestic violence victim witness and the integrity
28 of the truth-finding function of the trier of fact.

29 6. Unless all material facts alleged in support of the motion made
30 pursuant to subdivision one of this section are conceded, the court
31 shall, in addition to examining the papers and hearing oral argument,
32 conduct an appropriate hearing for the purpose of making findings of
33 fact essential to the determination of the motion. Except as provided in
34 subdivision [~~six~~] seven of this section, it may subpoena or call and
35 examine witnesses, who must either testify under oath or be permitted to
36 give unsworn testimony pursuant to subdivision two of section 60.20 of
37 this title and must authorize the attorneys for the parties to do the
38 same.

39 7. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the child witness or
40 the domestic violence victim witness who is alleged to be vulnerable may
41 not be compelled to testify at such hearing or to submit to any psycho-
42 logical or psychiatric examination. The failure of the child witness or
43 the domestic violence victim witness to testify at such hearing shall
44 not be a ground for denying a motion made pursuant to subdivision one of
45 this section. Prior statements made by the child witness relating to any
46 allegations of conduct constituting an offense defined in article one
47 hundred thirty of the penal law or incest as defined in section 255.25,
48 255.26 or 255.27 of such law, or prior statements made by the child
49 witness or the domestic violence victim witness relating to any allega-
50 tion of words or conduct constituting an attempt to prevent, impede or
51 deter [~~the child~~] such witness from cooperating in the investigation or
52 prosecution of the offense shall be admissible at such hearing,
53 provided, however, that a declaration that a child witness or a domestic
54 violence victim witness is vulnerable may not be based solely upon such
55 prior statements.

1 8. (a) Notwithstanding any of the provisions of article forty-five of
2 the civil practice law and rules, any physician, psychologist, nurse or
3 social worker who has treated a child witness or a domestic violence
4 victim witness may testify at a hearing conducted pursuant to subdivi-
5 sion [~~five~~] six of this section concerning the treatment of such child
6 witness or such domestic violence victim witness as such treatment
7 relates to the issue presented at the hearing, provided that any other-
8 wise applicable statutory privileges concerning communications between
9 the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness and such
10 physician, psychologist, nurse or social worker in connection with such
11 treatment shall not be deemed waived by such testimony alone, except to
12 the limited extent of permitting the court alone to examine in camera
13 reports, records or documents, if any, prepared by such physician,
14 psychologist, nurse or social worker. If upon such examination the court
15 determines that such reports, records or documents, or any one or
16 portion thereof, contain information material and relevant to the issue
17 of whether the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness is
18 a vulnerable [~~child~~] witness, the court shall disclose such information
19 to both the attorney for the defendant and the district attorney.

20 (b) At any time after a motion has been made pursuant to subdivision
21 one of this section, upon the demand of the other party the moving party
22 must furnish the demanding party with a copy of any and all of such
23 records, reports or other documents in the possession of such other
24 party and must, in addition, supply the court with a copy of all such
25 reports, records or other documents which are the subject of the demand.
26 At any time after a demand has been made pursuant to this paragraph, the
27 moving party may demand that property of the same kind or character in
28 possession of the party that originally made such demand be furnished to
29 the moving party and, if so furnished, be supplied, in addition, to the
30 court.

31 9. (a) Prior to the commencement of the hearing conducted pursuant to
32 subdivision six of this section, the district attorney shall, subject to
33 a protective order, comply with the provisions of subdivision one of
34 section 245.20 of this chapter as they concern any witness whom the
35 district attorney intends to call at the hearing and the child witness
36 or domestic violence victim witness.

37 (b) Before a defendant calls a witness at such hearing, he or she
38 must, subject to a protective order, comply with the provisions of
39 subdivision four of section 245.20 of this chapter as they concern all
40 the witnesses the defendant intends to call at such hearing.

41 10. The court may consider, in determining whether there are factors
42 which would cause the child witness or the domestic violence victim
43 witness to suffer serious mental or emotional harm, a finding that any
44 one or more of the following circumstances have been established by
45 clear and convincing evidence:

46 (a) The manner of the commission of the offense of which the defendant
47 is accused was particularly heinous or was characterized by aggravating
48 circumstances.

49 (b) The child witness or the domestic violence victim witness is
50 particularly young or otherwise particularly subject to psychological
51 harm on account of a physical or mental condition which existed before
52 the alleged commission of the offense.

53 (c) At the time of the alleged offense, the defendant occupied a posi-
54 tion of authority with respect to the child witness.

(d) The offense or offenses charged were part of an ongoing course of conduct committed by the defendant against the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness over an extended period of time.

(e) A deadly weapon or dangerous instrument was allegedly used during the commission of the crime.

(f) The defendant has inflicted serious physical injury upon the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness.

(g) A threat, express or implied, of physical violence to the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness, or a third person if ~~[the child]~~ such witness were to report the incident to any person or communicate information to or cooperate with a court, grand jury, prosecutor, police officer or peace officer concerning the incident has been made by or on behalf of the defendant.

(h) A threat, express or implied, of the incarceration of a parent or guardian of the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness, the removal of the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness from the family or the dissolution of the family of the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness if ~~[the child]~~ such witness were to report the incident to any person or communicate information to or cooperate with a court, grand jury, prosecutor, police officer or peace officer concerning the incident has been made by or on behalf of the defendant.

(i) A witness other than the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness has received a threat of physical violence directed at such witness or to a third person by or on behalf of the defendant.

(j) The defendant, at the time of the inquiry, (i) is living in the same household with the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness, (ii) has ready access to the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness or (iii) is providing substantial financial support for the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness.

(k) The child witness or the domestic violence victim witness has previously been the victim of an offense defined in article one hundred thirty of the penal law or incest as defined in section 255.25, 255.26 or 255.27 of such law.

(l) According to expert testimony, the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness would be particularly ~~[suceptible]~~ susceptible to psychological harm if required to testify in open court or in the physical presence of the defendant.

11. Irrespective of whether a motion was made pursuant to subdivision one of this section, the court, at the request of either party or on its own motion, may decide that a child witness or a domestic violence victim witness may be vulnerable based on its own observations that a child witness or a domestic violence victim witness who has been called to testify at a criminal proceeding is suffering severe mental or emotional harm and therefore is physically or mentally unable to testify or to continue to testify in open court or in the physical presence of the defendant and that the use of live, two-way closed-circuit television is necessary to enable ~~[the child]~~ such witness to testify. If the court so decides, it must conduct the same hearing that subdivision ~~[five]~~ six of this section requires when a motion is made pursuant to subdivision one of this section, and it must make findings of fact pursuant to subdivisions ~~[nine and eleven]~~ ten and twelve of this section, before determining that the child witness or the domestic violence victim witness is vulnerable.

12. In deciding whether a child witness or a domestic violence victim witness is vulnerable, the court shall make findings of fact which

1 reflect the causal relationship between the existence of any one or more
2 of the factors set forth in subdivision ~~[nine]~~ ten of this section or
3 other relevant factors which the court finds are established and the
4 determination that the child witness or the domestic violence victim
5 witness is vulnerable. If the court is satisfied that the child witness
6 or the domestic violence victim witness is vulnerable and that, under
7 the facts and circumstances of the particular case, the defendant's
8 constitutional rights to an impartial jury or of confrontation will not
9 be impaired, it may enter an order granting the application for the use
10 of live, two-way closed-circuit television.

11 13. When the court has determined that a child witness or a domestic
12 violence victim witness is a vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness, it shall make a
13 specific finding as to whether placing the defendant and the child
14 witness or the domestic violence victim witness in the same room during
15 the testimony of the child witness or the domestic violence victim
16 witness will contribute to the likelihood that ~~[the child]~~ such witness
17 will suffer severe mental or emotional harm. If the court finds that
18 placing the defendant and the child witness or the domestic violence
19 victim witness in the same room during the testimony of the child
20 witness or the domestic violence victim witness will contribute to the
21 likelihood that ~~[the child]~~ such witness will suffer severe mental or
22 emotional harm, the order entered pursuant to subdivision ~~[eleven]~~
23 twelve of this section shall direct that the defendant remain in the
24 courtroom during the testimony of the vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness.

25 § 65.30 Closed-circuit television; special testimonial procedures.

26 1. When the court has entered an order pursuant to section 65.20 of
27 this article, the testimony of the vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness shall be
28 taken in the testimonial room and the image and voice of the vulnerable
29 ~~[child]~~ witness, as well as the image of all other persons other than
30 the operator present in the testimonial room, shall be transmitted live
31 by means of closed-circuit television to the courtroom. The courtroom
32 shall be equipped with monitors sufficient to permit the judge, jury,
33 defendant and attorneys to observe the demeanor of the vulnerable
34 ~~[child]~~ witness during his or her testimony. Unless the courtroom has
35 been closed pursuant to court order, the public shall also be permitted
36 to hear the testimony and view the image of the vulnerable ~~[child]~~
37 witness.

38 2. In all instances, the image of the jury shall be simultaneously
39 transmitted to the vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness in the testimonial room.
40 If the court order issued pursuant to section 65.20 of this article
41 specifies that the vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness shall testify outside the
42 physical presence of the defendant, the image of the defendant and the
43 image and voice of the person examining the vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness
44 shall also be simultaneously transmitted to the vulnerable ~~[child]~~
45 witness in the testimonial room.

46 3. The operator shall place herself or himself and the closed-circuit
47 television equipment in a position that permits the entire testimony of
48 the vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness to be transmitted to the courtroom but
49 limits the ability of the vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness to see or hear the
50 operator or the equipment.

51 4. Notwithstanding any provision of this article, if the court in a
52 particular case involving a vulnerable ~~[child]~~ witness determines that
53 there is no live, two-way closed-circuit television equipment available
54 in the court or another court in the county or which can be transported
55 to the court from another county or that such equipment, if available,
56 is technologically inadequate to protect the constitutional rights of

1 the defendant, it shall not permit the use of the closed-circuit tele-
2 vision procedures authorized by this article.

3 5. If the order of the court entered pursuant to section 65.20 of this
4 article requires that the defendant remain in the courtroom, the attor-
5 ney for the defendant and the district attorney shall also remain in the
6 courtroom unless the court is satisfied that their presence in the
7 testimonial room will not impede full and private communication between
8 the defendant and his or her attorney and will not encourage the jury to
9 draw an inference adverse to the interest of the defendant.

10 6. Upon request of the defendant, the court shall instruct the jury
11 that they are to draw no inference from the use of live, two-way closed-
12 circuit television in the examination of the vulnerable [~~child~~] witness.

13 7. The vulnerable [~~child~~] witness shall testify under oath except as
14 specified in subdivision two of section 60.20 of this title. The exam-
15 ination and cross-examination of the vulnerable [~~child~~] witness shall,
16 in all other respects, be conducted in the same manner as if the vulner-
17 able [~~child~~] witness had testified in the courtroom.

18 8. When the testimony of the vulnerable [~~child~~] witness is transmitted
19 from the testimonial room into the courtroom, the court stenographer
20 shall record the [~~testimony~~] testimony in the same manner as if the
21 vulnerable [~~child~~] witness had testified in the courtroom.

22 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately and shall apply to all
23 criminal actions and proceedings commenced prior to the effective date
24 of this act but still pending on such date as well as all criminal
25 actions and proceedings commenced on or after such effective date.
26 Provided that the amendments to article 65 of the criminal procedure
27 law, made by section one of this act, shall not affect the expiration
28 and repeal of such article and shall be deemed repealed therewith.