

RÉSUMÉ DIGEST

ACT 616 (HB 126)

2026 Regular Session

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Existing law requires a court to allow a witness who is either under 18 years of age or who has a developmental disability to be accompanied by a facility dog, if available, while testifying in court.

Existing law authorizes a court to allow the use of facility dogs in cases involving all other witnesses.

Existing law requires notice to the court and provides for jury instructions regarding the role of the facility dog.

Existing law defines a "facility dog" as a dog that is certified, has graduated from an accredited assistance dog organization, and is specially trained to provide emotional support to witnesses testifying in judicial proceedings without causing a distraction during the proceedings.

New law requires a court to allow a witness in a trial for a sex offense to be accompanied by a facility dog, if available, while testifying in court.

New law permits a court to order that the presence of the dog be obstructed from the view of the jury. On motion of the court or either party, new law permits a court to instruct the jury on the role of the dog. Further requires that the dog's entry and exit from the courtroom be conducted out of the presence of the jury and that all precautions be taken to obscure the presence of the dog from the jury.

New law provides that the law be referred to and cited as "Duvall and Karissa's Law".

Effective August 1, 2026.

(Amends R.S. 15:284(A), (D), and (F))