

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Appropriations

BILL: SB 1724

INTRODUCER: Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee

SUBJECT: Human Trafficking

DATE: April 9, 2014

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Crosier</u> <u>Brown</u>	<u>Hendon</u> <u>Kynoch</u>	<u>AP</u>	CF SPB 7088 as introduced Pre-meeting

I. Summary:

SB 1724 changes statutory requirements for safe houses, establishes standards for residential treatment of sexually exploited children, and authorizes safe foster homes. The bill creates a certification program for safe houses and safe foster homes at the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and requires certification in order for these facilities to accept state funds specifically allocated to care for sexually exploited children. The bill allows the DCF to operate one secure safe house as a pilot program, sets requirements for that safe house, provides for judicial oversight, and requires an evaluation of the pilot program.

The bill also makes administrative changes to the requirements for the DCF and the community-based care lead agencies (lead agencies) related to sexually exploited children. The bill requires the DCF to create or adopt initial screening and assessment instruments for use in identifying and serving sexually exploited children and allows a child to be placed in a safe house if the assessment instrument determines that a safe house is available and is the most appropriate setting.

The bill requires the DCF and lead agencies to have response protocols in place regarding serving sexually exploited children. The bill also requires the DCF, lead agencies, and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to participate on any local task forces related to this population.

The bill requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to conduct a study on commercial sexual exploitation of children in Florida and specifies topics for inclusion in the study.

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact on the DCF and the DJJ.

II. Present Situation:

Florida law defines human trafficking as “soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploitation of that person.”¹ Human trafficking involves the exploitation of persons for commercial sex or forced labor.² Trafficking often subjects victims to force, fraud, and coercion.³

There are no definitive statistics on the extent of human trafficking. The U.S. Department of State estimates that as many as 27 million victims are being trafficked worldwide at any given time. They also estimate that there were approximately 40,000 victims being trafficked in the United States in 2012.⁴ Florida is estimated to have the third highest rate of human trafficking in the United States, following New York and California.⁵

Commercial Sex Trafficking of Minors

Human trafficking involving commercial sex is also known as commercial sexual exploitation or commercial sex trafficking. The United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 defines sex trafficking as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.⁶

In cases of commercial sex trafficking of minors, handlers or “pimps” often operate as the primary domestic sex traffickers and target particularly vulnerable youth, such as runaway and homeless youth.⁷ Pimps may engage in a “grooming” process where a child is showered with gifts, treats, and compliments in order to earn his or her trust.⁸ Often the children have low self-esteem and may come from broken families or have past childhood trauma which may include sexual or physical abuse.⁹ This makes the children easier targets because they are emotionally vulnerable and may be seeking someone to love and care for them.

After the pimp earns the child’s trust, the pimp may engage in physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse of the child.¹⁰ The effect is to psychologically and emotionally break the child so that he or she becomes completely dependent on the pimp.¹¹ Psychologists and clinicians call this phenomenon “traumatic bonding.”¹² This occurs where a person has dysfunctional attachment that occurs in the presence of danger, shame, or exploitation. These situations often include seduction, deception or betrayal, and some form of danger or risk is always present.¹³ While this

¹ Section 787.06(2)(d), F.S.

² Section 787.06(1)(a), F.S.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Trafficking in Persons Report 2013*, U.S. Department of State, available at: <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/> (last visited March 14, 2014).

⁵ Healthy Families Subcommittee Presentation by Professor Terry Coonan, FSU Human Rights Center, (Jan. 14, 2014).

⁶ Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, 22 USC 7101.

⁷ Sex Trafficking of Children in the United States, The Polaris Project, available at <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/prosecuting-traffickers/895-sex-trafficking-of-minors> (last visited March 14, 2014).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

is a common way that commercial sexual exploitation occurs, some children are commercially sexually exploited by family members or organized networks.¹⁴

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reports that each year as many as 100,000 to 300,000 children in the United States are at risk of being trafficked for commercial sex in the United States.¹⁵

Commercial Sex Trafficking of Minors in Florida

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) verified 182 victims of commercial sex trafficking in Fiscal Year 2012-2013. Of these, nine victims were exploited by their caregiver, and 27 victims were removed from their caregivers. The DCF also identified an additional 185 children who may be at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation.^{16, 17} According to the DCF, there are likely many more victims in Florida than have been identified.

The Florida Safe Harbor Act of 2012 allows sexually exploited children to be treated as dependent children¹⁸ rather than delinquent children.¹⁹ The act amended Florida law to classify child prostitution as abuse of a child, rather than a criminal act by the child, and allows children who are victims of sexual exploitation to be adjudicated dependent.²⁰

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Human Trafficking 101 for School Administrators and Staff*, Blue Campaign, The Department of Homeland Security, available at:

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CCoQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dhs.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpublications%2Fblue-campaign%2Fblue%2520Campaign%2520-%2520Human%2520Trafficking%2520101%2520for%2520School%2520Administrators%2520and%2520Staff.pdf&ei=4DvMUUp6oO4vrkQeAsYDoBg&usq=AFQjCNGLuEaOhuEVFzRuCTYISWLOrgTQ7w&sig2=AskcWjhjSuLHF6D7LHrcg> (last visited March 14, 2014).

¹⁶ Florida Department of Children and Families *Annual Human Trafficking Report 2012-13 Federal Fiscal Year*.

¹⁷ To determine whether a child is at risk of becoming a commercial sexual exploitation victim, DCF looked at three additional data sets in their IT system for dependent children (FSFN). The three indicators in FSFN indicate that that the child possibly has involvement in sexual exploitation, is possibly involved in prostitution, or were previously verified as a victim of human trafficking.

¹⁸ A child who is found to be dependent is a child who pursuant to ch. 39, F.S., is found by the court:

- (a) To have been abandoned, abused, or neglected by the child's parent or parents or legal custodians;
- (b) To have been surrendered to the department, the former Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, or a licensed child-placing agency for purpose of adoption;
- (c) To have been voluntarily placed with a licensed child-caring agency, a licensed child-placing agency, an adult relative, the department, or the former Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, after which placement, under the requirements of this chapter, a case plan has expired and the parent or parents or legal custodians have failed to substantially comply with the requirements of the plan;
- (d) To have been voluntarily placed with a licensed child-placing agency for the purposes of subsequent adoption, and a parent or parents have signed a consent pursuant to the Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure;
- (e) To have no parent or legal custodians capable of providing supervision and care;
- (f) To be at substantial risk of imminent abuse, abandonment, or neglect by the parent or parents or legal custodians; or
- (g) To have been sexually exploited and to have no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative currently known and capable of providing the necessary and appropriate supervision and care.

¹⁹ Section 39.001(4)(b)(2), F.S.

²⁰ Section 39.01(67), F.S.; however, child prostitution is not considered sexual abuse of a child if the child is under arrest or being prosecuted in a delinquency or criminal proceed for a violation in ch. 796 (offenses related to prostitution) or forcing a child to solicit for or engage in prostitution, engage in a sexual performance, as defined by ch. 827, or participate in the trade of sex trafficking as provided in s. 796.035.

Law enforcement officers are required to deliver a minor taken into custody to the DCF when there is probable cause to believe he or she has been sexually exploited.²¹ Safe houses and short-term safe houses were created by the Safe Harbor Act, and the DCF is authorized to place sexually exploited children in these facilities.²²

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) conducted a tri-county pilot project implementing a screening tool for commercial sexual exploitation of children in Fiscal Year 2012-2013. In total, there were 353 individual youth screened. Of the 353 screenings, 42 youth were verified as victims of commercial sexual exploitation. This means that 11.9 percent of the youth who had a history of running away (the prerequisite for a screening), and were screened, were ultimately verified by the DCF as a sexual exploitation victim.²³

The DCF primarily becomes aware of minors who are sexually exploited due to a call to the child abuse hotline or because the child is in the dependency system. As with any allegation of abuse, when allegations of commercial sexual exploitation of a child are reported to DCF's child abuse hotline and the hotline employee believes that the report meets the statutory definition of abuse, abandonment, or neglect, an investigation by a child protective investigator is triggered.²⁴ If the allegation is verified and the child has no known parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative who is capable of providing the necessary and appropriate supervision and care, the DCF may petition to have the child adjudicated dependent.²⁵

Community-based care lead agencies (lead agencies) in conjunction with the court, determine placements for children who have been adjudicated dependent. According to the DCF, lead agencies may also provide services to victims of human trafficking who are not adjudicated dependent as a means of preventing future involvement in the child welfare system. The DCF has taken steps to strengthen the infrastructure for serving victims of human trafficking, such as training its child protective investigators and participating in regional task forces.

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has also been working to identify and provide services to human trafficking victims. The DJJ secretary chairs the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet's Human Trafficking Workgroup.²⁶ The workgroup focuses on identifying ways in which Florida can end child sex trafficking. The workgroup has representation from the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, the DCF, the Florida State University Center for the Advancement of Human Rights, and other stakeholders. Workgroup members have begun researching best practices throughout the nation as well as monitoring proposed legislation addressing child sex trafficking.²⁷

Many programs for identifying and providing services for human trafficking victims have emerged through local efforts, which are unique to each community. Human trafficking task

²¹ Section 39.401(2)(b), F.S.

²² Section 409.1678, F.S.

²³ Sexual Exploitation of Youth, Department of Juvenile Justice, (January 23, 2014.)

²⁴ Section 39.201(2)(a), F.S.

²⁵ Section 39.01(15)(g), F.S.

²⁶ Florida Children and Youth Cabinet: *Human Trafficking Workgroup*, available at <http://www.flgov.com/childrens-cabinet-human-trafficking-workgroup/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2014).

²⁷ *Id.*

forces began as a way to raise awareness, coordinate responses, and share information regarding available services. There are 19 regional task forces dedicated to fighting human trafficking developed throughout Florida.²⁸ The task forces consist of community members involved in human trafficking issues in that area of the state. This may include law enforcement, providers, schools, and faith based organizations. The DCF is involved in the leadership in all task forces. The task forces meet at least monthly and operate according to the community's needs.

Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in Florida

Serving victims of human trafficking presents challenges for a variety of reasons.²⁹ Exploited children often do not see themselves as exploited or victims and thus will not self-identify. Instead, they often develop a “trauma bond” with the traffickers and see themselves as a companion to the trafficker.³⁰ These children often run away from their DCF placements, including from safe houses.³¹ In a DJJ pilot program, DJJ found that of 64 percent of children who were confirmed victims of commercial exploitation had a history of over five instances of running away.³² Victims may also try to recruit other children from their placements to go work for the pimp.³³

Services are not consistently available across the state.³⁴ Availability depends on the local response which has emerged to meet the challenge in that area.³⁵ Children's family situations also vary.³⁶ Some children come from the dependency system while others have a families that want to remain involved with the children and help the children.³⁷ There is also no standardized assessment tool for identifying victims,³⁸ and due to inconsistent training, the level of awareness of the signs of victimization and appropriate responses vary.³⁹

The Safe Harbor Act in 2012 provided for “safe houses.” Safe houses are homes for sexually exploited children who have been adjudicated dependent or delinquent and need to reside in a secure⁴⁰ residential facility.⁴¹ Safe houses must provide a living environment that has gender-specific, separate, and distinct living quarters for sexually exploited children and must have staff

²⁸ The task forces are in the following counties: Alachua, Bay, Broward, Collier, Duval, Escambia, Hernando, Lake, Leon, Manatee, Marion, Martin, Miami-Dade, Okaloosa, Orange, Palm Beach, Pinellas, Polk, and St. Johns.

²⁹ Testimony from the panel of providers for victims of human trafficking, House Healthy Families Subcommittee, (Feb. 19, 2014).

³⁰ Testimony from the Detective McBride, House Healthy Families Subcommittee, (Feb. 15, 2014).

³¹ Testimony from the panel of providers for victims of human trafficking, House Healthy Families Subcommittee, (Feb. 19, 2014).

³² Sexual Exploitation of Youth, Department of Juvenile Justice, (Jan. 23, 2014).

³³ Testimony from the panel of providers for victims of human trafficking, House Healthy Families Subcommittee, (Feb. 19, 2014).

³⁴ Testimony from the Detective McBride, House Healthy Families Subcommittee, (Feb. 15, 2014).

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ E-mail correspondence with the Department of Children and Families, (Dec. 23, 2013), (on file with the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs).

³⁹ Testimony from the Detective McBride, House Healthy Families Subcommittee, (Feb. 15, 2014).

⁴⁰ The term “secure” is defined as a facility which is supervised 24 hours a day by staff members who are awake while on duty.

⁴¹ Section 409.1678 (1)(b), F.S.

members on the job 24 hours a day. Each facility must be appropriately licensed in this state as a family foster home or a residential child-caring agency as defined in s. 409.175, F.S., and must have applied for accreditation no later than one year after being licensed.⁴² A safe house serving children who have been sexually exploited must have available staff or contracted personnel who have the clinical expertise, credentials, and training to provide:

- Security;
- Crisis intervention services;
- General counseling and victim-witness counseling;
- A comprehensive assessment;
- Residential care;
- Transportation;
- Access to behavioral health services;
- Recreational activities;
- Food;
- Clothing;
- Supplies;
- Infant care;
- Funds for miscellaneous expenses associated with caring for these children;
- The facilitation of educational services, including life skills services and planning services for the successful transition of residents back to the community; and
- Arrangements for necessary and appropriate health care and dental care.⁴³

The DCF is required to assess dependent children for placement in a safe house if the child is older than six years of age. The assessment is required to incorporate and address the following:

- Current and historical information from any law enforcement reports;
- Psychological testing or evaluation that has occurred;
- Current and historical information from the guardian ad litem, if one has been assigned;
- Current and historical information from any current therapist, teacher, or other professional who has knowledge of the child and has worked with the child; and
- Any other information concerning the availability and suitability of safe-house placement.

The child may be placed in a safe house if such placement is determined to be appropriate as a result of this assessment and if one is available, but placement is not required.⁴⁴ There are currently two safe houses in Florida, with a total of 11 beds statewide. A third safe house is projected to open in 2014 with seven beds.⁴⁵

The Citrus Health Network developed the Citrus Helping Adolescents Negatively Impacted by Commercial Exploitation (CHANCE) Program in South Florida.⁴⁶ The program uses therapeutic

⁴² According to DCF, there are currently no entities that accredit safe houses and safe houses are not sure what type of accreditation they are required to have. No safe houses have applied for accreditation at this time.

⁴³ Section 409.1671, F.S.

⁴⁴ Section 39.524, F.S.

⁴⁵ E-mail correspondence with the Florida Department of Children and Families, (Dec. 20, 2013) (on file with the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs).

⁴⁶ Testimony from Human Trafficking Panel, House Healthy Families Subcommittee (Feb. 19, 2014.)

foster care and a community response team for victims of commercial sexual exploitations.⁴⁷ The program places children in a therapeutic foster home in which only one child is placed.⁴⁸ The parents receive specialized training for this population. Foster parents are required to be available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, to respond to crises or the need for special therapeutic interventions.⁴⁹ The foster homes are also required to have an advanced alarm system to alert the foster parents of intruders and allow the parents to be aware if the child is leaving the home.⁵⁰ The CHANCE program also includes the following intensive clinical and support services:

- Assessment and evaluation of the child and the family;
- Individual therapy at least two and up to five times per week with a therapist trained in trauma focused-cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing;
- Family therapy available as necessary;
- Assignment of a life coach who is a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation for each child;
- Assignment of a peer mentor to provider peer support and encouragement;
- Clinical staff available 24/7 for crisis management or supportive intervention;
- Certified behavioral analyst services to address the behavioral needs of this population;
- Targeted case management to facilitate linkage to all appropriate support services;
- Regular monitoring by the treatment team to ensure all service and treatment plan goals are consistently pursued; and
- Group therapy with other survivors of commercial sex exploitation.

The University of South Florida is contracted to conduct an evaluation of the CHANCE program. The evaluation will be available in November 2014.⁵¹

Some victims of human trafficking have been placed with parents or relatives, in mental health facilities, in substance abuse facilities, in therapeutic foster homes, in foster care, in DJJ detention centers, or remained in their current placement, after identification as a victim.⁵²

The CHANCE program serves 17 children not placed in safe houses with wrap-around services. These services include assessment and evaluation, treatment and service plan development, 24/7 on-call clinical staff, individualized and family therapy, life coaching, peer mentorship, case management, certified behavioral analyst services, substance abuse treatment, and psychiatric services.⁵³ Victims of human trafficking may be offered other services generally available to children in need through the existing service array, such as substance abuse services, mental health services, and educational services.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² Florida Department of Children and Families *Annual Human Trafficking Report 2012-13 Federal Fiscal Year*.

⁵³ Testimony from Human Trafficking Panel, House Healthy Families Subcommittee (Feb. 19, 2014.)

⁵⁴ *Id.*

Residential Programs in Other States

Limited research has been completed nationwide regarding best practices to serve and treat victims of human trafficking. However, there are some residential programs in other states which serve victims of human trafficking.

Wellspring Living (Wellspring) is a residential facility in Georgia, which serves girls from 12 to 17 years of age who are victims of human trafficking.⁵⁵ This program is licensed as a “maximum watchful oversight” child care facility.⁵⁶ The facility has security features such as locked doors, unbreakable Plexiglas windows, and a fence surrounding the facility. While this program is a locked facility, it has alarmed doors that the children can open. If the alarmed door is pushed there is a delay for the door to open and alarms inform the program staff that somebody has tried to leave the facility. While Wellspring considers itself a locked facility, exit can occur without the involvement of facility staff. At Wellspring, girls receive trauma-informed therapies, life skills classes, education,⁵⁷ group therapies, family therapy, and other needed services.⁵⁸ Following the program, most girls return to their families or to a foster-home or group home setting. The program is working to develop a study of its effectiveness.

In California, Children of the Night (COTN) is a private, non-profit program for children between the ages of 11 and 17 that receives referrals from across the country and only accepts those children whom it believes are willing to leave prostitution and participate in long-term, comprehensive treatment. COTN is a homelike environment with 24 beds.⁵⁹ The children follow a highly structured program that includes attending an on-site school and a college placement program.⁶⁰ After children complete the comprehensive program of academic and life-skills education, caseworkers are available to provide ongoing case management to graduates.⁶¹ COTN exists through the sole support of private contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations.⁶²

Treatment for Victims of Human Trafficking

In the immediate as well as long-term aftermath of exposure to trauma, children are at risk of developing significant emotional and behavioral difficulties.⁶³ Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) is an evidence-based treatment approach shown to help children, adolescents, and their caregivers overcome trauma-related difficulties.⁶⁴ It is designed to reduce negative emotional and behavioral responses following child sexual abuse, domestic violence,

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ *Provider Resource Results, State of Georgia Out-of-Home Care, available at https://www.gascore.com/resourceguide/search_results.cfm.*

⁵⁷ Testimony from Human Trafficking Panel, House Healthy Families Subcommittee (Feb. 19, 2014.)

⁵⁸ *Wellspring Living for Girls, Wellspring Living, available at <https://wellspringliving.org/wellspring-living-for-girls/>*

⁵⁹ Children of the Night, available at <https://www.childrenofthenight.org/index.html> (last visited March 14, 2014.)

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Children Affected by Sexual Abuse or Trauma*, The Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (August 2012), available at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/trauma/>

⁶⁴ *Id.*

traumatic loss, and other traumatic events.⁶⁵ The treatment is based on learning and cognitive theories, and addresses distorted beliefs and attributions related to the abuse.⁶⁶ TF-CBT provides a supportive environment in which children are encouraged to talk about their traumatic experience.⁶⁷ TF-CBT combines elements drawn from:

- Cognitive therapy, which aims to change behavior by addressing a person's thoughts or perceptions, particularly those thinking patterns that create distorted or unhelpful views;
- Behavioral therapy, which focuses on modifying habitual responses (e.g., anger, fear) to identified situations or stimuli; and
- Family therapy, which examines patterns of interactions among family members to identify and alleviate problems.⁶⁸

TF-CBT is a short-term treatment typically provided in 12 to 18 sessions of 50 to 90 minutes, depending on treatment needs.⁶⁹ The intervention is usually provided in outpatient mental health facilities, but it has been used in hospital, group home, school, community, residential, and in-home settings.⁷⁰

Recent research findings suggest that TF-CBT is more effective than nondirective or client centered treatment approaches for children who have a history of multiple traumas (e.g., sexual abuse, exposure to domestic violence, physical abuse, as well as other traumas).⁷¹

An individualized, strengths-based approach refers to policies, practice methods, and strategies that identify and draw upon the strengths of children, families, and communities.⁷² Strengths-based practice involves a shift from a deficit approach, which emphasizes problems and pathology, to a positive partnership with the family.⁷³ The approach acknowledges each child and family's unique set of strengths and challenges and engages the family as a partner in developing and implementing the service plan.⁷⁴

III. Effect of Proposed Changes

Section 1 creates s. 409.1754, F.S., related to administrative requirements for serving sexually exploited children. The bill deletes the current assessment process to determine whether a child should be placed in a safe house and requires the DCF to develop or adopt one or more initial screening and assessment instruments to identify, determine the needs of, plan services for, and identify an appropriate residential environment for sexually exploited children. The bill requires that the assessment instruments include the ability to determine whether placement in a safe

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ *Id.*

⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ *Id.*

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² *An Individualized, Strengths-Based Approach in Public Child Welfare Driven Systems of Care*, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, available at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/acloserlook/strengthsbased/strengthsbased1.cfm> (last visited March 14, 2014).

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ *Id.*

house is appropriate. The bill requires that the initial screening and assessment instruments used to determine appropriate residential placement of a sexually exploited child must consider:

- Risk of the sexually exploited child running away;
- Risk of the sexually exploited child recruiting other children into the commercial sex trade;
- Level of the sexually exploited child's attachment to his or her exploiter;
- Level and type of trauma that the sexually exploited child has endured;
- Nature of the child's interactions with law enforcement;
- Length of time that the child was sexually exploited; and
- Extent of any substance abuse by the sexually exploited child.

The bill specifies that that if a safe house placement is determined to be the most appropriate setting, the child may be placed in a safe house, as long as a placement is available. However, the bill specifies that a child may be placed in another setting if the alternate setting is more appropriate to his or her needs and if the child's behaviors can be managed in a way that does not endanger other children, or if a safe house or safe foster home is not available.

The bill requires the initial screening and assessment instruments to be validated, if possible, and requires the instruments to be used by the DCF, juvenile assessment centers, lead agencies, and providers serving sexually exploited children. The bill requires the DCF to consult state and local agencies, organizations, and individuals involved in the identification and care of sexually exploited children to develop or adopt the initial screening and assessment instruments. The bill requires the DCF to establish rules specifying the initial screening and assessment instruments to be used, the requirements for their use, and the reporting of data collected through the instruments and specifies that entities are not precluded from using additional assessment instruments in the course of serving sexually exploited children.

The bill requires the DCF and lead agencies to assign cases where a child is alleged, suspected, or known to have been sexually exploited to child protective investigators (CPIs) and case managers who have received specialized intensive training in investigating cases involving a sexually exploited child. Similarly, the bill requires the DJJ's juvenile probation staff administering the detention risk assessment instrument to have specialized intensive training in identifying and serving sexually exploited children. The bill specifies that CPIs and case managers must receive this training prior to accepting any case involving sexually exploited children.

The bill requires each lead agency and DCF region to jointly identify the service needs of sexually exploited children and plan for developing sufficient capacity to meet them.

The bill requires each lead agency and DCF circuit to establish local protocols and procedures that are responsive to the varying circumstances that sexually exploited children are in. The bill requires the protocols and procedures to address the full continuum of needs of sexually exploited children to the extent of available funding. The bill requires that the protocols and procedures be used by case managers and CPIs when working with a sexually exploited child.

The bill requires the local circuit administrator or his or her designee, the local circuit director of the DJJ or his or her designee, and the lead agency chief operating officer or his or her designee,

to participate in any task force, committee, council, advisory group, coalition, or other entity active in the circuit for coordinating responses to address human trafficking or sexual exploitation of children. If no such entity exists, the bill specifies that the local circuit administrator must work to initiate one.

Section 2 amends the definition of “safe house” as a “group residential placement certified by the DCF to care for sexually exploited children,” and creates and defines “safe foster home” as a foster home certified by the DCF to care for sexually exploited children.

The bill also amends the definition of a sexually exploited child to include those children who have not been adjudicated dependent, which permits them to be served by safe houses and safe foster homes.

The bill specifies that safe houses and safe foster homes are required to provide a safe, separate, and therapeutic environment tailored to the needs of sexually exploited children who have endured significant trauma. The bill requires a DCF certification process for safe homes and safe foster homes and requires such homes to be certified.

The bill amends the current requirements for safe houses and creates requirements that safe foster homes must meet in order to be certified by the DCF. The bill requires that safe houses and safe foster homes be licensed as residential child-caring agencies or licensed family foster homes, respectively, and that safe houses have staff on-the-job 24 hours a day.

The bill requires that safe houses and safe foster homes must house a single sex, must group children with similar chronological ages or levels of maturity together, and must treat and care for these children in a manner that separates them from children with other needs. The bill specifies that safe houses and safe foster homes may care for other populations, as long as those populations do not interact with the sexually exploited children. The bill requires that safe houses and safe foster homes must use trauma-informed and strength-based approaches to care, to the extent possible and appropriate.

The bill requires that safe houses and safe foster homes provide appropriate security through facility design, hardware, technology, staffing, and siting, including but not limited to using external video monitoring or alarmed doors, or being situated in a remote location. The bill specifies that sexually exploited children must be allowed to exit the safe house or safe foster home if they choose.

The bill requires safe houses and safe foster homes to provide services tailored to the needs of sexually exploited children and to determine these needs on a case-by-case basis. The bill specifies that in addition to the services required for traditional foster homes and child caring facilities, safe houses and safe foster homes must also coordinate the following services:

A comprehensive assessment of the service needs of each resident;

- Victim-witness counseling;
- Family counseling;
- Behavioral health services;
- Treatment and intervention for sexual assault;
- Life skills services;

- Mentoring by a survivor of sexual exploitation, if available and appropriate;
- Substance abuse screening, and where necessary, access to treatment;
- Planning services for the successful transition of residents back to the community;
- Activities for sexually exploited children residing in the safe house, scheduled in a manner that provides them with a full schedule; and
- Any additional services determined by the DCF.

The bill requires foster parents of safe foster homes to complete intensive training regarding the needs of sexually exploited children, the effects of trauma and sexual exploitation, and how to address those needs using strength-based and trauma-informed approaches. The bill requires the DCF to specify this training by rule. The bill also allows the DCF to establish additional criteria in rule for the certification of safe houses and safe foster homes.

The bill requires that safe houses and safe foster homes reapply for certification and be inspected annually. The bill allows the DCF to place a moratorium on referrals and revoke the certification of a safe house or safe foster home if the requirements of certification are no longer being met.

The bill specifies that in order to accept state funds specifically allocated to provide services to sexually exploited children, the residential facility must be certified as a safe house or safe foster home.

The bill authorizes the DCF to facilitate the development of one secure safe house on a pilot basis in order to evaluate the therapeutic benefits of a secure residential setting within the broader array of residential and community-based services available to meet the needs of sexually exploited children. The bill specifies that the secure safe house is intended for those sexually exploited children with the greatest needs and for whom no less restrictive placement has been or will be effective in addressing the effects of severe abuse, violence, trauma, or exploiter control endured by the child. The bill specifies that the setting is only available to sexually exploited children who have been, or are in the process of being, adjudicated dependent. The bill specifies that children can remain in the secure safe house from five days to 10 months.

Secure Safe House Pilot Program

The bill authorizes the DCF to conduct a secure safe house pilot project by selecting a region where a secure safe house can be sited and to collaborate with the local lead agency to design the pilot. The bill specifies that for the pilot project, the secure safe house must be a certified safe house, have no more than 15 beds, and have security features to prevent any entry into or exit from the facility or its grounds without the involvement of staff. The bill specifies that these features may include, but are not limited to, walls, fencing, gates, and locking doors.

The bill requires that the facility staff, the child, the child's parent or guardian, and the case manager develop a plan regarding how the child will be cared for at least 30 days prior to leaving the facility.

The bill specifies that sexually exploited dependent children may be placed in the secure safe house from any region of Florida and that the DCF, in consultation with the lead agencies serving the children, must approve all placements in the secure safe house. The bill also provides

that a child may only be placed in the secure safe house if he or she has intensive needs, mental health issues, or other factors which prevent the child from being safely cared for in a less restrictive setting.

The bill specifies that in addition to the other criteria required to be used to determine whether safe house placement is appropriate for a child, a child's lack of willingness to participate in less intensive programs and lack of treatment progress in less restrictive placements must also be considered. The bill specifies that the DCF may establish additional criteria for placement in the secure safe house.

The bill allows a dependent child to be taken to the secure safe house for evaluation of the appropriateness of placement for treatment if:

- There is probable cause that the child has been sexually exploited;
- The child meets the criteria to be placed in a safe house;
- The child recently engaged in behaviors that subject the child to victimization, violence, emotional harm, serious bodily harm, or health risks that endanger the child, posing a real and present threat of substantial harm to the child's well-being;
- There is a substantial likelihood that without care or treatment the child will endanger or cause serious bodily harm to others, as evidenced by previous behavior; and
- Less restrictive placement alternatives are unlikely to be effective in keeping the child from engaging in the behaviors specified above, as determined by a DCF or lead agency employee.

The bill requires the DCF to contract for an evaluation of the secure safe house pilot project. The bill specifies that the evaluation must address the effectiveness in facilitating the rehabilitation of sexually exploited children. The bill specifies that the evaluation must describe the program model and facility design, assess the effectiveness of the facility in meeting the treatment and security needs of sexually exploited children, analyze its cost-effectiveness, and provide recommendations regarding the continued operation of the pilot program and any changes or enhancements. The bill specifies that the evaluation must be provided to the governor, the president of the Senate, and the speaker of the House of Representatives by February 1, 2018.

Section 3 amends s. 39.524, F.S., to add a safe foster home as an appropriate placement for a child using the initial screening and assessment instrument provided in s. 409.1754(1), F.S.

Section 4 creates s. 39.4072, F.S., to allow a dependent child to be taken to a secure safe house for evaluation of the appropriateness of placement for treatment if:

- There is probable cause that the child has been sexually exploited;
- The child meets the criteria to be placed in a safe house;
- The child recently engaged in behaviors that subject the child to victimization, violence, emotional harm, serious bodily harm, or health risks that endanger the child, posing a real and present threat of substantial harm to the child's well-being;
- There is a substantial likelihood that without care or treatment the child will endanger or cause serious bodily harm to others, as evidenced by previous behavior; and
- Less restrictive placement alternatives are unlikely to be effective in keeping the child from engaging in the behaviors specified above, as determined by a DCF or lead agency employee.

The bill allows a DCF official to initiate an evaluation of a child if the child is the subject of an open investigation or under the supervision of a court, as long as the child meets the criteria for evaluation specified above. The bill allows a CPI, law enforcement officer, case manager, or other qualified individual to transport the child to the secure safe house for assessment and stabilization.

The bill allows a secure safe house to admit the child for assessment and stabilization pending the filing and adjudication of a petition by the DCF alleging the need for a change in placement. The bill requires the secure safe house to provide notice regarding the child's admittance for assessment to the child's parent or guardian, foster parent, case manager, and guardian ad litem (GAL). The bill specifies that if the child does not have a GAL and a lawyer, a court must appoint them.

The bill requires a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, licensed mental health counselor, or licensed clinical social worker at the secure safe house to evaluate the child. The bill specifies that this professional must have experience working with sexually exploited children. The bill requires the evaluation be conducted as soon as it is appropriate to do so, given the child's emotional, mental, and physical condition and that facility staff continue evaluating the child throughout the placement for evaluation in the secure safe house. The bill permits the staff to access and request relevant information, including, the child's case file, and allows the child's parent or guardian, foster parent, case manager, and GAL to provide any information they believe is relevant to the evaluation. The bill requires that the evaluation be based on whether the child meets criteria for admission to the secure safe house.

If the evaluator determines that a secure safe house would not best meet the child's needs, the DCF must place the child in the least restrictive setting which is appropriate for the child's needs. If the evaluator determines that placement in the secure safe house would best meet the child's needs, the DCF must petition a court within 24 hours for placement, and the secure safe house must admit the child for placement pending a judicial determination. If the evaluator determines that additional evaluation is required before a determination may be made, the DCF must petition a court within 24 hours to extend the placement for evaluation purposes up to 30 days or until a determination may be made regarding the need for extended secure safe house placement for treatment, whichever comes first. The child must remain in the secure safe house pending the court order.

The bill requires the DCF to provide all evaluations to the child's parent or guardian, case manager, and GAL.

Section 5 creates s. 39.4074, F.S. If the evaluation of the child results in a determination that placement for treatment in a secure safe house would best meet the child's needs, the bill authorizes DCF to file a petition for placement in dependency court. The bill requires the DCF to provide notice to the child's parents. The bill specifies that if the child's parents consent to the placement, the court must enter an order placing the child in the secure safe house for up to 45 days, pending review by the court. The bill also specifies that if the child's parents refuse or are unable to consent, within 24 hours of the filing of the petition, the court must hear all parties in person or by counsel, or both. The bill specifies that if the court concludes that the child meets

the criteria for placement in the secure safe house, it must order that the child be placed in the secure safe house for a period of up to 45 days, pending review by a court.

The bill requires the secure safe house to review the child's progress toward the treatment goals and assess whether the child's needs can be met in a less restrictive treatment program. This review and assessment must be done every 20 days, commencing upon the beginning of treatment according to the treatment plan. The bill requires the secure safe house to submit a report of its findings to the child's parent or guardian, the GAL, the case manager, the DCF, and the court. The bill specifies that DCF may not reimburse a secure safe house until the secure safe house has submitted every written report that is due.

The bill requires the court to conduct an initial review of the status of the child's treatment plan no later than 35 days after the child's placement in the secure safe house. The bill also requires the court to review the child's treatment plan 20 days after the initial review and then every 60 days thereafter, until the child no longer requires placement in the secure safe house, or until the child has resided in the secure safe house for 10 months. The bill specifies that if the child has resided in the secure safe house for 9 months, a court hearing must be held to determine an appropriate setting and appropriate services for the child after 10 months.

The bill requires the child's continued placement in a secure safe house to be a subject of judicial review at any time that a judicial review is held pursuant to s. 39.701, F.S. The bill specifies that if, at any time, the court determines that the child has not been sexually exploited or that the placement in the safe house is not appropriate, the court must order the DCF to place the child in the least restrictive setting that is best suited to meet the child's needs. The bill requires the DCF to place the child in another setting when continued placement in the secure safe house is no longer appropriate.

Section 6 requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to conduct a study on commercial sexual exploitation of children in Florida. The bill requires the study to:

- Assess the extent of sexual exploitation of children in Florida, including the prevalence in various regions of the state;
- Estimate of the number of youth who have been sexually exploited;
- Determine service gaps for treating this population; and
- Analyze the operation of safe houses in Florida and assess the effectiveness of safe houses and safe foster homes in addressing the safety, therapeutic, health, and emotional needs of sexually exploited children, including the nature and appropriateness of subsequent placements, the extent of sexual exploitation post-placement, and educational attainment.

The bill requires the OPPAGA to report its findings to the governor, the president of the Senate, and the speaker of the House of Representatives by July 1, 2017.

Section 7 provides an effective date of July 1, 2014.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. Other Constitutional Issues:

The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees that the government cannot take away a person's basic rights to "life, liberty or property, without due process of law." Under s. 394.463, F.S., also known as the Baker Act, children can be involuntarily confined in a hospital or crisis stabilization unit for mental health assessment. However, the criteria to place a sexually exploited child in a secure safe house is based on risk of running away, recruiting other children into the commercial sex trade, attachment to his or her exploiter, level of trauma endured and interactions with law enforcement. The Florida Legislature has previously stated that sexually exploited children are victims, not criminals.

The following sections of the bill could be interpreted in varying ways regarding consistency with the state and U.S. constitution:

Section 2: The DCF, in consultation with the community-based care lead agency serving the child, shall approve all placements of children in the secure safe house. Under current law in s. 39.402(8)(a), F.S., a child may not be held in a shelter for longer than 24 hours unless ordered by a court, not the DCF after a shelter hearing.

Section 2: A child may be placed in the secure safe house for a minimum of 5 days and a maximum of 10 months.

Section 4: A child may be taken to a secure safe house for evaluation of the appropriateness of placement for treatment in a secure safe house if there is probable cause that the child has been sexually exploited and a less restrictive placement alternative is unlikely to be effective in keeping the child from engaging in certain behaviors as determined by the DCF or a lead agency.

Section 4: An official of the DCF may initiate an evaluation of a child who is the subject of an open investigation or under the supervision of a court under certain circumstances.

Section 4: Within five days after the child's admittance to the secure safe house for evaluation, the psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, licensed mental health counselor, or

licensed clinical social worker shall determine whether the secure safe house would best meet the child's needs or whether additional evaluation is required before a conclusion can be reached.

Section 4: If additional evaluation is required before a determination may be made about the child's needs for secure safe house placement for treatment, the DCF shall petition a court within 24 hours to extend the placement of the child for evaluation purposes up to 30 days or until a determination may be made regarding the need for secure safe house placement for treatment, whichever comes first. The child shall remain in the secure safe house pending the court order.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

SB 1724 authorizes the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to create a secure safe house pilot program. Such a program, if undertaken, could increase costs for the DCF by an indeterminate amount by requiring assessments of potential children, placement of sexually exploited children in safe houses or specialized foster homes, case management services, treatment services, and the requirement to contract for the program's evaluation.

The bill requires the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to provide intensive training to probation officers and other staff on identifying and serving sexually exploited children. The DJJ has not provided a fiscal impact statement on those training costs.

Other costs to the state could include the appointment of attorneys to represent children in court proceedings. The bill does not specify who would pay for such attorneys – only that they must be appointed. Courts have broad latitude to ensure that certain persons receive legal representation. In some cases, a court will appoint a pro-bono attorney, while in other cases, attorneys are paid through a contract with the Justice Administrative Commission. The potential cost for this legal representation to state agencies, the state court system, and the lead agencies cannot be determined.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

Line 128 states each region of the DCF and each community-based care lead agency shall establish local protocols and procedures for working with sexually exploited children. The bill is not clear as to whether those entities should develop their own separate protocols or whether they should work together to produce one set of protocols per region.

Lines 146, 148, 150, 155, and 162 refer to the “local circuit administrator,” “circuits,” or “circuit administrator.” The bill is not clear as to whether the circuit administrator is a DCF employee or the administrator of the judicial circuit.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 39.524 and 409.1678.

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 39.4072, 39.4074, and 409.1754.

The bill creates an undesignated section of Florida law.

IX. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.