

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/SB 282 — Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders

by Appropriations Committee and Senators Rouson, Jones, Book and Rodrigues

The bill (Chapter 2022-13, L.O.F.) promotes the use of peer specialists to assist an individual's recovery from substance use disorder (SUD) or mental illness. Peer specialists are persons who have recovered from a substance use disorder or mental illness who support a person with a current substance use disorder or mental illness.

Specifically, the bill:

- Adds the use of peer specialists as an essential element of a coordinated system of care;
- Provides legislative findings and intent related to the use of peer specialists in the provision of behavioral health care;
- Requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to designate a managing entity with an existing certified recovery peer specialist training program to provide training for persons seeking certification as peer specialists and requires the managing entity to give preference to trainers who are currently certified peer specialists;
- Requires the training program to coincide with a competency exam and be based on current practice standards;
- Revises background screening requirements for peer specialists;
- Adds offenses for which individuals seeking certification as a peer specialist may seek an exemption from eligibility disqualification, thereby expanding the number of people that may become certified as peer specialists under Florida law;
- Allows peer specialists to work with adults with mental health disorders, in addition to SUDs and co-occurring disorders, while a request for an exemption from a background check disqualification is pending;
- Increases the number of days during which a service provider can work under the supervision of a certified peer specialist while a request for an exemption from a background check disqualification is pending to 180 days from the current 90 days; and
- Provides that individuals certified as peer specialists by July 1, 2022, will be deemed to have met the requirements for certification under the bill, but requires these individuals to comply with minimum standards and requirements needed to maintain certification.

The bill is expected to have an insignificant negative fiscal impact on state government.

These provisions were approved by the Governor and will take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 114-0