

By Senator Crist

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to faith- and character-based
3 correctional institution programs; amending s.
4 944.803, F.S.; revising legislative findings;
5 providing requirements for faith- and character-based
6 programs; deleting provisions relating to funding;
7 revising requirements for participation; deleting
8 provisions relating to assignment of chaplains;
9 providing an effective date.

10
11 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

12
13 Section 1. Section 944.803, Florida Statutes, is amended to
14 read:

15 944.803 Faith- and character-based ~~Faith-based~~ programs ~~for~~
16 ~~inmates.~~

17 (1) The Legislature finds and declares that faith- and
18 character-based ~~faith-based~~ programs offered in state and
19 private correctional institutions and facilities have the
20 potential to facilitate inmate institutional adjustment, help
21 inmates assume personal responsibility, and reduce recidivism.

22 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that the department
23 ~~of Corrections~~ and the private vendors operating private
24 correctional facilities ~~shall~~ continuously:

25 (a) Measure recidivism rates for inmates who have
26 participated in faith- and character-based ~~religious~~ programs.†

27 (b) Increase the number of volunteers who minister to
28 inmates from various faith-based and secular institutions in the
29 community.†

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30 (c) Develop community linkages with secular institutions as
31 well as churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based
32 institutions to assist inmates in their release back into the
33 community. ~~;~~ and

34 ~~(d) Fund through the use of annual appropriations, in~~
35 ~~department facilities, and through inmate welfare trust funds~~
36 ~~pursuant to s. 945.215, in private facilities, an adequate~~
37 ~~number of chaplains and support staff to operate faith-based~~
38 ~~programs in correctional institutions.~~

39 (3) ~~(a)~~ The department must have at least six new programs
40 fully operational. These six programs shall be similar to and in
41 addition to the current faith-based pilot program. The six new
42 programs shall be a joint effort with the department and faith-
43 based service groups within the community. The department shall
44 ensure that an inmate's faith orientation, or lack thereof, will
45 not be considered in determining admission to a faith- and
46 character-based ~~faith-based~~ program and that the program does
47 not attempt to convert an inmate toward a particular faith or
48 religious preference.

49 (b) The programs shall operate 24 hours a day within the
50 existing correctional facilities and. ~~The programs~~ must
51 emphasize the importance of personal responsibility, meaningful
52 work, education, substance abuse treatment, and peer support.

53 (c) Participation in a ~~the faith-based dormitory~~ program
54 shall be voluntary. However, ~~at least 80 percent of the inmates~~
55 ~~participating in this program must be within 36 months of~~
56 ~~release.~~ Assignment to a program ~~these programs~~ shall be based
57 on evaluation and the length of time the inmate is projected to
58 be assigned to that particular institution. ~~In evaluating an~~

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59 ~~inmate for this program, priority shall be given to inmates who~~
60 ~~have shown an indication for substance abuse. A right to~~
61 ~~substance abuse program services is not stated, intended, or~~
62 ~~otherwise implied by this subsection. The department may not~~
63 ~~remove an inmate once assigned to a the program except for the~~
64 ~~purposes of population management, for inmate conduct that may~~
65 ~~subject the inmate to disciplinary confinement or loss of gain-~~
66 ~~time, for physical or mental health concerns, or for security or~~
67 ~~safety concerns. To support the programming component, the~~
68 ~~department shall assign a chaplain and a full-time clerical~~
69 ~~support person dedicated to each dormitory to implement and~~
70 ~~monitor the program and to strengthen volunteer participation~~
71 ~~and support.~~

72 ~~(4) The Department of Corrections shall assign chaplains to~~
73 ~~community correctional centers authorized pursuant to s.~~
74 ~~945.091(1)(b). These chaplains shall strengthen volunteer~~
75 ~~participation by recruiting volunteers in the community to~~
76 ~~assist inmates in transition, and, if requested by the inmate,~~
77 ~~placement in a mentoring program or at a contracted substance~~
78 ~~abuse transition housing program. When placing an inmate in a~~
79 ~~contracted program, the chaplain shall work with the~~
80 ~~institutional transition assistance specialist in an effort to~~
81 ~~successfully place the released inmate.~~

82 ~~(4)(5)~~ (4) The department shall ensure that any faith component
83 of any program authorized in this chapter is offered on a
84 voluntary basis and, an offender's faith orientation, or lack
85 thereof, will not be considered in determining admission to such
86 a ~~faith-based~~ program and that the program does not attempt to
87 convert an offender toward a particular faith or religious

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88 preference.

89 (5)~~(6)~~ The department shall ensure that state funds are not
90 expended for the purpose of furthering religious indoctrination,
91 but rather, that state funds are expended for purposes of
92 furthering the secular goals of criminal rehabilitation, the
93 successful reintegration of offenders into the community, and
94 the reduction of recidivism.

95 Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.