

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to proceedings involving minors or
 3 certain other persons; amending s. 92.55, F.S.;
 4 providing that judges may allow the use of certain
 5 service animals, therapy animals, or facility dogs in
 6 proceedings involving abuse, abandonment, or neglect;
 7 allowing such animals to be used when taking the
 8 testimony of certain other persons; providing
 9 definitions; providing an effective date.

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

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 13 Section 1. Subsection (5) of section 92.55, Florida
 14 Statutes, is amended to read:

15 92.55 Judicial or other proceedings involving victim or
 16 witness under ~~the age of~~ 18 years of age, a person who has an
 17 intellectual disability, or a sexual offense victim or witness;
 18 special protections; use of ~~registered~~ service animals, ~~or~~
 19 therapy animals, or facility dogs.-

20 (5) The court may set any other conditions it finds just
 21 and appropriate when taking the testimony of a victim or witness
 22 under 18 years of age, a person who has an intellectual
 23 disability, or a sexual offense victim or witness ~~child victim~~
 24 ~~or witness or a sexual offense victim or witness~~, including the
 25 use of a service animal, ~~or~~ therapy animal, or facility dog ~~that~~

26 ~~has been evaluated and registered according to national~~
27 ~~standards,~~ in any proceeding involving a sexual offense or child
28 abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

29 (a) When deciding whether to permit a victim or witness
30 under 18 years of age, a person who has an intellectual
31 disability, or a sexual offense victim or witness ~~child victim~~
32 ~~or witness or sexual offense victim or witness~~ to testify with
33 the assistance of a registered service animal, ~~or~~ therapy
34 animal, or facility dog, the court shall consider the age of the
35 child victim or witness, the age of the sexual offense victim or
36 witness at the time the sexual offense occurred, the interests
37 of the child victim or witness or sexual offense victim or
38 witness, the rights of the parties to the litigation, and any
39 other relevant factor that would facilitate the testimony by the
40 victim or witness under 18 years of age, a person who has an
41 intellectual disability, or a sexual offense victim or witness
42 ~~child victim or witness or sexual offense victim or witness.~~

43 (b) For purposes of this subsection the term:

44 1. "Facility dog" means a dog that has been trained,
45 evaluated, and certified as a facility dog pursuant to industry
46 standards and provides unobtrusive emotional support to children
47 and adults in facility settings.

48 2. "Service animal" has the same meaning as provided in s.
49 413.08.

50 3. "Therapy animal" means an animal that is not considered

51 | a service animal but has been trained and passed a nationally
52 | recognized skills and aptitude evaluation by an organization
53 | that certifies animals as appropriate to provide animal therapy.

54 | Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.