

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 Criminal Justice

BILL: SB 296

INTRODUCER: Senator Berman

SUBJECT: Victims of Domestic Violence and Dating Violence

DATE: December 8, 2025

REVISED: _____

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Wyant	Stokes	CJ	Pre-meeting
2. _____	_____	ACJ	_____
3. _____	_____	RC	_____

I. Summary:

SB 296 titled “Helping Abuse Victims Escape Now (HAVEN) Act,” creates s. 741.317, F.S., to establish the HAVEN Coordinating Council within the Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and requires the FDLE to provide administrative and staff support services related to the functions of the council. The bill provides definitions, membership requirements, duties of the council, and reporting requirements. The legislature may appropriate funds, and the council may receive grants or donations. Additionally, the bill permits each county to establish a county-level HAVEN council to operate in coordination with the HAVEN Coordinating Council.

The duties of the council include, in part, creating a dynamic website that will allow a user to discreetly call or alert law enforcement so that an officer may be dispatched to the user’s location.

The HAVEN Coordinating Council is repealed on October 2, 2029, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature.

The bill defines “dating violence” and allows a victim of dating violence to apply to participate in the Attorney General’s address confidentiality program.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Dating violence is physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a romantic or sexual partner. It can happen at any age, but young women are most likely to experience dating violence. More

than four in 10 college women have experienced violence or abuse in a dating relationship and up to 19% of teens experience dating violence.¹

Victims of dating violence may receive support and legal protection in a similar manner to victims of domestic violence; for example, victims of dating violence may petition the court for a protective injunction, and such injunction is transmitted to the Domestic, Dating, Sexual, and Repeat Violence Injunction Statewide Verification System. Additionally, victims of dating violence are to be given immediate notice of the legal rights and remedies available and are advised of domestic violence centers from which the victim can receive services. However, victims of dating violence are not included in the Attorney General's Domestic Violence Address Confidentiality Program which provides victims with substitute addresses.

Dating Violence

Section 784.046, F.S., provides the following “dating violence” means:²

- Violence between individuals who have or have had a continuing and significant relationship of a romantic or intimate nature. The existence of such relationship must be determined based on the consideration of the following factors:
 - A dating relationship must have existed within the past 6 months;
 - The nature of the relationship must have been characterized by the expectation of affection or sexual involvement between the parties; and
 - The frequency and type of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship must have included that the persons have been involved over time and on a continuous basis during the course of the relationship.

The term does not include violence in a casual acquaintanceship or violence between individuals who only have engaged in ordinary fraternization in a business or social context.

“Violence” means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, or false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death, by a person against any other person.³

Any person who is the victim of dating violence and has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming the victim of another act of dating violence, or any person who has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming the victim of an act of dating violence, or the parent or legal guardian of any minor child who is living at home and who seeks an injunction for protection against dating violence of that minor child, has standing in the circuit court to file a verified petition for an injunction for protection against dating violence.⁴

¹ Break the Cycle, *Teen Dating Violence Statistics 2024* (January 3, 2025), available at: <https://www.breakthecycle.org/teen-dating-violence-statistics/> (last visited December 8, 2025).

² Section 784.046(1)(d), F.S.

³ Section 784.046(1)(a), F.S.

⁴ Section 784.046(2)(b), F.S.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member.⁵

In 2024, 61,216 crimes of domestic violence were reported, resulting in 32,665 arrests.⁶ Of those 61,216 reported domestic violence offenses, the relationship of the victims to the offenders varied, including:

- 17,980 were spousal;⁷
- 6,957 were co-habitants;⁸ and
- 4,983 were other.⁹

This data was compiled by the FDLE after receiving the number of reports and arrests from local law enforcement agencies.¹⁰

Domestic Violence Investigations

Domestic violence investigations require an officer who investigates an alleged incident of domestic violence to:¹¹

- Assist the victim to obtain medical treatment if such is required;¹²
- Advise the victim that there is a domestic violence center from which the victim may receive services;¹³
- Administer a lethality assessment if the allegation of domestic violence is against an intimate partner, regardless of whether an arrest is made;¹⁴
- Give the victim immediate notice of the legal rights and remedies available;¹⁵

⁵ Section 741.28(2), F.S.

⁶ Florida Department of Law Enforcement, *Crime in Florida: Florida Uniform Crime Report 2022-2024*, on file with the Senate Criminal Justice Committee.

⁷ Spouse means the victim and offender are married by law or have been previously married. This category included ex-spouses.

⁸ *Id.* Co-Habitant means the victim lived with the offender as a married couple without legal marriage. This category includes former co-habitants.

⁹ *Id.* Other means the victim and offender had a child together but were never married and never lived together.

¹⁰ The data provided represents the information submitted to the FDLE as of the date of the report. The FDLE acts as a data repository for the law enforcement agencies who voluntarily submit UCR data or data required by the state. *See email correspondence from William Grissom*, on file with the Senate Criminal Justice Committee.

¹¹ Section 741.29, F.S.

¹² Section 741.29(1)(a), F.S.

¹³ Section 741.29(1)(b), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 741.29(1)(c), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 741.29(1)(d), F.S. The Legal Rights and Remedies Notice to Victims must include a general summary of s. 741.30, F.S., the resource listing and phone number for the area domestic violence center, and a copy of the following statement: “If you are a victim of domestic violence, you may ask the state attorney to file a criminal complaint. You also have the right to go to court and file a petition requesting an injunction for protection from domestic violence which may include, but need not be limited to, provisions which restrain the abuser from further acts of abuse; direct the abuser to leave your household; prevent the abuser from entering your residence, school, business, or place of employment; award you custody of minor children; and direct the abuser to pay support to you and the minor children if the abuser has a legal obligation to do so.”

- Make a written report, whether or not an arrest is made, that is complete and clearly indicates the alleged offense was an incident of domestic violence. The report shall be given to the officer's supervisor and filed with the law enforcement agency in a manner that will permit data on domestic violence cases to be compiled.¹⁶ Such report must include:
 - A description of physical injuries observed, if any.
 - If a law enforcement officer decides not to make an arrest or decides to arrest two or more parties, the officer must include the grounds for not arresting anyone or for arresting two or more parties.
 - A statement which indicates that a copy of the legal rights and remedies notice was given to the victim.
- Obtain a written statement from the victim and witnesses concerning the alleged domestic violence when possible; and
- Make an arrest whenever the officer determines probable cause that an act of domestic violence has been committed.^{17, 18}

Basic skills training in handling domestic violence cases is required for law enforcement officers.¹⁹ Every basic skills course required in order for law enforcement officers to obtain initial certification shall include a minimum of six hours of training in handling domestic violence cases and training must include the recognition and determination of the primary aggressor in domestic violence cases and the issues involved in child-to-parent cases.

Address Confidentiality Program

The Address Confidentiality Program for Victims of Domestic Violence operated by the Office of the Attorney General was designed to provide program participants with a substitute address²⁰ designated by the Attorney General in order to protect such participants and prevent their assailants or probable assailants from locating them. The program allows a participant to use his or her substitute address in lieu of his or her actual address with state and local agencies, which subsequently allows such agencies to comply with public record requests without jeopardizing the safety of program participants.²¹

Executive Branch Entities

Chapter 20, F.S., authorizes the creation of different entities within the executive branch to assist agencies in performing their duties more efficiently and effectively. These entities include commissions, committees or task forces, coordinating councils, and advisory councils. These entities are statutorily defined:

¹⁶ Section 741.29 (3), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 741.29(4), F.S.

¹⁸ Section 901.15(7), F.S., provides that a law enforcement officer may arrest a person without a warrant when there is probable cause to believe that the person has committed an act of domestic violence. The decision to arrest does not require consent of the victim or consideration of the relationship of the parties. It is the public policy of this state to strongly discourage arrest and charges of both parties for domestic violence or dating violence on each other and to encourage training of law enforcement and prosecutors in these areas.

¹⁹ Section 943.171, F.S.

²⁰ "Address" means a residential street address, school address, or work address of an individual, as specified on the individual's application to be a program participant. Section 741.402(1), F.S.

²¹ Section. 741.401, F.S.

- “Commission,” unless otherwise required by the State Constitution, means a body created by specific statutory enactment within a department, the office of the Governor, or the Executive Office of the Governor and exercising limited quasi-legislative or quasi-judicial powers, or both, independently of the head of the department or the Governor.²²
- “Committee” or “task force” means an *advisory body* created without specific statutory enactment for a time not to exceed one year or created by specific statutory enactment for a time not to exceed three years and appointed to study a specific problem and recommend a solution or policy alternative with respect to that problem. Its existence terminates upon the completion of its assignment.²³
- “Coordinating Council” means an interdepartmental advisory body created by law to coordinate programs and activities for which one department has primary responsibility but in which one or more other departments have an interest.²⁴
- “Council” or “advisory council” means an advisory body created by specific statutory enactment and appointed to function on a continuing basis for the study of the problems arising in a specified functional or program area of state government and to provide recommendations and policy alternatives.²⁵

Agency Advisory Bodies and Related Entities

Each executive agency advisory body, commission, board of trustees, or any other collegial body created as an adjunct to the agency, must be established, evaluated, or maintained in accordance with the following provisions:²⁶

- Must be necessary and beneficial to the furtherance of a public purpose.²⁷
- Must be terminated by the Legislature when it is no longer necessary and beneficial to the furtherance of a public purpose. The executive agency to which it is made an adjunct, must advise the Legislature when it ceases to be essential to the furtherance of a public purpose.²⁸
- The Legislature and the public must be kept informed of the numbers, purposes, memberships, activities, and expenses of advisory bodies, commissions, boards of trustees, and other collegial bodies established as adjuncts to executive agencies.²⁹
- Its members are appointed to 4-year staggered terms, unless expressly provided otherwise in the State Constitution.³⁰
- Its members serve without additional compensation or honorarium and are only authorized to receive per diem and reimbursement for travel expenses, unless expressly provided otherwise by specific statutory enactment.³¹
- Members of an entity, other than a commission or board of trustees, must be appointed by the Governor, a department head, an executive director, or a Cabinet officer.³²

²² Section 20.03(4), F.S.

²³ Section 20.03(5), F.S.

²⁴ Section 20.03(6), F.S.

²⁵ Section 20.03(7), F.S.

²⁶ Section 20.052, F.S.

²⁷ Section 20.052(1), F.S.

²⁸ Section 20.052(2), F.S.

²⁹ Section 20.052(3), F.S.

³⁰ Section 20.052(4)(c), F.S.

³¹ Section 20.052(4)(d), F.S.

³² Section 20.052(5)(a), F.S.

- Members of a commission or board of trustees must be appointed by the Governor unless otherwise provided by law, confirmed by the Senate, and are subject to the dual-office-holding prohibition of s. 5(a), Art. II of the State Constitution.³³
- All meetings and records of the entity are public, unless an exemption is specifically provided by law.³⁴

A law creating, or authorizing the creation of, an advisory body must provide for the repeal of the advisory body on October 2 of the 3rd year after enactment unless the law is reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.³⁵

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

HAVEN Act

The bill titled “Helping Abuse Victims Escape Now (HAVEN) Act,” creates s. 741.317, F.S., to establish the HAVEN Coordinating Council within the FDLE and requires the FDLE to provide administrative and staff support services related to the functions of the council.

The HAVEN Coordinating Council is composed of the following members:

- A representative from the FDLE, appointed by the executive director of the FDLE;
- A representative from a local law enforcement agency, appointed by the sheriff of the county in which the law enforcement agency is located;
- A representative from a victim services program, appointed by the secretary of the Department of Children and Families;
- A representative from a domestic violence advocacy group, appointed by the secretary of the Department of Children and Families;
- An expert in technology matters, appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- An attorney in good standing with The Florida Bar and who is a member of the Family Law section of The Florida Bar, appointed by the president of The Florida Bar; and,
- Any other representative determined by the HAVEN Coordinating Council, appointed by the chair of the council.

Appointments to the coordinating council must be made by September 1, 2026, and each member serves at the pleasure of the official who appointed the member. A vacancy must be filled in the same manner.

The council is required to:

- Develop a dynamic website that has the ability to:
 - Synchronize with law enforcement databases to ensure real-time data sharing and updates.

³³ Section 20.052(5)(b), F.S.

³⁴ Section 20.052(5)(c), F.S.

³⁵ Section 20.052(8), F.S.

- Allow a user to generate a unique telephone number from which the user can call a 911 emergency telephone number when he or she is in need of assistance from law enforcement.
- Allow a user to choose a personalized numerical code or phrase that discreetly alerts a law enforcement agency or sheriff's office when the user calls his or her uniquely generated telephone number.
- Automatically transmit specific data to a law enforcement agency or sheriff's office when a user calls his or her generated telephone number and uses his or her personalized numerical code or phrase, which then triggers the immediate dispatch of law enforcement to the user's location.
- Establish a public awareness campaign to inform the public about the dynamic website and its features.
- Coordinate with local law enforcement agencies and sheriff's offices to develop and implement a training program to ensure law enforcement officers are equipped to respond swiftly and effectively to alerts that are generated through the dynamic website.
- Meet at least quarterly to review relevant data, identify trends, and determine alternative or additional avenues of support for victims of domestic violence or dating violence.
- Provide quarterly reports to local law enforcement agencies and sheriff's offices.
- Beginning in 2027, submit an annual report to the Governor, the Attorney General, the executive director of the FDLE, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by November 1 that compiles the progress and cost breakdowns relating to the establishment of the dynamic website and, once the website is functioning, statistics relating to the usage and effectiveness of the website and the effectiveness of the coordinating council.

The Legislature may appropriate funds annually to the FDLE to be used for implementation, and the council may apply for and receive grants and accept donations to support the development and maintenance of the dynamic website.

The bill permits each county to establish a county-level HAVEN council to operate in coordination with the HAVEN Coordinating Council. A county-level HAVEN council may:

- Review cases involving domestic violence and dating violence, including fatalities and near-fatalities, in coordination with local domestic violence fatality review teams; and,
- Contribute to the development and maintenance of the dynamic website by providing localized data, resources, and impact metrics.

The bill provides the following definitions:

- "Dating violence" means violence between individuals who have or have had a continuing and significant relationship of a romantic or intimate nature. The existence of such a relationship must be determined based on the consideration of the following factors:
 - A dating relationship must have existed within the past 6 months;
 - The nature of the relationship must have been characterized by the expectation of affection or sexual involvement between the parties; and
 - The frequency and type of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship must have included that the persons have been involved over time and on a continuous basis during the course of the relationship.

- “Domestic violence” means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member.
- “Dynamic website” means a website that generates webpages in real time and can change its content or layout depending on various parameters, such as user preferences, time of day, and location.

In accordance with s. 20.052(8), F.S., the HAVEN Coordinating Council is repealed on October 2, 2029, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature.

Address Confidentiality Program

The bill amends s. 741.403, F.S., to allow a victim of dating violence to apply to participate in the Attorney General’s address confidentiality program and receive assistance and counseling.

The bill amends ss. 741.465 and 741.4651, F.S., relating to public records exemptions. The bill removes “domestic,” allowing for the public records exemption and the assistance given to program applicants to apply to victims of violence. Further, the bill amends s. 960.001, F.S., to require victims of dating violence to be given information about the address confidentiality program.

Additionally, s. 741.401, F.S., is amended to define “dating violence,” in a similar manner as defined under the HAVEN act but includes a threat of violence and does not require the act or threat to be reported to law enforcement. This definition only applies for purposes of the address confidentiality program.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

The bill does not appear to require the cities and counties to expend funds or limit their authority to raise revenue or receive state-shared revenues as specified by Article VII, s. 18, of the State Constitution.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

The bill expands a public records exemption for the address confidentiality program but does not provide a separate bill containing a public necessity statement and repeal date.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 741.401, 741.402, 741.403, 741.408, 741.465, 741.4651, 960.001.

This bill creates section 741.317 of the Florida Statutes.

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.