

By the Committee on Criminal Justice; and Senator Dockery

591-2603-07

1    A bill to be entitled

2                    An act relating to behavioral health; creating

3                    the Behavioral Health Community Solutions Pilot

4                    Program in the Tenth Judicial Circuit;

5                    providing definitions; providing purposes of

6                    the program; providing for cooperative efforts;

7                    providing goals; expanding the current crisis

8                    response team; creating two forensic teams;

9                    expanding the mental health court; providing

10                  for a step-down residential facility; providing

11                  for a central receiving facility; providing an

12                  effective date.

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

16                  Section 1. Behavioral Health Community Solutions Pilot

17 Program; creation; purpose; membership.--

18                  (1) There is created the Behavioral Health Community

19 Solutions Pilot Program in the Tenth Judicial Circuit. The

20 purposes of the program are to identify gaps in service in

21 relation to behavioral health issues in the criminal justice

22 system and to design a comprehensive system to mitigate

23 problems.

24                  (2) The pilot program shall consist of the cooperative

25 efforts of the Polk County Sheriff's Office and the Peace

26 River Center.

27                  Section 2. As used in this act, the term:

28                  (1) "Behavioral health services" has the same meaning

29 as in s. 394.9082(2), Florida Statutes.

30                  (2) "Qualified forensic team members" means

31 individuals who have at least a bachelor's degree with a

1 concentration in mental health and substance abuse treatment  
2 and have successfully completed the Florida Forensic Evaluator  
3 Training within 90 days after hire.

4 (3) "Community behavioral health offices" means the  
5 Bartow Main Street Administrative Offices in Polk County, the  
6 Wauchula Outpatient Clinic in Hardee County and the Sebring  
7 Safehouse, or other suitable locations, in Highlands County.

8 Section 3. Behavioral Health Community Solutions Pilot  
9 Program for the Tenth Judicial Circuit; creation; goals.--

10 (1) There is created a Behavioral Health Community  
11 Solutions Pilot Program for the Tenth Judicial Circuit. The  
12 purpose of the project is to divert people from the community  
13 jails and criminal justice system who would benefit from other  
14 available community services and treatments. The following  
15 changes shall be implemented to assist in the success of this  
16 project:

17 (2) Expansion of the crisis response team:

18 (a) Twenty new members of the crisis response team  
19 shall be hired to cover the three counties in the Tenth  
20 Judicial Circuit of Florida. The crisis response team  
21 operating out of the Peace River Center's crisis stabilization  
22 unit and providing mobile services to Polk and Hardee Counties  
23 on July 1, 2007, is expanded to also be located in the four  
24 substations of the Polk County Sheriff's Department and the  
25 primary sheriff's offices in Hardee and Highlands Counties,  
26 allowing the team members to work closely in collaboration  
27 with each of the three county sheriff's departments.

28 (b) The purpose of the team is to provide local law  
29 enforcement officers with 24-hour support to help prevent  
30 arrest by:

31

1           1. Assisting law enforcement officers in the field  
2 with calls pertaining to behavioral health issues.

3           2. Assisting law enforcement with assessing and  
4 determining if issues involving mental health or substance  
5 abuse exist, such as those necessitating the use of the Baker  
6 Act or substance abuse detoxification programs, and by  
7 accessing immediate resources.

8           3. Supporting law enforcement officers by providing  
9 the follow-up contact, communication, and monitoring of  
10 previous crisis call-outs, thereby preventing recurrences of  
11 individual crisis situations.

12           (3) Creation of two forensic teams:

13           (a) There shall be two forensic teams, each consisting  
14 of seven people. Six of the people on the team shall be  
15 qualified forensic team members. One person shall have  
16 training and experience in the criminal justice system and  
17 shall serve as the liaison from the criminal justice system to  
18 the team.

19           (b) Each team shall be located in community behavioral  
20 health offices in close proximity to each of the three  
21 counties' judicial or correctional facilities.

22           (c) The purpose of each forensic team is to improve  
23 the interface between the mental health, substance abuse  
24 treatment, and criminal justice systems and facilitate the  
25 community placement of individuals with mental or substance  
26 abuse disorders who are involved in the criminal justice  
27 system.

28           (4) Expansion of the mental health court:

29           (a) The current criminal judicial system within the  
30 Tenth Judicial Circuit shall be expanded to provide for the  
31 specific recognition of judicial cases that are complicated by

1 behavioral health issues, especially misdemeanor cases.

2 Funding of the previously identified forensic teams shall  
3 provide for the case management of behavioral health cases  
4 involving misdemeanor charges.

5 (b) Attention to the mental health cases shall  
6 decrease the amount of time people with behavioral health  
7 issues spend in county jails and the criminal justice system.

8 (5) Conversion of an existing facility into a  
9 step-down residential facility:

10 (a) The Peace River Center has an existing facility in  
11 Lakeland that shall be converted into an eight-bed step-down  
12 residential facility for individuals released from the state  
13 forensic facilities. Funds shall be allocated to provide for  
14 the daily food, shelter, activity, programming, and increased  
15 supervision and monitoring of people residing in this unlocked  
16 community facility.

17 (b) The purpose of this step-down residential facility  
18 is to increase the number of individuals who would be  
19 discharged from the state forensic hospitals by providing a  
20 transitional residence for individuals who are difficult to  
21 place.

22 (6) Conversion of an existing facility into a central  
23 receiving facility:

24 (a) The Peace River Center shall provide a facility  
25 that may be converted into a central receiving facility. This  
26 facility shall be at a location in which people are assessed  
27 and either transferred to the most appropriate stabilization  
28 or detoxification inpatient facility or connected and referred  
29 to outpatient community resources. This central receiving  
30 facility shall be similar to the Orange County Central  
31 Receiving Facility.

1           (b) The facility shall be located in the area that has  
2 the highest volume of cases handled under the Baker Act, with  
3 satellite offices located in other areas of the Tenth Judicial  
4 Circuit.

5           (c) Law enforcement officers currently transport  
6 individuals who are being evaluated involuntarily under the  
7 Baker Act to the nearest receiving facility. Law enforcement  
8 personnel shall work cooperatively with the Peace River Center  
9 to develop the most efficient system of transporting  
10 individuals to the central receiving center and routing them  
11 to the appropriate facility if necessary.

12           Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2007.

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14                           STATEMENT OF SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES CONTAINED IN  
15   COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR  
16   Senate Bill 2520

- 17 - Omits reference to Polk County in the name of the pilot  
18 program.  
19 - Defines "behavioral health," "community behavioral health  
20 offices," and the qualifications for forensic team  
21 members.  
22 - Specifies that the crisis response team operating from  
23 Peace River Center's crisis stabilization unit is  
24 expanded to also operate out of the four Polk County  
25 Sheriff's Department substations and the primary offices  
26 of the Hardee and Highland County Sheriff's Departments.  
27 - Clarifies the purpose of the forensic teams.  
28 - Clarifies the purpose of the step-down facilities.  
29 - Requires law enforcement personnel and the Peace River  
30 Center to work together to develop an efficient system  
31 for transferring persons to the Central Receiving  
Facility and from there to other facilities if necessary.