

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           therapy animals or facility dogs in proceedings  
 6           involving abuse, abandonment, or neglect; allowing  
 7           such animals to be used when taking the testimony of  
 8           certain other persons; providing definitions;  
 9           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, a person who has an intellectual  
 17   disability, or a sexual offense victim or witness; special  
 18   protections; use of ~~registered service or~~ therapy animals or  
 19   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 the age of 18, 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 or~~ therapy animal or facility dog ~~that has been~~

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

29 (a) When deciding whether to permit a victim or witness  
30 under the age of 18, 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 or~~ therapy animal or  
34 facility dog, the court shall consider the age of the child  
35 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 the age of 18, person who has an  
41 intellectual disability, or 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. "Therapy animal" means an animal that has been trained,  
49 evaluated, and certified as a therapy animal pursuant to  
50 industry standards by an organization that certifies animals as

51 | appropriate to provide animal therapy.

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