

ENROLLED

CS/CS/HB 1045, Engrossed 1

2023 Legislature

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 2 An act relating to the Certified Peer Specialist
 3 Gateway Pilot Program; creating the pilot program
 4 within the Department of Corrections; providing
 5 purpose of and requirements for the pilot program;
 6 authorizing inmates at participating facilities to
 7 apply to participate in the pilot program; requiring
 8 the department to develop certain criteria for
 9 selecting qualified applicants; exempting persons who
 10 complete the pilot program's requirements from
 11 specified background screening requirements for peer
 12 specialists; requiring the pilot program to assist
 13 potential employers with acquiring specified bonds;
 14 authorizing the pilot program to offer funding to
 15 potential employers to cover specified costs under
 16 certain circumstances; requiring persons who have
 17 completed the pilot program's requirements to provide
 18 prospective employers with incarceration records;
 19 requiring such persons to receive a signed informed
 20 consent form from any potential clients; providing
 21 requirements for such form; requiring the department
 22 to adopt rules; providing for expiration of the pilot
 23 program; providing an effective date.

24
 25 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 27 Section 1. The Certified Peer Specialist Gateway Pilot
 28 Program is created within the Department of Corrections. The
 29 purpose of the pilot program is to provide participating inmates
 30 with a path to becoming certified peer specialists under s.
 31 397.417, Florida Statutes, upon release by offering such inmates
 32 while incarcerated the necessary training hours and experience
 33 needed for certification and to assist inmates who complete the
 34 pilot program's requirements with post-incarceration employment.

35 (1) The pilot program shall:

36 (a) Recruit and enroll inmates who have completed certain
 37 treatment programs while incarcerated into certified peer
 38 specialist training programs approved under s. 397.417, Florida
 39 Statutes.

40 (b) Provide core educational training and on-the-job work
 41 experience during each participant's incarceration which meets
 42 all of the requirements for peer specialist certification.

43 (c) Assist participants with completing any examinations
 44 required to become a certified peer specialist under s. 397.417,
 45 Florida Statutes.

46 (d) Assist in placing participants in employment as
 47 certified peer specialist professionals upon their release.

48 (2) Inmates at participating facilities may apply to
 49 participate in the pilot program. The Department of Corrections
 50 shall develop criteria for selecting qualified applicants for

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51 the pilot program including, but not limited to, requiring that
 52 applicants:

53 (a) Have the appropriate custody classification.

54 (b) Meet certain discipline criteria.

55 (c) Have an expected release date within a specified
 56 timeframe.

57 (d) Be housed at the facility providing training.

58 (e) Have served as a positive role model during their
 59 incarceration.

60 (f) Express a desire to work in the behavioral health
 61 treatment field after release.

62 (g) Not have been found guilty of, regardless of
 63 adjudication, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to,
 64 or have been adjudicated delinquent and the record has not been
 65 sealed or expunged for, any offense that would prohibit them
 66 from becoming a certified peer specialist under s.
 67 397.417(4)(e), Florida Statutes.

68 (3) A person who completes the pilot program's
 69 requirements is exempt from the background screening
 70 requirements for peer specialists under s. 397.417(4)(a)-(d),
 71 Florida Statutes.

72 (4) In assisting persons who have completed the pilot
 73 program's requirements with post-incarceration employment, the
 74 pilot program:

75 (a) Shall assist potential employers with acquiring bonds

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76 from the United States Department of Labor's Federal Bonding
 77 Program, if applicable.

78 (b) May offer funding to a potential employer to cover the
 79 initial costs of hiring and retaining such persons, if the pilot
 80 program secures applicable grant funds for such purpose.

81 (5) After a person who has completed the pilot program's
 82 requirements has been released, he or she must provide each
 83 prospective employer with a copy of his or her incarceration
 84 record before the employer may hire the person. The person must
 85 also receive a signed informed consent form from any potential
 86 client seeking treatment from him or her. Such consent form must
 87 specify that the person has completed the pilot program's
 88 requirements and is certified as a peer specialist under s.
 89 397.417, Florida Statutes.

90 (6) The Department of Corrections shall adopt rules to
 91 implement this act.

92 (7) The pilot program expires June 30, 2026.
 93 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.