

By Senator Rouson

16-01521-24

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1                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to mental health education and  
3       training; providing a short title; creating s.  
4       394.4996, F.S.; requiring persons working in roles  
5       involving direct interaction with youth to undergo  
6       mental health education and training; providing  
7       requirements for such education and training;  
8       encouraging persons who work with youth to prioritize  
9       their own mental health and well-being and their  
10      employers to provide resources and support; requiring  
11      the Department of Children and Families to establish  
12      and maintain dedicated spaces within certain  
13      institutions, centers, and venues that are easily  
14      accessible to youth for the dissemination of  
15      information and resources relating to mental health  
16      and to promote such spaces; providing that the  
17      department, in collaboration with relative agencies,  
18      is responsible for implementation and enforcement of  
19      the act; providing for penalties; providing for  
20      funding; providing an effective date.

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

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24       Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Butler Act."

25       Section 2. Section 394.4996, Florida Statutes, is created  
26 to read:

27       394.4996 Mental health education and training.-

28       (1) All persons working in roles involving direct  
29 interaction with youth as defined in s. 381.84(1), including,

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30 but not limited to, educators, counselors, mentors, and coaches,  
31 shall undergo mental health education and training. The  
32 education and training shall include:

33 (a) The recognition of signs and symptoms of mental health  
34 issues in youth, appropriate methods for providing assistance  
35 and support, and guidelines for referring youth to qualified  
36 mental health professionals when necessary.

37 (b) Specialized training in effectively and respectfully  
38 interacting with youth by emphasizing active listening to the  
39 voices and perspectives of youth, respecting their rights and  
40 dignity, and fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.

41 (2) Persons who work with youth are encouraged to  
42 prioritize their own mental health and well-being and employers  
43 of persons who work with youth should provide resources and  
44 support for their mental health needs.

45 (3) The department shall establish and maintain dedicated  
46 spaces within educational institutions, community centers, and  
47 other youth-centric venues for the dissemination of information  
48 and resources related to mental health. The spaces shall be  
49 easily accessible to youth and shall be promoted to ensure that  
50 youth are aware of the available mental health resources.

51 (4) The department, in collaboration with relevant  
52 agencies, shall be responsible for the implementation and  
53 enforcement of this act. A violation of this section may result  
54 in penalties, training requirements, or other appropriate  
55 measures as determined by department rule.

56 (5) Funding for the implementation of this section shall be  
57 allocated from state funds and supplemented by federal grants  
58 and private-sector partnerships, as necessary.

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Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.