

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [CS/HB 1237](#)

TITLE: Human Trafficking Awareness

SPONSOR(S): Booth, Overdorf

COMPANION BILL: [CS/SB 444](#) (Avila)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 113 Y's 0 N's

GOVERNOR'S ACTION: Approved

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to identify a free training curriculum regarding human trafficking awareness, by December 1, 2025. Each public school, including charter schools, must require that all instructional personnel, administrative personnel, and educational support personnel who have contact with students receive training on human trafficking awareness. Additionally, each employee must submit to the school an acknowledgement of having received the training, which must be retained by the school.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill requires, no later than December 1, 2025, the Department of Education (DOE) to identify a free training curriculum regarding [human trafficking awareness](#), which may be conducted either in-person or online. Such training must include:

- The definition of human trafficking and an explanation of the difference between sex trafficking and labor trafficking;
- Guidance specific to the public education sector concerning how to identify students who may be victims of human trafficking;
- Guidance concerning [the role of employees in reporting](#) and responding to suspected human trafficking; and
- A protocol for reporting suspected human trafficking, which must require that suspicion of human trafficking be reported to the Department of Children and Families or the Florida Human Trafficking Hotline. (Section [1](#)).

Each public school must require that all instructional personnel, administrative personnel, and educational support employees who have contact with students receive training on human trafficking awareness.

Each employee must submit to the school an acknowledgement of having received the training, which must be retained by the school.

Lastly, the bill clarifies that [charter schools](#) must comply with the requirement for the training on human trafficking awareness. (Section [2](#)).

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 21, 2025, ch. 2025-65, L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2025. (Section [3](#)).

STORAGE NAME: h1237z1

DATE: 5/22/2025

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking means transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, purchasing, patronizing, procuring, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploitation of that person.¹ Under federal law, the term “severe forms of trafficking in persons” includes labor² and sex trafficking.³ Victims can be found in legal and illegal labor industries, including child care, elder care, the drug trade, massage parlors, nail and hair salons, restaurants, hotels, factories, and farms.⁴ In 2022, a total of 1,912 persons were referred to U.S. attorneys for human trafficking offenses.⁵

Human Trafficking in Florida

Florida is ranked as the third highest state of reported human trafficking cases in the United States.⁶ Reports of commercially exploited children to the Florida Abuse Hotline for 2023 totaled 3,358 and 3,408 in 2022.⁷ In Florida, any person who knowingly, or in reckless disregard of the facts, engages in human trafficking, attempts to engage in human trafficking, or benefits financially by receiving anything of value from participation in a venture that has subjected a person to human trafficking for labor,⁸ services,⁹ or commercial sexual activity,¹⁰ commits a crime.¹¹

The Role of School Employees in Reporting Human Trafficking

Florida law requires that any person who knows or who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused by a parent, legal custodian, or other person responsible for their welfare or that the child is victim of sexual abuse must report such abuse to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Abuse Hotline.¹² Abuse is defined as any willful act or threatened act that results in physical, mental, or sexual abuse, injury, or harm which causes or is likely to cause a child’s physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired.¹³ Given this broad definition of abuse and the fact that it is to be liberally construed,¹⁴ any employee who suspects that a child is a victim of human trafficking must report their suspicions to the DCF Abuse Hotline. Failure to report a case of known or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult is a second-degree misdemeanor.¹⁵

¹ Section [787.06, F.S.](#)

² The term “labor trafficking” means the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. 22 USCA § 7102.

³ 22 USCA § 7102(11). The term “sex trafficking” means the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. 22 USC § 7102(12).

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, *What is Human Trafficking?* (last updated Jun. 26, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/what-is-human-trafficking> (last visited May 1, 2025).

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, *Human Trafficking Data Collection Activities, 2024* (Oct. 2024), available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/htdca24.pdf> (last visited May 1, 2025).

⁶ Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking, *The Issue*, <https://www.floridaallianceendht.com/the-issue/> (last visited May 1, 2025).

⁷ The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, *Annual Report on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Florida, 2024* (July 2024), available at <https://oppaga.fl.gov/Documents/Reports/24-04.pdf> (last visited May 1, 2025).

⁸ Section [787.06\(2\)\(e\), F.S.](#), defines “labor” as: work of economic or financial value.

⁹ Section [787.06\(2\)\(h\), F.S.](#), defines “services” as: any act committed at the behest of, under the supervision of, or for the benefit of another. The term includes, but is not limited to, forced marriage, servitude, or the removal of organs.

¹⁰ Section [787.06\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#), defines “commercial sexual activity” as any violation of ch. 796, F.S., relating to prostitution, or an attempt to commit any such offense, and includes sexually explicit performances and the production of pornography.

¹¹ Section [787.06\(3\), F.S.](#)

¹² Section [39.201, F.S.](#)

¹³ Section [39.001\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹⁴ See Section [39.001\(12\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵ Section [415.111, F.S.](#)

The Department of Education offers numerous resources regarding child human trafficking, including online training materials, hotlines, factsheets, and local contacts for reporting.¹⁶ Currently, schools are required to provide instruction regarding child human trafficking to students in grades K-12; however, there is no mandatory training for school personnel.¹⁷

Statewide Council on Human Trafficking

Florida law creates the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking (Council), within the Department of Legal Affairs (DLA), to enhance the development and coordination of state and local law enforcement and social services responses to fight commercial sexual exploitation as a form of human trafficking and to support victims.¹⁸ The Council is tasked with:

- Developing recommendations for human trafficking victim programs and services, including recommendations for certification criteria for safe houses and safe foster homes.
- Assessing the frequency and extent to which social media platforms are used to assist, facilitate, or support human trafficking within this state; establishing a process to detect such use on a consistent basis; and making recommendations on how to stop, reduce, or prevent social media platforms from being used for such purposes.
- Making recommendations for apprehending and prosecuting traffickers and enhancing coordination of responses.
- Annually holding a statewide policy summit.
- Working with the DCF to create and maintain an inventory of human trafficking programs and services in each county.
- Developing policy recommendations that advance the duties of the Council and further the efforts to combat human trafficking in the state.¹⁹

Direct-support Organization- Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking

Florida law requires DLA to establish a direct-support organization (DSO) to provide assistance, funding, and support to the Council.²⁰ The DSO incorporated in 2019 as the Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking.²¹ The DSO is statutorily required to be:

- A Florida not for profit corporation, incorporated under chapter 617, and approved by the Secretary of State;
- Organized and operated exclusively to conduct programs and activities; solicit funds; request and receive grants, gifts, and bequests of money; acquire, receive, hold, invest, and administer, in its own name, property and funds; and make expenditures to or for the direct or indirect benefit of the Council;²² and
- Certified by DLA, after review, to be operating in a manner consistent with the purposes of the DSO and in the best interests of the state.²³

The DSO in, conjunction with the Council, is required to form strategic partnerships to foster the development of community and private sector resources to advance the goals of the Council.²⁴

Currently, the DSO offers a one-hour training course that focuses on detecting human trafficking, best practices for reporting human trafficking, and the interventions and treatment for survivors of human trafficking which is used

¹⁶ See Florida Department of Education, *Human Trafficking*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/healthy-schools/human-trafficking.stml> (last visited May 1, 2025).

¹⁷ See Florida Department of Education, *Florida First State in Nation to Teach K-12 Child Trafficking Prevention*, <https://www.fldoe.org/newsroom/latest-news/florida-first-state-in-nation-to-teach-k-12-child-trafficking-prevention.stml> (last visited May 1, 2025).

¹⁸ Section 16.617, F.S.

¹⁹ Section 16.617(4), F.S.

²⁰ Section 16.618, F.S.

²¹ Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking, 2019-2020 Annual Report, https://www.floridaallianceendht.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2019-2020-Annual-Report_FINAL.pdf (last visited May 1, 2025).

²² Section 16.618(8)(a), F.S.

²³ Section 16.618(1), F.S.

²⁴ Section 16.618(5), F.S.

by certain healthcare professionals and public lodging establishments which are required by law to provide training on human trafficking.²⁵

Charter Schools

Charter schools are nonsectarian, public schools that operate under a performance contract with a sponsor.²⁶ This performance contract is known as a “charter.”²⁷ The charter exempts the school from many regulations applicable to traditional public schools to encourage the use of innovative learning methods.²⁸ One of the guiding principles of charter schools is to “meet high standards of student achievement while providing parents flexibility to choose among diverse educational opportunities within the state’s public school system.”²⁹

Charter schools are exempt from a number of Florida’s Early Learning-20 Education Code statutes,³⁰ except for statutes that pertain specifically to charter schools.³¹ Statutory provisions that expressly include charter schools within their scope include statutes pertaining to student assessment and school grading; the provision of services to students with disabilities; civil rights; student health, safety and welfare; secondary school start times, public records, public meetings and public inspection; criminal and civil penalties; and provisions relating to educator compensation, contracts and the substantive requirements relating to performance evaluations.³² Additionally, charter schools must be in compliance with statutes relating to school safety, including safe-school officers; school safety plans, tools, and reporting; school personnel training on youth mental health; and reporting of involuntary examinations.³³

Like traditional public schools, charter school operations are funded through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) and charter schools may not charge tuition.³⁴ Charter school students must participate in Florida’s coordinated screening and progress monitoring system and statewide assessments, and charter schools receive an annual school grade.³⁵ Teachers employed by or under contract with a charter school must be certified like those in traditional public schools.³⁶

An application for a new charter school may be made by an individual, teachers, parents, a group of individuals, a municipality or a legal entity organized under Florida law.³⁷ The school must be organized as a nonprofit organization, and may be operated by a municipality, a public entity authorized under the law, or a nonprofit organization.³⁸ While a charter school must be a public or nonprofit entity, it may be managed by a for-profit education management organization.³⁹

²⁵ Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking, *Training*, <https://www.floridaallianceendht.com/training/> (last visited May 1, 2025). The DSO also offers a course that lawyers can use for credits towards the Florida Bar’s Continuing Legal Education requirements. *Id.*

²⁶ Section [1002.33\(1\), \(7\), and \(9\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁷ Section [1002.33\(7\) and \(9\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

²⁸ Section [1002.33\(2\)\(b\)3. and \(16\), F.S.](#)

²⁹ Section [1002.33\(2\)\(a\)1., F.S.](#)

³⁰ Chapters 1000 through 1013, F.S., comprise the Florida Early Learning-20 Education Code. *See s. 1000.01(1), F.S.*

³¹ Section [1002.33\(16\), F.S.](#)

³² *Id.*

³³ Section [1002.33\(16\)\(b\)8.-15., F.S.](#)

³⁴ Section [1002.33\(9\)\(d\) and \(17\), F.S.](#)

³⁵ Section [1002.33\(16\)\(a\)2., F.S.](#); *see also ss. 1008.25(9), F.S., 1008.22, F.S., and 1008.34, F.S.*

³⁶ Section [1002.33\(12\)\(f\), F.S.](#)

³⁷ Section [1002.33\(3\)\(a\), F.S.](#); *see also* r. 6A-6.0786, F.A.C. and Florida Department of Education, Charter Schools, *Model Application Forms*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/charter-schools/charter-school-reference/> (last visited May 1, 2025).

³⁸ Section [1002.33\(12\)\(i\), F.S.](#)

³⁹ *Id.*