

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Rules

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BILL: CS/SB 444

INTRODUCER: Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education; Senator Avila and others

SUBJECT: Human Trafficking Awareness

DATE: April 18, 2025

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Gray</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	<b>Fav/CS</b>
3.	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>Yeatman</u>	<u>RC</u>	<b>Favorable</b>

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**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

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**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 444 requires public school personnel to receive human trafficking awareness training. The bill requires a district- or school-based administrator to annually provide training to instructional personnel, school nurses and doctors, and other school personnel who come in regular contact with students. Such personnel must annually acknowledge receipt of training.

The bill requires each school district to develop a comprehensive training curriculum on human trafficking awareness, which must be submitted to the Department of Education for approval. The training must include:

- The definition of human trafficking and the difference between sex trafficking and labor trafficking.
- Guidance for public school personnel concerning how to identify students who may be victims of human trafficking and in reporting and responding to suspected human trafficking.
- A protocol for reporting suspected human trafficking, which includes reporting such suspicion to the Department of Children and Families or the Florida Human Trafficking Hotline.
- The bill specifies that charter schools must comply with the human trafficking awareness training.

The bill is not expected to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

The bill is effective July 1, 2025.

## II. Present Situation:

### Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery.<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking is a global crime that trades in people of all genders, ages and backgrounds and exploits them for profit. Human trafficking generally takes two forms: sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.<sup>2</sup>

Traffickers use various techniques to instill fear in victims and to keep them enslaved. Some traffickers keep their victims under lock and key. However, the most frequently used practices are less obvious techniques that include isolating victims from the public and family members; confiscating passports, visas, or other identification documents; using or threatening to use violence toward victims or their families; telling victims that they will be imprisoned or deported for immigration violations if they contact authorities; and controlling the victims' funds by holding the money ostensibly for safekeeping.<sup>3</sup>

There are approximately 30 million people enslaved throughout the world with 2.5 million located right here in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, every two minutes a child is trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

### *Department of Children and Families*

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) tracks human trafficking allegations in two primary categories:

- Human Trafficking – Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Child (CSEC): This maltreatment type is used for cases in which the allegations involve commercial sexual exploitation of a child (e.g., adult entertainment clubs, escort services, prostitution, etc.).
- Human Trafficking – Labor: This maltreatment type is used in cases in which the allegations involve issues associated with forced labor, slavery, or servitude that do not appear to be sexual in nature.<sup>5</sup>

In Fiscal Year 2023-2024, the total number of reports accepted by the Florida Abuse Hotline alleging one of the human trafficking maltreatments was 2,137 involving 1,592 children. Of the

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<sup>1</sup> Section 787.06(1), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *What is Human Trafficking?* <https://www.ice.gov/features/human-trafficking> (last visited April 1, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Section 787.06(1), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Human Trafficking*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/healthy-schools/human-trafficking.stml> (last visited April 1, 2025)

<sup>5</sup> Florida Department of Children and Families, *Human Trafficking of Children Annual Report* (Oct. 1, 2024), available at [https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2024-10/Human\\_Trafficking\\_Report\\_2023-24.pdf](https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2024-10/Human_Trafficking_Report_2023-24.pdf), at 3.

2,137 accepted reports, 1,965 (91.95 percent) were coded as CSEC and 172 (8.05 percent) reports were for Labor Trafficking.

County-level data reveals that Hillsborough County received the highest number of reports of human trafficking, with 220 reports, followed closely by Miami-Dade and Broward counties, each with 199 reports. Duval County received 148 reports, and Orange County reported 139 cases.<sup>6</sup>

### **Human Trafficking and Students**

Of 22,326 trafficking victims and survivors identified through contacts with the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2019, at least 5,359 were under age 18. Many underage victims of human trafficking are students in the American school system. No community, school, socioeconomic group, or student demographic is immune. Cases of child trafficking are found in every area of the country—in rural, suburban, and urban settings alike.<sup>7</sup>

Indicators that school staff and administrators should be aware of concerning a potential victim are if a child:

- Demonstrates an inability to attend school on a regular basis and/or has unexplained absences.
- Frequently runs away from home.
- Makes references to frequent travel to other cities.
- Exhibits bruises or other signs of physical trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, anxiety, or fear.
- Lacks control over his or her schedule and/or identification or travel documents.
- Is hungry, malnourished, deprived of sleep, or inappropriately dressed (based on weather conditions or surroundings).
- Shows signs of drug addiction.
- Has coached/rehearsed responses to questions.

Additional signs that may indicate sex trafficking include the child:

- Demonstrates a sudden change in attire, personal hygiene, relationships, or material possessions.
- Acts uncharacteristically promiscuous and/or makes references to sexual situations or terminology that are beyond age-specific norms.
- Has a “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” who is noticeably older.
- Attempts to conceal recent scars.

Additional signs that may indicate labor trafficking include if the child:

- Expresses need to pay off a debt.
- Expresses concern for family members’ safety if he or she shares too much information.
- Works long hours and receives little or no payment.

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<sup>6</sup> Florida Department of Children and Families, *Human Trafficking of Children Annual Report* (Oct. 1, 2024), available at [https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2024-10/Human\\_Trafficking\\_Report\\_2023-24.pdf](https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2024-10/Human_Trafficking_Report_2023-24.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/human-trafficking-americas-schools> (last visited April 1, 2025).

- Cares for children not from his or her own family.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Human Trafficking Education in Public Schools***

As a part of required comprehensive age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate K-12 instruction students must receive instruction on the prevention of child sexual abuse, exploitation, and human trafficking. For students in grades six-12, the instruction must also include the various effects of social media including predatory behavior and human trafficking on the Internet.<sup>9</sup>

Age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs and instruction to students in grades K-12 related to child trafficking prevention and awareness and must address, at a minimum, the following topics:

- Recognition of signs of human trafficking;
- Awareness of resources, including national, state and local resources;
- Prevention of the abuse of and addiction to alcohol, nicotine, and drugs;
- Information on the prevalence, nature, and strategies to reduce the risk of human trafficking, techniques to set healthy boundaries, and how to safely seek assistance; and
- Information on how social media and mobile device applications are used for human trafficking.<sup>10</sup>

The Department of Education (DOE) maintains a human trafficking webpage<sup>11</sup> with information about the human trafficking education; resources on abuse, including sexual abuse, and human trafficking prevention for professional learning purposes; and materials for parents, guardians, and other caretakers of students.

### ***Human Trafficking Training for Educators***

According to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), schools have several responsibilities regarding child trafficking. To be effective, schools should increase staff awareness and educate staff on the nature of trafficking and on which youth are most vulnerable to it, increase parent and student awareness of the risks and realities of trafficking, and develop district or schoolwide policies and protocols for identifying and supporting trafficking victims. Basic training on trafficking risk factors and indicators should be provided to school personnel, particularly those who work with students in higher-risk groups, or staff who, by virtue of their positions, are most likely to notice red flags. These school staff include school counselors, bus drivers, special education teachers, attendance officers, and school nurses.<sup>12</sup>

Several national training modules regarding human trafficking are available, such as:

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Human Trafficking of Children in the United States-A Fact Sheet for Schools*, <https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/human-trafficking/human-trafficking-of-children-in-the-united-states-a-fact-sheet-for-schools> (last visited April 1, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> Section 1003.42(2), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Rule 6A-1.094124(6), F.A.C.

<sup>11</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Human Trafficking*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/healthy-schools/human-trafficking.stml> (last visited April 1, 2025).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Human Trafficking in America's Schools* (Jan. 2021), available at <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/documents/human-trafficking/human-trafficking-americas-schools.pdf>, at 15.

- The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, through a contract with the USDOE, provides educators with an introduction to human trafficking prevention. It includes three brief videos that provide information key to identifying potential trafficking, generating appropriate school-level responses, and efforts to prevent trafficking of students. Each video includes comments by both content and lived experience subject matter experts, as well as reflection questions for educators to consider individually or as a group.<sup>13</sup>
- The Blue Campaign by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is a national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking, and how to appropriately respond to possible cases. The Blue Campaign works closely with DHS partners to develop general awareness trainings, as well as specific educational resources to help reduce victimization within vulnerable populations. Blue Campaign’s educational awareness objectives consists of two foundational elements, prevention of human trafficking and protection of exploited persons. The training on human trafficking includes general awareness, labor trafficking, and sex trafficking.<sup>14</sup>

### **Required Public School Training Related to Student Health, Safety, and Welfare**

Florida teachers, administrator, and staff are required to complete a number of trainings regarding student well-being.

All teachers in grades K-12 must participate in continuing education training provided by the DCF on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.<sup>15</sup>

The DOE is required to develop an evidence-based youth mental health awareness and assistance training program to help school personnel identify and understand the signs of emotional disturbance, mental illness, and substance use disorders and provide such personnel with the skills to help a person who is developing or experiencing an emotional disturbance, mental health, or substance use problem. School districts must annually certify that at least 80 percent of school personnel have received this training.<sup>16</sup>

The DOE, in consultation with the Statewide Office for Suicide Prevention and suicide prevention experts, shall develop a list of approved youth suicide awareness and prevention training materials and suicide screening instruments that may be used for training in youth suicide awareness, suicide prevention, and suicide screening for instructional personnel in public schools. A school is designated a “Suicide Prevention Certified School” if it meets certain staff training requirements.<sup>17</sup>

Each district school board must adopt a dating violence and abuse policy for school and school events with procedures for responding to such incidents of dating violence or abuse, including

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<sup>13</sup> National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, *Addressing Human Trafficking in Schools, Staff Development Series*, <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/addressing-human-trafficking-americas-schools-staff-development-series> (last visited April 1, 2025).

<sup>14</sup> Department of Homeland Security, *Blue Campaign*, <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign> (last visited April 1, 2025).

<sup>15</sup> Section 1012.98(13), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Section 1012.584(1) and (5), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Section 1012.583, F.S.

accommodations for students experiencing dating violence or abuse. The district school board must provide training for teachers, staff, and school administrators to implement the policy.<sup>18</sup>

A district school safety specialist, or designee, must provide for the necessary training and resources to students and school district staff in matters relating to youth mental health awareness and assistance; emergency procedures, including active shooter training; and school safety and security. Additionally, each district school board and charter school governing board must adopt an active assailant response plan. Each district school superintendent and charter school principal must annually certify that all school personnel have received training on the active assailant response plan.<sup>19</sup>

Each athletic coach or sponsor of outdoor-related extracurricular activities must annually complete training in exertional heat illness identification, prevention, and response, including effective administration of cooling zones. A school employee or volunteer with current training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and use of a defibrillator must be present at each athletic event or practice.<sup>20</sup>

Each school district must provide training to any school personnel authorized to use positive behavior interventions and supports pursuant to school district policy on the use of physical restraint. The training must include risk assessment procedures, safe and appropriate restraint techniques, documentation and reporting requirements, CPR and medical emergencies.<sup>21</sup>

Each school employee whose duties include regular contact with the student who has an individualized seizure action plan must complete training in the care of students with epilepsy and seizure disorders. The DOE must identify on its website one or more free online training courses.<sup>22</sup>

### **Charter Schools**

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools created through an agreement or “charter” that provides flexibility relative to regulations for traditional public schools. During the 2022-2023 school year, 382,367 students were enrolled in 726 charter schools in 46 school districts.<sup>23</sup> In general, charter schools are exempt for most Florida laws that govern public schools. The specific regulations that charter schools must comply with are named in law and include requirements such as:

- Provisions to students with disabilities.
- Civil rights.
- Student health, safety, and welfare.
- Secondary school start times.
- Public records, public meetings and public inspection.

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<sup>18</sup> Section 1006.148, F.S.

<sup>19</sup> Section 1006.07(6), F.S.

<sup>20</sup> Section 1006.165(1), F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Section 1003.573(5), F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Section 1006.0626, F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education & Parental Choice, *Fact Sheet Florida’s Charter Schools* (October 2023), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7696/urlt/Charter-Sept-2022.pdf>.

- Threat management teams.
- School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting.
- Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool.
- Mental health awareness and assistance training.<sup>24</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

This bill creates s. 1006.481, F.S., to establish requirements for human trafficking awareness training in public schools.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to identify 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 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 of the public school system in reporting and responding to suspected human trafficking.
- A protocol for reporting suspected human trafficking which must require that suspicion of human trafficking of a child be reported to the Department of Children and Families or the Florida Human Trafficking Hotline at either entity's designated telephone number.

Each public school shall require that the following staff human trafficking awareness training:

- Instructional personnel, to include classroom teachers, school counselors, social workers, career specialists, school psychologists, librarians and media specialists, learning specialists, and paraprofessionals.
- School administrators.
- Educational Support Employees, which includes, but is not limited to, doctors, nurses, secretaries, craft workers, and service workers.

Each employee must submit to the school district 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.

The bill is effective July 1, 2025.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

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<sup>24</sup> Section 1002.33(16), F.S.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The bill is not expected to have a fiscal impact on the Department of Education or on the school districts, as the bill requires the department of education to identify free training curriculum, that may be conducted either in-person or online.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates section 1006.481 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS by Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education on April 10, 2025:**

The committee substitute amends the bill to:

- Require the Department of Education to identify a no-cost human trafficking awareness training curriculum that will provide guidance on identifying students who may be victims of human trafficking and on the requirements and procedures for reporting; and
- Require school districts to ensure that instructional personnel, school administrators, and staff who come into contact with students receive this training, either in-person or online.

The committee substitute also clarifies that charter schools must comply with requirements on human trafficking.

**B. Amendments:**

None.