

By the Committee on Fiscal Policy; the Appropriations Committee on Criminal and Civil Justice; and Senators Avila and Arrington

594-03847-25

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A bill to be entitled
An act relating to the Spectrum Alert; creating s.
937.0401, F.S.; providing legislative findings;
requiring the Department of Law Enforcement, in
cooperation with the Department of Transportation, the
Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, the
Department of the Lottery, and local law enforcement
agencies, to establish and implement the Spectrum
Alert by a specified date; requiring the department,
in cooperation with specified entities, to develop a
training program and alert system for missing children
with autism spectrum disorder which is compatible with
existing alert systems by a certain date; specifying
requirements for the training program; requiring the
Department of Law Enforcement to establish specified
policies and procedures; authorizing the department to
adopt rules; providing an appropriation; providing an
effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 937.0401, Florida Statutes, is created
to read:

937.0401 Spectrum Alert.—

(1) The Legislature finds that autism spectrum disorder
(ASD) significantly affects children in this country, creating
unique challenges that can lead to critical safety risks, such
as elopement or wandering behaviors in children. Children with
ASD are prone to wander from safe environments at a higher rate

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than their non-autistic peers. Elopement frequently results in
severe consequences, including fatal traffic accidents and
drownings. Notably, drowning is the leading cause of death of
children with ASD in this country, with Florida ranking fifth in
the nation. The high propensity for elopement and the
ineffectiveness of traditional search and response methods
necessitate a robust system that will swiftly locate and ensure
the safety of missing children with ASD. The Legislature finds
that a standardized system is necessary to aid in the search for
a missing child with ASD.

(2) By July 1, 2026, the Department of Law Enforcement, in
cooperation with the Department of Transportation, the
Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, the Department
of the Lottery, and local law enforcement agencies, shall
establish and implement the Spectrum Alert to enhance the safety
and well-being of children with ASD through immediate and
effective community and emergency response.

(3) By July 1, 2026, the Department of Law Enforcement, in
cooperation with the Department of Transportation, the
Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, the Department
of the Lottery, and local law enforcement agencies, shall:

(a) Develop a training program and alert system for missing
children with ASD which is compatible with existing alert
systems. The training program must implement crisis intervention
team training to equip law enforcement officers with the skills
to understand ASD and other mental illnesses, to de-escalate
interactions with children in crisis, to facilitate appropriate
interventions, and to respond effectively to a reported missing
child emergency when the child has ASD.

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59 (b) Establish policies and procedures for responding to a
60 reported missing child emergency when the child has ASD. The
61 policies and procedures must, at a minimum, provide for all of
62 the following:

63 1. Immediate and widespread dissemination of critical
64 information when a child with ASD is reported missing.

65 2. Enhancement of emergency response teams' competence by
66 informing them of the unique behaviors and needs of children
67 with ASD.

68 3. Measures to increase public awareness and understanding
69 of the risks associated with autism-related elopement, to foster
70 community support for children with ASD.

71 (c) Require a law enforcement agency, at a minimum, to do
72 all of the following upon receiving such a report:

73 1. Contact media outlets in the affected area or
74 surrounding jurisdictions.

75 2. Inform all on-duty law enforcement officers of the
76 reported missing child with ASD.

77 3. Communicate the report to all other law enforcement
78 agencies in the counties surrounding the county in which the
79 report was filed.

80 (4) The Department of Law Enforcement may adopt rules to
81 implement and administer this section.

82 Section 3. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of
83 \$190,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the
84 Operating Trust Fund within the Department of Law Enforcement to
85 the Department of Law Enforcement for the purpose of
86 implementing the Spectrum Alert.

87 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.