

**By Senator Gaetz**

1-01335A-26

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to a statewide project for missing persons with special needs; reviving, readopting, and amending s. 937.041, F.S., relating to the missing persons with special needs statewide project; providing that the project is created through the centers for autism and related disabilities; requiring that participants for the project be selected based on certain criteria; deleting obsolete language; providing appropriations; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Notwithstanding the repeal of section 937.041, Florida Statutes, in section 13 of chapter 2020-3, Laws of Florida, section 937.041, Florida Statutes, is revived, readopted, and amended to read:

937.041 Missing persons with special needs statewide project.-

(1) There is created a statewide project, to be known as "Project Leo," through the centers ~~a center~~ for autism and related disabilities established under s. 1004.55. Each center that opts to join the project shall distribute personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs in the case of elopement.

(2) Participants for the project shall be selected based on criteria developed by the respective center for autism and related disabilities based on the specific needs of the respective each center's service area counties prescribed under

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30 s. 1004.55. Criteria for participation in the project must  
31 include, at a minimum, the person's risk of elopement. The  
32 qualifying participants shall be selected on a first-come,  
33 first-served basis by the respective centers to the extent of  
34 available funding within their existing resources. The project  
35 must be voluntary and free of charge to participants.

36 (3) Under the project, personal devices to aid search-and-  
37 rescue efforts shall be provided by the respective center to the  
38 sheriff's offices of the participating counties. The devices  
39 shall be distributed to project participants by the county  
40 sheriff's offices in conjunction with the respective center. The  
41 respective center shall fund any costs associated with  
42 monitoring the devices.

43 (4) The project shall operate to the extent of available  
44 funding within the respective center's existing resources.

45 ~~(5) This section expires June 30, 2019.~~

46 Section 2. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of  
47 \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General  
48 Revenue Fund to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities  
49 at the University of Florida, the sum of \$250,000 in  
50 nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund  
51 to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at Florida  
52 Atlantic University, the sum of \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds  
53 is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Center for  
54 Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of South  
55 Florida, and the sum of \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds is  
56 appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Center for  
57 Autism and Related Disabilities at Florida State University. The  
58 funds provided to each center shall be used solely for the

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59 purchase of personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts  
60 for persons with special needs in the case of elopement.

61 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.