

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.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

BILL: SB 624

INTRODUCER: Senator Yarborough

SUBJECT: Batterers' Intervention Program Activities

DATE: December 29, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Kennedy</u>	<u>Tuszynski</u>	<u>CF</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>JU</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 624 adds a new subsection to s. 741.325, F.S., authorizing Batterers' Intervention Programs (BIPs) to offer supplemental faith-based activities, while explicitly prohibiting programs from requiring participant involvement in such activities as a condition of program participation.

The bill likely does not have a fiscal impact on state government. *See* Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill is effective July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Batterers' Intervention Programs (BIPs)

A BIP is designed to address and change the behavior of an individual who has committed acts of domestic violence. These programs aim to enhance accountability,¹ reduce recidivism, and promote the safety of victims of Domestic Violence by educating participants on the impact of their actions and teaching them non-violent conflict resolution strategies.² Unlike anger management programs, BIPs focus on power and control dynamics that fuel abusive behaviors.³

¹ The Florida Department of Children and Families, Child Welfare and Child Protection (Domestic Violence program page), available at: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/abuse/domestic-violence/programs/child-welfare-child-protection> (last visited 12/30/2025).

² Rule 65H-2.017, F.A.C.; The Florida State Courts, *What Is the Difference Between Anger Management and a Certified Batterer Intervention Program (BIP)*, available at: <https://www.flcourts.gov/content/download/864671/file/Differences%20between%20AM%20and%20BIP.pdf> (last visited 12/30/2025)

³ The Florida Department of Children and Families, *Common Differences Between Anger Management and Batterer Intervention Programs*, available at: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2025->

If an individual is found guilty of, has adjudication withheld on, or pleads nolo contendere to a crime of domestic violence, the court must impose a minimum term of 1 year of probation and require the defendant to attend and complete a batterers' intervention program as a condition of probation.⁴ The statute allows judicial discretion to waive this requirement if the court states on the record why a batterers' intervention program might be inappropriate.⁵ The Department of Children and Families (DCF) currently allows BIP providers to include supplemental faith-based activities,⁶ however this faith-based content cannot be a mandatory part of program curriculum.⁷

State Law

In 1995, the Florida Legislature enacted requirements for BIPs, including a minimum duration of 29 weeks and a curriculum based on cognitive behavioral therapy models that focus on power and control dynamics in abusive relationships.⁸ The following year, the Legislature directed the DCF to oversee certification and compliance of BIPs to maintain program integrity and effectiveness.⁹ Unless deemed ineligible the intervention program condition must be imposed.¹⁰

In September of 2022, the DCF finalized a rule that created certification requirements for BIP.¹¹ This rule specifically prohibits BIP curriculum from requiring faith-based ideology associated with a particular religion or denomination.¹² Generally, BIP curricula must follow a cognitive behavioral therapy or psychoeducational model, addressing power and control dynamics and incorporate elements that include:¹³

- The batterer taking responsibility for the violence.
- Viewing intimate partner violence as a learned behavior.
- Healthy expression of feelings.
- Communication and listening skills.
- Negotiation and conflict resolution.
- Not involving victim participation, fair fighting techniques, or faith-based ideology associated with a particular religion or denomination.

As of December 30, 2025, there were a total 79 providers statewide offering BIP programs, available to circuit courts and individuals who require services.¹⁴ Of these programs there are several who are faith-based, including the Salvation Army, Healing Hearts Ministry, Community

[04/Common%20Differences%20Between%20Anger%20Management%20and%20Batterer%20Intervention%20Programs.pdf](#) (last visited 12/30/2025).

⁴ Section 741.281, F.S.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Florida Department of Children and Families, *2025 Agency Analysis*, p.2 (on file with the Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee).

⁷ Rule 65H-2, F.A.C.

⁸ Section 741.325, F.S.; Ch. 95-195, Laws of Fla.

⁹ Section 741.327, F.S.; Ch. 96-312, Laws of Fla.

¹⁰ Section 741.325, F.S.

¹¹ Rule 65H-2.017, F.A.C.

¹² Rule 65H-2.017(2)(e), F.A.C.

¹³ *See generally* Rule 65H-2.017, F.A.C.

¹⁴ The Florida Department of Children and Families, *Find a Local Batterers' Intervention Program*, available at: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/abuse/domestic-violence/resources/find-local-batterers-intervention-program> (last visited 12/30/25).

Hands of Hope, and Free Spirit Evangelistic Outreach Ministries.¹⁵ These faith-based programs are certified by the DCF and provide BIP programs without integrated faith-based content.

First Amendment Free Exercise Challenge

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution contains what are known as the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses. Together those clauses read:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .”¹⁶

This language has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States to generally mean that the federal and state governments cannot create law that establishes the belief in a religion or prohibit citizens from exercising their religious beliefs freely.

The DCF recently defended a First Amendment challenge in federal court related to the current provision of Rule 65H-2.017, F.A.C., that prohibits BIP curriculum from including faith-based ideology associated with a particular religion or denomination.¹⁷ The court held that the DCF rule prohibiting “faith-based ideology associated with a particular religion or denomination” was government speech and not violative of the free expression or exercise clause of the First Amendment and that “an observer of court-ordered BIP sessions would reasonably believe the government has endorsed the message expressed during that program.”¹⁸

On appeal, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit affirmed the district court’s ruling, agreeing that the required BIP curriculum constitutes government speech. The court held that the state has historically used BIPs to communicate its own message, that participants would reasonably associate the program’s content with the government, and that the state exercises substantial control over the content.¹⁹ The court also held DCF’s authority to exclude faith-based ideology associated with a particular religion or denomination from certified BIP programming.²⁰

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 624 amends s. 741.325, F.S., to expand the permissible scope of batterers’ intervention program activities by allowing programs to offer supplemental faith-based activities in addition to required program components.

These changes allow participant choice in programs that may offer faith-based activities and content. However, while the language allows supplemental faith-based activities, it clearly

¹⁵ *Supra*, Note 6.

¹⁶ U.S. CONST. amend. I.

¹⁷ *Nussbaumer v. Harris*, United States District Court, Northern District of Fla., Case No. 4:22cv448-MW-MAF (November 15, 2024).

¹⁸ *Supra*, Note 6, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Nussbaumer v. Secretary, Florida Dept of Children and Families*, United States Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit, No. 24-14082, 2025 (11th Cir. September 4, 2025).

²⁰ *Id.*

prevents said programs from *requiring* participation in any offered supplemental faith-based activities as a condition of completing the batterers' intervention program.

The bill provides for an effective date of July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill amends s. 741.325 of Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

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

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
