

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to community rehabilitation programs;
3 amending s. 413.014, F.S.; providing minimum standards
4 a community rehabilitation program must meet to
5 qualify to enter into a cooperative agreement with the
6 Division of Blind Services to provide certain
7 services; authorizing the director of the division to
8 temporarily waive certain requirements for certain
9 purposes; providing that a community rehabilitation
10 program that meets specified requirements is
11 considered a priority service provider for purposes of
12 program funding; authorizing the division to enter
13 into a cooperative agreement with a noncommunity
14 rehabilitation program private vendor under certain
15 circumstances; providing requirements for such
16 cooperative agreement; requiring the Florida
17 Association of Agencies Serving the Blind, Inc., to
18 coordinate with the division to ensure cooperative
19 agreements meet certain needs; providing for funding;
20 providing an effective date.

21
22 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

23
24 **Section 1. Section 413.014, Florida Statutes, is amended**
25 **to read:**

26 413.014 Community rehabilitation programs.—

27 (1) The Division of Blind Services shall enter into
28 cooperative agreements with community rehabilitation programs as
29 defined by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, to be the
30 service providers for the blind citizens of their communities.

31 (2) The division shall, as rapidly as feasible, increase
32 the amount of such services provided by community rehabilitation
33 programs under subsection (3). The goal shall be to decrease the
34 amount of such services provided by division employees and to
35 increase to the maximum extent allowed by federal law the amount
36 of such services provided through cooperative agreements with
37 community service providers. The division shall seek, to the
38 maximum extent allowed by federal and state law and regulation,
39 all available federal funds for such purposes. Funds and in-kind
40 matching contributions from community and private sources shall
41 be used to maximize federal funds. Unless prohibited by federal
42 law or regulation, the share of the federal vocational
43 rehabilitation grant apportioned for services to the blind may
44 not be less than 17 percent.

45 (3) A community rehabilitation program must meet all of
46 the following requirements to enter into a cooperative agreement
47 with the division to provide services to persons who are blind
48 or visually impaired:

49 (a) Be a qualified nonprofit agency for the blind as
50 defined in s. 413.033(3) and be organized and operated

51 exclusively for charitable purposes under s. 501(c)(3) of the
52 Internal Revenue Code or be an approved program at a state
53 college or university.

54 (b) Maintain current accreditation from at least one of
55 the following national accrediting organizations:

56 1. The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation
57 Facilities.

58 2. The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the
59 Blind and Visually Impaired.

60 3. Any other nationally recognized accrediting body for
61 vision rehabilitation services as determined by the director of
62 the division.

63 (c) Employ staff who hold current, valid certification
64 from at least one of the following:

65 1. The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation
66 and Education Professionals.

67 2. The National Blindness Professional Certification
68 Board.

69 3. Any other nationally recognized certifying body for
70 vision rehabilitation professionals as determined by the
71 director of the division.

72 (d) Provide services required under the cooperative
73 agreement by the division, including, but not limited to, the
74 following:

75 1. Activities of daily living.

76 2. Assessments.

77 3. Assistive technology training.

78 4. Guidance and career counseling.

79 5. Communication skills training.

80 6. Community integration.

81 7. Counseling.

82 8. Low vision training.

83 9. Orientation and mobility training.

84 10. Preemployment transition services, including, but not
85 limited to, career coaching, development, and placement;
86 workplace readiness; personal assistance; vocational
87 rehabilitation; technology training; and transportation
88 services.

89 11. Recreation and leisure activities training.

90 12. Self-advocacy training.

91 13. Sensory and cognitive development.

92 14. Other services as determined by the director of the
93 division as may be required by state and federal guidelines.

94
95 The director of the division may temporarily waive staff
96 requirements and community rehabilitation program requirements
97 under this subsection for approval of new community
98 rehabilitation program organizations.

99 (4) (a) A community rehabilitation program that meets the
100 requirements in subsection (3) is a priority service provider

101 for purposes of program funding. In addition to the requirements
102 in subsection (3), the community rehabilitation program shall be
103 qualified, accredited, and certified with evidence-supported
104 outcomes aligned with the federal Rehabilitation Services
105 Administration performance indicators for services to persons
106 who are blind or visually impaired to ensure quality, safety,
107 accountability, and sustainability.

108 (b) In the event a community rehabilitation program is
109 unable to provide services to a specific client for reasons
110 including client choice, suspension of services, capacity, or
111 timeliness, the division may enter into a cooperative agreement
112 for services with a noncommunity rehabilitation program private
113 vendor. The noncommunity rehabilitation program private vendor
114 must meet the requirements in subsection (3) and comply with all
115 requirements provided in the community rehabilitation program
116 cooperative agreement to ensure quality, safety, accountability,
117 and sustainability. If the division enters into a cooperative
118 agreement with a noncommunity rehabilitation program private
119 vendor to provide services, the community rehabilitation program
120 serving that same geographic area must be notified by the
121 division of the name of the private vendor to ensure that the
122 client receives the same level of high-quality service offered
123 by the community rehabilitation program.

124 (5) The Florida Association of Agencies Serving the Blind,
125 Inc., shall coordinate with the division to ensure cooperative

agreements for services meet the needs of blind and visually impaired clients served by community rehabilitation program member organizations and act on behalf of such clients on cooperative agreement issues or other issues in the best interest of serving the clients.

(6) As authorized by and consistent with funding appropriated in the General Appropriations Act, the Florida Association of Agencies Serving the Blind, Inc., may submit requests to the Legislature for funding for community rehabilitation programs from the funds available as provided in the General Appropriations Act. The division shall disperse these funds to community rehabilitation programs that are considered priority service providers under paragraph (4)(a) within 45 days after receipt of a qualified invoice from a community rehabilitation program with subsequent monthly payments thereafter.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.