

House Bill No. 1069

An act relating to the Family Readiness Program; creating s. 250.5206, F.S.; creating the Family Readiness Program within the Department of Military Affairs; providing purpose of the program; providing for program funding and use of program funds; specifying eligible services and eligible program recipients; providing procedure with respect to requests for assistance and award of funds under the program; providing for monthly audit reviews of the program; providing for annual reports; providing rulemaking authority of the Department of Military Affairs; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 250.5206, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

250.5206 Family Readiness Program.—The Department of Military Affairs shall establish a state Family Readiness Program headed by a program director and based on the United States Department of Defense National Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Strategic Plan 2004-2005 initiative.

(1) PROGRAM PURPOSE.—The purpose of the program shall be to provide need-based assistance to families of service members of the Florida National Guard and United States Reserve Forces, including the Coast Guard Reserves, who are on active duty serving in the Global War on Terrorism and who are federally deployed or participating in state operations for homeland defense.

(2) FUNDING.—Implementation of the program is subject to appropriations expressly provided for this purpose.

(3) ELIGIBLE SERVICES.—Program funds may be used in emergency situations to purchase critically needed services, including, but not limited to, reasonable living expenses, housing, vehicles, equipment or renovations necessary to meet disability needs, and health care.

(4) ELIGIBILITY.—Eligible recipients shall include persons designated as beneficiaries on the United States Department of Defense Form 93, or who are otherwise dependents of eligible service members, and who are residents of the State of Florida.

(5) REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE; REVIEW; AWARDS.—Requests for assistance shall be validated and assessed at the local level by a federal Family Center Support Specialist stationed at a state armory or at a reserve facility by a designated official. Recommendations subsequent to assessment and validation shall be forwarded to the program director, who shall review the recommendations for eligibility, appropriateness, and sufficiency of documentation. The Adjutant General or his or her designee shall receive the recommendations from the program director and is authorized to award funds pursuant to subsections (3) and (4).

(6) AUDITS.—The inspector general of the department shall conduct a monthly audit review of the program.

(7) ANNUAL REPORT.—The department shall maintain sufficient data to provide an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature on the families served under the program, the types of services provided, and the allocation of funds spent.

(8) RULES.—The department is authorized to adopt rules necessary to implement this program, including procedures for applying for assistance, qualifying services, and criteria for eligibility.

Section 2. The sum of \$5 million, which includes \$10,000 in operating capital outlay and authorizes 3 other-personal- service positions, is appropriated for fiscal year 2005-2006 from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Military Affairs for the Family Readiness Program to provide need-based assistance to the family members eligible under s. 250.5206, Florida Statutes.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2005.

Approved by the Governor May 25, 2005.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 25, 2005.