

CHAPTER 2016-186

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 230

An act relating to missing persons with special needs; creating s. 937.041, F.S.; creating pilot projects in specified counties to provide personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs; providing for administration of the projects; requiring reports; providing for expiration; providing appropriations; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 937.041, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

937.041 Missing persons with special needs pilot projects.—

(1)(a) There is created a pilot project in Alachua, Baker, Columbia, Hamilton, and Suwannee Counties, to be known as “Project Leo,” to provide personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs in the case of elopement.

(b) There is created an additional pilot project in Palm Beach County to provide personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs in the case of elopement.

(c) There is created an additional pilot project in Hillsborough County to provide personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs in the case of elopement.

(2)(a)1. Participants for the pilot project specified in paragraph (1)(a) shall be selected based on criteria developed by the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of Florida.

2. Participants for the pilot project specified in paragraph (1)(b) shall be selected based on criteria developed by the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at Florida Atlantic University.

3. Participants for the pilot project specified in paragraph (1)(c) shall be selected based on criteria developed by the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida.

(b) Criteria for participation in the pilot projects must include, at a minimum, the person’s risk of elopement. The qualifying participants shall be selected on a first-come, first-served basis by the respective centers to the extent of available funding within their existing resources. Each project must be voluntary and free of charge to participants.

(3) Under each pilot project, personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts which are attachable to clothing or otherwise worn shall be provided by the respective center to the sheriff’s offices of the participating counties.

The devices shall be distributed to project participants by the county sheriff's offices in conjunction with the respective center. The respective center shall fund any costs associated with monitoring the devices.

(4) Each center shall submit a preliminary report by December 1, 2016, and a final report by December 15, 2017, to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives describing the implementation and operation of its pilot project. At a minimum, each report must include the criteria used to select participants, the number of participants, the nature of the participants' special needs, the number of participants who elope, the amount of time taken to rescue such participants following elopement, and the outcome of any rescue attempts. Each final report shall also provide recommendations for modification or continued implementation of the project.

(5) Each project shall operate to the extent of available funding within the respective center's existing resources.

(6) This section expires June 30, 2018.

Section 2. For the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the sum of \$100,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of Florida, the sum of \$100,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at Florida Atlantic University, and the sum of \$100,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida. The funds provided to each center shall be used for the purchase of personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs in the case of elopement.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016.

Approved by the Governor April 6, 2016.

Filed in Office Secretary of State April 6, 2016.