

CHAPTER 2020-104

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 573

An act relating to first responders and correctional officers; creating s. 111.09, F.S.; providing definitions; prohibiting certain persons who participate in peer support communication with a first responder from testifying or divulging specified information under certain circumstances; providing exceptions; prohibiting liability and a cause of action under certain circumstances; providing construction; reordering and amending s. 112.531, F.S.; revising definitions; amending s. 112.532, F.S.; specifying that an allegation or complaint of misconduct against a law enforcement officer or a correctional officer may originate from any source; amending s. 112.533, F.S.; authorizing law enforcement and correctional agencies to request a separate agency to conduct an investigation of a complaint under certain circumstances; specifying requirements for such investigations; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 111.09, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

111.09 Peer support for first responders.—

(1) For purposes of this section, the term:

(a) “First responder” has the same meaning as provided in s. 112.1815 and includes 911 public safety telecommunicators as defined in s. 401.465.

(b) “First responder peer” means a person who:

1. Is not a health care practitioner as defined in s. 456.001.

2. Has experience working as or with a first responder regarding any physical or emotional conditions or issues associated with the first responder’s employment.

3. Has been designated by the first responder’s employing agency to provide peer support as provided in this section and has received training for this purpose.

(c) “Peer support” means the provision of physical, moral, or emotional support to a first responder by a first responder peer for the purpose of addressing physical or emotional conditions or other issues associated with being a first responder.

(d) “Peer support communication” means electronic, oral, or written communication, made with a mutual expectation of confidentiality while a first responder peer is providing peer support in his or her official capacity.

(2) A first responder peer may not divulge information from or testify about a peer support communication in a civil, criminal, administrative, or disciplinary proceeding, unless:

(a) The first responder peer is a defendant in a civil, criminal, administrative, or disciplinary proceeding arising from a complaint filed by the first responder who was a party to the peer support communication, in which case such information may be divulged but is limited to the scope of the proceeding;

(b) The first responder who was a party to the peer support communication agrees, in writing, to allow the first responder peer to testify about or divulge information related to the peer support communications;

(c) Based on the peer support communications, the first responder peer suspects that the first responder who was a party to the peer support communications has committed a criminal act or intends to commit a criminal act. There is no liability on the part of, and no cause of action of any nature may arise against, the first responder peer for disclosing information under this paragraph; or

(d) There are articulable facts or circumstances that would lead a reasonable, prudent person to fear for the safety of the first responder who was a party to the peer support communication, another person, or society, and the first responder peer communicates the information only to a potential victim and law enforcement or other appropriate authorities. There is no liability on the part of, and no cause of action of any nature may arise against, the first responder peer for disclosing information under this paragraph.

(3) This section does not limit the disclosure, discovery, or admissibility of information, testimony, or evidence that is obtained by a first responder peer from a source other than a first responder through a peer support communication.

Section 2. Section 112.531, Florida Statutes, is reordered and amended to read:

112.531 Definitions.—As used in this part, the term:

(2)(1) “Law enforcement officer” means any person, other than a chief of police, who is employed full time or part time by any municipality or the state or any political subdivision thereof and whose primary responsibility is the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of the penal, traffic, or highway laws of this state; and includes any person who is appointed by the sheriff as a deputy sheriff under pursuant to s. 30.07.

(1)(2) “Correctional officer” means any person, other than a warden, who is appointed or employed full time or part time by the state or any political subdivision thereof whose primary responsibility is the supervision, protection, care, custody, or control of inmates within a correctional institution;

and includes correctional probation officers, as defined in s. 943.10(3). However, the term “correctional officer” does not include any secretarial, clerical, or professionally trained personnel.

Section 3. Paragraph (a) of subsection (6) of section 112.532, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

112.532 Law enforcement officers’ and correctional officers’ rights.—All law enforcement officers and correctional officers employed by or appointed to a law enforcement agency or a correctional agency shall have the following rights and privileges:

(6) LIMITATIONS PERIOD FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS.—

(a) Except as provided in this subsection, disciplinary action, suspension, demotion, or dismissal may not be undertaken by an agency against a law enforcement officer or correctional officer for any act, omission, or other allegation or complaint of misconduct, regardless of the origin of the allegation or complaint, if the investigation of the allegation or complaint is not completed within 180 days after the date the agency receives notice of the allegation or complaint by a person authorized by the agency to initiate an investigation of the misconduct. If the agency determines that disciplinary action is appropriate, it shall complete its investigation and give notice in writing to the law enforcement officer or correctional officer of its intent to proceed with disciplinary action, along with a proposal of the specific action sought, including length of suspension, if applicable. Notice to the officer must be provided within 180 days after the date the agency received notice of the alleged misconduct, regardless of the origin of the allegation or complaint, except as follows:

1. The running of the limitations period may be tolled for a period specified in a written waiver of the limitation by the law enforcement officer or correctional officer.

2. The running of the limitations period is tolled during the time that any criminal investigation or prosecution is pending in connection with the act, omission, or other allegation of misconduct.

3. If the investigation involves an officer who is incapacitated or otherwise unavailable, the running of the limitations period is tolled during the period of incapacitation or unavailability.

4. In a multijurisdictional investigation, the limitations period may be extended for a period of time reasonably necessary to facilitate the coordination of the agencies involved.

5. The running of the limitations period may be tolled for emergencies or natural disasters during the time period wherein the Governor has declared a state of emergency within the jurisdictional boundaries of the concerned agency.

6. The running of the limitations period is tolled during the time that the officer's compliance hearing proceeding is continuing beginning with the filing of the notice of violation and a request for a hearing and ending with the written determination of the compliance review panel or upon the violation being remedied by the agency.

Section 4. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section 112.533, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

112.533 Receipt and processing of complaints.—

(1)

(b)1. Any political subdivision that initiates or receives a complaint against a law enforcement officer or correctional officer must within 5 business days forward the complaint to the employing agency of the officer who is the subject of the complaint for review or investigation.

2. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "political subdivision" means a separate agency or unit of local government created or established by law or ordinance and the officers thereof and includes, but is not limited to, an authority, board, branch, bureau, city, commission, consolidated government, county, department, district, institution, metropolitan government, municipality, office, officer, public corporation, town, or village.

Notwithstanding the rights and privileges provided under this part or any provisions provided in a collective bargaining agreement, the agency head or the agency head's designee may request a sworn or certified investigator from a separate law enforcement or correctional agency to conduct the investigation when a conflict is identified with having an investigator conduct the investigation of an officer of the same employing agency; the employing agency does not have an investigator trained to conduct such investigations; or the agency's investigator is the subject of, or a witness in, the investigation and such agency is composed of any combination of 35 or fewer law enforcement officers or correctional officers. The employing agency must document the identified conflict. Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator shall present the findings without any disciplinary recommendation to the employing agency.

Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.

Approved by the Governor June 27, 2020.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 27, 2020.