

## CHAPTER 2026-172

### House Bill No. 1405

An act relating to a statewide project for missing persons with special needs; reviving, readopting, and amending s. 937.041, F.S., relating to the missing persons with special needs statewide project; providing that the project is created through the centers for autism and related disabilities; providing that the participants for the project shall be selected based on certain criteria; deleting obsolete language; providing appropriations; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Notwithstanding the repeal of section 937.041, Florida Statutes, in section 13 of chapter 2020-3, Laws of Florida, section 937.041, Florida Statutes, is revived, readopted, and amended to read:

937.041 Missing persons with special needs statewide project.—

(1) There is created a statewide project, to be known as “Project Leo,” through the centers ~~a center~~ for autism and related disabilities established under s. 1004.55. Each center that opts to join the project shall distribute personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs in the case of elopement.

(2) Participants for the project shall be selected based on criteria developed by the respective center for autism and related disabilities based on the specific needs of the respective ~~each~~ center’s service area counties prescribed under s. 1004.55. Criteria for participation in the project 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. The project must be voluntary and free of charge to participants.

(3) Under the project, personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts 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) The project shall operate to the extent of available funding within the respective center’s existing resources.

~~(5) This section expires June 30, 2019.~~

Section 2. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$250,000 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 \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at Florida Atlantic University, the sum of \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida, and the sum of \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at Florida State University. The funds provided to each center shall be used solely 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, 2026.

Approved by the Governor June 25, 2026.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 25, 2026.