

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/HB 99 Sexual Exploitation

SPONSOR(S): Health & Human Services Access Subcommittee; Fresen

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 202

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Health & Human Services Access Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N, As CS	Batchelor	Schoolfield
2) Civil Justice Subcommittee			
3) Appropriations Committee			
4) Health & Human Services Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

CS/HB 99 creates the Florida Safe Harbor Act to serve sexually exploited children. Specifically, the bill makes the following changes to statute:

- The bill makes amendments to definitions relating to abuse and sexual exploitation of children in Chapter 39, F.S.
- Requires that children who have been sexually exploited, and are taken into custody by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF), be placed in shelters and facilities that offer treatment for sexual exploitation;
- The bill creates new sections of law related to safe harbor placements which provides process and requirements for services in safe houses;
- Requires the DCF to develop guidelines for serving sexually exploited children and to produce a report to the Legislature;
- The bill adds the term “safe house” and “short term safe house” to s. 409.175, F.S., relating to licensure of facilities;
- Amends the civil penalty for specified violations of prostitution from \$500 to \$5,000 and directs that \$4500 of the civil penalty be paid to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) to fund services for sexually exploited children.

The bill is not anticipated to have a fiscal impact on state agencies but may have an indeterminate fiscal impact on DCF contractors. The bill provides an effective date of January 1, 2013.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

Safe Harbor Act

In 2008, the state of New York signed the “Safe Harbor for Exploited Youth Act” into law. The act requires local districts to provide crisis intervention services for sexually exploited children and decriminalizes child prostitution, recognizing these children as victims, rather than as criminals. The law is designed to provide counseling, emergency services and long term housing solutions for these children.¹ After the passage of this legislation various programs have become available to young children who have been sexually exploited, including GEMS in New York² and the Paul and Lisa Program in Connecticut.³ Both of these programs have received recognition and grant funding through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.⁴

Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution

Chapter 39, Florida Statutes, provides law for dependent children, who are the subject of abuse, neglect or abandonment and addresses sexual exploitation in the definition of “sexual abuse of a child.”⁵ In this definition, sexual exploitation of a child includes allowing, encouraging, or forcing a child to either solicit for or engage in prostitution; or engage in a sexual performance, as defined by Chapter 827, F.S. Currently, children who are allowed, encouraged or forced to engage in prostitution may be considered dependent by the courts⁶ and delivered to DCF for shelter and services in or out of their caregiver’s home. The definition of abuse from sexual exploitation in Chapter 39, Florida Statutes, does not include children who willfully engage in prostitution.⁷

The prohibition against prostitution is without respect to the age of the person offering, committing, or engaging in prostitution. A first offense for prostitution is a 2nd degree misdemeanor, a second offense is a 1st degree misdemeanor, and a third or subsequent offense is a third degree felony.⁸ In addition to the criminal penalties, a civil penalty of \$500 shall be assessed against individuals that solicit, induce, entice, or procure another to commit prostitution, lewdness, or assignation.⁹

Any person who knowingly recruits, entices, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains by any means a person, knowing that force, fraud, or coercion will be used to cause that person to engage in prostitution, commits the offense of sex trafficking, a second degree felony.¹⁰ However, a person commits a first degree felony if the offense of sex trafficking is committed against a person who is under the age of 14 or if such offense results in death.¹¹

¹ Staff Analysis, HB 99 (2012); Department of Children and Family Services. (on file with committee staff).

² <http://www.gems-girls.org/>. (last visited 11/29/2011).

³ <http://www.paulandlisa.org/index.htm>. (last visited 11/29/2011).

⁴ http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/csec_program.html. (last visited on 11/29/2011).

⁵ s. 39.01(67)(g), F.S.

⁶ s. 39.0139, F.S.

⁷ s. 39.01(67)(g), F.S.

⁸ s. 796.07(4), F.S.

⁹ s. 769.07(6), F.S.

¹⁰ s. 796.045, F.S.

¹¹ *Id.*

Sex-Trafficking and Prostitution of Children

It is estimated that about 293,000 American youth are currently at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The majority of American victims of commercial sexual exploitation tend to be runaway youth living on the streets who are highly susceptible to become victims of prostitution. These children generally come from homes where they have been abused, or from families that have abandoned them, and often become involved in prostitution as a way to support themselves financially or to get the things they want or need.¹²

Other young people are recruited into prostitution through forced abduction, pressure from adults, or through deceptive agreements between parents and traffickers.¹³ In a study conducted at the University of New Hampshire in 2009, researchers found that among a sampling of law enforcement agencies for information concerning youth involved in prostitution, of the estimated 1,450 arrests/detentions in the U.S. in 2005, 95% involved third party exploiters, 31% were for what they labeled solo types of prostitution cases, and 12% involved sexual exploitation.¹⁴

Third party or pimp-controlled commercial sexual exploitation of children is linked to escort and massage services, private dancing, drinking and photographic clubs, major sporting and recreational events, major cultural events, conventions, and tourist destinations. About one-fifth of these children become involved in nationally organized crime networks and is trafficked nationally. They are transported around the United States by a variety of means – cars, buses, vans, trucks or planes, and are often provided counterfeit identification to use in the event of arrest.¹⁵ The average age at which girls first become victims of prostitution is 12-14; for boys and transgender youth it is 11-13.¹⁶

Services Currently Available for Shelter

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) acknowledges that foster homes, group homes and shelters used in the child welfare system are lacking in services or trained staff to address victims of sexual exploitation. DCF notes that victims in runaway shelters or group homes can continue to be psychologically manipulated and return to the control of the trafficker. Foster homes, group homes, and shelters are not ideal for several reasons including the fact that these residences are not equipped to deal with sexual exploitation trauma and also that the trafficker/pimp could easily find the child and threaten to harm the foster family or residents unless contact with the child is permitted.¹⁷

Services are available through the Children In Need of Services (CINS) program to provide short-term shelter, counseling, services, and case management in one of the 28 youth shelters statewide that are operated by DJJ.¹⁸ These shelters are primarily voluntary and a court may order the child to stay in a shelter for a period no longer than 120 days.¹⁹ Even under this longer stay option, only 10 shelters are

¹² Id.; Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S, Canada and Mexico*, University of Pennsylvania (2001), available at www.sp2.upenn.edu/~restes/CSEC_Files/Exec_Sum_020220.pdf. (last visited 11/7/11)

¹³ Staff Analysis, HB 99 (2012); Department of Children and Family Services. (on file with committee staff); Francis T. Miko & Grace Park, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, p. 7. (Updated July 10, 2003), at <http://www.usembassy.it/pdf/other/RL30545.pdf>. (last visited 11/17/11).

¹⁴ Staff Analysis, HB 99 (2012); Department of Children and Family Services. (on file with committee staff); Kimberly J. Mitchell, David Finkelhor and Janis Wolak, *Conceptualizing Juvenile Prostitution as Child Maltreatment: Findings from the National Juvenile Prostitution Study*, p.22-26, University of New Hampshire Sage Publications

¹⁵ Staff Analysis, HB 99 (2012); Department of Children and Family Services. (on file with committee staff); Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S, Canada and Mexico*, pp. 7-8. University of Pennsylvania (2001), available at www.sp2.upenn.edu/~restes/CSEC_Files/Exec_Sum_020220.pdf.

¹⁶ Id

¹⁷ Staff Analysis, HB 99 (2012); Department of Children and Family Services. (on file with committee staff).

¹⁸ Id

¹⁹ s. 984.226, F.S.

available statewide.²⁰ The CINS program shelters are not available for children who have been adjudicated dependent.²¹

Currently, DCF has identified 69 possible victims of sexual exploitation that are being served within the foster care system. Additionally, DCF has identified 55 children within the last year who have been arrested for prostitution and are currently being served through the Department of Juvenile Justice system.²² The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) reports that during 2009, 22 children were arrested under the age of 16 for prostitution pursuant to 796.07(2), F.S.²³

Effect of Proposed Changes

Purpose and Intent Language

The bill is titled the Florida Safe Harbor Act. The bill creates legislative intent language as it relates to children that are victims of sexual exploitation. The bill recognizes that sexual exploitation is a problem in the state of Florida and nationwide, identifying that many of these children have a history of abuse and neglect and are often a hard population to serve. The legislative intent states that traffickers maintain control of these children through manipulation and force. The intent language also establishes goals of the Legislature in treating these children.

Definitions

Specifically, the bill amends the following definitions in s. 39.01, F.S:

- “abuse” is amended so that it includes sexual abuse.
- “child who is found to be dependent” is amended to include children that have been sexually exploited and have no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative currently known and capable of providing the necessary and appropriate supervision and care. The effect of this change will specifically include sexually exploited children within dependency actions.
- “sexual abuse of a child” is amended to include participation in sex trafficking as an act of sexual exploitation of a child.

Shelter Placement

The bill amends s. 39.402, F.S., by requiring that a child who is in the custody of DCF and has been sexually exploited be placed in a shelter that offers treatment for sexually exploited children.

Disposition Hearings

The bill also amends s. 39.521, F.S., directing the court to place a child who is alleged to be sexually exploited in a facility that offers treatment for sexually exploited children. This applies to children who have been adjudicated dependent.

Placement of Sexually Exploited Children

The bill creates s. 39.524, F.S., relating to placement of sexually exploited children. This section requires that any dependent child 6 years of age or older who has been found to be a victim of sexual exploitation to be assessed for placement in a facility which is appropriate to serve sexually exploited children. This does not apply to children who have been removed from their caregiver’s home, are receiving medical screenings or other proceedings pursuant to s. 39.407, F.S. The manner in which assessments are conducted is included in this new section of law as well as a requirement that the results of assessments be included in the judicial reviews for dependent children. The bill requires

²⁰ Staff Analysis, HB 99 (2012); Department of Children and Family Services. (on file with committee staff).

²¹ s.984.226(5)(d), F.S.

²² Staff Analysis, HB 99 (2012); Department of Children and Family Services. (on file with committee staff).

²³ Staff Analysis, HB 99 (2012); Florida Department of Law Enforcement. (on file with committee staff).

facilities serving sexually exploited children to report to DCF its success in achieving permanency for those children.

The bill also requires DCF to develop guidelines and a plan for serving children who have been sexually exploited. The plan must be submitted to the Legislature by June 1, 2013, and address the assessment of need, residential and other service needs and coordination across agencies for serving sexually exploited children. The bill also provides that DCF may contract with local law enforcement to train officers working with sexually exploited children. Finally, DCF is required to report annually to the Legislature on the placement of children in facilities that provide treatment for sexually exploited children.

Safe House Services for Children Who Are Victims of Sexual Exploitation

The bill creates s. 409.1678, F.S., relating to safe harbors for children who are victims of sexual exploitation. The bill creates definitions for:

- “child advocate” means an employee of a short-term safe house who shall accompany the child to court, meet with law enforcement and serve as a liaison between the safe house and the court. It is not clear from the bill how this advocate will coordinate with case management staff of community based care lead agencies and the guardian ad litem in their advocacy role with the court.
- “safe house” as a living environment that has set aside gender-specific, separate and distinct living quarters for sexually exploited children who have been adjudicated dependent or delinquent and need to reside in a secure facility with 24-hour-awake staff. The safe house is required to be licensed by DCF as a child-caring agency under s. 409.175, F.S.
- “secure” means that a child is supervised 24 hours a day by staff who are awake while on duty.
- “sexually exploited child” to mean a dependent child who has suffered sexual abuse, as defined in 39.01(67)(g) and is not eligible for federal benefits through the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.²⁴
- “short-term safe house” means a shelter operated by a licensed child-caring agency, includes runaway youth center, gender specific, separate living quarters for sexually exploited children, and provides care and counseling to exploited children.

Also in s. 409.1678, F.S., the bill provides that the lead agency, not-for-profit agency or local government entity that is providing safe house services is responsible for security, counseling, residential care, food, clothing, etc. for children who are placed there. The bill also provides that a lead agency or other service provider providing a safe house program for children has specific legal authority to enroll the child in school, sign for driver’s license, cosign loans and insurance for the child, sign for medical treatment and other such activities.

Licensure of Safe Houses and Short Term Safe Houses

The bill amends the definition of the terms “family foster home” and “residential child-caring agency” in s. 409.175, F.S., to include a “safe house” and a “short-term safe house”. This addition to the current licensure definitions of foster homes and residential child caring agencies recognizes a safe house and a short term safe house as an option for placement of a dependent child who has been sexually exploited.

Civil Penalty Related to Prostitution

The bill amends s. 796.07, F.S., increasing the civil penalty that may be assessed against violators of specified provisions related to prostitution. Currently, a civil penalty of \$500 must be assessed against a person who violates s. 796.07(2)(f), by soliciting, inducing, enticing, or procuring another to commit prostitution, lewdness, or assignation. The bill increases the civil penalty to \$5,000 and directs that \$4,500 of the penalty be paid to DCF to fund services for sexually exploited children and the remaining

²⁴ 22 USC, ss.7101

\$500 shall be paid to the circuit court administrator. The effect of this change creates a proposed funding source for services for sexually exploited children. According to information provided by the Clerk of Courts, the collections of the fines by counties are not always certain and collection amounts vary by year.²⁵

Eligibility for Victim Assistance Award

The Florida Crimes Compensation Act directs the Office of the Attorney General to administer the Crimes Compensation Trust Fund to provide financial assistance to victims of violent crimes and to provide information and referral services that can help victims cope with the effects of the crimes against them. The Crimes Compensation Trust Fund receives funding derived from court-ordered assessments from offenders, including a mandatory court cost, a surcharge on fines, restitution, and subrogation, when appropriate.²⁶ The Victim Assistance program is overseen by the Attorney General's office and provides financial assistance for medical care, lost income, mental health services, funeral expenses and other out-of-pocket expenses directly related to the injury, to persons who are eligible.²⁷

The bill amends s. 960.065, F.S., to allow victims of sexual exploitation pursuant to a definition in s.39.01 (67)(g), F.S., to be eligible for compensation awards.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Creates title of Florida Safe Harbor Act.

Section 2: Amends s. 39.001, F.S., relating to purposes and intent; personnel standards and screening.

Section 3: Amends s. 39.01, F.S., relating to definitions.

Section 4: Amends s. 39.402, F.S., relating to placement in a shelter.

Section 5: Amends s. 39.521, F.S., relating to disposition hearings; powers of disposition.

Section 6: Creates s. 39.524, F.S., relating to placement of sexually exploited children.

Section 7: Creates s. 409.1678, F.S., relating to safe house services for children who are victims of sexual exploitation.

Section 8: Amends s. 409.175, F.S., relating to licensure of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, child-placing agencies; public records exemption.

Section 9: Amends s. 796.07, F.S., relating to prohibiting prostitution, etc.; evidence; penalties; definitions.

Section 10: Amends s. 960.065, F.S., relating to eligibility for awards.

Section 11: Provides an effective date of January 1, 2013.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

²⁵ Email from Randy Long at the Clerk of Courts, received 11/16/2011. (on file with committee staff).

²⁶ ss. 938.03, 938.04, 775.0835, 775.089, F.S.

²⁷ <http://myfloridalegal.com/pages.nsf/main/1c7376f380d0704c85256cc6004b8ed3!OpenDocument> (last visited 12/2/2011).

1. Revenues:

The civil penalty related to prostitution for persons who violate s.796.07(2)(f),F.S., is increased from \$500 to \$5000. The \$4500 increase is to be paid to DCF for services to sexually exploited children. According to information provided by the Clerk of Courts, the collections of the fines by counties are not always certain and collection amounts vary by year.²⁸ The viability of this revenue source cannot be determined.

2. Expenditures:

See fiscal comments.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact. The cost associated with this bill is not anticipated to be significant or have a direct fiscal impact on state agencies. However, it could have an indeterminate fiscal impact on community based care (CBC) lead agencies (under contract with DCF). CBC agencies are required to serve all dependent children referred to their agency. CBC agencies may already provide treatment to sexually exploited children and may not need to incur additional cost to implement this bill. However, if services do not exist, then any additional cost for services would have to be absorbed by current contract funds to the CBC agency.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not Applicable. This bill does not appear to require counties or municipalities to spend funds or take action requiring the expenditures of funds; reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

²⁸ Email from Randy Long at the Clerk of Courts, received 11/16/2011. (on file with committee staff).

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

- Lines 285-290 provides for a definition of “child advocate”. It is not clear how this advocate will coordinate with case management staff of community based care lead agencies and the Guardian ad Litem in advocacy efforts.
- Lines 194-196 provides findings by the court for dependency which may create confusion that sexual exploitation is a standalone finding and not related to abuse by a caregiver.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGE

On December 7, 2011, the Health and Human Services Access Subcommittee adopted a strike all amendment to House Bill 99.

The strike all amendment makes the following changes to the bill:

- Amends the definition of abuse to clarify that it includes sexual abuse. The definition of a child who is dependent is amended to recognize sexual exploitation as one of the possible findings of the court. Further, the bill clarifies that sexual exploitation includes sex trafficking.
- Removes rebuttable presumption language that law enforcement must deliver a child to a safe house if one is available. The amendment keeps intact law enforcements current process for addressing these children.
- Requires that children who have been sexually exploited be placed in shelters and facilities that offer treatment for sexually exploited children.
- Requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to develop guidelines for serving sexually exploited children and to produce reports to the Legislature.
- The amendment adds the term “safe house” and “short term safe house” to s. 409.175, F.S., relating to licensure of facilities.

The bill was reported favorably as a Committee Substitute. This analysis reflects the Committee Substitute.