

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: PCB CCJP 10-04 Background Screening

SPONSOR(S): Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council

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

	REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
Orig. Comm.:	Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council		Thomas	Havlicak
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SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Florida law mandates criminal background screening of certain individuals applying to operate or to be employed in a business that deals primarily with vulnerable persons. Each provider, employee, or contractor required to submit to a criminal background screening may be subject to one of two types of screening requirements. A Level 1 screening simply requires a name check against state records, while a Level 2 screening requires a fingerprint search against state and national records. If a person's screening results determine he or she is not qualified to work in a position of trust due to their criminal history, he or she may apply for an exemption.

The bill substantially rewrites requirements and procedures for background screening of the persons and businesses that deal primarily with vulnerable populations. Key changes made by the bill:

- Require that no person required to be screened may begin work until the screening has been completed.
- Increase all Level 1 screening to Level 2 screening.
- Require all fingerprints to be submitted electronically by July 1, 2012.
- Require certain personnel that are not presently being screened to begin Level 2 screening.
- Add additional serious crimes to the list of disqualifying offenses.
- Authorize agencies to request the retention of fingerprints by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.
- Provide that an exemption for a disqualifying felony may not be granted until at least three years from the completion of all sentencing sanctions for that felony.
- Require that all exemptions from disqualification be granted only by the agency head.

The new screening requirements will be prospective. Existing persons working with vulnerable populations are not required to be rescreened until such time they are otherwise required to be rescreened by existing law.

The fiscal impact of the bill is still being determined. It is clear the bill will have an impact on agencies, employers and employees. It should not have a significant impact directly on local governments.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2010.

This document does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill sponsor or House of Representatives.

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HOUSE PRINCIPLES

Members are encouraged to evaluate proposed legislation in light of the following guiding principles of the House of Representatives

- Balance the state budget.
- Create a legal and regulatory environment that fosters economic growth and job creation.
- Lower the tax burden on families and businesses.
- Reverse or restrain the growth of government.
- Promote public safety.
- Promote educational accountability, excellence, and choice.
- Foster respect for the family and for innocent human life.
- Protect Florida's natural beauty.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Currently, Florida has one of the largest vulnerable populations in the country with over 25% of the state's population over the age of 65, and many more children and disabled adults. These vulnerable populations require special care as they are at an increased risk of abuse.

In 1995, the Florida Legislature created standard procedures for the screening of prospective employees where the Legislature had determined it necessary to conduct criminal history background checks to protect vulnerable persons. Chapter 435, F.S., outlines the screening standards for "Level 1" employment screening and "Level 2" employment screening. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) provides criminal history checks to the employer.

In September, 2009, the Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel ran a series of articles following an investigation of background screening of persons working with vulnerable populations in Florida.¹ The Sun Sentinel spent six months investigating Florida's background screening system for caregivers of children, the elderly and disabled. The newspaper obtained screening databases from the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and Broward County. Among the findings are the following:

- Since 1985, DCF has granted exemptions to more than 6,500 people with criminal records to work in child care, substance abuse and mental health counseling, and with the disabled.
- Lack of proof that a nationwide criminal check on employees had been conducted is the most frequent violation found by state inspectors in day care centers. Screening problems are among the four most common violations in assisted living facilities, adult day cares and nursing agencies. Home health agencies and nursing homes are also cited, but less frequently.
- Florida seniors and disabled adults have been beaten, neglected and robbed by caregivers with criminal records.

¹ Sun Sentinel. Criminals and Convicted Felons Working in South Florida Day-care Centers and Nursing Homes. The entire series of articles may be found at <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/sfl-trust-florida-criminals-child-elder-care-html,0,3829069.htmlstory> (accessed February 15, 2010).

- More than 3,500 people with criminal records - including rape, robbery and murder - have been allowed to work with the elderly, disabled and infirm through exemptions granted by the state over the past two decades.
- Hundreds of employees are working with vulnerable persons because employers failed to check their backgrounds or kept them on the job despite their criminal pasts.
- Facility owners and administrators require a nationwide FBI check, but not employees caring for patients. With some exceptions, they are checked only for crimes in Florida.
- For most businesses, employees can begin work before screening results come back.
- At nursing homes, some employees had worked as long as seven years without any check.

The newspaper performed analyses to determine how many exemptions have been granted, who obtained them and for what crimes. FDLE crosschecked the newspaper's list of 8,750 people granted exemptions against its criminal database and found:

- 1,818 people were re-arrested, 1,067 of them on felony charges.
- The crimes included 3,123 felonies and 3,321 misdemeanors.
- The majority of the felonies were drug- and theft-related but also included child molestation, sex offenses, murder, arson, extortion, kidnapping, and cruelty toward a child.²

Level 1 and Level 2 Background Screenings

The provisions of ch. 435, F.S., apply whenever a Level 1 or Level 2 screening for employment is required by law. Screenings can be done following Level 1 or Level 2 standards, depending on what direction is provided in a specific statute.³

Level 1 screenings⁴ are name-based demographic screenings that must include, but are not limited to, employment history checks and statewide criminal correspondence checks through FDLE. Level 1 screenings may also include local criminal records checks through local law enforcement agencies. Anyone undergoing a Level 1 screening must not have been found guilty of any of the offenses listed below:

- Section 393.135, relating to sexual misconduct with certain developmentally disabled clients and reporting of such sexual misconduct.
- Section 394.4593, relating to sexual misconduct with certain mental health patients and reporting of such sexual misconduct.
- Section 415.111, relating to abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult.
- Section 782.04, relating to murder.
- Section 782.07, relating to manslaughter, aggravated manslaughter of an elderly person or disabled adult, or aggravated manslaughter of a child.
- Section 782.071, relating to vehicular homicide.
- Section 782.09, relating to killing of an unborn quick child by injury to the mother.
- Section 784.011, relating to assault, if the victim of the offense was a minor.
- Section 784.021, relating to aggravated assault.
- Section 784.03, relating to battery, if the victim of the offense was a minor.

² A full report of the FDLE results can be found at <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/media/acrobat/2009-09/49418865.pdf>.

³ A Level 1 screening is referred to as a "background screening" in s. 435.03, F.S., while a Level 2 screening is referred to as a "security background investigation" in s. 435.04, F.S.

⁴ Level 1 screenings are outlined in s. 435.03, F.S.

- Section 784.045, relating to aggravated battery.
- Section 787.01, relating to kidnapping.
- Section 787.02, relating to false imprisonment.
- Section 794.011, relating to sexual battery.
- Former s. 794.041, relating to prohibited acts of persons in familial or custodial authority.
- Chapter 796, relating to prostitution.
- Section 798.02, relating to lewd and lascivious behavior.
- Chapter 800, relating to lewdness and indecent exposure.
- Section 806.01, relating to arson.
- Chapter 812, relating to theft, robbery, and related crimes, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 817.563, relating to fraudulent sale of controlled substances, only if the offense was a felony.
- Section 825.102, relating to abuse, aggravated abuse, or neglect of an elderly person or disabled adult.
- Section 825.1025, relating to lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of an elderly person or disabled adult.
- Section 825.103, relating to exploitation of an elderly person or disabled adult, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 826.04, relating to incest.
- Section 827.03, relating to child abuse, aggravated child abuse, or neglect of a child.
- Section 827.04, relating to contributing to the delinquency or dependency of a child.
- Former s. 827.05, relating to negligent treatment of children.
- Section 827.071, relating to sexual performance by a child.
- Chapter 847, relating to obscene literature.
- Chapter 893, relating to drug abuse prevention and control, only if the offense was a felony or if any other person involved in the offense was a minor.
- Section 916.1075, relating to sexual misconduct with certain forensic clients and reporting of such sexual misconduct.
- Has not committed an act that constitutes domestic violence as defined in s. 741.28.

A Level 2 screening⁵ consists of a fingerprint-based search of FDLE and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) databases for state and national criminal arrest records. Any person undergoing a Level 2 screening must not have been found guilty of any of the offenses for Level 1 or the offenses listed below:

- Section 787.04(2), relating to taking, enticing, or removing a child beyond the state limits with criminal intent pending custody proceedings.
- Section 787.04(3), relating to carrying a child beyond the state lines with criminal intent to avoid producing a child at a dependency hearing.
- Section 790.115(1), relating to exhibiting firearms or weapons within 1,000 feet of a school.
- Section 790.115(2)(b), relating to possessing an electric weapon or device, destructive device, or other weapon on school property.
- Section 843.01, relating to resisting arrest with violence.
- Section 843.025, relating to depriving a law enforcement, correctional, or correctional probation officer means of protection or communication.
- Section 843.12, relating to aiding in an escape.
- Section 843.13, relating to aiding in the escape of juvenile inmates in correctional institutions.
- Section 874.05(1), relating to encouraging or recruiting another to join a criminal gang.
- Section 944.35(3), relating to inflicting cruel or inhuman treatment on an inmate resulting in great bodily harm.
- Section 944.46, relating to harboring, concealing, or aiding an escaped prisoner.

⁵ Level 2 screenings are outlined in s. 435.04, F.S.

- Section 944.47, relating to introduction of contraband into a correctional facility.
- Section 985.701, relating to sexual misconduct in juvenile justice programs.
- Section 985.711, relating to contraband introduced into detention facilities.

Additionally, the security background investigations conducted for employees of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) must ensure that no persons have been found guilty of any offense prohibited under any of the following provisions of the Florida Statutes or under any similar statute of another jurisdiction:

- Section 784.07, relating to assault or battery of law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical care providers, public transit employees or agents, or other specified officers.
- Section 810.02, relating to burglary, if the offense is a felony.
- Section 944.40, relating to escape.

The Department of Juvenile Justice may not remove a disqualification from employment to any person who is disqualified for any offense disposed of during the most recent 7-year period.

There are two additional requirements that are unique to the Level 2 screening process. Unlike the screening standards contained in Level 1, employees undergoing a Level 2 screening are required to inform an employer immediately if they are convicted of any of the disqualifying offenses listed in the statute during the time they are employed.⁶

In addition to Level 1 and Level 2 disqualification offenses⁷, additional disqualification offenses were added to s. 408.809(5), F.S., (for screening done under the purview of AHCA) during the 2009 Legislative Session. These offenses apply to both the Level 1 and Level 2 screening. These additional offenses are:

- Any specific authorizing statutes, if the offense was a felony.
- Chapter 408, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 409.920, relating to Medicaid provider fraud, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 409.9201, relating to Medicaid fraud, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 741.28, relating to domestic violence.
- Chapter 784, relating to assault, battery, and culpable negligence, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 810.02, relating to burglary.
- Section 817.034, relating to fraudulent acts through mail, wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photooptical systems.
- Section 817.234, relating to false and fraudulent insurance claims.
- Section 817.505, relating to patient brokering.
- Section 817.568, relating to criminal use of personal identification information.
- Section 817.60, relating to obtaining a credit card through fraudulent means.
- Section 817.61, relating to fraudulent use of credit cards, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 831.01, relating to forgery.
- Section 831.02, relating to uttering forged instruments.
- Section 831.07, relating to forging bank bills, checks, drafts, or promissory notes.
- Section 831.09, relating to uttering forged bank bills, checks, drafts, or promissory notes.
- Section 831.30, relating to fraud in obtaining medicinal drugs.
- Section 831.31, relating to the sale, manufacture, delivery, or possession with the intent to sell, manufacture, or deliver any counterfeit controlled substance, if the offense was a felony.

Level 2 Fingerprint Submission

⁶ *Id.* at s. 435.04(5), F.S.

⁷ Section 435.03, and s. 435.04, F.S., respectively.

Criminal histories for Level 2 background screenings are obtained through the submission of the applicant's fingerprints to FDLE. Currently, there are two ways to submit fingerprints, through the submission of a hard copy of the applicant's fingerprint card or through the electronic submission of the applicant's fingerprints. Each type of submission has a different process and varies in the time it takes to have results returned.

The process for submitting a hard copy of fingerprints is as follows:

- (1) An applicant submits a completed hard copy fingerprint card to a regulatory agency;
- (2) The agency must forward the card to FDLE within 5 days;
- (3) FDLE screens the Florida records and reports back to the regulatory agency regarding the state criminal history check.
- (4) The FBI's response to the agency is mailed to the employer separately from FDLE's response and at a later date. Results from the FBI can take from 4 to 6 weeks.

The process for submitting an electronic copy of fingerprints is as follows:

- (1) An applicant has fingerprints taken through the use of a "livescan" device⁸ that digitally takes their fingerprints. The prints are then securely emailed to FDLE;
- (2) FDLE processes the prints for a state check and e-mails the electronic submission to the FBI for a national check;
- (3) A bundle of both the FDLE and the FBI results are then sent to the agency within 2 to 3 days.⁹

Currently, due to the length of time required to respond to hard copy fingerprint submissions, a person may begin to work while awaiting the results of a Level 2 background screening.

The fee for a Level 1 screening request is \$24.00. The fee for a Level 2 screening request is \$43.25¹⁰ if submitted electronically, while a hard copy submission costs \$54.25. Currently, over 75% of fingerprints are submitted electronically.¹¹

Electronic submissions have many benefits including reduced processing time, improved quality of prints for searching, reduction in potential missed identifications, national and state results bundled together and retention of finger prints for future records. Electronic submissions that are retained by FDLE allow for easy notification to employers if the applicant is arrested. In addition, fingerprint submissions for a Level 2 screening have been found to be more accurate than a Level 1 screening (which is name-based check only). Level 1 screenings conducted in the state of Florida were found to have an error rate of 11.7%.¹² A name-based check does not identify any convictions outside of Florida and may contain false positives and false negatives when trying to correctly identify the applicant.

Exemptions from Disqualification

⁸ Livescan devices may be owned by agencies or may be owned by third party vendors. Livescan is a computer device that captures electronic finger prints more accurately than hard copy, and allows for faster submission and retention of the prints. Many state agencies already have livescans in place, and FDLE has established a process to set up any new device.

⁹ Results regarding criminal histories for both hard copy and electronic fingerprint submissions are always sent to the agency and never directly to the applicant.

¹⁰ The Agency for Health Care Administration: Background Screening. Available at: http://www.fdhc.state.fl.us/mchq/long_term_care/Background_Screening/index.shtml.

¹¹ Criminal History Record Check Process. Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Jan. 12, 2010.

¹² Interstate Identification Index Name Check Efficacy. Report of the National Task Force to the U.S. Attorney General. July 1999. NCJ-179385. Pg 7.

If a person is disqualified from applying for employment in a facility through a Level 1 or Level 2 background screening, ch. 435, F.S., provides a mechanism for those individuals to pursue an exemption from disqualification. An agency may grant an exemption from disqualification to any applicant or employee otherwise disqualified for:

- Felonies committed more than three years prior to the date of disqualification;
- Misdemeanors;
- Offenses that were felonies when committed but are now misdemeanors;
- Findings of delinquency; or
- Commissions of acts of domestic violence as defined in s. 741.30.¹³

Once an application for exemption is received, the agency determines if a hearing is warranted. A notice is sent to the applicant to request a personal interview. The informal interview is typically conducted by telephone. The review officer poses questions regarding the applicant's criminal/abuse history, work history, and their motivations for seeking employment in a position of trust. A review committee will make a decision to grant or deny the application based on this interview and the applicant is notified by mail in 14 days.¹⁴

Pursuant to s. 435.07, F.S., an applicant seeking an exemption must demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that they should not have been disqualified. The applicant must give sufficient evidence of rehabilitation, which could include:

- A explanation of the circumstances surrounding the criminal incident for which an exemption is sought,
- The time period that has elapsed since the incident,
- The nature of the harm caused to the victim,
- The history of the employee since the incident, or
- Any other evidence indicating that the employee will not present a danger in continued employment.¹⁵

If one agency grants an exemption, it is not binding on other agencies.¹⁶

Since 2006, nearly 44% of the total applications for exemption processed by AHCA have been granted. The Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel reported on the high recidivism rate among people granted exemptions. The Sun Sentinel reported that one in five people granted exemptions were re-arrested after having been granted the exemption.¹⁷

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill substantially rewrites requirements and procedures for background screening of the persons and businesses that deal primarily with vulnerable populations. The bill provides that "vulnerable persons" includes minors and adults whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection is impaired due to a mental, emotional, long-term physical, or developmental disability or dysfunctioning, or brain damage, or the infirmities of aging. Key changes made by the bill:

¹³ Section 435.07(1), F.S.

¹⁴ A decision is contestable under the traditional administrative appeal process found in chapter 120, F.S.

¹⁵ Section 435.07(3), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 435.07(5), F.S.

¹⁷ Sun Sentinel. Criminals and Convicted Felons Working in South Florida Day-care Centers and Nursing Homes. <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/sfl-trust-florida-criminals-child-elder-care-html,0,3829069.html> (accessed February 10, 2010).

- Require that no person required to be screened may be employed until the screening has been completed and it is determined that the person is qualified.
- Increase all Level 1 screening to Level 2 screening. This will not require existing employees to be rescreened until they otherwise come up for rescreening pursuant to existing law.
- Require all fingerprint submissions to be submitted electronically by July 1, 2012, or sooner, should an agency decide to do so by rule. However, for those applying under AHCA, electronic prints will be required as of July 1, 2010.
- Require certain personnel that deal substantially with vulnerable persons that are not presently being screened to begin Level 2 screening. This includes homes for special services, transitional living facilities, prescribed pediatric extended care centers, and certain direct service providers under the Department of Elder Affairs.
- Add additional serious crimes to the list of disqualifying offenses for Level 1 and Level 2 screening.
- Authorize agencies to request the retention of fingerprints by FDLE. The bill also provides for rulemaking and related implementation provisions for retention of fingerprints.
- Provide that an exemption for a disqualifying felony may not be granted until after at least three years from the completion of all sentencing sanctions for that felony.
- Require that all exemptions from disqualification be granted only by the agency head.
- Rewrite present screening provisions for clarity and consistency.

Section 1 of the bill removes a reference to ch. 435, F.S., for background screening of hurricane mitigation inspectors participating in the My Safe Florida Home Program established within the Department of Financial Services. These persons will still undergo fingerprinting and criminal background screening at the state and national Level, but not pursuant to ch. 435, F.S., since they do not deal primarily with vulnerable children or adults.

Section 2 of the bill adds additional disqualifying offenses for the screening of direct service providers for persons with developmental disabilities. The additional offenses are:

- Any specific authorizing statutes, if the offense was a felony.
- Chapter 393, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 409.920, relating to Medicaid provider fraud, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 409.9201, relating to Medicaid fraud, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 817.034, relating to fraudulent acts through mail, wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photooptical systems.
- Section 817.234, relating to false and fraudulent insurance claims.
- Section 817.505, relating to patient brokering.
- Section 817.568, relating to criminal use of personal identification information.
- Section 817.60, relating to obtaining a credit card through fraudulent means.
- Section 817.61, relating to fraudulent use of credit cards, if the offense was a felony.
- Section 831.01, relating to forgery.
- Section 831.02, relating to uttering forged instruments.
- Section 831.07, relating to forging bank bills, checks, drafts, or promissory notes.
- Section 831.09, relating to uttering forged bank bills, checks, drafts, or promissory notes.

Section 3 (mental health personnel), section 4 (nursing homes), section 13 (intermediate care facilities for developmentally disabled persons), and section 15 (health care clinics), of the bill revise provisions

related to the screening of personnel. These screening provisions already require Level 2 screening, but are being revised for clarity and consistency. They are also being revised to conform to the screening provisions being placed in s. 408.809, F.S. By placing the procedures for screening in a single statute, s. 408.809, F.S., AHCA can achieve efficiencies and consistency in the application of screening requirements. Many of the existing provisions being deleted are duplicative of provisions in ch. 435, F.S., and are unnecessary or may conflict with changes made by this bill.

Section 5 (home health agency personnel; nurse registry personnel; and companions and homemakers), section 6 (hospices), sections 10, 11, and 12 (home medical equipment providers), section 14 (health care services pools), section 18 (employees and volunteers in summer day camps and summer 24-hour camps), section 19 (consumer directed care personnel), sections 21 and 22 (assisted living facilities), sections 23 and 24 (adult family-care homes), and sections 25 and 26 (adult day care centers), of the bill increase from Level 1 screening to Level 2 screening for relevant personnel. These provisions are also being revised for clarity and consistency and to conform to the screening provisions being placed in s. 408.809, F.S. By placing the procedures for screening in a single statute, s. 408.809, F.S., AHCA can achieve efficiencies and consistency in the application of screening requirements. Many of the existing provisions being deleted are duplicative of provisions in ch. 435, F.S., and are unnecessary or may conflict with changes made by this bill.

Section 7 (homes for special services), section 8 (transitional living facilities), section 9 (prescribed pediatric extended care centers), and section 27 (certain direct service providers under the Department of Elder Affairs), of the bill provide Level 2 background screening for personnel in these facilities. Presently, these groups do not have such screening requirements.

Sections 16 and 17 of the bill revise AHCA's general provisions relating to screening. The changes are intended to provide for consistency and clarity. The change to s. 408.806, F.S., provides for the submission of an affidavit by licensure applicants, subject to the penalty of perjury, stating that all persons subject to background screening have been screened and are qualified. Changes to s. 408.809, F.S., provide that:

- Any person whose responsibilities may require them to provide personal care or services directly to clients, or have access to client living areas, client personal property, or client funds, including contractors, must be screened. However, this change does not require a person who is employed or contracts with a licensee on or before June 30, 2010, to submit to any additional rescreening if that licensee has written evidence that the person has already been screened and qualified according to Level 1 or Level 2 standards.
- Proof of compliance with Level 2 screening standards submitted within the previous 5 years to meet requirements of AHCA, the Department of Health, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, or the Department of Children and Family Services satisfies screening requirements if the person has not been unemployed for more than 90 days.
- Fingerprints must be provided in electronic format.
- Screening results will be reviewed by the agency and maintained in a database. The qualifying or disqualifying status of the person named in the request will be posted on a secure website accessible to all licensees [this is current law for nursing homes and is being moved from s. 400.215(1)(b), F.S.].
- An employer is not liable, upon notice of a disqualifying offense listed, for terminating the person against whom the report was issued, whether or not the person has filed for an exemption.

Sections 28 provides that ch. 435, F.S., only applies to background screenings that are required by law to be conducted under the chapter. This section also provides that, in accordance with the doctrine of incorporation by reference, that a reference in the Florida Statutes to any provision in ch. 435, F.S., includes all subsequent amendments to ch. 435, F.S.

Section 29 provides:

- A definition of “employment” to clarify that its use in the chapter is limited to those activities that require the employee to be subject to screening.
- A definition of “vulnerable person” to include all minors and those adults whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection is impaired due to a mental, emotional, long-term physical, or developmental disability or dysfunctioning, or brain damage, or the infirmities of aging.
- A revision to the definition of “licensing agency” – to “agency” – to clarify that its use includes all agencies that facilitate background screening, not just those agencies that issue licenses.

Section 30 revises the provisions related to Level 1 screening to delete the current list of disqualifying offenses and instead, incorporate the expanded list of disqualifying offenses provided by the bill for Level 2 screening in s. 435.04, F.S.

Section 31 revises the provisions related to Level 2 screening as follows:

- Require all fingerprint submissions to be submitted electronically by July 1, 2012, or sooner, should an agency decide to do so by rule. However, for those applying under AHCA, electronic prints will be required July 1, 2010.
- Authorize an agency to contract with one or more vendors to perform all or part of the electronic fingerprinting pursuant to this section.
- Delete specific provisions for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and the Department of Juvenile Justice (these are being transferred to the specific statutes on these topics).
- Deletes requirements for attestation and affidavits by employees and employers (these are being moved to s. 435.05, F.S.).

Section 31 also provides the following additional disqualifying offenses to Level 2 screening (which means they will also apply to Level 1 screening):

- Chapter 784, relating to assault, battery, and culpable negligence, if the offense was a felony (therefore, the bill strikes existing specific references to crimes in this chapter).
- Section 787.025, relating to luring or enticing a child.
- Section 794.05, relating to unlawful sexual activity with certain minors.
- Section 810.02, relating to burglary (presently, felony burglary is a disqualifying offense for those being screening under DJJ).
- Section 810.14, relating to voyeurism, if the offense is a felony.
- Section 810.145, relating to video voyeurism, if the offense is a felony.
- Section 944.40, relating to escape (presently, escape is a disqualifying offense for those being screening under DJJ).

- Any crime that constitutes domestic violence.

Section 32 deletes existing authority that allows employees to work pending the outcome of their background screening. This section also inserts requirements for attestation and affidavits by employees and employers that are being stricken in s. 435.04, F.S.

Section 33 provides that an employer may not hire an employee until the screening process is completed and that if an employer becomes aware that an employee has been arrested for a disqualifying offense, the employer must remove the employee from contact with any vulnerable person.

Section 34 provides that:

- An exemption from disqualification may not be granted for a disqualifying felony until at least three years after the applicant has completed or been lawfully released from confinement, supervision, or sanction for the disqualifying felony.
- Only the head of an agency may grant an exemption from disqualification.
- The agency may consider as part of its deliberations of the employee's rehabilitation subsequent arrests and convictions, even if that subsequent crime is not a disqualifying offense.
- The standard of review by the administrative law judge of the agency's decision as to rehabilitation is whether the agency's intended action is an abuse of discretion.
- An exemption may not be granted from disqualification from employment for any person who has been designated as a sexual predator pursuant to s. 775.21, F.S.

Section 35 provides that each agency is responsible for collecting and paying any fee related to fingerprints retained on its behalf to FDLE. The amount of the annual fee and procedures for the submission and retention of fingerprint information and for the dissemination of search results is to be established by rule of FDLE.

Section 36 of the bill removes a reference to ch. 435, F.S., for background screening of construction contractors under the Department of Business and Professional Regulation. These persons will still undergo fingerprinting and criminal background screening at the state and national level, but not pursuant to ch. 435, F.S., since they do not deal primarily with vulnerable children or adults.

Section 37 authorizes agencies to request the retention of fingerprints by FDLE and to adopt rules that require employers to keep the agency informed of any change in the affiliation, employment, or contractual status or place of affiliation, employment, or contracting of each person whose fingerprints are retained. This section also allows FDLE to participate in a federal fingerprint retention program once one is implemented, provided that FDLE is funded and equipped to participate.

Section 38 makes technical changes by removing obsolete references in s. 943.053, F.S.

Section 39 amends the background screening provisions of the Department of Juvenile Justice for consistency with other changes made by this bill; to remove redundant provisions; to add an additional disqualifying offense for the criminal use of personal identification information; to add the disqualifying offense of assault or battery of law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical care providers, public transit employees or agents, or other specified officers (which is being struck from s. 435.04, F.S.); and to authorize the adoption of rules that describe the procedure and requirements necessary to implement the employment screening and fingerprint retention services.

Section 40 provides that the changes made by the bill are intended to be prospective in nature and that persons are not required to be rescreened who are employed or licensed on the effective date of the bill until such time they are otherwise required to be rescreened pursuant to law, at which time they must meet the requirements for screening as set forth in the bill.

Section 41 provides that the bill takes effect July 1, 2010.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1 - amends s. 215.5586, F.S., relating to the My Safe Florida Home Program.

Section 2 - adds to s. 393.0655, F.S., relating to screening of direct service providers.

Section 3 - amends s. 394.4572, F.S., relating to screening of mental health personnel.

Section 4 - amends s. 400.215, F.S., relating to personnel screening requirement.

Section 5 - amends s. 400.512, F.S., relating to screening of home health agency personnel; nurse registry personnel; and companions and homemakers.

Section 6 - amends s. 400.6065, F.S., relating to background screening.

Section 7 - amends s.400.801, F.S., relating to homes for special services.

Section 8 - adds to s. 400.805, F.S., relating to transitional living facilities.

Section 9 - creates s. 400.9065, F.S., relating to background screening.

Section 10 - amends s. 400.934, F.S., relating to minimum standards.

Section 11 - amends s. 400.953, F.S., relating to background screening of home medical equipment provider personnel.

Section 12 - repeals s. 400.955, F.S., relating to procedures for screening of home medical equipment provider personnel.

Section 13 - amends s. 400.964, F.S., relating to personnel screening requirement.

Section 14 - amends s. 400.980, F.S., relating to health care services pools.

Section 15 - amends s. 400.991, F.S., relating to license requirements; background screenings; prohibitions.

Section 16 - adds to s. 408.806, F.S., relating to license application process.

Section 17 - amends s. 408.809, F.S., relating to background screening; prohibited offenses.

Section 18 - amends s. 409.175, F.S., relating to licensure of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies; public records exemption.

Section 19 - amends s. 409.221, F.S., relating to consumer-directed care program.

Section 20 - amends s. 409.907, F.S., relating to medicaid provider agreements.

Section 21 - amends s. 429.14, F.S., relating to administrative penalties.

Section 22 - amends s. 429.174, F.S., relating to background screening.

Section 23 - amends s. 429.67, F.S., relating to licensure.

Section 24 - amends s. 429.69, F.S., relating to denial, revocation, and suspension of a license.

Section 25 - amends s. 429.911, F.S., relating to denial, suspension, revocation of license; emergency action; administrative fines; investigations and inspections.

Section 26 - amends s. 429.919, F.S., relating to background screening.

Section 27 - creates s. 430.60, F.S., relating to screening of direct service providers.

Section 28 - amends s. 435.01, F.S., relating to applicability of this chapter.

Section 29 - amends s. 435.02, F.S., relating to definitions.

Section 30 - amends s. 435.03, F.S., relating to Level 1 screening standards.

Section 31 - amends s. 435.04, F.S., relating to Level 2 screening standards.

Section 32 - amends s. 435.05, F.S., relating to requirements for covered employees and employers.

Section 33 - amends s. 435.06, F.S., relating to exclusion from employment.

Section 34 - amends s. 435.07, F.S., relating to exemptions from disqualification.

Section 35 - amends s. 435.08, F.S., relating to payment for processing of fingerprints and state criminal records checks.

Section 36 - amends s. 489.115, F.S., relating to certification and registration; endorsement; reciprocity; renewals; continuing education.

Section 37 - amends s. 943.05, F.S., relating to Criminal Justice Information Program; duties; crime reports.

Section 38 - amends s. 943.053, F.S., relating to dissemination of criminal justice information; fees.

Section 39 - amends s. 985.644, F.S., relating to departmental contracting powers; personnel standards and screening.

Section 40 - provides the changes made by this act are intended to be prospective in nature.

Section 41 - provides an effective date of July 1, 2010.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

See D. FISCAL COMMENTS below.

2. Expenditures:

See D. FISCAL COMMENTS below.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

This bill should have no impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

Staff is not aware of any local governments that use ch. 435, F.S., for background screening, though they do perform criminal background checks on certain employees. The bill will have no fiscal impact on background screening done outside of the ch. 435, F.S., process. It may be that some local governments are associated, or help fund, local programs that do use such screening.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill increases the number of persons who will need to undergo background screening prior to working with vulnerable persons. It also will require much of the screening to be done using Level 2 standards instead of Level 1, which has a greater cost associated with it. Level 1 costs \$24, and Level 2 costs that same \$24, plus an additional \$19.25 (electronic fingerprints) or \$30.25 (hard card fingerprints). By increasing the cost and the number of those persons required to be screened, there will be a substantial impact on agencies and employers and employees. It is anticipated that in most cases, the fees will be passed on to the employee and the employer may or may not reimburse that employee. Some agencies pay for the screening of their employees and volunteers.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The largest fiscal impact on the agencies will be the retention of fingerprints. The bill does not mandate, but does authorize, the retention of fingerprints. However, retention will go a long way in ensuring the protection of Florida's vulnerable populations. The cost of retention of fingerprints by FDLE is estimated to be \$6 per year per set of fingerprints. How this \$6 is collected will have an effect on the fiscal impact to the agencies. The first year's cost for retention is included in the existing fees, but for additional years, the \$6 will be charged. It is anticipated that to make collection feasible, and to avoid the collection of \$6 per person per year, that \$24 for retention will be collected up front at the time of screening. This will cover a 5 year period of retention, at which time the employee would be required to get rescreened (if provided for in existing law). If the cost of retention is built into the existing collection of screening fees, then there should not be an additional workload impact. However, if it becomes a separate collection issue, then this could affect workload. Also, retention will require each agency to develop a database and related software in order to maintain the list of employees that should continue to have their fingerprints retained.

There will be additional workload impact due to the increase in the number of persons who will need to undergo background screening prior to working with vulnerable persons. The bill requires present Level 1 screens to be done at Level 2, which has a greater cost associated with it. Level 1 costs \$24, and Level 2 costs that same \$24, plus an additional \$19.25 (electronic fingerprints) or \$30.25 (hard card fingerprints). By increasing the cost and the number of those persons required to be screened, there will be a substantial impact on agencies and employers and employees. It is anticipated that in most cases, the fees will be passed on to the employee and the employer may or may not reimburse that employee. Some agencies pay for the screening of their employees and volunteers. However, it is difficult to anticipate how many additional persons will need to be screened.

The following agencies have reported that the bill will have a neutral or no fiscal impact on revenues or expenditures:

- FDLE

- AHCA – but see their additional comments below
- Department of Elder Affairs
- DJJ
- Guardian ad Litem Office

The following agencies have reported that the bill will have a fiscal impact on workload:

- DCF
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Agency for Health Care Administration

While the Agency for Health Care Administration did report that the bill's fiscal impact will be neutral, it also provided the following comments:

The Agency's background screening workload is expected to increase based upon the shift from Level 1 to Level 2 screening that will require screening currently sent directly to FDLE to be conducted through the Agency,

The workload will also increase because of the increase in the number of persons subject to screening based on the uniform definition of when screening is required (access to client living areas, property or funds).

The Agency expects to process approximately 86,000 additional screenings each year. The resources necessary to do this work will be offset by the efficiencies gained through use of electronic fingerprint (Livescan), and movement of OPS staff funding of \$142,098 within the Agency. Therefore no new resources will be required.

New screening volume: Based upon the shift to Level 2 and the additional persons required to be screened, we estimate that approximately 122,000 additional Level 2 screenings may be conducted annually. This total added to the number of Level 2 screenings currently conducted means approximately 150,000 Level 2 screenings will be processed by the Agency annually.

Background screening duties/workload: Duties involved in processing background screening checks include accepting requests, processing payments, transmitting requests to FDLE, accepting results, reviewing criminal history reports, determining eligibility for employment, providing results to providers and all related data entry.

Data from 2009 indicates that an estimated 10% of all Level 2 screenings are rejected by the FBI and must be submitted a second time. This process includes notifying the requesting health care provider that a second card must be submitted, tracking the submission of the second card and requesting a "Name Check Only" search for fingerprints rejected a second time.

Exemption workload: In 2009, 20% of all Level 2 screenings resulted in a criminal history that must be reviewed for disqualifying offenses. Of those, approximately 22% will contain a disqualifying offense. Those individuals will be eligible to apply for an exemption from disqualification.

Electronic fingerprints: Much of the manual processing currently required with submission of fingerprint cards directly to the Agency would be eliminated with the requirement to submit requests through LiveScan. However, the number of criminal history reports to review will increase as will the number of applications for exemption from disqualification. It is expected that the efficiencies of electronic fingerprinting will decrease some data entry and other manual processes of screening.

Shift existing OPS funding: In January 2010, the Division of Medicaid provided \$142,098 in OPS funds to the Background Screening section to consolidate background screening within the Agency. These resources assist with the direct staff screening requirements of certain Medicaid providers which in some cases are duplicative of screenings for licensure, bringing efficiency to Agency background screening duties. Moving the OPS funding to Health Quality Assurance will secure the necessary resources to support the additional Level 2 workload in the bill. Funds would be moved from Org. Code 68500000000 to 68304030000.

The Department of Children and Families

DCF has reported it anticipates a workload and fiscal impact by the bill. Staff is working with the agency to determine how great the impact will be. The Department understands the importance of retention of fingerprints, but this appears to be where the greatest impact will result. While the bill does not mandate the retention of fingerprints, it is a goal of the Department to be able to implement this provision. DCF also provided the following information:

In order for the agencies to be able to notify FDLE which prints are to be retained, the agency will need to have a database of the persons being both screened and employed. The bill also contains language indicating the appropriate agency is responsible for collecting and paying fees related to fingerprint retention to FDLE. The department would likely need additional staff to manage this process and ensure collection and payment is provided timely. Since the process would need to be developed, the cost is indeterminate at this time.

Until each agency has a database of the current employees of facilities and providers and which fees are to be paid by whom, an estimate of the total impact is indeterminate. Although DCF can estimate the cost to DCF for FDLE to retain the fingerprints for the 13,500 DCF employees at \$81,500 per year, DCF does not currently have data on the number of employees of the licensees and providers whose employees will be impacted by this bill.

Some specifics are available, however.

Mental Health: The publicly operated state mental health treatment facilities have a total of 3,980.5 full-time equivalent positions which are required to be screened. At \$6 per year per employee, the cost for retaining the prints of these employees would be \$23,883. Per contract, the privatized state mental health treatment facilities have a total of 1,345.70 positions. The estimated additional cost associated with retention of prints to these contractors would be \$8,074.20 annually. These additional costs would likely result in the contractors making requests to increase the amount of their contracts with the department.

The additional fee for retaining fingerprints will also impact contracted mental health providers in the community. There are approximately 233 community mental health providers that contract with the department whose employees are required to be screened. As stated earlier, the department does not currently have an estimate regarding the number of staff employed in these agencies. However, the cost of retaining fingerprints for these employees would likely be passed on to the department through negotiated contract increases with these providers.

The total known annual cost for retaining the fingerprints for Mental Health facilities is \$75,211 plus the increased unknown costs to the community mental health providers. The cost to the department of creating a process for tracking the employees at mental health facilities and providers for the purpose of notifying FDLE which prints to retain and for collecting the fee from the facilities and providers and submission to FDLE is indeterminate.

Child Care / Summer Camps: The pre-employment screening requirement may have a fiscal impact on the operation of a child care provider in terms of filling vacant positions in a timely manner, which may result in additional licensing sanctions.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities has reported it anticipates some fiscal impact by the bill. Staff is still working with the agency to determine how great the impact will be. The Agency understands the importance of retention of fingerprints, but this appears to be where the greatest impact will result. While the bill does not mandate the retention of fingerprints, it is a goal of the Agency to be able to implement this provision.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable because this bill does not appear to require counties or cities to: spend funds or take action requiring the expenditure of funds; reduce the authority of counties or cities to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or cities.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The bill provides specific rulemaking direction in several places in the bill related to implementation of fingerprints screening, retention of fingerprints, and the electronic submission of fingerprints. All rulemaking is directed to be accomplished pursuant to ch. 120, F.S. It has been recommended that an additional general rulemaking provision be added to ch. 435, F.S., that grants agencies clear broad authority for rulemaking since the references in the bill are fairly specific.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

It has been recommended that an additional general rulemaking provision be added to ch. 435, F.S., that grants agencies clear broad authority for rulemaking since the references in the bill are fairly specific.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES