

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

H.B. 982
May 2, 2024
HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH30449-MRa-119

Short Title: Faith In Mental Health Pilot Program.

(Public)

Sponsors: Representative Sossamon.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A PILOT PROGRAM TO INCREASE RESOURCES IN THE
3 COMMUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE USE
4 SERVICE NEEDS.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.(a)** Development of the Faith in Mental Health Pilot Program. – The
7 Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental
8 Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (MH/DD/SUS), shall develop a pilot program that
9 allows religious institutions to better respond to individuals in the community with mental health
10 or substance use service needs and that adheres, at a minimum, to the requirements of this act.
11 This pilot program shall initially be offered only to religious institutions serving Vance County,
12 Granville County, or both. The Division of MH/DD/SUS shall collaborate with the local district
13 health department and the local management entity/managed care organization (LME/MCO) in
14 those counties in developing the pilot program.

15 For the purposes of the Faith in Mental Health pilot program, the following definitions
16 apply:

- 17 (1) Mental health. – Any clinically recognized behavioral, mental, or emotional
18 condition.
19 (2) Religious institution. – Any church, mosque, synagogue, temple, or
20 ecclesiastical or denominational organization with an established physical
21 place for worship in this State at which nonprofit religious services and
22 activities are regularly conducted. This term includes any separate group or
23 corporation that forms an integral part of a religious institution that is exempt
24 from federal income tax under the provisions of section 501(c)(3) of the
25 Internal Revenue Code that is primarily supported by funds solicited inside its
26 own membership or congregation.

27 **SECTION 1.(b)** Designations Available Under the Faith in Mental Health Pilot
28 Program. – Annually, any religious institution may apply for, and be granted, one of three levels
29 of Faith in Mental Health designation. The three levels of designation, and the requirements for
30 that level of designation, are as follows:

- 31 (1) Basic Designation. – The following criteria are required to be met to be
32 granted Basic Designation:
33 a. The religious institution conducts at least one training per year for its
34 leadership, personnel, members, or any combination thereof, that
35 consists of information about local mental health and substance use
36 service providers and the services each provider offers.



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- 1 b. At least one member of the religious institution's leadership or
- 2 personnel, or at least one member of the religious institution, is
- 3 identified on the application for designation as capable of referring
- 4 individuals to local mental health and substance use services
- 5 providers.
- 6 c. A mental health or substance use topic has been, or will be, featured at
- 7 the religious institution at least once a month. Examples of the manner
- 8 in which mental health or substance use topics may be featured include
- 9 providing resources on various mental health or substance use topics
- 10 in high traffic areas at the religious institution's place of worship,
- 11 making information on mental health or substance use services
- 12 available in a bulletin or newsletter or on a website, or hosting learning
- 13 sessions on mental health or substance use topics. The preceding list
- 14 of examples shall not be construed as exhaustive.
- 15 d. At least one mental health- or substance use-related support group per
- 16 month is hosted, or will be hosted, by or at the religious institution.
- 17 The support group may be open to members of the religious institution
- 18 or the community at large.
- 19 (2) Intermediate Designation. – The following criteria are required to be met to
- 20 be granted Intermediate Designation:
- 21 a. The religious institution meets all requirements for Basic Designation.
- 22 b. At least quarterly, a mental health or substance use forum is hosted, or
- 23 will be hosted, by the religious institution. A mental health or
- 24 substance use forum is an event in which the religious institution
- 25 invites experts in a field related to mental health or substance use to
- 26 speak on a specific mental health issue with the goal of familiarizing
- 27 attendees with mental health and substance use resources and services
- 28 within the community. Experts may include healthcare providers,
- 29 counselors, or individuals representing an LME/MCO or BH IDD
- 30 tailored plan operated by the LME/MCO, the local health department,
- 31 the local community college, or other related agencies. The preceding
- 32 list of experts shall not be construed as exhaustive.
- 33 c. A mental health resource library is established and clearly identified
- 34 within the religious institution.
- 35 d. At least one training that is offered by the QPR Institute, or a similar
- 36 entity, is, or will be, hosted by the religious institution per year. At a
- 37 minimum, the training will last one hour and include education on
- 38 identification of the signs of suicide crisis and the appropriate
- 39 responses to those signs.
- 40 (3) Advanced Designation. – The following criteria are required to be met to be
- 41 granted Advanced Designation:
- 42 a. The religious institution meets all requirements for Basic and
- 43 Intermediate Designation.
- 44 b. The religious institution offers at least one Mental Health First Aid
- 45 training per year.
- 46 c. Members of the religious institution, leadership of the religious
- 47 institution, or both, participate in at least one workshop or seminar
- 48 pertaining to mental health or substance use per year.

49 **SECTION 1.(c)** Conditions of Receipt of Designation for Faith in Mental Health
 50 Pilot Program Participants. – As a condition of receipt of the Faith in Mental Health designation,
 51 the following shall be required of all religious institutions participating in the pilot program:

- 1 (1) Upon being granted any Faith in Mental Health designation, the website of the
2 religious institution shall be updated to reflect the institution's participation in
3 the program and its designation level.
- 4 (2) All religious institution personnel and members of the religious institution that
5 will be directly participating in the pilot program shall complete mental health
6 and substance use training identified and deemed essential by the Division of
7 MH/DD/SUS.

8 **SECTION 1.(d)** Responsibilities of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental
9 Disabilities, and Substance Use Services. – The Division of MH/DD/SUS shall be responsible
10 for the development of the application for Faith in Mental Health designation. The Division of
11 MH/DD/SUS shall also be responsible for awarding all designations to each religious institution
12 with an application approved by the Division of MH/DD/SUS to participation in the Faith in
13 Mental Health pilot program. The Division of MH/DD/SUS may delegate any or all
14 responsibilities with regards to the application process to a local health department in a
15 participating county, however, the final determination for a denial of a designation shall remain
16 with the Division of MH/DD/SUS and shall be given in writing to all applicants.

17 No later than March 1 of each year of the pilot program, the Division of MH/DD/SUS
18 shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services
19 containing information on the steps taken to implement the pilot program, the number of
20 applications for Faith in Mental Health Designation and the number of designations granted, the
21 approximate number of individuals served by the religious institutions certified within the
22 previous year, and any recommendations to expand the pilot program to other counties in the
23 State.

24 **SECTION 2.** Effective July 1, 2024, there is appropriated from the General Fund to
25 the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental
26 Disabilities, and Substance Use Services, the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be used
27 to develop the Faith in Mental Health pilot program, as described in this act. As part of that
28 implementation, the Division of MH/DD/SUS may allocate a portion of these funds to each
29 religious institution with an approved application to participate in the Faith in Mental Health pilot
30 program that is based upon the religious institution's designation level with the purpose of
31 offsetting costs of participation in the pilot program. If the Division of MH/DD/SUS allocates
32 funds provided under this section to each religious institution with an approved application to
33 participate in the Faith in Mental Health pilot program, then the Division of MH/DD/SUS shall
34 determine the maximum funding award that is allocated for each level of designation.

35 **SECTION 3.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes
36 law.