

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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HOUSE BILL 982

Short Title: Faith In Mental Health Pilot Program. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Sossamon, Winslow, Ross, and Fontenot (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Health, if favorable, Appropriations, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations
of the House

May 6, 2024

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A PILOT PROGRAM TO INCREASE RESOURCES IN THE
COMMUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE USE
SERVICE NEEDS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

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

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

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

- (1) Basic Designation. – The following criteria are required to be met to be granted Basic Designation:
 - a. The religious institution conducts at least one training per year for its leadership, personnel, members, or any combination thereof, that



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

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

4 (1) Upon being granted any Faith in Mental Health designation, the website of the
5 religious institution shall be updated to reflect the institution's participation in
6 the program and its designation level.

7 (2) All religious institution personnel and members of the religious institution that
8 will be directly participating in the pilot program shall complete mental health
9 and substance use training identified and deemed essential by the Division of
10 MH/DD/SUS.

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

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

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

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