

By: Representative Watson

To: Judiciary B

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE  
FOR  
HOUSE BILL NO. 1216

1 AN ACT TO ALLOW FORMATION OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY REVIEW TEAMS  
2 TO EVALUATE AND INVESTIGATE REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT; TO  
3 SPECIFY THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE TEAMS; TO REQUIRE AN ORDER OF THE  
4 YOUTH COURT AS A CONDITION PRECEDENT TO THE FORMATION THEREOF; TO  
5 SPECIFY THE TEAM PARTICIPATION OF A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER; TO  
6 PROHIBIT THE DISCLOSURE OF ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM A TASK  
7 FORCE MEETING; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

9 **SECTION 1.** (1) The district attorneys or the Department of  
10 Human Services may initiate formal cooperative agreements with the  
11 appropriate agencies to create multidisciplinary child protection  
12 teams in order to implement a coordinated multidisciplinary team  
13 approach to intervention in reports involving alleged severe or  
14 potential felony child physical or sexual abuse, exploitation, or  
15 maltreatment. The multidisciplinary team also may be known as a  
16 child abuse task force. The purpose of the team or task force  
17 shall be to assist in the evaluation and investigation of reports  
18 and to provide consultation and coordination for agencies involved  
19 in child protection cases. The agencies to be included as members  
20 of the multidisciplinary team are: The district attorney's  
21 office, city and county law enforcement agencies, county  
22 attorneys, youth court prosecutors, and other agencies as  
23 appropriate.

24 (2) To implement the multidisciplinary child abuse team, the  
25 team or task force must be authorized by court order from the  
26 appropriate youth court. The court order will designate which  
27 agencies will participate in the cooperative multidisciplinary  
28 team.



29           (3)   (a)   Teams created under this section may invite other  
30 persons to serve on the team who have knowledge of and experience  
31 in child abuse and neglect matters.  These persons may include  
32 licensed mental and physical health practitioners and physicians,  
33 dentists, members of the clergy, representatives of the district  
34 attorney's office and the Attorney General's office, experts in  
35 the assessment and treatment of substance abuse or sexual abuse,  
36 the victim assistance coordinator of the district attorney's  
37 office and staff members of a child advocacy center.

38           (b)   (i)   A child advocacy center means an agency that  
39 advocates on behalf of children alleged to have been abused and  
40 assists in the coordination of the investigation of child abuse by  
41 providing a location for forensic interviews and promoting the  
42 coordination of services for children alleged to have been abused.  
43 A child advocacy center provides services that include, but are  
44 not limited to, forensic medical examinations, mental health and  
45 related support services, court advocacy, consultation, training  
46 for social workers, law enforcement training, and child abuse  
47 multidisciplinary teams; and staffing of multidisciplinary teams.

48           (ii)   Child advocacy centers may provide a  
49 video-taped forensic interview of the child in a child friendly  
50 environment or separate building.  The purpose of the video-taped  
51 forensic interview is to prevent further trauma to a child in the  
52 investigation and prosecution of child physical and sexual abuse  
53 cases.  Child advocacy centers can also assist child victims by  
54 providing therapeutic counseling subsequent to the interview by a  
55 qualified therapist.  Child advocacy centers can also assist law  
56 enforcement and prosecutors by acquainting child victim witnesses  
57 and their parents or guardians to the courtroom through child  
58 court school programs.

59           (4)   A team or task force created under this section shall  
60 review records on cases referred to the team by the Department of



61 Human Services or law enforcement or the district attorney's  
62 office. The team shall meet at least monthly.

63 (5) No person shall disclose information obtained from a  
64 meeting of the multidisciplinary team unless necessary to comply  
65 with Department of Human Services' regulations or conduct and  
66 proceeding in youth court or criminal court proceedings or as  
67 authorized by a court of competent jurisdiction.

68 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
69 and after July 1, 2002.

