

By: Representative Carlton

To: Public Health and Human Services

HOUSE BILL NO. 754

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 43-15-51, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO REQUIRE THE DISTRICT ATTORNEYS OR THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
3 SERVICES TO CREATE MULTIDISCIPLINARY CHILD PROTECTION TEAMS; AND
4 FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 43-15-51, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
7 amended as follows:

8 43-15-51. (1) The district attorneys or the Department of
9 Human Services shall initiate formal cooperative agreements with
10 the appropriate agencies to create multidisciplinary child
11 protection teams in order to implement a coordinated
12 multidisciplinary team approach to intervention in reports
13 involving alleged severe or potential felony child physical or
14 sexual abuse, exploitation, or maltreatment. The
15 multidisciplinary team also may be known as a child abuse task
16 force. The purpose of the team or task force shall be to assist
17 in the evaluation and investigation of reports and to provide
18 consultation and coordination for agencies involved in child
19 protection cases. The agencies to be included as members of the
20 multidisciplinary team are: the district attorney's office, city
21 and county law enforcement agencies, county attorneys, youth court
22 prosecutors, and other agencies as appropriate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

67 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
68 and after July 1, 2006.