

in terms of the investigation, is that sometimes a single piece of information from one person's perspective is not enough to make a case for child abuse, but if all the people who are dealing with a family would work together those pieces put together may make a very solid case or a much clearer picture of what's going on for the family. So the idea here is to more effectively handle both the investigation and the treatment by clarifying roles and minimizing cracks in the system, minimizing the confusion about who's doing what and putting all the pieces together in a coherent plan. Let me go through the sections of this bill. The very first section establishes that there will be two teams. There'll be the investigation team and there will be a treatment team, and it makes clear that each one of those teams is to establish a protocol for doing the investigations and for the development of treatment plans. One of the things that we have attempted to do through this bill is to provide some guidelines about what must be done, but, on the other hand, provide flexibility recognizing that every county has different players as well as different resources. So the investigation team is to develop a protocol, but it must minimally provide for a system of joint investigations of sexual abuse, joint investigations of other kinds of abuse, as well as neglect, to deal with strategies for reducing risk of harm to the child and ensuring the child is in safe surrounding and to share case information and, lastly, to establish regular meeting times and procedures for meeting in terms of doing a joint investigation. The same kind of protocol is there for the treatment teams, although the focus there becomes more on the team working together to access services, to do case staffings together and, again, to address reducing risk and harm for the children and to assist those who are abused by perpetrators that are not in the home. There's been some discussion that the Department of Social Services has only been able to deal with child abuse and neglect in those circumstances where the perpetrators was somebody who resided in the same residence as the abused. Under this plan, with law enforcement having the responsibility for doing the investigation, then it opens up the door for the Department of Social Services assisting in those circumstances where the perpetrators may not reside in the same place as the child who is being abused. The intent here is to provide guidelines for these teams to operate, but flexibility in the exact strategies for doing that. The teams, the investigation teams, the composition is defined in Section 2. It is to minimally be the county attorney, a representative from the Department of Social Services, a representative from all appropriate law enforcement,