By 2022, every hospital emergency room in Illinois must have staff that can provide specialized care to victims of sexual assault. This new requirement is the result of HB 5245, a bill passed unanimously by the General Assembly and signed into law this summer. Under the law, a trained provider will have to be present in the emergency room within 90 minutes of the patient arriving in the hospital. According to the Illinois attorney general’s office, few hospitals currently provide specialized care for sexual assault victims.

One option for hospitals to meet this new requirement is to have existing staff become sexual assault nurse examiners. These nurses receive training on how to collect physical evidence, respond to the medical and psychological needs of a survivor, and testify in court. The attorney general’s office already offers these training services. Supporters of HB 5245 told the Chicago Tribune it will reduce trauma among victims and improve government prosecutions of sex crimes.

Another provision in the Illinois law ensures that sexual abuse survivors under the age of 13 can undergo any necessary medical forensic exams at a pediatric health care facility, which must ensure that these young victims are treated by specially trained providers.