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## Joint effort seeks to file more charges

A new Ramsey County program will pair prosecutors and investigators on select cases to bring them to court.

By PAT PHEIFER<sup>1</sup>, Star Tribune

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Criminal cases that may not have resulted in charges in the past will get a second set of eyes under a program announced Tuesday by Ramsey County Attorney John Choi.

The Second Look Initiative will partner longtime prosecutor Mindy Elledge with investigators from city, county and suburban law enforcement agencies on select cases. Together they will determine what additional evidence or investigation is needed to prosecute a case. Elledge will shepherd the cases all the way through trial.

The program will supplement, not replace, existing charging procedures in the county attorney's office, Choi said.

Among those with Choi at Tuesday's announcement were Ramsey County Sheriff

Matt Bostrum, Maplewood Police Chief Dave Thomalla, St. Paul Assistant Police Chief Ken Reed and others.

"Investigations are often run on two tracks, one by law enforcement and one by the attorneys," Thomalla said. "Hopefully through this program, we'll bring those tracks together and be a unified team."

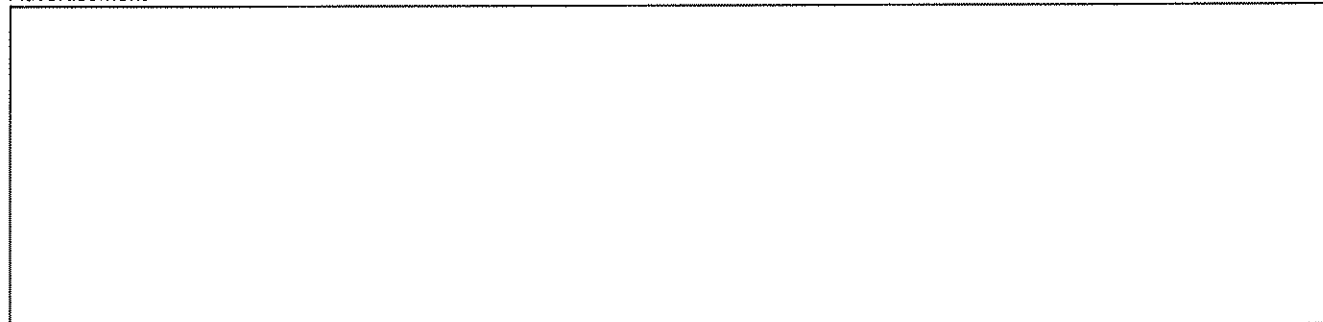
The effort also will have a training component, by teaching investigators what is specifically needed for a case to succeed at trial, Choi said.

Bostrum explained further: An investigator might say, for example, "We think this is worth charging, and a prosecutor will look at it and say, 'Well, it's solid in these areas, but there are a couple of areas that could use some tweaking. If you go out and get this for us, we're going to take this forward.'"

"That's how we envision it," he said, "knowing we're going to have the prosecutors behind us when we take those next steps."

The additional investigation effort won't be wasted -- the cases selected for the Second Look Initiative come with the promise of charges, Choi and the others said. It will definitely result in more cases being charged,

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Choi said, but "the key here is not about quantity, it's about quality."

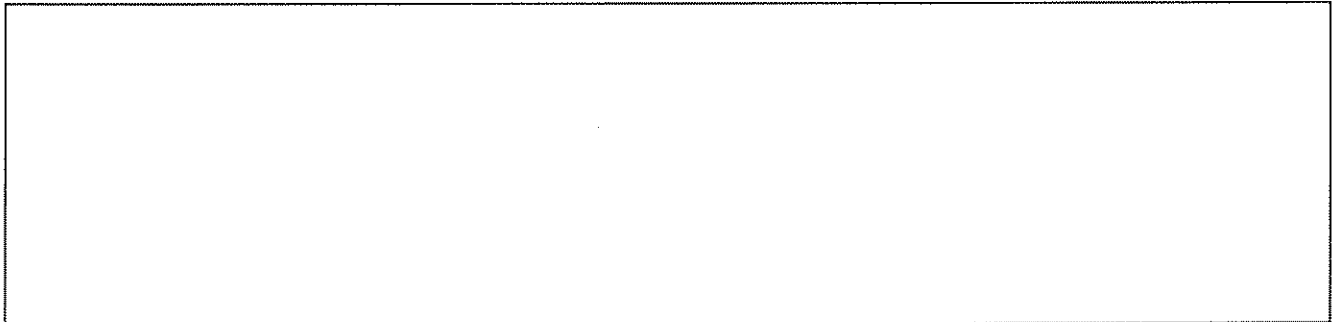
The initiative will be reviewed in nine months. By then, Choi said, he hopes it becomes part of standard protocol for all prosecutors and investigators.

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