

Multidisciplinary Team

WHAT IS A CHILD ABUSE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM?

A child abuse Multidisciplinary Team or MDT is a group of professionals who represent various disciplines and work collaboratively from the point of initial report of abuse to assure the most effective coordinated response possible for every child.

The core child abuse MDT is comprised of representation from the following disciplines: law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical, mental health, victim advocacy, together with Child Advocacy Center (CAC) staff (where available). Other members may be added as deemed necessary and appropriate by the team.

The purpose of the MDT is to implement a child-centered approach to investigation and prosecution of child abuse that minimizes trauma to the victim, assures child safety, facilitates efficient information gathering and sharing, and coordinates service needs.

MDTs formalize interagency cooperation and commitment with written agreements (such as Memoranda of Understanding) to ensure continuity of practice when department heads, personnel, and elected officials change. Together the MDT develops a written protocol addressing intervention which begins at initial report and includes, but is not limited to, first response, pre and post interview debriefings, forensic interviews, confidentiality, consultations, advocacy, evaluation, treatment, case reviews and prosecution. The protocol is reviewed at least every two years and updated to reflect current practice and leadership.

INDICATORS OF A HEALTHY MDT

- 1) **Accountability for the Team** – MDTs hold themselves accountable and ensure they are functioning within their purpose and accomplishing their goals.
- 2) **Accountability for Team Members** – Members of the MDT are accountable to each other: attending, being prepared, advancing knowledge, following up as needed, etc.
- 3) **Burnout Prevention** – Working in the field of child abuse is stressful and overwhelming, but MDT members can serve as supports to each other and help prevent burnout.
- 4) **Celebration** – Big or small, taking time to celebrate accomplishments is imperative!
- 5) **Clear Purpose** – All members must understand the MDT's purpose.
- 6) **Consistent and Total Representation** – to work well together, members must know each other. Consistent representation from each discipline helps form the relationships necessary for a team identify.
- 7) **Evaluation** – to gain a sense of how the MDT is doing.
- 8) **Extended MDT Concept** – MDT's that function optimally work together daily, even when not formally holding meetings.
- 9) **Identified Meeting Facilitator** – Strong MDT's have strong leaders.
- 10) **Knowing Roles/Knowing the "Why"** – all members should know the role of others on the team.
- 11) **Orientation** – MDTs have a responsibility for orienting new members to their team – it can reduce confusion and keep the team moving forward.
- 12) **County Child Abuse Protocols** – outline how child abuse cases will be handled.
- 13) **Strategies for dealing with conflict** – Healthy MDT's have a plan for dealing with conflict before problems arise.
- 14) **Supervisor Support** – Belief in and commitment to MDT process from the top down to front-line staff is important and promotes easier access to information and better interagency communications and relationships.
- 15) **Trust, Respect & Commitment** – to be successful, members must trust and respect each other and be committed to the team approach to child abuse.
- 16) **Willingness to Acknowledge Weaknesses and Mistakes** - Great MDT's, just like great character, are built upon the willingness to acknowledge and learn from weaknesses and mistakes.