



# WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT CHILD ABUSE

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## OBJECTIVES

History

MDT Challenges

Working as a Team



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## CHILD ABUSE HISTORY

1974: Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act  
1983-1990: McMartin Preschool Trial  
Child sexual abuse was a hot topic: beginning in 1981,

"we faced an overwhelming increase in child sexual abuse cases" and by 1985, CSA was 90% of all abuse cases referred to the prosecutor. Robert E. Cramer, Jr, *The District Attorney as a Mobilizer in a Community Approach to Child Sexual Abuse*, Miami Law Review (1985)



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## PROBLEMS WITH THE SYSTEM

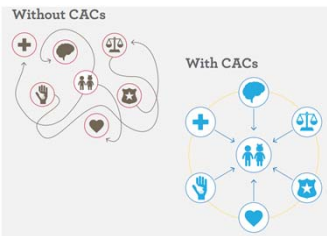
"...many professionals involved with child victims were not communicating with each other. Medical exams were incomplete. They were often performed in hospital emergency rooms after the children were kept waiting for hours. The children and their families were bounced between agencies...The system was **revictimizing** the children." Cramer (1985)



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## IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Development of Multidisciplinary Team approach and establishment of Children's Advocacy Centers came about as result of our failures



### Lack of Communication

Vital information regarding offense, victim/family, alleged perpetrator, physical evidence, case strategy

### Lack of Coordination

Duplicate interviews, failure to follow through, confusion for victim/family, interference with efforts of other agencies

### Lack of Cross Training

Misinformation about roles/responsibilities, available and appropriate services not accessed



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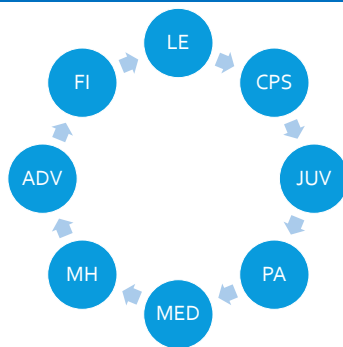
## CREATION OF MDTs AND CASE REVIEW PROCESS

- In 1981 "I scheduled case review meetings" twice a week "and invited law enforcement to attend...We designed forms for presentation of cases at the team review sessions. We documented all decisions including referrals for therapy...in 1983 a victim witness coordinator...joined the team." Cramer (1985)
- Review meetings evolved to include joint investigations with CPS and "saw a dramatic turnaround in the attitude of both the law enforcement detectives and social workers." Cramer (1985)



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## CREATION OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM



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## BENEFITS OF A COORDINATED TEAM APPROACH

Improves communication among agencies

Facilitates information gathering

Broadens knowledge-base for decision making

All members of MDT routinely involved with investigation/intervention



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## MDT EUTOPIA!



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## IN REALITY....


- Little Lucy's case
- Response vs Priority
- Setting priorities
- Never enough....




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## MDT CHALLENGES


- High Turnover
- Training
- Agency Involvement
- No support
- Secondary Traumatic Stress



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## THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM




**#1: Absence of Trust**  
The fear of being vulnerable with team members prevents the building of trust within the team.

**#2: Fear of Conflict**  
The desire to preserve artificial harmony stifles the occurrence of productive, ideological conflict.

**#3: Lack of Commitment**  
The lack of clarity or buy-in prevents team members from making decisions they will stick to.

## TEAMWORK IS HARD WORK!



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## TRUST

### #1 – Absence of Trust

- Teams members that lack trust...
  - Conceal weaknesses and mistakes
  - Don't ask for feedback or help
  - Hesitate to offer help to others
  - Jump to conclusions about intentions
  - Fail to recognize and utilize others' skills
  - Waste time managing behaviors
  - Hold grudges
  - Dread meetings/spending time together



### Absence of Trust

- Fear of vulnerability
- Not open about mistakes and weaknesses



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## CONFLICT



### Fear of Conflict

- Artificial Harmony
- Personal attacks common
- Critical conversations avoided
- Opinions and perspectives of others ignored
- Issues are discussed outside of proper setting (gossip) and allies are sought



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## COMMITMENT



"There are only two options regarding commitment. You're either in or out. There's no such thing as life in-between."

Pat Riley

### Lack of Commitment

- Lack of clarity or buy-in
- Roles and purpose/goals ambiguous
- Lack of confidence
- Fear of failure
- Team members second guess decisions



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## ACCOUNTABILITY

### Avoidance of Accountability

- Accepting low standards and underperformance
- Creates resentment among team members
- Encourages mediocrity



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WHY DO I HAVE TO GO FIRST?

THERE'S NO I IN TEAM DAVE

## RESULTS

### Inattention to Results

- Putting individual goals ahead of the purpose/goals of the TEAM
- Contradicts the very nature of why MDTs were created

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Align on a common goal

Remember – purposeful and legally defensible!

"Blocks" in our MDT

- Policies/procedures align with best practice


Use your CAC as the hub

- CACs should handle that responsibility with integrity and humility

## IT STARTS WITH US!

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MDT  Case Review

Don't be afraid to ask tough questions

Remember – it isn't about YOU

Care enough to ask – and be timely

Orient your team members to the MDT

- Dispel common misconceptions
- Don't assume or let them learn the hard way
- Set your teams and agencies up for success
- Communicate clear roles and expectations from the beginning

## IT STARTS WITH US!

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## 3 P'S OF TEAM INTERACTIONS

People      Process      Product

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## ADDRESSING SPECIFIC ISSUES

### Example:

**Other agencies upset when children aren't removed from the home**

- Response:
  - Give your CPS agency the floor at a Case Review or MDT meeting and teach on the criteria and protocols for CPS' decision-making process.
  - Provide clarity to the roles on the MDT and the inherent limitations they ALL possess.



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## ADDRESSING SPECIFIC ISSUES

### Example:

**MDT disagreement over contacting/interrogating the offender**

- Response:
  - Ensure MDT members are coordinating from the very beginning – the CAC can lead this charge as a hub for coordination and case management.
  - Ensure both entities understand the roles and responsibilities of the other – can come to an effective agreement for the execution and involvement to meet each agency's guidelines and protocols.



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## ADDRESSING SPECIFIC ISSUES

### Example:

**Lack of prosecutor presence in the initial stages of the investigation**

- Response:
  - Set up an opportunity to discuss with both agencies what is hoped to be accomplished by attendance at the FIs and troubleshoot possible solutions or "a starting point" to achieve this goal.



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## ADDRESSING SPECIFIC ISSUES

### Example:

**Interviewing children in the field**

- Response:
  - Provide training opportunities and guidance to the agencies responsible for initiating investigations and scheduling interviews.
  - Educate on the disclosure process and how children experience abuse – how this may impact the interview when conducted in an inappropriate setting.



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## COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK

- Keys to effective feedback:
  - **Situation**
  - **Behavior**
  - **Impact**
- Seek to understand before you are understood
- Network and fellowship *outside* of cases and trauma



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## RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Be respectful, but real – candid/authentic
- Trust each other and always assume positive intent
- No triangulation! Go to the source
- 48 hours or let it go
- Exhaust all efforts at the peer level
- Disagree, then Commit



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## RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Align on message – what's the purpose?
- Take accountability to get clarity – seek to understand.
- Mind your bucket!
- Call it out!
- Don't forget the good stuff too! Build on the strengths of others.



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## THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO!



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