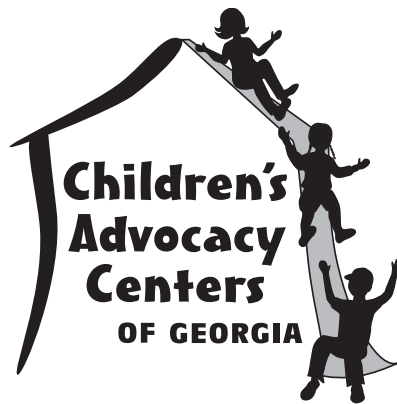


# Indicators of a Healthy Multidisciplinary Team

Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia  
Jodi Lashley, M.S.W.  
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Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1192, Decatur, GA 30031-1192  
404.377.6127  
Fax 404.377.1365  
[www.cacga.org](http://www.cacga.org)  
[cacga@cacga.org](mailto:cacga@cacga.org)

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# Foreword

The core element of a Children's Advocacy Center is a multidisciplinary team (MDT). A MDT is a group of professionals representing various disciplines who work collaboratively to promote a thorough understanding of case issues and assure the most effective system response possible. The purpose of interagency collaboration is to coordinate intervention so as to reduce potential trauma to children and families, while preserving and respecting the rights and obligations of each agency to pursue their respective mandates.

*Putting Standards into Practice*  
*National Children's Alliance*

Probably the most defining and universal of the items listed here is the multidisciplinary team (MDT). The MDT consists of law enforcement officers, child protective service investigators, prosecutors, mental health and medical professionals, and others who provide a coordinated response designed to increase the effectiveness of investigations while reducing the stress and risk of secondary traumatization to children

*Children's Advocacy Centers: One Model, Many Programs*  
*APSAC Advisor; Volume 16, Number 2; Summer 2003*  
*Wendy Walsh, Lisa Jones, and Theodore Cross*  
*Crimes Against Children Research Center*  
*University of New Hampshire*

Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) are a great idea. What professionals would not be excited about having a MDT in their community – team members, meeting on a regular basis to share information, improve the process, and bond?

A community who believes in the team approach to child sexual abuse knows having a MDT is no easy task. The truly complex nature of forming teams becomes apparent from the very beginning. Even with willing participants it is complex and can be challenging and frustrating. Bringing diverse disciplines to the table is an intricate process requiring commitment, strong leadership, and

dedication. Team development takes hard work and a lot of it! The first step to building a successful MDT is to acknowledge this complex and intricate process.

This Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project began, as most projects do, with a brilliant idea. We decided to investigate the nature of MDTs in order to learn how to help teams excel! Talk about a

difficult goal, but we were prepared for the challenge. The project kicked off with 15 MDT visits across the state of Georgia. We began this project thinking we would go into these meetings and solicit information and feedback on specific team topics. However, as the teams are the experts, we ended up following their lead. These teams held open discussions about their teams' functioning, dynamics, and processes. They shared ideas on how they became successful, how they overcame roadblocks, and where they see themselves going. They shared strategies for handling team issues, ways in which their teams celebrate, and ideas about evaluating their team functioning.

Through these team visits, themes for healthy team functioning began to appear.

After extensive analysis of the ideas collected at these meetings, sixteen themes were identified as essential to a healthy MDT. These themes became the basis for this Handbook.

These indicators, while not necessarily present in every team, represent ideas teams have expressed as important and significant to good team functioning. As you read the next section on "How to Get the Most from the 16 Indicators of a Healthy Team," you will learn how to best utilize this Handbook.

Consider each indicator, and challenge yourself and your team to incorporate them as your team deems appropriate. Thanks for your interest in having a great MDT, and for your dedication and commitment to the protection of children.