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Delaware's Multidisciplinary Teams for the Investigation of Child Abuse: Communities of Practice?

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Communities of Practice?

by Lori Sitler

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Abstract

Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) of professionals are mandated to respond to and investigate cases of child abuse in Delaware. Utilizing research and theory about interorganizational collaboration, my exploratory study considered how this mandate operated in practice. Five themes from interorganizational literature (IOC) on facilitators and barriers to collaborative practice--trust, commitment, communication, capacity, and change--were examined using the theories of Goffman and Weber. The concept of power underlies these themes.

The MDT was considered a motivating example to explore whether Lave and Wenger's socio-cultural learning theory of Community of Practice (CoP) explained learning and practice among multidisciplinary professionals considering barriers and facilitators identified in IOC research. My research, the first study of Delaware's MDTs, sought to give voice to professionals who served as MDT members and to answer the question: How do divergent groups of professionals interact in the interorganizational collaboration framework of the MDT that investigates child abuse in Delaware?

Through 29 interviews with team members, conducted on Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic, I explored participants' perceptions of team operations. Five overarching themes emerged from my coding of interview data: the importance of relationships; communication; learning; team identity; and systemic or process issues.

I concluded that the MDT is a reasonably well functioning interorganizational collaboration with several hallmarks of a CoP. The MDT is not a perfect fit with the idealized model of a voluntary CoP because the MDT process is statutorily mandated and the team is comprised of members from diverse, albeit related professions, where their

primary allegiance lies. However, their commitment to the best practice of a

multidisciplinary response and mutual engagement created around the joint enterprise of

investigating child abuse reflected key elements of a CoP. Learning that members

experienced through team participation helped develop and sustain the MDT through

changes in membership.

Study results are not generalizable to MDTs in other locations because the study

was based on a nonprobability sample in one small state. Benefits of my study include the

production of useful knowledge about the lived experiences of MDT members in

Delaware and the applicability of the CoP theory in understanding mandated

collaborations.

Keywords: Multidisciplinary team, interorganizational collaboration, Community

of Practice

Dedication

To my mentor, advisor, and friend of over 30 years, the late Raymond Albert, PhD, JD, MSW who inspired and encouraged me to come back to Bryn Mawr to pursue my doctorate 27 years after I graduated with my MSS and MLSP. Raymond was a great support when I was ready to throw in the towel on the doctoral program after my first year and encouraged me to stick with it and take it one day at a time. After my second year of coursework, when I shared the news with him that I had passed my comprehensive examination in Data Analysis (much to my shock and delight), Raymond wrote, "I had faith in you, of course, so it's no surprise." I will always appreciate his gentle encouragement and his faith in me even when I lacked faith in myself. He was taken from us too soon and I pray he is at peace.

This seven-year journey could not have been possible without the love and support of my family. My sister has been my biggest cheerleader, reminding me often that our beloved late mother would have been proud of me. My dad would ceremoniously usher me off our nightly telephone call promptly at 8 p.m. telling me to "go do your homework" and ending the call with an encouraging "go get 'em, kid." To my sons, Michael and Christian, who have had to share their mom with the demands of my doctoral program and career, thank you for your love and patience. You have grown up to be strong, smart young men and I'm so very proud of you. And to my biggest supporter, my partner, my confidant, my wonderful husband, Steve, who has endured the highs and lows of the doctoral program by my side, always encouraging me and loving me. I couldn't have done it without you. *Ti amo molto.*

work closely with me and was always available to answer questions and to provide valuable input and support during the dissertation process. Her steady guidance and thoughtful suggestions on my multiple drafts helped me create a solid dissertation. I am humbled to have worked on this project with such a gifted professor and scholar.

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I am most grateful to the professionals who are current or past members of the MDT in Delaware. I appreciate their willingness to speak with me about this difficult work and their experiences as team members. The work they do every day to protect children deserves our admiration and respect. They are my heroes.

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List of Acronyms

CAC – Children's Advocacy Center of Delaware

CAPTA - Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

CoP – Community of Practice

DAG – Deputy Attorney General; Criminal Division DAGs, who handle criminal prosecutions, are also known as prosecutors

DFS – Division of Family Services, Delaware's child welfare agency

DOJ – Department of Justice; Delaware's prosecuting attorney's office

IC – Investigation Coordinator – an attorney employed by the Office of the Child Advocate with statutory authority to independently track cases of alleged child abuse or neglect from the initial report to the final criminal and civil disposition. IC acts as the convenor of the MDT case reviews

IOC – Interorganizational Collaboration

MDT – Multidisciplinary team that investigates child abuse allegations

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding, document signed by MDT member agencies which guides practice

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Chapter 1: Interorganizational Collaboration on a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)

Importance of Collaboration in Social Work: A Reflexivity Statement

Collaborative efforts to address child maltreatment are important to the profession of social work. Social workers have been at the forefront of addressing the complex practical and social policy issues presented by cases of child abuse and neglect. I have been engaged in this policy work as a macro practice, Masters level social worker for more than 30 years. For two years in the mid-1990s, as one of the representatives of the Delaware Department of Justice (DOJ), my employer at the time, I sat on the interorganizational planning committee that created the Children's Advocacy Center of Delaware (CAC). Although Delaware social service and law enforcement agencies worked cooperatively on a variety of issues prior to the creation of the CAC, this was the first time that such a large-scale, formalized collaboration using a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach was undertaken for the investigation of child abuse. As a social worker who provided services to crime victims through the prosecutor's office at the time, this inter-agency collaboration made sense to me, and I was a strong voice on the planning committee for its adoption.

When deciding on a topic for my dissertation research, I chose to study interorganizational collaborations (IOC) using the MDT as a motivating example. Multidisciplinary teams of professionals--child welfare workers, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, forensic interviewers, investigation coordinators, medical and mental health personnel--are mandated to respond to and investigate cases of child abuse

in Delaware. I conducted the first study of the three MDTs that operate within the CAC of Delaware to learn how people from different professional backgrounds work together in the MDT model and to explore the goodness of fit of Lave and Wenger's construct of a Community of Practice in understanding these teams. I sought to give voice to the professionals who served as MDT members. The formulation of collaborations, partnerships, and alliances between public, private, and non-profit organizations, with the goal of improving service delivery and outcomes for clients, is seen as necessary in addressing major issues facing society today (Dudau, Fischbacher-Smith & McAllister, 2016; Einbinder, Robertson, Garcia, Vuckovic, & Patti, 2000; Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, & Fahrbach, 2001; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen 2005; Thomson & Perry 2006). Particularly in social services, health care, and education, IOCs concerned about specific social problems are increasingly necessary and often mandated (Gray, 2000; Oliver, 1990).

To add to the trustworthiness and transparency of my study, I reflected on my relationship to my dissertation topic and to two of the agencies involved in the MDT. While I was never a member of the MDT, I worked with colleagues at the DOJ who were. Following my involvement on the planning committee, which ended in 1996, I didn't have any relationship with the CAC until 2007 when I was asked to serve on the Board of Directors. By that time, I had left the DOJ and was teaching at a local university. The Board was a governance board, met quarterly, and was not involved in daily operations. In 2015, I was elected as the Board President, a role I filled until 2018 when I joined my current employer, a children and family services agency. The only staff I had regular contact with while on the Board was the Executive Director. Annually, the

Board hosted a staff appreciation reception, and it was at those events that I had contact with staff from the three CAC offices. Although I have had formal relationships with both the DOJ, as an employee, and the CAC, as a planning committee member and, later, a Board member, time has passed, and staff turn-over has occurred. There is a new generation of forensic interviewers at the CAC and prosecutors in the special victims' unit at the DOJ since I left the agency in 2006. In addition to reviewing the potential conflicts with professionals in my study sample, I also reflected on my feelings toward the MDT. I am still very proud of the work I contributed to the CAC planning committee, which resulted in the formation of the child abuse investigation MDT, and my work as a CAC Board member. I have spent my professional career in direct services, teaching, planning and policy development to support victims of crime and the child welfare and criminal justice systems. I am an invested observer who cares deeply about victims of child maltreatment and the quality of the systems that serve them.

For social workers, collaborations are embedded in our ethical standards. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in its Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Welfare, has taken the position that, "Social workers in child welfare shall promote interdisciplinary and interorganizational collaboration to support, enhance, and deliver effective services to children, youths, and families" (NASW, 2012, p. 15). Ethical responsibility requires that social workers, when working on an interdisciplinary team, participate in decisions that affect the well-being of clients by drawing on the perspectives, values, and experiences of the social work profession (NASW, 2017). Perrault, McClelland, Austin, and Sieppert (2011) stated that collaborative practice was an important component of social work and that the social work profession has a value

base that was highly congruent with factors that contribute to successful collaboration: shared leadership, establishing connections through formal and informal communication, and workgroups formed around a learning purpose. They suggested that further emphasis on collaboration was required for advancement of the social work profession.

As a social worker, I feel strongly that interorganizational collaboration can be a positive model for service delivery. I am not, however, naïve in my assessment of the MDT and the human beings who make up the teams. Strong allegiance to their home agency, suspicion of the knowledge and skills of other members outside their own field, power differentials among team members, burn-out, and turn-over create potentially strong impediments to MDT members coalescing as a Community of Practice. I did not enter this research project wearing rose-colored glasses about the MDT model I helped create in Delaware over 25 years ago.

Multidisciplinary Teams for the Investigation of Child Abuse

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the most effective approach to cases involving child maltreatment is interagency coordination and planning (Hammond, Lanning, Promisel, Shepherd, & Walsh, 2001; Loveless, McKellar, & Teele, 2014). In the 2003 guidelines that stemmed from the 2001 National Child Protection Summit, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), and National Children's Alliance (NCA) focused on building partnerships to protect children by reducing the incidence of, and responding effectively to, child abuse and neglect. The introduction to the guidelines boldly stated that, when "agencies work separately, they may fail to respond to the full dimensions of a case and may even place children at further risk. When agencies work together in

multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), the potential to respond to and prevent abuse and neglect increases dramatically" (2003, p. 5). Acknowledging that building effective teams is no easy matter, IACP, CWLA and NCA propose a model to guide the development of MDT collaborations including:

1. Define the issues

2. Identify and engage potential partners

3. Agree on a mission statement, goals, and objectives

4. Assess strengths and needs

5. Design a multidisciplinary response model

6. Leverage and share resources

7. Build team capacity

8. Implement the multidisciplinary response model

9. Evaluate the impact of multidisciplinary response model (IACP, CWLA & NCA, 2003, p. 8).

This model of multidisciplinary practice is the focus of my dissertation.

Organization of the Dissertation

In the next chapter, I provide a brief history of the efforts in the U.S. to create a multidisciplinary response to child maltreatment and describe the evolution of Delaware's CAC and MDT. In Chapter 3, I review the IOC literature including the barriers and facilitators to these collaborations and the IOC model as it relates to collaborations involving law enforcement and collaborations involving the child welfare system. Following the literature review, I discuss the conceptual framework for the study and the research questions in Chapter 4. The study methodology is discussed in Chapter

5. Demographics and post-interview survey responses are included in Chapter 6. Findings

are presented in Chapters 7 through 11. Chapter 12 includes conclusions,

recommendations, and directions for research and practice.

Chapter 2: Creating a Multidisciplinary Response to Child Abuse

Brief History: Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)

and other Federal legislation

The 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth focused on child maltreatment. The following year, the U.S. Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, created a new Subcommittee on Children and Youth, chaired by Senator Walter Mondale. The Children's Division of the American Humane Association received funding to establish a clearinghouse to gather data on the nature and characteristics of child abuse and neglect, to collect information on reporting procedures and protective services, and to design a voluntary uniform reporting system for states (National Child Abuse and Neglect Training and Publications Project, 2014).

In 1973, Congress conducted hearings on bills to create the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). CAPTA provided limited federal funds to improve the response to physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse. CAPTA provided money to train professionals and fund multidisciplinary centers on child abuse and neglect, established advisory committees to oversee the new provisions, monitor research and maintain a clearinghouse on child abuse and neglect programs. To obtain CAPTA funds, states had to comply with regulations strengthening child abuse reporting laws. The regulations required child protective services to provide non-criminal investigations for the verification of reports, to provide immediate protection through such means as protective custody and to provide rehabilitative and ameliorative services (Myers, 2006).

Critics of CAPTA, including the director of the Child Welfare League of America and first Director of the Office of Child Development (now the Administration for Children and Families), did not believe the bill went far enough to attack the root causes and complexity of the issue (NCAN Training and Publication Project, 2014).

CAPTA was underfunded from the outset. Appropriations declined steadily until, by the early 1990s, they had half the value originally established in 1974. Costin and colleagues (1996) contended this lack of federal funding had significant implications for child abuse prevention. Child abuse reporting laws, which addressed various aspects of child maltreatment, were passed in all states and territories in the 1960s, and by the time the reporting of child abuse became mandatory under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, allegations of abuse and neglect had skyrocketed. Yet, because of the capping of appropriations, local welfare departments were cut off from the federal aid necessary to field an adequate response.

While the traditional role of family preservation and reunification still echoed in CAPTA re-authorizations and other child welfare legislation, movement toward the type of public/child safety definition requiring criminal justice intervention emerged. Congress enacted the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 designed to create a comprehensive, multidisciplinary response to child abuse to improve the handling of child abuse cases in criminal courts. However, Congress made no appropriation. Newly elected Representative Robert "Bud" Cramer, a former District Attorney who founded the first CAC in Huntsville Alabama in 1985, led the passage of the amended Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1992 and, since that time, federal funding has been provided through re-authorization of the Act for the development and implementation of Children's

Advocacy Centers and for technical assistance and training for MDT members (Jackson, 2012).

The Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act of 2000 marked the entrance of law enforcement agencies as recipients of funds to enforce child abuse and neglect laws, specifically regarding child sexual abuse, and to complete criminal history records to assist child welfare agencies in their decision-making. In most communities the child welfare system is only responsible for intra-familial cases of abuse. Extra-familial cases are handled solely by law enforcement, but since law enforcement also has responsibility for intra-familial sexual abuse, child protective services and law enforcement are intended to work together on intra-familial cases of sexual abuse.

CAPTA's Reauthorization in 2010 supported collaboration between child protection services and domestic violence providers for assistance to both the non-offending parent who was a victim of domestic violence and to the child who witnessed domestic violence. The 2010 reauthorization also stated that reunification was not required where a parent committed intra-familial sexual abuse or must register with a sex offender registry (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). At last, an acknowledgement that "family preservation" was not desirable or feasible in child sexual abuse cases. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Reauthorization Act of 2021 focused on promoting a trauma-informed, public health approach to support families to prevent and reduce child abuse and neglect. It provided funding to support child death review programs and promote increased shared responsibility across public agencies to prevent child fatalities and near-fatalities.

Beginning in 1974, CAPTA mandated coordination of services and partnerships for agencies receiving government funding (National Child Abuse and Neglect Training and Publications Project, 2014). In addition to this federal mandate, the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse (2015) in its most recent compilation of state, federal, and territorial legislation identified 48 states and the District of Columbia that authorize the use of MDTs for coordinating the investigation and prosecution of child abuse. Because child abuse cases involve legal, social, medical, and psychological issues, a variety of professionals ranging from prosecutors and law enforcement to child protective services workers, physicians, mental health providers, and victim advocates must work together to adequately address these issues. Recognizing the crucial role MDTs play in the investigation and prosecution of criminal child abuse and neglect, Congress, and most states, including Delaware, have passed legislation authorizing this cross-disciplinary collaboration, but designing an effective MDT requires the cooperation of multiple partner agencies.

The Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) Model and the MDT in Delaware

CACs are child-focused centers that facilitate law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, behavioral health, social services, and medical communities working together to intervene in child abuse cases. MDTs investigating child maltreatment within the framework of a CAC have a history in the U.S. dating to 1985 with the founding of the first CAC in Huntsville, Alabama. The expansion of the CAC model was assured with the passage of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1992, which provided appropriations and helped to ensure institutional and governmental support for establishing CACs nationwide. By 1994, there were 50 CACs established nationwide. As of 2006, the

National Children's Alliance (NCA), the accrediting organization for CACs, reported

more than 600 CACs (Cross et al., 2008). Delaware's MDT process was solidified with

the establishment of the CAC of Delaware in 1996 making it one of the early adopters of

the model. It is currently one of over 1,000 CACs in the U.S. and 34 countries around the

world (CAC of Delaware, 2021). Herbert and Bromfield (2016) posit that the CAC model

(see Figure 1 below) was developed as a response to the failure of traditional law

enforcement and child welfare agency practices in working with victims of child sexual

abuse.

Figure 1

Children's Advocacy Center Model

HOW DOES THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER MODEL WORK?

■ Core Function of CAC   ■ Function Provided by a Team Member

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The role of local law enforcement is grounded in public safety

If not criminal in nature, law enforcement may not take action

Immediate Response

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

The role of CPS is to ensure that a child's home is safe

If the family/caretaker is not the alleged abuser, CPS may not take action

Priority Assigned
(24-72 hours)

Child is brought to children's advocacy center

Joint Investigation Begins
Forensic Interview
Evidence Collected
Photos Taken
Witness Interview
Medical Treatment and Exam

CAC coordinates Case Review with all team members, including law enforcement, prosecution, Child Protective Services, the forensic interviewer, a mental health provider, a medical professional, and a family advocate

Case presented to District Attorney

Suspect Charged or Case Refused

Child & family receive mental health services— Family advocate works with family to assess critical resources and provide support as the case moves through the justice system

Child Removed from Home, or Case Opened for Services, or Case Closed

National Children's Alliance (2021). *About: Our model.*
https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/NCA_CACmodel.pdf

According to the CAC of Delaware:

> The main goal of all Children's Advocacy Centers is to make sure that children
> are not further traumatized or victimized by the systems designed to protect them.
> We accomplish this by working together as a multidisciplinary team and
> interviewing children with specially trained and experienced forensic interviewers
> in a manner that is legally sound, follows nationally accepted "best practices," and
> minimizes duplicative and unnecessary interviews (CAC, *About Us*, 2021).

In Delaware, the MDT process is legislatively mandated. Delaware's statute outlining the State's response to child abuse and neglect states, "It is the policy of this State that the investigation and disposition of cases involving child abuse or neglect shall be conducted in a comprehensive, integrated, multidisciplinary manner" (Del. Code, 16, §906(b), 2021). During the Delaware State fiscal year 2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020), which included over three months of time during the Covid-19 pandemic, 1,132 forensic interviews were conducted at the CAC. Of these, 52% were for allegations of sexual abuse, 22% for physical abuse allegations and another 22% of the children were witnesses to violent crimes. Of those children interviewed, 45% were White, 38% were African-American, 10% Hispanic and 5% were two or more races.

The operations of the MDT are guided by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (see Appendix A) which is signed by the heads of the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (the parent agency for Delaware's child welfare agency known as the Division of Family Services (DFS), the Delaware Department of Justice, the Children's Advocacy Center of Delaware, the Division of Forensic Science (the parent agency for the Medical Examiner's office), the Office of the Investigation

Coordinator, Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children, and all Delaware Police

Departments. The MOU contains a useful glossary of terms related to the criminal justice

and child welfare systems as well as the MDT. The glossary is included in Appendix A

for reference by the reader. The CAC of Delaware, a statewide, non-profit agency with

locations in Wilmington, Dover, and Georgetown, coordinates the MDT process through

three county teams that are unique due to police jurisdiction as well as the geography and

regional culture of each county. The small state of Delaware is home to 49 law

enforcement agencies ranging in size from a three-person force to the Delaware State

Police with over 650 troopers serving in multiple specialized units (Reaves, 2011).

Delaware is comprised of a mid-sized city rife with crime problems in its urban north,

several small cities/towns and large stretches of unincorporated suburban tracts mid-state,

and rural/agricultural areas co-exist with beach towns in the southern part of the state.

The CAC provided the opportunity for these MDT partner agencies to work together but

one egregious case[1] of child sexual abuse in Delaware created such a massive crisis that

investigation protocols and MDT procedures were revamped because of it.

Changes to MDT Operations: The Ammons Report

Recommendations in the *Independent Review of the Earl Brian Bradley Case,*

commonly referred to as "The Ammons Report," restructured the functioning of the

MDT that investigates child abuse in Delaware (Ammons, 2010). The Ammons Report,

named for its author, Linda L. Ammons, J.D., former Associate Provost and Dean of the

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[1] Earl Bradley was a pediatrician in Delaware convicted of rape, assault, and sexual exploitation of over 100 of his child patients. He is currently serving multiple life sentences in prison. As a result of the criminal justice and medical system failures uncovered by his prosecution, then Governor Jack Markell convened an independent review and appointed the then Dean of the Widener University Delaware Law School, Linda L. Ammons, J.D., as its chairperson. Recommendations of the independent review included the creation of a case review process and a data collection system to track information about all allegations of abuse. The position of the Investigation Coordinator was created to implement these specific recommendations.

Widener University School of Law, was produced pursuant to Executive Order No. 16 (February 4, 2010) of Delaware Governor Jack Markell (State of Delaware, 2010). Ammons' charge was to conduct, "an independent review of the State's policies and statutory and administrative procedures governing child sexual abuse and exploitation, and… make recommendations that will foster a child protection community of collaboration and accountability to better protect Delaware's children from predators" (p. 1). The Ammons Report concluded that, "…State and non-state agencies and entities missed opportunities to communicate and/or share vital information that in combination could have led to the successful prosecution of…Bradley" (2010, p. 37). Recommendations included that every child sexual abuse victim should be routed through the CAC for evaluation, that mandated multidisciplinary case reviews occur to track decisions to prosecute and outcomes of prosecution, and that one confidential, central repository, accessible to the medical, criminal justice and child welfare systems, be created for reports of all accusations of child sexual assault (p. 38-44). To operationalize these and other recommendations, the Delaware General Assembly in 2012 passed legislation creating the role of Investigation Coordinator with authority to track all cases of child abuse and neglect and child deaths from inception to final criminal justice and civil legal disposition (Del. Code, 16, §906(c), 2021). The post-Ammons Report MDT structure is the subject of my research.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Interorganizational Collaborations (IOC)

To learn more about IOCs, I undertook a review of the literature on this topic focusing on collaborations involving child welfare, human services, law enforcement, and healthcare partnerships. I reviewed the seminal research on IOCs, and described how IOCs have been defined, modeled, and studied. Then, I studied assumptions and empirical research regarding the formation and success of IOCs. I explored the barriers and facilitators to IOCs using the major themes that emerged from the literature: trust, commitment, communication, capacity, and change. I focused my review on IOC research studies that included law enforcement, child protective service workers, mental health providers, and juvenile justice agency workers as partners in the collaboration. I conclude this chapter with my impressions of IOCs.

Foundational Research on IOC

Much of the foundational IOC research stems from the field of management because, as Evan pointed out, "managers are greatly preoccupied with inter-organizational relations" (1965, p. B-218). Foundational IOC research by Selznick (1949) viewed formal organizations through his study of the Tennessee Valley Authority. He described the organization as an adaptive social structure and theorized that not only do structures develop within organizations but, "there will also develop informal lines of communication and control to and from other organizations within the environment" (p. 251). He discussed the concept of "cooptation" which he defines as, "the process of

absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence" (p. 259). Flowing from this concept was both formal and informal cooptation. Formal cooptation ostensibly shared authority with institutions in the community but, "the real point is the sharing of the public symbols or administrative burdens of authority, and consequently public responsibility, without the transfer of substantive power" (p. 264). He recognized that power in a community is distributed among those who can mobilize organizational, psychological, and economic resources and can therefore shape the character and role of government and its social policy. In analyzing public-private partnerships, Selznick cautioned, "the tendency of democratic participation to break down into administrative involvement requires continuous attention" (p. 265) and concludes that this potential for breakdown is part of the "organizational problem of democracy" (p. 265) and not a matter of the morals or good will on the part of administrative agents. Finally, he determined that, "all formal organizations are molded by forces tangential to their rationally ordered structures and stated goals" (p. 251). For the collaborators within the MDT, the competing forces from within and outside their primary organizations and this idea of shared power will be a point for further consideration.

A dozen years later, Levine and White (1961), used exchange as a conceptual framework for studying interorganizational relations in the health field. They defined organizational exchange as voluntary activity between two organizations which has consequences for the realization of each organization's goals. Because of the scarcity of critical elements, interorganizational exchanges are required to attain goals. These exchanges were predicated on prior consensus regarding the domains--the organization's

population and service scope--and prior agreement, either implicit/informal or explicit/formal, of the terms of the exchange.

Evan's (1965) seminal article went beyond exploring organizational phenomena to introducing a theory of interorganizational relations. His unit of analysis was an "organization-set", an organization or class of organizations which he used to trace interactions within the network of organizations in its environment; he called the organization that was the point of reference within this set the "focal organization" (p. B-220). Since it was nested in other social systems, the focal organization relied on other organizations for resources like personnel, material, legality, and legitimacy. Evan hypothesized that the higher the concentration of input organizations, the lower the autonomy of the focal organization in decision-making. Further, the greater the size of the organization-set, the lower the decision-making autonomy of the focal organization since some elements in the set may form an uncooperative coalition which controls the functioning of the focal organization. If the focal organization and members of its set shared complementary functions, the likelihood was greater that they would form cooperative action. He questioned how the organization-sets of economic, political, religious, educational, and cultural organizations were different and how those variations may have consequences for the internal structure and decision-making process of different types of organizations. He acknowledged that describing and measuring networks of interorganizational relations presented a substantial methodological challenge.

IOC: How it is Currently Defined, Modeled and Studied

In reviewing the literature on interorganizational collaboration, I discovered numerous terms related to multi-agency activity. Coordination, cooperation, collaboration, partnership, joining up, joint working, multi-agency, were all used in the literature although, as Percy-Smith (2006) pointed out, these related terms can describe either strategic or operational level activities. Despite the complexities of the associated terms, Percy-Smith (2006) pointed out some shared characteristics: the structure involved two or more organizations; the organizations retained separate identities; the relationship was not one of contractor to provider; an agreement existed between the organizations to work together toward a common goal; the goals could not or would not be as effectively achieved by an organization working alone; relationships between organizations were formalized with a governance structure for planning, implementing and reviewing agreed upon work. The MDTs in Delaware share these characteristics.

Perrault, McClelland, Austin, and Sieppert (2011) defined collaboration as a, "durable relationship that bring previously separate organizations into a new structure with commitment to a commonly defined mission, structure, or planning effort; each organization contributes its own resources to pooled resources and a shared product or service" (p. 283). More specifically, they suggested that an interorganizational community collaboration involves government and nonprofit service providers coming together to integrate service, build community capacity, and/or address collective problems through research, service delivery, or policy development.

Various models exist for IOCs. Sandfort and Milward (2009), discussed a common representation in the literature of the continuum that described the varying

intensity of collaborations from informal *cooperation* through *coordination* to

collaboration and, finally, the most formalized, *service integration*. A similar continuum

model was proposed by Atkinson, Wilkin, Stott, Doherty, and Kinder (2002), who

described less formal "decision-making groups" to "consultation and training" where

professionals from one agency worked with another organization to share expertise to the

mid-level "center-based delivery," where staff from a range of agencies delivered

coordinated services at a single center, to the more formal "coordinated delivery" which

involved a coordinator with responsibility for pulling together previously distinct groups,

to the most formal model, the "operational-team delivery" in which professionals from

different agencies worked together on a daily basis to form a multi-agency team that

deliver services directly to clients. According to this scheme, the MDT in Delaware

appeared to fall into the "coordinated delivery" category, with the forensic interviewer

and investigation coordinator responsible for organizing the team's work.

Gazley (2017) cautioned that researchers who examine collaborative activity

solely as an organizational phenomenon may overlook, "the obvious fact that the human

beings who lead organizations control their decision-making authority," (p. 1) and may

not consider the ways in which an organization's staff can foster or impede collaborative

activity. Gazley (2017) took issue with unidimensional approaches to characterize

collaborative behavior, such as the continuum of increasingly integrated activity,

believing that it was, "unlikely to capture enough…multidimensional complexity" (p. 1).

Gazley argued that collaboration was not only a human activity but also a team and group

dynamic that occurs within and across institutions as well as within the partnerships they

inhabit. Huxham and Vangen (2005) also disagreed with a linear conception of the

collaborative process and suggested that the purpose, membership, trust, power relations, leadership and identity of collaborations must all be nurtured, managed and negotiated continuously. Since the membership of the MDT changed each time a child welfare worker left her agency or a detective was promoted, this concept of a recursive process was helpful to my research question.

Various classification systems for collaboration were described in the literature. Kagan (1994; cited in Sandfort & Milward, 2009) identified four levels of service delivery for collaborations from macro to micro level. The MDT, as a public-private partnership, encompassed all four levels, as it was created by legislation (policy level), was working to improve information sharing (organizational level), integrating staff (program level), and coordinating services for children and their families through a case management process (client level). Atkinson, Jones and Lamont (2007) described three dimensions of IOC models: "organization" refers to whether there were organizational structures specifically set up to support collaborative working, whether the team had any formal legal or statutory status, and whether the team shared funding and other resources; "joint investment" described the extent to which goals of both professionals and agencies were bound together in a shared vision and whether partners perceived that they were working toward a common goal through shared decision-making. If the organizations that comprised it feel that the IOC supported the individual organization's own goals, there was more investment from the partners in the collaboration; "integration" was the degree to which practices of the team were integrated through information exchange between agencies, the level of impact of the team on the other work of the individual agencies, and the extent to which staff from different organizations jointly managed and delivered

services. Henri and Pudelko (2003) described the activity of professionals as the relationship between the strength of the social bond of the participants, as evidenced by their involvement in the group, and the group's intentionality to undertake an activity with a learning goal. They described four levels of group engagement ranging from a *community of interest* which the authors defined as simply a group that forms around a common interest not motivated by a common goal, to a *goal-oriented community of interest* which was created to carry out a specific mandate, to a *learners' community* where knowledge was constructed by carrying out social situated activities of a collective project but members were not engaged for the long-term and, finally, to a *community of practice* where members invested in the social and professional definitions of the community by enriching and contributing to it which, in turn, reinforced the sense of belonging of the members.

Despite differences in theoretical approaches, IOC research focused on a few main areas. Sandfort and Milward (2009) identify two research streams that focused on partnerships. The first stream focused on the collaboration itself which was viewed as an outcome of managerial, social, and political actions. It is an end, in and of itself. The research focused on the process of partnering, what motivated its development, how it is maintained, and what were the various barriers that make collaborative partnerships challenging to achieve. The second stream of research focused on the consequences of the IOC and viewed the collaboration as a means to an end. It looks at outcomes and effects, operations of member organizations and the policy systems of which they are a part. The researchers' main interest was in determining the consequences of a collaboration on other important outcomes. Cropper, Ebers, Huxham and Ring (2009)

described these research streams as micro level research--how the organizational groups and individual members impact the functioning and results of the IOCs--and macro level analysis which views the institutional environments--legal, political, national, cultural, and historical--in which an IOC operates. Cropper and colleagues (2009) described three dimensions of collaboration research: content--the flow of information; governance mechanisms--how IOCs manage and coordinate their relationships; and structure--opportunities and constraints.

Gray (2000) found that while considerable effort has gone into documenting collaborative efforts, less focus had been placed on judging the success of IOCs. Gray identified five conceptual perspectives on assessment: 1) problem resolution or goal achievement focuses on the extent to which the collaboration has ameliorated the domain problem or increased positive outcomes; 2) generating social capital which focuses on actual or potential resources that can be mobilized through the relationships and membership of the cross-sector collaboration including such things as the presence of increase in trust and construction of shared norms; 3) creation of shared meaning, derived from social constructionism, focused on whether the stakeholders in the collaboration held a common interpretation about the problem and approaches to action with respect to it; 4) changes in network structure which evolved around changes in the network relationships among the collaborators; for instance, whether there was increasing density within the stakeholder network; and 5) shifts in the power distribution, which considers the extent to which a more equal distribution of power emerged and if there was a change in the governance structure. Gray points to their own earlier work (1989) in the

discussion of power including the power to gain voice, control the collaboration process, convene, strategize, and authorize actions on behalf of the stakeholders.

The Impact of Collaboration

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention touts the virtues of interagency coordination and planning (Loveless, McKellar, & Teele, 2014) and the IACP, CWLA and NCA (2003) assumes that IOCs in the form of MDTs are not only valuable but necessary for a comprehensive investigation and response to child maltreatment. Researchers have questioned these assumptions.

Interorganizational collaboration is often promoted as an effective process for human services to achieve better outcomes, and interagency service coordination is sometimes presented as a solution for systems that are perceived to be fragmented and inefficient. Longoria (2005) doesn't question whether the process of collaboration results in outcomes but does take issue with the assumption that these outcomes will be necessarily mutually beneficial to the stakeholders. There is powerful symbolism behind interorganizational cooperation, Longoria argues. The popularity of collaboration derives from the assumption that positive outcomes will occur rather than on empirical analysis of outcomes. As an example, Longoria pointed to a series of interorganizational collaboration initiatives that have been implemented as reform measures in the child welfare system in the U.S. Outcome measures from these initiatives for child safety, permanency, and well-being by state child welfare systems have been disappointing. Longoria concluded that the idea that collaboration will enhance human service delivery systems, "is questionable at best and deceptive at worst" (2005, p. 132). Organizations need to scrutinize the funding and staffing resources involved in establishing and

maintaining interorganizational collaborations and engage in data-driven evaluation of outcomes of organizational relationships to determine how these outcomes impact the lives of human service recipients.

As Vangen (2016) stated, research carried out over the last three decades suggests that collaborations are complex and prone to failure. Sloper (2004) concurred, finding little evidence of the effectiveness of multi-agency collaboration in producing improved outcomes for children and families in a review on multi-agency collaborations to inform the Children's National Service Framework, which sets standards for children's health and social care in the U.K. Sloper concluded,

> Despite the many voices calling for increased multi-agency collaboration, it seems that this is still difficult to achieve in practice. There are a number of reasons why this is so. Multi-agency working requires changes at the level of individual practice, within agencies and at the multi-agency organizational level. This challenges existing professional cultures….it challenges people's current work (Sloper, 2004, p. 572).

Collaborations that have the potential to achieve advantages are inherently paradoxical in nature (Percy-Smith, 2006; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Vangen, 2016). Vangen found, "The paradoxical nature arises because gaining advantage requires the simultaneous protection and integration of partners' uniquely different resources, experiences, and expertise in complex, dynamic organizing contexts," (2016, p. 263). Percy-Smith (2006) pointed to the assumption that children's services partnerships provided more effective services and created more positive outcomes for children. But these strategic partnerships required "careful planning, commitment and enthusiasm on the part of the partners, the

overcoming of organizational, structural and cultural barriers and the development of new skills and ways of working" (p. 321). Percy-Smith admitted that evaluating partnership processes, activities and outcomes can be difficult. Finally, Percy-Smith questioned whether the partnerships achieving positive outcomes for children could not be achieved by an agency acting alone. As Thomson and Perry (2006) pointed out, the formation of a successful collaboration may be undermined by the tension of conflicting goals, interests, and identities between partner organizations and those of the collaboration. The autonomous goals of the individual organizations will always outweigh the mission of the collaboration. The more tension between the organization and the collaboration, the less likely a collaboration will form or succeed in the long run.

As Leiba and Weinstein observed, "There is plenty of evidence that breakdowns of communication between professionals or between service users and professionals can harm users. It is more difficult to show that user involvement and multi-professional working benefits users…" (2003, p. 76).

In their review of over 540 peer-reviewed journal articles published during the past 40 years on nonprofit organizations engaged in collaborative activity, Gazley & Guo (2015) found collaborative activity is not necessarily a win-win proposition. "Success depends on resources, patience, and hard work" (p. 3), they concluded. Since the literature contains mixed results about collaborative activity, I interrogated the potential downsides of the IOC model in relation to the MDT.

Facilitators and Barriers to IOC

Determining what is required to build and sustain successful initiatives is challenging. Research has identified both facilitators and barriers to successful

collaborations. While there was some variety in the literature about what helps and hinders IOCs, there was also general agreement on many of the core factors. Changes in membership, external context, organizational territorial tensions, and collaborative purpose will lead to changes in what was required to sustain each collaboration (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allexperten, 2001).

In their study of non-profit and public sector IOCs, Curnin and O'Hara (2019) found that role clarity was fundamental for collaborative operations and needed to be articulated in the administrative arrangements of the IOC structures. IOC structures required plans that clearly articulated different organizations roles and responsibilities. They found that IOC structures can be a barrier to and an enabler of collaboration in the non-profit and public sectors. Sloper (2004), identified facilitators and barriers in a review of the literature on multi-agency collaborations in children's services identifying as key facilitating factors the areas of planning, implementation, and ongoing management. Percy-Smith (2006) identified facilitators for successful team building: mutual understanding of each other's organizations; mutual respect; equality and inclusivity; providing support for new partners; building commitment to and ownership of the partnership; resolving conflict and building trust.

Interactional, organizational, and systemic determinants that contributed to successful healthcare teams were described by San Martin-Rodriguez, Beaulieu, D'Amour and Ferrada-Videla (2005). Interactional factors included the interpersonal relationships between team members. Organizational factors included the structure and resource of the organization, its leadership, values, and climate. Systemic factors were elements outside the organization such as the social, cultural, educational, and

professional systems that existed between the IOC members like disparate social status among the professionals in the team which may lead to power differences.

From my review of the literature, five major themes emerged about the facilitators and barriers to effective collaboration: trust, commitment, communication, capacity, and change. "Trust" included building and nurturing trusting relationships between individuals and partner agencies; fostering attachments to the team; and maintaining mutual respect and support within the IOC. "Commitment" reflected a commitment to and sense of ownership of the partnership as well as a commitment to a shared vision, values, purpose, and goals for the IOC. "Communication" encompassed communication between individuals (front-line staff) and agencies (administrators); establishing formal, professional relationships and informal, personal relationships within the team; developing written policies and protocols which communicate clear expectations (i.e. MOU); utilizing a case management system for info exchange/tracking; and clearly defining roles, responsibilities and an accountability structure. "Capacity" was a willingness to collaborate by holding a common understanding and approach to solving the problem; having necessary resources--human resources, time, and expertise; support of leadership and decision-making authority; and joint training for skills building and formation of team identity. Finally, "change" highlighted many of the impediments to successful collaboration: constant reorganization within agencies due to, for example, political priorities or funding; frequent turnover of staff; territorial tensions and turf issues between partners; and separate professional education of the partners and organizational cultures of the member agencies.

Trust

Practitioners suggest that trust is essential for successful collaborations (Darlington, Feeney & Rixon, 2004; Percy-Smith, 2006; Perrault, McClelland, Austin, & Sieppert, 2011; San Martin-Rodriguez et al., 2005; Sense, 2005; Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Trust enables members of the IOC to hold difficult conversations with a sense of psychological safety. When a trusting environment exists, members can express diverse ideas, float new approaches and challenge group norms (Sense, 2005).

Building and managing trust within collaboration partners was one of the major theoretical themes found in the long-term empirical research program of Vangen and Huxham (2003). They conceptualized a trust-building loop that suggested that building trust in IOCs was a cyclical process involving vulnerability, expectations, risk, and trust in a reciprocal relationship. Trust leads to taking risks and, if expectations materialize, the risk-taking supported a sense of trust. Practitioners often perceived a lack of trust in their own collaborative relationships as being fueled by power struggles. Tu and Xu (2020) suggested that when both sides are motivated by an internal need to collaborate trust between them is more sustainable. Their case study also showed that interorganizational trust cannot be built in a hasty manner but accumulates through sufficient interactions and that a combination of formal and informal rules was essential to support trust and sustain collaboration.

Latusek and Vlaar (2018) considered two perspectives on the governance of interorganizational relations and trust: the calculative and the relational approach. The calculative approach focused on the reduction of risk and uncertainty; motives, interests and positions of others are scrutinized. For the relational approach the authors described

how partners use one of three types of suspension to embrace risk and uncertainty: creation of fictions, bracketing of concerns, and willingness to believe. The results of their study illustrated that interorganizational relationships relied on both calculation and suspension mechanisms as interdependent approaches to trust formation. Brattström, Faems, and Mähring (2018) described a trust development process, which was not characterized by reinforcing cycles, but rather represented a discontinuous pattern whereby members of one organization shifted multiple times between positive and negative trust perceptions toward the partner organization.

Vangen and Huxham (2003) pointed to the natural evolution of collaborations as a potential impediment to building and maintaining trust. The researchers suggested that successful management of trust implies both the ability to cope when trust is lacking and the ability to build trust where possible. This contrasted with much of the previous literature which argued that the presence of trust is essential for a successful collaboration but makes sense given the reality of IOCs. Second, the theory clarified different implications for initiating and sustaining the trust-building loop. Trust management required assessment of the level of risk and level of trust among the partners and whether trust can be built through small wins or requires a more comprehensive approach.

Commitment

Percy-Smith (2006) discussed the importance of a vision statement that should not only define the partnership's scope and purpose, "but also be inspirational and based on jointly held values" (p. 317). The vision statement, along with the mission statement stemming from it, should provide a reference point for subsequent decision-making in the partnership. Many researchers have noted that having a common purpose, values and

vision was essential for building and ensuring the continued success of a collaboration (Children's Alliance Family Resource Project, 2004; Hall, 2005; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Ivery, 2008; San Martin-Rodriguez, et al., 2005; Sloper, 2004; Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003).

Communication

Good communication and the lack thereof were key factors in whether an IOC is successful (Darlington et al., 2004; Dietrich, Eskerod, Dalcher & Sandhawalia, 2010; Korazim-Korosy, Mizrahi, Bayne-Smith & Garcia, 2014; Newman & Dannenfelser, 2005; San Martin-Rodriguez et al., 2005; Sloper, 2004). The literature discussed the importance of clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and accountability for team members (Sloper, 2004;) as well as clearly defined protocols for information exchange (Bai, Wells & Hillemeier, 2009; Cross, Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2005; Darlington, Feeney & Rixon, 2005). Establishing informal relationships and communication links were also seen as critical to IOC development and success (Perrault et al., 2011).

Capacity

Capacity defined not only a willingness to collaborate but having strong leadership and adequate resources to do so (Gazley & Guo, 2015; San Martin-Rodriguez et al., 2005). Time was viewed as a crucial resource in the IOC literature, time to nurture and build partnerships, and time to devote to the goals of the IOC (Dietrich et al., 2010; Ivery, 2008; Sloper, 2004). Another critical capacity issue recognized by researchers was joint training and learning which are valuable to the process of collaboration and as a valuable outcome of participating in a collaboration (Bai et al., 2009; Cross et al., 2008; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Newman & Dannenfelser, 2005;

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Perrault et al., 2011; Ward-Lasher, Messing & Hart, 2017). Learning benefits not only the members but can enhance capacity of the members' organizations due to knowledge transfer from the group resulting in additional skills including how to collaborate (van Winkelen, 2010).

Change

Agency re-organization, staff turnover and tensions over turf were cited as roadblocks to collaboration (Korazim-Korosy et al., 2014; Newman & Dannenfelser, 2005; Sloper, 2004). Organizations as well as individual representatives come and go from IOCs and maintaining stability in the membership of collaborations is rarely possible, "trusting relationships disappear as members leave the collaboration, requiring remaining members to keep things afloat despite fractures in the trust-building cycle" (Vangen & Huxham, 2003, p. 20). New arrivals to the IOCs disturb the equilibrium of the trust-building cycle creating a challenge to the management of the IOCs. The trust-building loop was particularly interesting to me since the MDT experienced high turnover which interrupts the trust-building cycle of the team. It was also important to understand the power struggles that occurred within the team and their impact on the trust-building cycle.

Professional differences, notably in the education and orientation of team members as well as the organizational culture of their home agencies, was also viewed as a potential barrier. Hall (2015) described, "profession-specific world views," (p. 193) as barriers created by unfamiliar vocabulary, different approaches to problem-solving, and a lack of common understanding of issues. San Martin-Rodriguez and colleagues (2005) explained that if certain team members come from professions with a cultural value of

autonomy and control, this may undermine the willingness and collegiality needed to collaborate. The education system for the professions to which the team members belong may not socialize them to the practices, expertise, responsibilities, values, and theoretical perspectives of professionals in other fields which could create an obstacle to collaboration.

Korazim-Korosy and colleagues (2014) explored how professionals from the fields of law, social work, psychology, public health, nursing, and medicine understand, engage, and evaluate inter-disciplinary collaborative experiences. Although the codes of ethics of the majority of these professions express commitment to collaboration, each profession, to varying degrees, asserted its need to maintain or achieve autonomy creating a tension between the competing values of professional autonomy and interdisciplinary work. There was great similarity in the comments of participants regarding professional/systemic determinants resulting in negative aspects of their collaboration experiences. Professional barriers included professional jealousies, turf and territorialism, and tunnel vision. Physicians pointed to the obstacle that their training and professional socialization was structured to dominate and lead. The authors concluded, "The collaborative process requires openness and willingness to compromise without drifting into 'group think'…creative tensions…are inevitable, and probably even necessary and valuable," (p. 248). Potential barriers caused by separate professional education and culture resonated with me since there are diverse professions represented on the MDT ranging from law enforcement and mental health professionals to prosecutors and pediatricians.

Interorganizational research involving law enforcement as partners

Law enforcement professionals are perceived by some as independent agents not accustomed to inter-disciplinary working. O'Neill and McCarthy (2014) found that police were in favor of community partnerships that focus on prevention due to the benefits of long-term solutions. The researchers concluded that police would use partnerships when they understood how the collaboration supported their goals in the criminal justice system. In an attempt to learn more about collaborations specifically involving law enforcement, I reviewed studies in which police were a party to the collaborative relationship. Many of these collaborations also involved child welfare agencies, but IOC research focusing on child protective services is discussed later in this literature review.

The professional "love-hate" relationship between child protective services (CPS) and law enforcement was the subject of a literature review and secondary data analysis by well-known child abuse researchers, Cross, Finkelhor, and Ormrod (2005). Decades of literature described the sometimes-difficult relationships between these two key actors in the investigation of child abuse allegations. Underlying clashes in philosophy and beliefs were often reported as was the potential to interfere with the other's job (Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003). Friction between police and CPS due to different deadlines, priorities, and measures of success created tension and frustration despite their common goal of protecting children. Frictions were derived from structural and cultural divergences (Bowen & Nhan, 2021).

Cross and colleagues (2005) found that CPS workers worry that police will be heavy handed and antagonize families they are attempting to repair, or that they may not value family preservation and reunification and prefer a criminal justice approach. Police

worry that CPS workers will interfere with the criminal investigation and evidence collection and stymie bringing perpetrators to justice. Since state laws require co-involvement and often, concurrent, investigations by CPS and law enforcement, Cross and colleagues (2005) sought to address the outcomes of joint investigations and the implication for practice. They advocated for the establishment of a memorandum of understanding or protocol to address such issues as whether or when the two agencies should conduct joint home visits and joint interviews with children, families, or perpetrators. They viewed these protocols as important guides for all investigators, "including those disinclined by temperament, prejudice or experience to cooperate with the other agency" (p. 227). The researchers highlighted the MDT as having a positive impact on the co-involvement of CPS workers and police. They recounted several, well-known advantages to the MDT including the elimination of redundant interviews, more thorough investigations because of the skills, perspectives, and information that each agency brings to the process. They also pointed out the value of a second opinion and mutual support for CPS workers and law enforcement officers in their mentally and emotionally challenging work.

These attachments to the team and relationships with other team members were deemed valuable by members, according to Cross and colleagues (2005). Operating as a team, CPS and police can also use the 'good cop/bad cop' method of interviewing which can be more fruitful in interviewing perpetrators who may be more willing to reveal their behavior to a human service professional than law enforcement. The confidentiality issues identified by Darlington and colleagues, (2005) in their study of collaborations

between CPS and mental health workers, also resonated for police and CPS collaborations.

The secondary data analysis from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being undertaken by Cross and colleagues, (2005) tested a two-tailed hypothesis: given the benefits and difficulties detailed in the literature, police involvement in CPS cases could either increase the likelihood of a range of CPS interventions or decrease their likelihood. The study used a multivariate procedure with a large sample to control for a number of potentially confounding variables. It compared cases with and without police involvement in investigations, compared cases in which police were and were not involved in the placement decision or case plan, and also compared cases in which an MDT, which usually includes law enforcement as a team member, was involved in planning and placement decision versus no MDT involvement. One of the most clear-cut conclusions was that police involvement was not associated with a reduction or inhibition of affirmative child protection activities under any of the conditions assessed. The associations were all in the direction of more child protective involvement when police participated. The researchers concluded, "Law enforcement involvement is positively associated with a range of different CPS interventions for victims of child sexual abuse, child physical abuse, and child neglect" (p. 240). Although difficulties may arise between police and CPS stemming from differences in their mission, training, experience and methods, collaborative work on child maltreatment should be promoted and both CPS and law enforcement could implement more cross-training.

As Cross, Finkelhor, and Ormrod (2005) pointed out, law enforcement involvement may actually promote more effective CPS interventions. However, a study

by Dawson and Wells (2007) in two rural northeast towns during the decade of the 1990's found that, in investigations involving child victims, the police use a considerable amount of discretion in determining which cases to forward to CPS. The results of the analysis show that, overall, the police were more likely to tell CPS about cases involving physical assault, sexual assault, or neglect, as well as about cases in which the offender was a parent or caregiver. Cases were less likely to be reported to CPS if the victims were older than age 13 years or the offenders were male. However, despite generally expected procedures of police reporting to CPS, the police did not report 35% of cases involving a parent, sibling, or caregiver perpetrator to CPS, a troublingly high percentage. Clarification on the use of domestic violence or child abuse protocols when making decisions to report to CPS was suggested by the researchers as well as increasing efforts to streamline collaboration between law enforcement and CPS to maximize the services and legal interventions available for children and their families.

Ward-Lasher, Messing and Hart (2017) reported findings from a survey of 544 officers in Arizona on attitudes to intimate partner violence (IPV) risk assessment, risk factors for homicide, and collaboration with social workers. Police tended to view domestic violence social workers within the criminal justice system as facilitators of victim/survivor cooperation. Police-social worker collaboration occurred if police viewed social workers as assets, such as when issues in the case directly related to social work practice or mental health. The results of this study reported that the majority (73%) of police officers did not feel that a social worker or advocate would be helpful at the scene of an IPV call. The researchers suggested that both police officers and social workers needed to understand the other's job responsibilities and framework.

Although police officers seemed confident in their abilities to perform a risk assessment, they may lack the appropriate knowledge about IPV dynamics or risk factors for homicide. This study confirmed that police officers need ongoing training regarding domestic violence and suggests that their social work partners provide this training. It also suggested that police officers may not be as resistant to collaboration if social workers received training to become familiar with the criminal justice system process and its jargon as well as IPV risk assessment. Cross-training police and social workers was recommended to help dispel myths. I was surprised (but not shocked) by the overwhelming proportion of police officers who did not see the benefit of collaboration with social workers in IPV but the demographics of the officers might help explain this disconnect as they were overwhelmingly male (93%), in patrol capacities (91%), white (65%) with an average of 10 years' experience on the job. Of course, in Arizona, police/CPS joint investigations for child abuse allegations only became policy in 2013 so perhaps the idea of IOCs was new to law enforcement.

Law enforcement officers who participated on an MDT at a CAC expressed a desire to engage in the MDT process. They valued its efficiency and effectiveness and appreciated the need to build relationships among MDT members. However, they were hamstrung by resource constraints including time, funding, and sometimes supervisory support. Training, commitment of the local prosecutor, and adequate facilitation of the collaborative process by the CAC staff were found to be supportive of the MDT process (Buchan, 2019).

A qualitative, key informant telephone survey of 157 law enforcement officers and 133 CPS workers from 28 Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) in 20 states was

conducted by Newman and Dannenfelser (2005) to describe facilitators and barriers to the collaboration process. Facilitators to collaboration included having the resource of the CAC available to the MDT, cross-training that provides knowledge of each other's roles, availability to each other, co-location, and teamwork, communication, and good relationships. Training and cross-training could help foster a team identity. CPS and law enforcement partners who worked the same schedules, began investigations concurrently and have 24-hour access to a CAC appeared to contribute to the development of collaboration.

Barriers were described as the perception that CPS and law enforcement personnel have different mandates, conflicts over case control, time and scheduling inconsistencies, insufficient resources, inconvenient location, and lack of knowledge of individual investigators. A common misperception was that CPS's emphasis on family reunification conflicts with law enforcements' goal to arrest offenders; in fact, CPS cannot reunite children with families that include perpetrators who violated the child, so arresting the perpetrator may actually help reunification. The authors suggested that workers on the front line needed to understand the context of their organization's commitment to collaborate through support and direction from the executive level.

The facilitator--the CAC itself--was identified in Newman and Dannenfelser's (2005) survey of CPS workers and law enforcement staff as a leading enabler of IOC. A recent national survey of characteristics of CACs in the U.S. by Herbert, Walsh, and Bromfield (2018) supported this finding. Herbert and colleagues (2018) utilized another set of key informants: 361 CAC directors, who completed an on-line survey in 2016. The researchers examined whether practice models matched the predominant model presented

in the research literature. Findings suggested that CACs may have a number of characteristics in place to support inter-agency collaboration:

Only 35% of directors indicated that their CAC had a shared case tracking/data system to help them monitor the progress of cases across agencies. However, most CACs had a cross-agency steering group (60%), had state legislation in place to support cross-agency work (64%), and had joint performance measurement or evaluation of practice in place (70%). Most CACs indicated that they had a written protocol or interagency agreement on processes and practices (97%), an MDT Coordinator or a person that fit this description (91%), had regular informal contact and personal relationships amongst MDT members (93%), and engaged in joint training and professional development for multi-agency work (91%) (p. 590).

The authors concluded that, while improving collaboration between workers across agencies and improving the quality of forensic interviewing practices seemed to be core to the CAC response, "we remain none the wiser about which parts of the model are important in improving outcomes" (p. 594). This was due to the differences in the size, structure and complement of services of the individual CACs. My observation was that many of the interpersonal/interactional and training needs of the MDT partners are being met but some of the organizational and systemic dimensions (San Martin-Rodriguez et al., 2005) need improvement, particularly the case management system for tracking cases, which Sloper (2004) identified as a facilitator.

Interorganizational research involving child welfare agencies as partners

Since the other major professional group of interest to me was child welfare workers who, like law enforcement, are consistently participating members of the MDT, I

reviewed additional literature that focused on collaborations that involved child welfare

system staff. In these research studies, child welfare agencies were in IOCs with mental

health providers, substance abuse treatment agencies and/or the juvenile justice system.

One of the most influential studies of the value of IOCs and the impact on

outcomes comes from Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998) who conducted a quasi-

experimental, longitudinal study that involved both intra-organizational and

interorganizational aspects. The interorganizational aspect of the study involved research

on services coordination teams in Tennessee that could authorize services from any state-

supported child welfare, juvenile justice, education, mental health, or health service

organization, regardless of the state agency that was given physical custody of the child.

It was expected that the teams would increase the level of coordination among the various

direct service organizations so that an appropriate array of services and residential

placements could be provided to children who entered custody.

The research showed interorganizational services had a negative impact on the

quality of child and family services and had no effect on key outcomes, a finding they

attributed to a diffusion of responsibility for case management. Instead, Glisson and

Hemmelgarn (1998) found that intra-organizational climate had a positive impact on the

quality of services and key outcomes for children and families. Their findings suggested

that agencies with higher levels of job satisfaction, fairness, role clarity, cooperation and

personalization, and lower levels of role overload, conflict and vicarious trauma were

more likely to support caseworkers' efforts. Positive climates reflected work

environments that encourage the type of service provider activity that led to success.

Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998) posited that the more pronounced and visible the role of

a services coordination team, the less responsibility caseworkers assumed for activities related to service quality. The issue of climate in the workplace was important for my review of the MDT, as there is a perpetual morale problem in the state's child welfare agency due to high caseloads, high staff turn-over, and lack of resources.

Darlington, Feeney, and Rixon (2004) conducted a survey in Queensland, Australia of child protection workers, adult mental health workers and child mental health workers as part of a larger mixed-method research project to develop best practices for child protection and mental health services. Half of the 232 respondents identified that no issues arose in the collaboration process between child protection and mental health workers or that collaboration had resulted in an improved outcome for the client or a positive collaborative process for the workers. However, in one-third of the cases, communication was cited as a problem resulting in information not being exchanged. In later work, Darlington, Feeney, and Rixon (2005) described how confidentiality issues can confound information sharing processes and inhibit effective IOCs. Establishing clear protocols for information exchange could overcome the confidentiality issues associated with services (Darlington, et al., 2005).

Bai, Wells, and Hillemeier (2009) were also concerned with coordination between child welfare agencies and mental health providers. Their longitudinal analysis of data from a three-year period in the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being consisted of a sample of 1,613 children within 75 child welfare agencies. The focus of the study was on the intensity of interagency connections, which they defined as the number of different types of linkages connecting the child welfare agency and any type of partner agency. Their hypothesis was that more child welfare agency cooperation with mental

health providers would lead to better outcomes for children. They found that greater intensity of IOCs was associated with higher likelihood of both service use and mental health improvement. The authors concluded that having greater numbers of ties with mental health providers may help child welfare agencies improve children's mental health service access and outcomes. Interestingly, the association found in this study between the intensity of interagency cooperation and children's mental health status was contrary to results among general pediatric populations in previous large-scale studies.

Bai and colleagues (2009) speculated about the possible reasons for this contrast: Abused and neglected children may benefit more from enhanced interagency coordination because they lack the family resources that other children have. A related possibility was that certain types of interagency ties mattered more than others. Specifically, perhaps relationships between the child welfare agency, with its overall case management responsibilities, and mental health service providers, with their potential for encouraging behavioral change, were particularly important (Bai et al., 2009). The authors recommended strengthening the coordination between child welfare and mental health systems at both the individual case level and organizational level. The researchers' speculation that enhanced IOC had a greater impact on abused and neglected children would tend to support the need for strengthening partnerships within the MDT between CPS and child mental health.

Contrary to the findings of Bai and colleagues (2009), Chuang and Wells (2010 found that connectivity between child welfare and juvenile justice was not associated with the likelihood that crossover youth receive necessary behavioral health services. Crossover youth are those who are receiving services from both the child welfare and

juvenile justice systems although one system will be designated as the lead. Previous studies focused on IOCs between child welfare and behavioral health providers, not child welfare and juvenile justice agencies. Chuang and Wells (2010) speculated that this may reflect a genuine lack of association between child welfare and juvenile justice connectivity and service provision, or that their study didn't capture the strength of personal relationships between staff or the amount of the day-to-day communications that actually occurred. The authors pointed to Smith and Mogro-Wilson's 2007 study on the practice of inter-agency collaboration in child welfare and substance abuse treatment as support for their second supposition. Smith and Mogro-Wilson (2007) found that some frontline workers within each agency were more likely to engage in IOC than others, especially if they perceived organizational policies promoted or required collaboration and that administrators' reports of collaborative practices did not align with those reported by front-line staff.

An interesting parallel to the MDT that investigates child abuse was the Drug-Endangered Children (DEC) interagency collaboration in Spokane, Washington. This collaboration included joint working by CPS and law enforcement when children were found to be living in homes that operate as meth labs. The team was similar in composition to the MDT with prosecution, medical, and social service agencies participating. I was interested in the two instruments used by Altshuler (2005) to evaluate the first year of the project: The Team Fitness Test (Bendaly, 1996) is a survey for team members to assess team cohesiveness, shared leadership, group work skills, climate, and member contributions. The Team Observation Tool (Long & Wilson, 2001) evaluates goals, role clarity, leadership, and communication and was completed by the researchers

observing the team meetings. The instruments were modified to assess the DEC collaboration more accurately.

Team members rated collaboration efforts across all subscales as consistently high. Observers' ratings were somewhat lower, "indicating differences between what the team members were apparently feeling and what the observers were seeing" (p. 183). Differences in perception between team members and observers were attributed to several factors. Members were invested in the outcome of the project and therefore may have been self-ranking higher than was actually occurring in the collaboration. Higher levels of collaboration may have been occurring outside the meetings of which observers were not aware. Also, the two instruments were measuring different aspects of collaboration. Team members appeared satisfied with the collaboration, and this was reflected in the consistently high attendance rate at meetings. This study was particularly instructive for me when I developed the survey instrument and interview guide questions that I used in my research.

Ivery (2008) discussed the challenges for organizations that are required to collaborate by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in order to receive funding, and the cost-benefit analysis that the organizations consider. Like MDTs, these mandated collaborations reflected varying degrees of capacity and involvement. As a framework, Ivery used exchange theory, which assumes that organizations will choose among alternatives from which they expect to receive the most benefit, and resource dependence-independence theories, which discuss how organizations seek to maintain independence from other organizations but will agree to develop IOCs to achieve stability in a changing environment. Ivery conducted a cross-

sectional survey and key informant interviews to collect observations on the housing

partnership's collaborators. Ivery found that when organizations formed collaborative

partnerships, they may not have a firm understanding of their role within the partnership.

Organizations may not have possessed the capacity to participate, lack time, or bring

different skills and knowledge, as well as levels of commitment and motivation to the

IOC. Ivery encouraged a readiness-to-collaborate assessment by administrators within

partnering agencies to determine the organizations' level of commitment, to identify the

agency personnel who participate in the collaboration, and to establish a mechanism for

communicating decisions of the partnership back to the organization.

Conclusion

There was a general agreement in the literature on the facilitators and barriers to

good collaborative practice. Whether IOCs were valuable to their members as useful

professional exercises and whether they impacted outcomes for clients and communities

was less clear. Since IOCs were commonplace in most professions, I expected that

professionals within the MDTs I studied would have experienced IOCs in different facets

of their work lives. If IOCs are the way we do business in so many fields, it was

important to find out how prevalent or absent the facilitators and barriers were in

practice.

Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework for the Study and Research Questions

Against the broad backdrop of IOC theory and research, the mandate for MDT agencies to work together is explored as it operates in practice. In my review of the IOC literature, I identified five major themes that emerged about facilitators and barriers to effective collaboration: trust, commitment, communication, capacity, and change (Sitler, 2018). The concept of power underlies these themes. The sociological theories of Goffman and Weber provided a foundation to discuss these five major themes of barriers and facilitators identified from the IOC literature. To conceptualize workplace practice and learning in IOCs and understand how MDTs responded to the five major themes of barriers and facilitators, I selected the socio-cultural learning theory of Lave and Wenger's Community of Practice (CoP), which is built on situated learning. See Tables 1 and 2 below for an overview of IOC themes and CoP indicators.

Table 1
Interorganizational Collaboration Themes

Theme	Description
Capacity	- willingness to collaborate by holding a common understanding and approach to solving the problem - access to necessary resources – human resources, time, and expertise - support of leadership and decision-making authority - joint training for skills building and formation of team identity.
Change	- impediments to successful collaboration - constant reorganization within agencies due to political priorities or funding - frequent turnover of staff - territorial tensions and turf issues between partners - separate professional education of partners - organizational cultures of member agencies
Commitment	- whether/extent to which there is allegiance to and sense of ownership of the partnership - dedication to a shared vision, values, purpose and goals
Communication	- communication between individuals and agencies - establishing formal, professional relationships and informal, personal relationships within the team - developing written policies and protocols which communicate clear expectations (MOU) - utilizing a case management system for information exchange/tracking - clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and accountability structure
Trust	- building and nurturing trusting relationships between individuals and partner agencies - fostering attachment to team - whether/extent to which there are connections of members to MDT - mutual respect - whether/extent to which there is recognition of value and importance of contribution of team members

Table 2

Wenger's 14 Indicators of a Community of Practice and the Proposed Domains

Community of Practice Indicators	Community of Practice Domains
1. Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual	Mutual engagement
2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together	Mutual engagement/Joint enterprise
3. The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation	Mutual engagement
4. Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process	Mutual engagement/Shared repertoire
5. Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed	Mutual engagement/Shared repertoire
6. Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs	Mutual engagement
7. Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise	Mutual engagement/Joint enterprise/Shared repertoire
8. Mutually defining identities	Mutual engagement
9. The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products	Shared repertoire
10. Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts	Shared repertoire
11. Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter	Shared repertoire
12. Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones	Shared repertoire/Mutual engagement
13. Certain styles recognized as displaying membership	Mutual engagement
14. A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world	Mutual engagement

Wenger E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 125.

Analyzing IOC Themes: Goffman's Team and Weber's Organizational Power

Using the five themes identified from the IOC literature, Goffman's ideas on teams, conception of the presentation of self, and impression management (1959), and Weber's (1968; 1978) concepts of power and authority will be explored. Because I sought to understand how divergent groups of professionals interacted, I began with the concept of team which Goffman (1959) defined as, "a set of individuals whose intimate co-operation is required…" (p. 104). Goffman (1959) argued that individuals present themselves based on the impression they wish to convey to others, suggesting that individuals actively manage impressions during their team interactions. He described this as a performance, played out in front-stage and backstage behaviors. Individuals manage complex expectations, in both formal and informal settings. IOCs are difficult to establish and maintain due, in part, to the interpersonal dynamics of the group, including the members' dual allegiance to their individual agencies and to the team. Teammates find themselves in an important relationship to one another and are forced to rely on each other in what Goffman describes as "…a bond of reciprocal dependence" (1959, p. 82). Good group communication through informal relationships was reflected in Goffman's (1959) description of the backstage behavior of the team away from the audience. Teammates tend to be bound by, "the privilege of familiarity" (p. 83) which develops over time spent together. By contrast, the formal role of teammate is fulfilled as soon as the individual becomes a member of the team.

One of the recurrent themes in the IOC literature was the importance of trust among collaboration partners. Goffman (1959) described the relationship with a teammate in terms of acceptance and trust, "… [if] a person insists on giving the show

away or forcing it to take a particular turn, he is none the less part of the team….It is just because he is part of the team that he can cause this kind of trouble" (p. 83). He described a team as a secret society which is held together by a bond that outsiders don't share. Goffman (1959) observed that members must be sufficiently attuned to one another to avoid open contradiction. He didn't anticipate harmony, calling it, "an optimistic ideal…not necessary for the smooth working of society" (p. 9) but did expect a working consensus to form among team members.

As the investigative MDT replaced the former system of individual organizations conducting separate investigations, how did power relations shift? Weber's writings shed light on the centers of power and authority within organizations, addressing the themes of change, trust and communication. Weber's writings on organizations, with his distinctions between power and legitimate domination or authority, can be a useful way to understand IOCs. Weber's definition of power as the ability to achieve one's own will in the face of resistance (Weber, 1978) contrasts with his definition of domination/authority as the capacity to get others to obey because of voluntary compliance, discipline, or habit. (Jenkins, 2009). Domination is not a forceful imposition of power but relies on a shared belief system that structures interactions. It is the institutionalization of values and norms that stabilize and govern a wide range of social, economic, and political behavior. (Lounsbury & Carberry, 2005).

Weber's typology describes three types of leadership authority. Charismatic authority rests on the character and personal attributes of an individual. Traditional authority is supported by longstanding beliefs, customs, and traditions like the ruling authority of monarchs or tribal leaders. While traditional authority and charismatic

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authority, in different ways, are vested in people, Weber viewed rational-legal authority as impersonal and vested in organizations (Jenkins, 2009).

All organizational members are recognized as having some degree of access to power. The underpinnings and maintenance of power are subject to actions of individuals operating under socially constructed 'structures of dominancy'; per Weber, the 'structures of dominancy' refer to those socially constituted norms that gave rise to a 'prevailing authority' which is considered legitimate because it is efficacious authoritative action with respect to norms (Clegg, 1975). Historically held positions of dominance, based on rank and superior status, have a right to power that others are expected to obey. Power is reinforced by organizational rules and structures. Power as a social relation will be inherently dynamic. Weber viewed the efficacy of authority as being contingent upon its social acceptance. An individual attempting to exercise authority needs do so on the basis of a, "legal norm established by agreement or imposition," (Weber, 1968, p. 217).

Mechanistic bureaucratic organizations are characterized by (1) centralized authority, (2) formalized procedures and practices, and (3) specialized functions. For instance, a highly formalized system, such as the military, large police agency, or child welfare system, has a very defined organization, a tightly structured system, in which all of the jobs, responsibilities, and accountability structures are very clearly understood. Mechanistic bureaucracies, which are usually resistant to change, use tools to set expectations and exercise controls around expectations (Abrahamsson, 1993). In contrast, a loosely structured system, for example, a small nonprofit like the CAC, relies heavily on the relationships of informal organization. In my assessment, the MDT is a

combination of a highly formalized system and a more loosely structured system and has

hallmarks of both structures. The MOU, which guides the MDT's practice, is a set of

standardized and formalized procedures. The mandated timeframes that structure a DFS

investigation are another example of formalized procedures. However, the relationships

and team communication that develop among MDT members reflect a more informal,

loosely structured system.

According to organizational theorists, team members who accept and identify

with a team leader, may be responding to the leader out of commitment because the

leader exercised expert power. Another possible response is compliance whereby the

team member believes they have a duty to comply because the leader has legitimate

power (Black, Bright, Gardner, et al, 2019). Clegg, Courpasson, and Phillips (2006) posit,

"…[T]here is always the probability that the command will be met with resistance,

because it is not construed as being legitimate in the context in which it is interpreted by

those subject to it…" (p. 106). This variety of responses can be seen with MDT members

who deferred to the DAG because of their knowledge of the law (expert power) or

because the DAG was the ultimate decision-maker regarding criminal charges (legitimate

power). Prosecutors can also be viewed as the "traditional authority" within the criminal

justice system. They make the ultimate charging decision and have the final word on

cases brought to them by police investigators. According to Kelly (2007), the way in

which power is exercised in an organization, especially if this exercise of power is

legitimized in some way by the organization itself, can increase the levels of confidence

of those who are subject to it. In this system, knowledge is a way to legitimize power and

build trust, "The successful management of this power relationship overall is predicated

on effective and consensual management, based on a legitimate exercise of authority which can then result in the development of an overall environment of trust." (Kelly, 2007, p. 136). Trust within the MDT is one of the five major IOC themes which I explored.

Using Communities of Practice (CoP) to Explore IOCs and MDT Practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) coined the term "community of practice" to describe a set of relations among the persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice, "CoP are engaged in the generative process of producing their own future" (p. 58). The MDT was considered as a motivating example to explain how the CoP theory could be a way of viewing learning and practice among professionals considering the barriers and facilitators identified in IOC research.

Situated Learning

Situated learning theory, based on anthropological studies of apprenticeship, conceptualized the process of learning as interactive and participative. Transmission of knowledge is horizontal through collaboration with peers; it is embedded in community. As a departure from cognitive theories of learning, situated learning described how knowledge is developed and organized in workplaces (Contu & Willmott, 2003).

CoP are not static but rather they evolve over time as new members join and others leave. A CoP is rooted in the learning value members find in their interactions; ongoing learning sustains the members' mutual commitment. Wenger (1998) described four components of his social theory of learning as: 1) meaning (learning as experience), 2) practice (learning as doing), 3) community (learning as belonging), and 4) identity

(learning as becoming). He argued that the analytical power of a CoP lay in its ability to integrate various components of learning. Members developed trust based on their ability to learn together, to care about the common domain, to respect each other as practitioners sharing resources such as experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems--in short, a shared practice (Wenger & Wenger-Traynor, 2015).

Wenger (1998) described the CoP's domains of shared practice as: mutual engagement--members build a CoP by establishing relationships and norms through interaction that leads to the creation of shared meaning on issues or a problem; a joint enterprise--members were engaged in working together toward a common goal, and a shared repertoire--resources like language, artifacts, and tools produced by the CoP that members used to negotiate meaning and to facilitate group learning.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Lave and Wenger (1991) described group relations between masters (or old-timers), young masters (or journeymen) and apprentices (or newcomers) (p. 56) as legitimate peripheral participation (p. 29) which they conceptualized as, "a complex notion implicated in social structures involving relations of power" (p. 36). Newcomers must learn from old-timers but also must contribute to the work of the group, typically by doing simple, routine aspects of the practice; this immediate contribution makes them a legitimate member of the community. As they master more of these peripheral practices their legitimacy increases within the group and they become more identified with the CoP. The development of identity is central to the newcomer in the CoP: "learning and a sense of identity are inseparable" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 115). Viewing learning as legitimate peripheral participation means that, "Learning is not merely a condition of

membership, but is itself an evolving form of membership" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53). The zone of proximal development was characterized as the distance between problem-solving abilities exhibited by a learner working alone and that learner's problem-solving ability when collaborating with more experienced people (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger considered legitimate peripheral participation as an anthropological description of a zone of proximal development (Engeström & Wenger, 2010).

Participation and Reification

The negotiation of meaning in the CoP involves two processes, participation and reification. Members develop shared meaning through active participation with the community and by actively using the tools of the trade. Reification is the process of giving form to experiences by producing objects that, "congeal this experience into 'thingness'" (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). Literally, making into an object. CoP produce tools, symbols, stories, and concepts that reify something of the practice in a congealed form. Participation and reification are a duality. In terms of meaning, people and things cannot be defined independently of each other. For instance, drafting a law means that a certain understanding is given form. It becomes a focus for the negotiation of meaning as people use the law in creating practice (Wenger, 1998). The MDT's enabling statute reifies how members investigate child abuse and participate as a team.

The Power Infrastructure of IOCs

The "power infrastructure" of a collaboration (Huxham, 2003) is an important consideration for IOCs and can act as an engine for change. While Cox (2005) charged that power is not a central concern of Wenger's CoP theory, and Fox (2000) argued that

CoP theory has specific weaknesses in the way it addresses power in the learning process,

Lave and Wenger (1991) addressed power, in part, when they conceptualized legitimate

peripheral participation as, "a complex notion implicated in social structures involving

relations of power" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 36). Wenger (1998) clarified that

participation in a CoP is not tantamount to cooperation, "It can involve all kinds of

relations, conflictual as well as harmonious, intimate as well as political, competitive as

well as cooperative" (p. 56). In an interview with educational researchers, Farnsworth

and Kleanthous (2016), Wenger was asked about the role that power plays in the CoP

theory:

> Central to the theory is the idea that learning from a social perspective entails the
>
> power to define competence. And so when you have a claim to competence in a
>
> community, that claim to competence may or may not be accepted. Or it may take
>
> work to convince the community to accept it. When the definition of competence
>
> is a social process taking place in a community of practice, learning always
>
> implies power relations. Inherently. It is a learning theory, not a theory of power
>
> in general…there is a learning-based theorization of power, which has to do with
>
> the definition of competence in social spaces (p. 13).

When describing how power relations played out between old-timers and newcomers,

Wenger concluded in the interview:

> …often people talk about power as a negative thing, but in this theory, power is
>
> not necessarily a negative thing. It is an inherent aspect of learning, for better or
>
> for worse. The fact that old-timers often have more power than newcomers to
>
> assess claims to competence is not necessarily bad because they have more

experience. Now, from an innovation perspective sometimes you may want to include the perspective of a newcomer who has a naïve view of things and who is not stuck in history. Power can prevent learning by silencing voices. So you can start talking about how the learning potential in a community is affected when fixed hierarchies control the ability to define competence. In this sense power can be negative when it becomes an obstacle to further learning (p. 16).

Lave and Wenger (1991) explained that a continuity-displacement contradiction exists between securing continuity over time for the CoP and the inherent displacement that occurs as full participants are replaced by newcomers-become-old-timers. Power conflicts occurred because newcomers need to engage in, understand, and participate in practice to become full members of the community: "Conflicts between masters and apprentices take place in the course of everyday participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 116). Reflecting Goffman, Lave and Wenger (1991) described shared participation as a stage on which the old-timer and newcomer, "act out their differences, discover commonalities, manifest their fear of one another and come to terms with their need for one another" (p. 116). I argue that this shared participation also builds trust. Novices were subject to both the power and knowledge of their more experienced colleagues echoing organizational theorists' view of expert power where subordinates accept the authority of one with more expertise and knowledge (Raven, 1993). Wenger (1998) concluded, "Even when specific members have more power than others, the practice evolves into a communal response to that situation...members produce a practice to deal with what they understand to be their enterprise, their practice…it belongs to their community in a fundamental sense" (p. 80). Further, the MDT is a mandated IOC, so

unlike members of a CoP who come together voluntarily as a learning community, the formation of the MDT is prescribed. Wenger addressed how a CoP can form despite a mandate: "Even when a community of practice arises in response to some outside mandate, the practice evolves into the community's own response to that mandate" (1998, p. 80). MDT members created their own practice.

Boundaries in a CoP

Another important concept in CoP focused on spanning boundaries. In CoP, boundary objects are forms of reification (artifacts, documents, concepts) around which multiple CoPs can organized. Wenger (2000) explained that each CoP sets boundaries with markers that were meaningful to that community, for instance, the jargon of a profession. Because individual members of the MDT were part of their own profession's CoP, the MDT acted as a community of communities; each member of the MDT belonged to multiple communities of practice at once. Spanning the boundary between an individual's professional CoP and the MDT (the community of communities) was critical. Boundary processes can support or inhibit the development of multidisciplinary activity. When new members joined the team, the communication tools used by the team acted as boundary objects that required negotiating for multidisciplinary work to occur. CoP theory challenged the vertical view of expertise in which learners ascend through levels of knowledge/skill and recognized that vertical expertise was complemented by horizontal, boundary-crossing movement (Warmington et al., 2004). This horizonal, expansive learning model both transferred and created knowledge.

Research Questions

My study explored how child abuse MDTs function. My overarching research

question sought to answer: How do divergent groups of professionals interact in the interorganizational collaboration framework of the multidisciplinary team that investigates child abuse in Delaware? I contend that CoP theory can be used to conceptualize the process through which MDT members interact to create and transmit knowledge as they participated in their practice. I explored the perceptions of select team members about team operations, specifically, the forensic interviews and case reviews in which they participated. I inquired if members felt they were well prepared to contribute to the MDT process. I sought to learn how the teams in the three counties identified the barriers and facilitators that existed within the MDT model as it functions in the three locations. Finally, acknowledging that knowledge acquisition is a process in a CoP, I sought to determine how members experienced the MDT process including changes during their tenure on the team, and whether and how the changes have impacted team functioning.

Conclusion: Implications for Team Practice

Learning benefits not only the members but can enhance capacity of the members' organizations due to knowledge transfer from the group resulting in additional skills including how to collaborate (van Winkelen, 2010). The five themes that emerged from the IOC literature--trust, commitment, communication, capacity, and change--are considered facilitators and barriers to practice. The concept of power underlies all these themes. Tensions and contradictions among team members, traditionally labeled as barriers, had potential value as tools for expansive learning, and development of a joint enterprise.

Chapter 5: Methodology

This study described the experiences of core members of the three Delaware MDTs. Members of the MDT, including law enforcement personnel, child welfare workers and supervisors, prosecutors, and forensic interviewers, who had been involved in a case at the CAC between 2017 and 2020, were screened for inclusion into the study. The study was designed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which began in Delaware in March 2020. Restrictions caused by the pandemic suspended regular MDT activities and delayed child abuse investigations. Suspect interviews were not conducted by detectives except in emergency situations. DFS offices were closed and only cases of serious abuse warranted home visits by DFS workers. The Courts were closed, trials were re-scheduled, and prosecutors worked from home. Forensic interviews were only done in the most serious cases. Between March and late June 2020, when school buildings in Delaware were closed and classes were conducted remotely, calls to the child abuse hotline declined by 35-40% over the same period in the previous year in part because teachers, one of the largest groups of reporters of child abuse, were not in classrooms with children to observe signs of abuse or neglect (Schmidt, 2020). Case investigations as well as forensic interviews and case reviews by the MDT became backlogged. The State of Emergency in Delaware, declared by Governor John Carney, was lifted on July 13, 2020, and slowly MDT operations resumed as professionals returned on a limited basis to the workplace. My previously planned in-person interviews with MDT members shifted to a video conferencing format.

My study included a screening survey to collect demographic information, followed by interviews via Zoom. MDT members were asked opened ended questions on the Zoom call and interviews concluded with a short survey of close-ended questions. This design allowed me to explore how MDT members viewed their participation on the team and whether or how MDT members' experiences fit within the conceptual framework of a Community of Practice (CoP).

I chose to use a primarily qualitative approach because I was seeking to learn about the lived experiences of members of the MDT. Schwandt (2000) stated, "We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience…. We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language…" (p. 197). I was curious to learn how participants interacted as a team with their shared understanding and practices drawing from their experiences as professionals in the field. Using thematic analysis, I sought to determine the goodness of fit with the CoP theory.

IRB Approval

This study went through a full IRB review and received approval, following modifications suggested by the IRB members, for all aspects of the project including its research procedures and instruments. Following its formal approval of the study, I requested approval to use a remote interview method during the COVID-19 pandemic because the BMC IRB forbade in-person interviews during 2020. A remote method for data collection was approved by the IRB Chairperson (Appendix B). I conducted my first interview on July 20, 2020 via Zoom.

Sampling and Recruitment

Study participants were identified using a non-probability sampling method. The sampling frame included law enforcement officers, child welfare workers and supervisors, prosecutors and forensic interviewers who participated in an MDT forensic interview or case review at one of the county CAC centers in the three years prior to the interview. Although hundreds of cases of suspected child maltreatment receive forensic interviews and case reviews by the MDT at one of the Delaware CAC centers each year, a finite number of professionals from law enforcement, child welfare, prosecution and forensic interviewing were involved in the MDT process. Participants were identified through snowball sampling methods, utilizing my connections with law enforcement, DFS, DOJ and CAC staff to identify professionals who had been assigned to child abuse investigation units within the study timeframe. Using a three-year timeframe ensured an adequate population of recent MDT members to study compared to a shorter time horizon. I considered that some proportion of MDT members, who had been part of the team within the past three years, were no longer available to participate in the study due to job transfers and retirements and that some team members/former members would not respond to the screening survey even after receiving a reminder email. Finally, based on information from key informants at the CAC, certain agencies only had a few staff members regularly participating on the team further narrowing the pool of potential interviewees.

CAC staff provided me a list of law enforcement agencies that referred cases for forensic interviews within the selected timeframe. I followed-up with specific law enforcement agencies in each county through their command structure and through a

"warm hand-off" by police-based victim services coordinators who offered email

introductions for me with their law enforcement agency leadership. I also contacted the

Attorney General of Delaware, the chief executive officer of the CAC, and the director of

the Division of Family Services (DFS) directly via email requesting permission for their

staff to participate in my study. All agreed to send out the email memo from leadership

(Appendix C), that I drafted for each discipline, to inform their staff that participation in

the study was sanctioned and that staff should expect an email from me asking them to

participate in the study. In the case of the Attorney General, she designated the Deputy

Attorney General who headed the Family Division to distribute the email memo on her

behalf to prosecutors who had been part of the MDT. In a few of the large law

enforcement agencies, including the Delaware State Police, the Chief designated a

subordinate in the chain of command to distribute the email memo to detectives in the

units that investigated child abuse cases.

I was provided with the email addresses for the individuals or staff groups who

were the recipients of the email memo from leadership so that I could send the discipline-

specific screening instrument transmittal email (Appendix D) to prospective participants.

A personalized email was sent to prospective participants containing the Qualtrics

screening survey link. The screening surveys (Appendix E) were used to introduce the

study, obtain initial consent, and collect demographic information. Responses to the

screening surveys were maintained within the Qualtrics platform.

A reminder email was sent seven days after the screening instrument transmittal

email encouraging potential participants to access the Qualtrics link and complete the

survey. A final follow-up email was sent approximately three days later. In the case of

the DFS staff, the email memo from leadership was sent to a listserv of 400 DFS

employees who may or may not have ever been involved in the MDT. So that I could

target my reminder email encouraging DFS staff to complete the screening survey and

avoid re-contacting 400 DFS employees by group email, I requested and received a list

from the CAC of DFS workers and supervisors who had participated in forensic

interviews or case reviews during the study timeframe. I then was able to follow-up with

a reminder email to only those DFS staff who had been active with cases at the CAC and

were a potential member of the MDT.

To ensure inclusion of law enforcement officers, child welfare workers (both

investigators and supervisors), prosecutors and forensic interviewers from all three

counties in the interviews, I used a quota sampling method for data collection. Based on

responses to screening survey questions, I categorized professionals by their county,

agency, and role. For DFS respondents, I recorded the role they held (investigator vs.

supervisor) while they were a member of the MDT. This was to ensure that there was

diversity in geographic areas and roles (DFS investigators who attended forensic

interviews as well as supervisors who attended case reviews) in the interview sample. If a

participant fit into the quota sample matrix, I sent a personalized email inviting them to

schedule an interview with me at their convenience. If a screening survey respondent

agreed to be interviewed, I exported their screening survey information to the Bryn Mawr

College's (BMC) OneDrive server where it will be maintained until the conclusion of my

dissertation for purposes of an audit trail.

Using the population estimates described above, I interviewed 29 MDT

participants between July 20 and November 2, 2020, via Zoom. Although I originally

proposed to interview 27 team members, I selected two additional participants to interview at the beginning of the process based on their professional background described on the screening survey and years on the MDT in an attempt to secure a longer-term view of these "old-timers." Interviews ranged from 37 minutes to 79 minutes with an average of just under an hour. Sample sizes for each profession were as follows: law enforcement staff = 10 (3 detectives in Kent and New Castle counties; 4 detectives in Sussex County--at least 1 from a large department and 1 from a small department); DFS workers = 6 (2 investigation workers in each county); DFS supervisors = 3 (1 in each county); prosecutors = 6 (2 in each county); forensic interviewers = 4 (1 in Kent and Sussex counties; 2 in New Castle County). I selected professionals with varied levels of experience--the newcomer vs. old timer described by Wenger (1998).

After 29 interviews, common themes had emerged from participant responses with such frequency that I believed additional interviews would not reveal sufficiently novel data to warrant the scheduling of further interviews. According to Creswell (2007), saturation is the point at which new information does not provide new insight. Because respondents repeated themes and no new themes emerged that required exploration, I stopped interviewing after 29 participants.

Setting, Data Collection, and Data Management

My original plan was to conduct interviews with law enforcement staff, DFS workers (both investigators and supervisors), prosecutors and forensic interviewers at the CAC center in the counties in which they worked or in another mutually agreed upon private, convenient location. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the risks involved with face-to-face interactions, I selected Zoom as the remote method to conduct

interviews with participants because it was easily accessible and had quickly become a

popular platform through which meetings were conducted during the pandemic. All

participants responded that they were familiar with the Zoom platform and agreed to be

interviewed through this remote method.

Video conferencing has been used for several years prior to the current pandemic

as a cost saving measure to eliminate the need for travel, to help researchers gain access

to diverse and geographically dispersed interview participants, and to accommodate for

unpredictable conditions such as poor weather (Boland, et al., 2020; Deakin &

Wakefield, 2013; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009; Winiarska, 2017). Researchers who

compared face-to-face versus online video conferencing interviews found the quality of

the interviews did not differ from face-to-face interviews (Cabaroglu, Basaran, &

Roberts, 2010; Deakin & Wakefield, 2013), and found that online participants were more

open and expressive (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). Deakin and Wakefield (2013) found

that in some of their video conferencing interviews that rapport was created quicker than

some of their face-to-face interviews.

In a study of qualitative interviews using Zoom, Gray and colleagues (2020)

found that, overall, participants were positive about participating in the video

conferencing format. Participants were more comfortable speaking about a personal topic

in a space of their own choosing, the Zoom interview did not disrupt participants' work

and home schedules, participants valued being able to see and connect personally with

the interviewer, and they appreciated the flexibility of being able to use a computer,

tablet, or cell phone for the interview. Gray and colleagues (2020) pointed to

disadvantages which included technology issues, and, like face-to-face interviews,

distractions, or lack of privacy. Cater (2011) pointed out that while video conferencing software allows the participant and interviewer to hear and see each other, they do not occupy the same physical space, resulting in missed opportunities for the researcher to observe the participant's physical space and respond to body language and emotional cues.

I acknowledge that I missed being able to "share space" with my participants but, through the Zoom video and, because many participants were working from home, I was able to observe several of them in their home offices and even briefly "met" a few of their children and pets, something that wouldn't have happened if I conducted the interview at the CAC or another location. Because participants who were working from home were in a private, comfortable space, away from colleagues, I felt that responses were perhaps more candid than those who participated from their office where "front stage" behavior was expected. Law enforcement and DFS participants were the most likely to have been working in their offices although, due to social distancing which created the need for staggered scheduling of staff in workplaces during the pandemic, offices were relatively quiet during the timeframe I was conducting interviews.

It was not lost on me that there was an inequity and status differential between those participants at home versus those who were back in the office. Prosecutors and forensic interviewers were able to and permitted to "work from home" while front-line DFS workers and detectives were, out of necessity, in their offices, in most cases. The privilege of working from home extended to prosecutors not being required to attend emergency forensic interviews at the CAC during the pandemic. They only participated by telephone while other team members attended in person. While this arrangement

caused frustration and a sense of being disconnected on the part of the DAGs, it does highlight the inequity in the job status of team members and underscored that law enforcement and DFS workers were "essential workers" during the height of the pandemic.

A few of those participants who were in their workplace offices did experience interruptions during the Zoom call--knocks on office doors and ringing phones--but no participant needed to end the interview prematurely because of the interruption. In fact, one of the participants announced to a colleague who had stopped by their cubicle that they were on an "important call" and would catch up with the colleague later. Briefly discussing the shared struggle of working during the pandemic created an opportunity for building rapport as I shared with participants that my staff were considered essential workers and my social service agency, with its domestic violence and youth emergency shelters, remained open even during the declared State of Emergency. Even though we were meeting remotely, I was able to observe facial expressions and other body language --shifting in a chair, twirling hair, cupping a chin, rolling eyes--that gave me a good indication via the video feed when a question hit a nerve or required extra thought on the part of the participant which allowed me to probe and ask follow-up questions.

A password protected Zoom meeting invitation was send to each participant's email address. Prior to the Zoom interview date, I send each participant an electronic copy of the IRB approved Consent Form (Appendix F) as part of a reminder email regarding the scheduled Zoom meeting. Participants were asked to read and sign the Consent Form, returning a signed copy to me as an email attachment prior to the interview date.

At the start of the Zoom interview, I asked each participant if they had any questions or needed clarification about the Consent Form. I informed participants of their right to refuse to answer or stop the interview or to go "off the record" if they wanted to discuss something they did not want recorded. I requested permission to audio tape record the interview and to contact them later for "member checking" or if follow-up on a question was required. I also verbally reviewed parameters of maintaining confidentiality of MDT client and case information during the interview. Participants raised no concerns and there were no adverse events reported.

With participants' permission, I audio recorded the interviews however, I did not use the record feature available on Zoom but chose to audio record the interviews using an independent voice recorder. I was fortunate that only one interview was plagued by technical issues caused by a violent summer thunderstorm. During that interview, the participant and I turned off the video capability to stabilize the audio connection and were able to continue our discussion. While not ideal, we had already been speaking for over 30 minutes and had established rapport which allowed us to complete the interview using only the audio feature. In fact, we had a sidebar discussion about the marvel and misery of Zoom which was precipitated by the unstable connection.

Because it was not possible to physically hand a printed copy of the short survey of closed-ended questions to participants, I created PowerPoint slides with one survey question per slide on it as well as the Likert Scale responses. I was pleased with the ease at which I was able to administer the end of interview survey questions by sharing my screen to show the PowerPoint slides to interview participants. I recorded responses on a printed copy of the survey which was assigned a numerical identifier to connect the

survey with the respondent. The paper copies of the short survey were transcribed into the Excel application available through the BMC Office 365 suite and the spreadsheet was saved to my account on the College's OneDrive. All paper copies of the short survey were cross-cut shredded after they were transcribed.

At the completion of each interview, I uploaded the audio recordings to the College's secure OneDrive computer storage site and deleted the audio recording from the voice recorder device. After transcribing the first eight interviews myself, I shared a link to the additional 21 audio recordings through the College's SharePoint feature with a professional transcriptionist, who signed a confidentiality agreement, (Appendix G). The transcriptionist assigned the numerical identifier to each interview and returned the transcripts through email to me. I downloaded the transcripts to the College's OneDrive. Electronic transcripts will be retained in my account on the College's OneDrive until the conclusion of my dissertation for purposes of an audit trail and then deleted. Transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, and printed for hand coding. The printed copies of the interview transcripts used for coding were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my locked home office. All paper copies of the transcripts will be cross-cut shredded at the conclusion of my dissertation. The quota sample matrix containing the names/professional affiliations and the matched numerical identifiers will be maintained on the College's OneDrive and purged at the conclusion of my dissertation.

Minimizing Non-response and Attrition

I reviewed the completed screening surveys to determine whether and where each prospective participant fit in the quota sample. Attempts to interview a participant were

made if they fit into a quota cell that was not full. If a participant was not able to be

interviewed, another participant who met the criteria of that cell in the matrix was

substituted. As stated above, an introductory email with an embedded link to the

screening survey and then follow-up reminder emails were used to minimize non-

response. While a sufficient number of survey respondents to fulfill the quota matrix had

agreed to be interviewed, there were some survey respondents who failed to acknowledge

the invitation to participate in an interview despite follow-up requests. In one case, a

respondent actively declined the invitation to be interviewed citing a lack of time to

participate.

Due to the pandemic, many of the interview participants were still working from

home during the summer and early fall of 2020 which created a generally uninterrupted

environment in which to complete the Zoom interviews. No interview was cut short or

terminated due to pressing office demands on a participant. This had been a concern for

me when I originally planned to conduct the interviews in person knowing that members

of the MDT often operate in crisis mode and are on call. Only one Zoom interview was

conducted with each of the 29 participants. While there were certainly trade-offs with not

being in the same space as my interviewees, the Zoom platform enabled me to conduct

interviews at the ultimate convenience for participants--I conducted interviews anytime

between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m.--and without requiring travel on the part of participants or

interviewer. I believe that the remote interview format enabled some participants to

engage in a research interview when they might not have otherwise made the time to do

so, with or without the pandemic. With their pressing work demands, carving out time to

meet with me in person, especially if it involved travel, may not have resulted in as many

participants in my study. In the middle of a pandemic, the pluses of interviews via Zoom clearly outweighed the minuses, in my judgment. I would opt to use video conferencing software for future research given my experience with this study.

Measurement

My interviews elicited participants' views on the key concepts identified in the IOC literature as facilitators and barriers to effective collaboration: trust, commitment, communication, capacity, and change. I operationalized the key concepts as follows:

Trust involved (a) building and nurturing relationships between individuals and partner agencies, (b) fostering attachment to the team, and (c) maintaining mutual respect and support of the team.

Commitment included (a) dedication to/sense of ownership of the partnership and (b) allegiance to a shared vision, values, purpose, and goals of the MDT.

Communication involved (a) interfacing between individuals and agencies, (b) establishing formal, professional relationships and informal, personal relationships on the MDT, (c) developing written policies and protocols which convey clear expectations (i.e., Memorandum of Understanding), and (d) clearly defined roles, responsibility, and an accountability structure.

Capacity included (a) holding a common understanding and approach to solving problems, (b) having necessary resources (i.e., human resources, time and expertise, support of leadership and decision-making authority), and (c) joint training to build skills and form team identity.

Change involved (a) constant reorganization within agencies due to, for example, political priorities or funding, (b) frequent turnover of staff, c) territorial tensions and turf

issues between partners, (d) separate professional education of the partners, and e) organizational culture of the member agencies (Sitler, 2018).

The interview guide (Appendix H) captured the key constructs of trust, commitment, communication, capacity and change through both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Coding of interview questions revealed themes to assess the goodness of fit of the CoP framework.

I selected pertinent questions from four instruments and wrote my own interview protocol which creates a useful and targeted line of inquiry for my research questions. I created open-ended questions drawing select questions from a dissertation on collaboration in MDTs in three southern states and California (Young, 2015). I also drew questions from the CoP Focus Group Interview Protocol (Gajda & Koliba, 2007). While designed as part of an evaluation of collaboration in relation to school improvement programs, the researchers assert that, "the protocol is generalizable and would prove useful in a wide range of organizational settings," (p. 29). The CoP interview protocol instrument was developed as a key evaluation deliverable for two projects sponsored by Vermont's Department of Education and its Higher Education Collaborative for which the researchers consulted as evaluators (Gajda & Koliba, 2007).

Following the open-ended questions, I asked closed-ended questions using an ordinal Likert scale reproduced on the PowerPoint slides with six responses on the rating scale range from "not at all" to "always" with an option for "don't know." While my research was not designed as a mixed methods study, I incorporated the survey questions to balance the interview responses. I had concerns that, on the one hand, some participants might not be forthcoming or talkative in the interview but would respond

more easily to closed-ended questions. On the other hand, following Goffman, if the interviews elicited front-stage behaviors, with participants telling me what they thought I wanted to hear, the survey might reveal back-stage views. In the end, participants were forthcoming. They shared not only their front-stage impressions of how the MDT worked but also shared frustrations about the MDT process demonstrating a level of trust in me as a scholarly practitioner who had a history with and understanding of the MDT process.

The first six closed-ended questions were drawn from the IDEA Partnership Success Rating Scale which grew out of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs under the No Child Left Behind Act (Cashman, Linehan & Rosser, 2007; National Association of State Directors, 2006). This scale assessed partnerships by looking at several features of successful and collaborative partnerships. It was based on the work of McLaughlin and Covert (1984), evaluators for the U.S. Department of Education - Office of Special Education Programs.

The final six questions were drawn from Bendaly's (1996, 2018) Team Fitness Test designed to assess and improve team performance. The Team Fitness Test was based on years of research in team performance in the public and private sectors and measures seven elements of high performing teams: cohesiveness, healthy climate, team member contribution, open communication/groupwork skills, shared learning/innovative thinking, shared leadership, and compatibility to change. The Team Fitness Test assessment has been updated over time and undergone rigorous testing, with an overall inter-rater reliability for the instrument of 0.936 (Bendaly, 1996, 2018). These measures meshed well with the five major concepts identified in my review of IOC research. While I recognized that the validity and reliability of the instruments exist when they are used in

their original form, I made a conscious decision not to try to fit a square peg into a round

hole and ask questions that were irrelevant to my study sample or my research questions,

hence the decision to modify the instruments. I chose to combine the closed-ended survey

questions with the in-depth interview questions for completeness so that perceptions

about team operations and interactions can be captured from different perspectives.

Responses to the closed-ended questions were aggregated to describe variations in a way

that was not possible with open-ended questions.

Analysis

Screening survey data was collated to describe interviewees' professional

affiliations and years of experience. The Zoom interviews produced responses to both

open-ended and closed-ended questions. Once they were returned to me, I read over the

transcripts for accuracy. I then went back and did a close read of the first 10 transcripts

making margin notes and memoing, to see if any of the five major concepts related to

facilitators and barriers to effective collaboration, namely, trust, commitment,

communication, capacity, and change, emerged as themes. After getting a feel for the

data through manual coding, I uploaded the transcripts to Dedoose and used the software

to analyze themes that emerge from the responses to the open-ended questions. I selected

this software package because I had limited time to learn a software package, I was

attracted by the web-based, intuitive design, its focus on qualitative and mixed-methods

studies, accessible tutorials in webinar format, and affordable licensing.

For the survey questions presented near the end of the interview, I utilized the

Likert scale described above to create numerical proxies for input into an Excel

spreadsheet to determine the degree to which the responses indicate collaborative

behaviors. I compared the responses from the survey questions to the open-ended

interview responses to see if correlations existed. I used first and second cycle coding

methods (Saldana, 2016) to analyze the transcripts (See Table 3).

Table 3

Final Code Book: Codes drawn from IOC themes and CoP indicators

First Cycle Coding

Process Codes	Versus Codes	In Vivo Codes
Making decisions	Siloed work vs. collaborative work	"stay in your lane"
Networking	Law and order vs. child protection	"sink or swim"
Knowing	standards	"too many cases"
Learning	Constant vs. change	"covid curveball"
Brokering/negotiating	Old-timers vs. newcomers	"all have a job to
Sharing information		do"
Adjusting to Covid-19		"needing each
		other"
		"at the table"
		"on the same page"
		"show me the
		ropes"
		"not enough time"

Second Cycle Coding

Focused and Pattern Coding themes	Description of themes
Communication	importance/contribution of communication (or lack thereof) to team operations/team dysfunction
Relationships	synergy (complement one another) vs. tensions (power issues) between team members
Learning	training, knowledge/skills, decision-making, negotiating
Identity	role, identification of "who belongs"
System/Process Issues	investigative timeframes, high caseloads, turnover

I employed the five main themes and sub-themes I identified from the IOC

literature as well as elements of the framework of the CoP theory to create codes. After

consultation with my Director of Work as well as four working sessions with another

member of my dissertation committee, I refined my coding scheme. As part of my

preparation for the working sessions, I reviewed a few key articles and examples of

thematic networks and thematic analysis and used XMind software to create concept

maps utilizing the IOC and CoP indicators to help me organize my thinking around

coding for themes.

As a first cycle method, I created process codes which captured actions of the

MDT members--making decisions, networking, knowing, learning,

brokering/negotiating, sharing information--that I had identified in my review of the

transcripts. I also utilized versus coding, another first cycle coding method, based on

dichotomies I had uncovered in the transcripts. The versus codes--siloed work vs.

collaborative work, law and order vs. child protection standards, constant vs. change, old-

timers vs. newcomers--highlighted the points of conflict and change among MDT

members. My final first cycle coding method, in vivo codes, was used to identify

passages in participants' own words, to give voice to the observations, insights, and

frustrations expressed by MDT members.

Next, I utilized the IOC concepts and CoP indicators and domains to re-code the

transcripts in Dedoose, refining the data through focused coding and pattern coding to

help me reconstitute major themes from the data. Five overarching themes emerged:

Communication which I defined as the importance and contribution of communication

(or lack thereof) to team operations/team dysfunction; Relationships defined as the

synergy (complement one another) vs. tensions (turf issues/power structure) between team members; Learning which encompassed training, knowledge/skills, decision-making, and negotiating among MDT members; Identity was a member's role as well as the team's identification of "who belongs"; System/Process issues were the challenges faced by the MDT as a team and as professionals in the criminal justice and child welfare systems.

I selected In Vivo passages that captured the essence of these five themes and relied on these quotes from team members to support trustworthiness, from Lincoln and Guba's evaluative framework for qualitative research (1985). I strove for thick descriptions and detailed accounts from team members in my writing of the Findings chapters. I created an audit trail to aid external researchers in determining if my analysis is rooted in the data by maintaining records of the research process including raw data, color coded in vivo passages, notes about the iterative process of developing interview questions, and notes about my decision-making. I also provided a thorough reflexivity statement to acknowledge how my former affiliation with the CAC and DOJ may have impacted my study.

Limitations

Response biases were potential limitations of this study. Past members of the MDT have retired, resigned, been re-assigned, or promoted, so the email survey may not have reached all intended targets. The loss of institutional memory was a concern if past MDT members did not participate in the survey although I was able to interview some MDT members who have had long tenures on the team. Those who did not respond to the screening survey may have been too busy or frustrated to contribute.

Study participants were overwhelmingly White (see Chapter 6). Perspectives on MDT interaction may have been different if more DFS workers and law enforcement professionals of color had responded to the screening survey and agreed to participate in an interview. For example, issues of race and class might have been raised more often by professionals of color than by White participants. Response bias may also arise if, for instance, those who returned the survey tended to be newer professionals with less experience with the MDT process, compared with those who did not respond. The close-ended questions may have created response bias because they were phrased to capture positive attributes of the MDT.

This exploratory study does not have the ability to detect differences between professions or counties. Detecting differences was not an aim of the study, but it generated hypotheses about differences or conditions under which MDTs may or may not flourish.

Because the interview protocol I used was created from modified survey instruments, credibility, an element of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), was an issue. By asking participants probing and clarifying questions during interviews to determine if the themes I identified were accurate, I attempted to address credibility concerns. Results of my study will not be generalizable to MDTs in other geographic locations because the study was based on a nonprobability sample in Delaware. While the results will not be generalizable, the expected benefits of my study include the production of useful knowledge about the lived experiences of MDT members in Delaware and the applicability of the CoP theory in understanding the collaboration among team members.

Chapter 6: Participant Demographics and Post-interview Survey Responses

For this study, I interviewed 29 current and past members of the three MDTs that operate in Delaware. The quota sampling matrix (see Table 4) depicts the number of professionals from each category listed in each cell.

Table 4

Quota Sampling Matrix: Professional Job Title by Workplace County

Job Title		County		Subtotals
	New Castle	Kent	Sussex	
Law Enforcement	3	3	4	10
DFS Worker	2	2	2	6
DFS Supervisor	1	1	1	3
Prosecutor	2	2	2	6
Forensic Interviewer	2	1	1	4
Subtotals	10	9	10	29

Gender and race information (see Table 5) are presented in the aggregate to reduce the chance of identifying interviewees. This information is based on my visual observations during the Zoom interviews. I did not ask potential participants about these demographic categories on the screening instrument. I acknowledge that observational data on gender and race may be inaccurate.

Table 5

Interview Participants by Gender and Race

Gender		Race	
Male	Female	African-American	White
10	19	2	27

Women participants outnumbered men by a ratio of nearly 2:1 (19 women; 10 men). Child welfare investigators and supervisors as well as forensic interviewers were all female. Four of the six DAGs interviewed were women. The vast majority (80%) of law enforcement participants in my study were male which mirrors the gender composition of most law enforcement agencies. The gender of study participants is reflective of the overall gender composition for prosecutors, DFS supervisors, and forensic interviewers. Women were overrepresented in my study compared to the gender composition of DFS workers.

Two of the study participants were African-American and the remaining 27 were White. Participants in my study mirrored the race of the staff within the DOJ and the CAC as staff in those agencies are primarily White. However, the DFS participants in my study did not mirror the racial diversity of DFS workers in Delaware. Although DFS and the larger law enforcement agencies are the most racially diverse groups of professionals on the MDT, the majority of employees in those agencies are White. Officers of color in the largest law enforcement agencies in Delaware range from 8% to 23% of the sworn force (Hughes, 2021) while 11% of law enforcement participants in my study were officers of color.

To ensure that I was interviewing participants with a wide range of experience in their professions, I included questions on the screening instrument about the year in which the participant began working for their current agency as well as their overall experience in their profession (see Table 6).

Table 6

Years of Experience with Current Agency by Profession: Min/Max, Mean, Median

Profession	Years of Experience		
	Min/Max	Mean	Median
Law Enforcement	8 yrs./18 yrs.	12.7 yrs.	12.5 yrs.
DFS Worker/Supervisor	2 yrs./18 yrs.	8.4 yrs.	5.0 yrs.
Prosecutor	3 yrs./19 yrs.	7.8 yrs.	6.5 yrs.
Forensic Interviewer	1 yr./10 yrs.	4.3 yrs.	3.0 yrs.

Five of the DFS workers/supervisors had prior experience in social services, for a mean of 1.6 years before joining the Delaware Division of Family Services. Experience within DFS ranged from two years to 18 years with supervisors having more years of experience and workers having less. Three law enforcement participants had worked for another police department prior to joining their current agency. Cumulative law enforcement experience ranged from eight to 18 years. Forensic interviewers, on average, had just over six years of experience in social services before joining the CAC. Experience at the CAC ranged from one to 10 years. Prosecutors' experience ranged from three to 19 years within the Delaware DOJ.

As described in the Methodology chapter, following the interviews with participants via Zoom, I shared my computer screen and showed interviewees PowerPoint slides each containing a survey question to be answered on a Likert scale with responses ranging from "not at all" to "always" with an option for "don't know".

See Table 7 at the end of this chapter for survey responses to the 12 close-ended questions.

Through the survey responses I learned that most participants held beliefs that the MDT established a clear, shared sense of purpose among its members (very much = 62%, always = 34%). Most felt that the MDT shared leadership among its members but were less convinced of this than they were about a shared sense of purpose (very much = 41%, somewhat = 38%). Nearly half (48%) felt that the MDT "always" encouraged contributions from all members with another 41% stating that this was "very much" the case.

The question that drew the widest variety of responses and consternation was related to how functional conflict was among team members. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of participants felt that the extent to which the MDT used conflicts among members as a tool to grow as a team was "somewhat" the case and another 21% believed it was "very much" the case. But 17% said conflict was used as a tool "a little" and 10% said conflict was "always" used as a tool to grow. Another 10% responded that they "don't know" and 3% said "not at all". Those responses on the extremes of the scale, were accompanied with the explanation to me, during the administration of the survey, that they had not experienced conflict on their teams and therefore couldn't opine on whether it had been used as a tool for change. Entrenched and deep conflict among members was not something that surfaced to any great degree during my interviews, however, I acknowledge that team members may have been trying to manage their front stage presentation (Goffman, 1959) with the interviewer and may have been attempting to preserve the view of the team as a smooth-running collaboration.

Nearly half (48%) of respondents believed "very much" that the MDT members communicated frequently and effectively, and the remainder felt that this was "somewhat" the case (28%) or "always" the case (24%). Sixty-two percent (62%) of participants felt that the MDT "very much" made key decisions and solved problems as a full partnership with 24% believing that was "always" the case. Just over half (52%) felt it was "very much" the case that team members knew they could depend on one another and 34% believed this statement was "somewhat" the case. Sixty-five percent (65%) felt "very much" that there was a sense of openness and trust within the team and another 21% of participants believed this was "always" the case. The overwhelmingly positive response to this question about openness and trust among team members was also reflected in conversations during my interviews.

About half (48%) of survey respondents felt "very much" that team members didn't allow personal or agency priorities or agendas to hinder team effectiveness and 31% felt this was "somewhat" the case. Conflicting goals and interests between partner organizations and the MDT reflect IOC research (Thomson and Perry, 2006) that found that the formation of successful collaborations can be undermined by these tensions. Nearly 60% of respondents believed "very much" that each team member had an equal voice on the MDT with 28% responding that it was "somewhat" the case. In interviews, DFS supervisors, prosecutors and many law enforcement and forensic interviewers reflected that they felt they had an equal voice; DFS workers were not convinced that was the case. This lack of equality in decision-making reflects the power differential between team members.

Thirty-four (34%) of respondents felt "very much" that team members shared their learning for the good of the team and 28% felt that this was the case "somewhat". About half (52%) of respondents believed "very much" that if team members were to list team priorities, the lists would be very similar and 38% felt this was "somewhat" the case. A few participants explained that each profession had its own priorities for child maltreatment cases which were, at times, in conflict with the priorities of other team members (strict timelines for concluding child welfare investigations vs. more open-ended timeframes for law enforcement investigations, for instance). Generally, the survey responses reflected the interview responses particularly around the issues of communication, trust, sharing a clear sense of purpose, allowing each team member to have a voice, and making key decisions as a full partnership.

Table 7

End-of-interview survey responses (valid n=29)

To what extent does the MDT…	Not at all		A little		Somewhat		Very Much		Always		Don't Know	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Establish a clear, shared sense of purpose?	0		0		1	3%	18	62%	10	34%	0	
2. Share leadership among members	0		2	7%	11	38%	12	41%	4	14%	0	
3. Encourage contributions from all members	0		0		3	10%	12	41%	14	48%	0	
4. Use conflicts among MDT members as a tool to grow as a team	1	3%	5	17%	11	38%	6	21%	3	10%	3	10%
5. Communicate frequently and effectively among members	0		0		8	28%	14	48%	7	24%	0	
6. Make key decisions and solve problems as a full partnership	0		1	3%	3	10%	18	62%	7	24%	0	
7. Team members know they can depend on one another	0		0		10	34%	15	52%	4	14%	0	
8. A sense of openness and trust within the team	0		0		4	14%	19	65%	6	21%	0	
9. Team members do not allow personal or agency priorities or agendas to hinder team effectiveness	0		2	7%	9	31%	14	48%	4	14%	0	
10. Each team member has an equal voice	0		0		8	28%	17	59%	4	14%	0	
11. Team members share their learning for the good of the team	0		4	14%	8	28%	10	34%	6	21%	1	3%
12. If asked to list team priorities, the lists would be very similar	0		2	7%	11	38%	15	52%	1	3%	0	

Chapter 7: Harmonious or Conflictual: The Importance of Relationships

Becoming a Team

The functioning of the MDT process relied on the relationships between its members. Each case brought to the CAC for a forensic interview may have had a different constellation of team members working on it. However, due to specialized units in each county within law enforcement agencies, the DOJ and DFS, the universe of professionals involved in these cases was generally small. In addition, there were only two forensic interviewers at the CAC in each county. There were exceptions; in small law enforcement jurisdictions without a detective unit, patrol officers investigated cases of child abuse/child sexual abuse. At DFS, while workers in specialized units investigated serious injury and sexual abuse, less serious physical abuse cases were often handled by generalist DFS staff.

Team dynamics depended on which members of the core team--DFS worker, detective, DAG, forensic interviewer--participated in the forensic interview and case review meetings. As one DAG explained, "I think it's probably less about the team and more about the individuals you're working with…you have interactions with the same people…a small world of people so you develop relationships."

Although the dynamics of the MDT changed when one of the team members was new, the team was seen by both new and existing teammates as welcoming to new members. A DFS worker recalled that the team gave her a tour of the CAC building and were all very accommodating and helpful when she joined the team, "The team members

know you're nervous, it's your first time participating in something like that, but they were all very laid back and just, you know, 'we understand that you're new', 'this is typically how this process works.'" A detective described how existing MDT members take new members under their wing and how he felt comfortable sending detectives from his unit to the CAC to participate in the forensic interview, "I would trust them [MDT] to kinda brief them…this is kinda like what we do and welcome to the process." A seasoned detective, who had been part of the MDT for several years, explained how the team accommodates and encourages a new member:

> There's always an adjustment when you have a new person become a member of the team…they might be either not as confident or just their skills aren't as developed, you know. Others…can kind of share that burden a little bit more, take on a little bit more work themselves…show the new person what's expected, but provide that guidance too…just like with anything, when you go there by yourself for the first time…I don't want to say 'the pressure is on' but you know, this is falling on me so I want to make sure I do the right thing and sometimes you…forget that there's a reason that you're there, you're there because you're qualified…you belong here…make sure you do what you're supposed to do.

To facilitate connections with all team members, one DFS supervisor preferred to expose their new staff to the MDT through a variety of cases so they could forge their own relationships: "…that way, they're building their relations, too, with different detectives and different attorneys to get their name…out there so that they know that they are part of the MDT process."

Most often, new team members had to prove themselves as contributing members of the team to be accepted. This seemed especially true for DFS workers and supervisors. A DFS worker shared that sometimes it felt that the MDT looked down on new DFS members discounting their contribution to the team as if their, "input doesn't matter." But as competence built, DFS workers became more willing to contribute their opinions about what they believed needed to happen and what actions they planned to take with a case. A DFS worker concluded, "…I almost feel like you have to earn their respect."

A seasoned DFS worker described how their carefully cultivated relationships with DAGs contrasted with newer workers who don't enjoy those relationships, "I think the more that we get to know Department of Justice too, the more they take our input into account." The worker went on to describe how prosecutors now sought their opinion, "I've had…DAGs reach out and be like 'hey, what's your thoughts on this, what do you think needs to happen?' and then a lot of times they'll kind of take our suggestions and advice…" As for newer workers, "I don't know how much they reach out to our newer workers still because they don't necessarily always know the backgrounds [on these cases]." The worker concluded, "…the more experience I've gotten, the more I've built relationships with them. I think they come to us more." Another DFS worker talked about how their role evolved on the team, "…because I've become a more seasoned worker…[I'm] often given more responsibility in my unit, which has led me to develop a stronger relationship with the CAC and law enforcement…they have started to like come to me when asking stuff that isn't necessarily [about] my cases." The worker concluded, "…as I've been here, and I've worked with the team longer they have sort of, you know, seen me in a more leadership role than just a regular worker."

A DFS supervisor explained their development as a team member over time, "I've become…somewhat of a valuable member of the team…I'm on their level now whereas, before I didn't feel that I should have been there." Now, she reports, "…they respect me as part of a member of the team. I am a professional and my opinion is just as valuable as theirs. So, yes, it has grown and it has blossomed into a, you know, a better relationship." It seems to me that DFS workers and supervisors need to prove themselves to the other team members, particularly the prosecutors, to be accepted and viewed as a valuable, contributing member. Their status on the team is contingent in a way that other members is not. Most DFS workers are not social workers by training as the field of child welfare has become de-professionalized. Other MDT members may view DFS workers as advocates for the family but DFS, too, has an investigative role on the team.

There was camaraderie as well as tension between seasoned team members and newcomers. A forensic interviewer pointed out that because some teams experience high turnover of team members, relationships constantly changed but acknowledged that some teams maintained stable membership for months if not years so, "if there is somebody that you don't particularly get along with…you're probably in it for the long haul and you have to learn to work with them…."

A long-time DFS worker and current supervisor, who had been a member of the team during two separate timeframes, gave a striking account of differences in the MDT from their first experience to current experience. In the past, team members were closer, had strong relationships, and were more dedicated team members. Now, many younger DFS workers wanted to base decisions on education, not experience. The supervisor felt the younger workers can be too judgmental, lack empathy and do not have the life

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experience to make good decisions. The supervisor had to put some of the DFS workers "in check" [reprimand them] over their decisions.

A forensic interviewer concurred that younger DFS workers and detectives "just don't have the life experience" and questioned why staff who lack life experience were assigned to a unit with such complex cases. A detective supervisor described how some of the DFS workers at the table seemed to be notetakers rather than engaged members of the MDT. Another detective also judged DFS workers: "I've seen cases where I've had a really good DFS worker that really cared and kind of pushed the envelope…. I've seen DFS workers really go above and beyond to help a family and I think when we all work together that that happens. Of course, you see instances where it appears to be just checking boxes.…" I wonder if negative judgments about DFS workers were based on their relative inexperience in their profession generally and/or the fact that they were newcomers to the team and were unsure of themselves and their role. These judgments may also reflect the relative status of DFS workers compared with other professionals.

While old timers tended to be respected for their experience, a forensic interviewer pointed out that some senior members were negative about the MDT process and, despite changing protocols and new research which moved the MDT forward, clung to the old ways "…[their] feet are in the mud" or, as Wenger described it, are bounded by history, and unwilling to accept change. The newcomer may have ideas and suggestions for improving processes or other suggestions that could be helpful to MDT operations or investigations. Relationships could be expanded and reframed as newcomers become young masters.

Participants talked of "becoming comfortable" with other team members and how the level of "comfortability" facilitated teamwork and team communication. Activities and decision-making became second nature because of familiarity of team members with one another. A detective indicated, "It's normally the same few of us that go [to the CAC] so we're all very open and comfortable and I think we can speak pretty freely about how we feel about the case and it's all very well-respected." The longer team members worked together, the more opportunity for relationships and trust to grow. A prosecutor described how, as the team evolved, there was "more of an equal give and take - we're all just equal participants," and how a comfort level formed, "…you just start speaking up more about things…I like that I know the faces around the table…and I know how this person works."

The newcomer became part of the core membership as they participate in the MDT over time. When new to the team, a DAG felt like other team members questioned what they knew, "you've been here a minute, what can you tell us?" and now felt like a "trusted advisor" to the MDT. The DAG described becoming more "confident and comfortable" with the team and in the role. The DAG concluded, "When all of us feel like 'we can do this' I think that's really helpful. So, my role has changed almost from being meek in the observer [role] to being a part of the team."

A DFS worker, describing the evolution of their relationship with law enforcement, believed, "once they get to know us more, they kind of trust our judgment…they trust me to go do that [home visit] on my own, they trust me to establish my own safety plans…that's because they've seen me working for years…they trust my judgment and my ability." As relationships built, members helped other team members;

detectives accompanied DFS workers on home visits, DFS workers pulled hotline sheets and other information about a family for detectives. One prosecutor described how the strength of the individual relationships impacted communication and how they would be more inclined to reach out to a DFS worker with a case update if they knew the DFS team member and had a good working relationship with them.

As the teams grew in their relationships, communication at the table flowed. A detective described the break during a forensic interview when the forensic interviewer consulted with the MDT on additional lines of questioning:

> …We rely on everybody…to come up with ideas and suggestions, we open it up to everybody because I'd rather have ten brains working instead of myself and a prosecutor…so we pick everybody's brain….I think that really shows that you care and that they really want their input and, you know, you have their trust, if you're really asking them for suggestions, ideas, different ways to look at certain things and I think that just makes everybody closer when you include everybody…

A DFS worker observed that, because the DAGs and detectives work together frequently, "…they build such a good rapport with one another that they trust each other's decisions…they begin to build this relationship of like 'I know you're doing your best', 'I know you're doing what's in the best interest of the child'." They became a team within the team, "They work so much with each other that I think they just build that friendship or ability to just feed off of one another and work positively together."

Conflicts and Tensions Among the MDT: "If You Want Me to Stay in My Lane, Then Do Your Job"

Respect for professional boundaries and job functions was described by three participants--a forensic interviewer, detective, and DFS worker--as "staying in their lane." Every team member had a specific role on the MDT and the detective who used that term attributed the smooth operation of the team to the mutual respect members had for other members' specialty. However, at times, professional conflicts arose among team members, most notably between DFS workers and detectives. A detective admitted, "there's going to be conflict… you're family and everybody knows family fights." The detective's comment shed light on what had been described in the IOC literature as the sibling-like relationship between law enforcement officers and DFS workers.

Even though they are on the same team--part of the same "family"--and participants indicated that they shared a sense of purpose, the goals of the criminal justice system and the child welfare system are often at odds. The child welfare system strives to prevent child abuse by strengthening families. Child welfare services aim to keep children safe but also espouse the goal that families should remain together whenever possible. By contrast, the criminal justice system enforces laws to protect children without regard to whether the family unit remains intact. These different philosophies and priorities can lead to different tactics and inevitable conflict. Much like the dynamics in families, the disagreements happen behind closed doors but then those same members presented a unified front to the victim's family at the end of the forensic interview. Being at the table behind closed doors equates to Goffman's (1959) back-stage behavior and the

meeting with the victim's family or, perhaps the interview with a researcher such as myself, is occasion to put on front stage behavior.

While not mentioned by participants as occurring often, some team members had been known to hold a grudge from a past case against another team member. The tension from the previous case permeated a team meeting during a forensic interview or case review and negatively impacted the way the team operates. DFS staff felt that other MDT members did not necessarily understand the challenges they faced with the time constraints on their renewable safety plans and their mandated, on-going interaction with families. A DFS supervisor lamented that her agency isn't valued by the detective or the DAG until those other members need something--like information on a family or to have a child to be removed from a home.

DFS operated under firm investigation timelines and notice requirements in child welfare laws and policies.[2] This was a major driver of the tension. Law enforcement agencies and the DOJ did not have rigid time restrictions on their work at least in the early stages of a criminal investigation. These standards caused frustration when DFS workers needed to conclude their investigation, notify the alleged perpetrator of the allegations, and decide whether to create a safety plan--but the detective had not finished their investigation yet. A detective may not approve a DFS worker to speak to a member

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[2] Delaware DFS best practice standards dictate that an investigation should be finished within 45 days. (Department of Services to Children, Youth and Families website: https://kids.delaware.gov/pdfs/ists_InvestigatingReportsofChildAbuse.pdf). Federal law, Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires the Division to notify the alleged perpetrator of the allegations against him or her (DFS Policy Manual https://kids.delaware.gov/policies/dfs/fs-policy-manual.pdf). At the conclusion of the DFS investigation, the worker determines whether or not there is a preponderance of the evidence, a civil evidentiary standard of proof that there is a 50 per cent or greater likelihood that the report is true, to substantiate a claim of abuse or neglect and to determine if continued services are necessary. A case that remains open for continued services is transferred out of the investigation unit to the treatment unit.

of the family who may be under investigation. This prohibition hampered the DFS worker from doing a thorough child welfare investigation. A DFS worker described this tension with law enforcement in a child death case:

> I really didn't agree with how it [the criminal investigation] was being handled. I had a lot more concerns than they seemed to have, you know, some law enforcement people will tell you to 'stay in your lane' like 'your lane is not to do the investigation on the criminal side' and that can be a little frustrating because if you want me to stay in my lane then do your job, like I need you to do your part so I can do my part because I can't go out and meet with these people and do these interviews until you do them…

Most detectives were fearful that if a DFS worker spoke with a possible suspect, that the worker may tip off the suspect by disclosing information meant to be kept confidential, "I don't want to give them [DFS worker] information that I've found and then have them go tell the mom not realizing no, you don't tell her, you're not supposed to tell her that, that was between us." A DAG explained their concern:

> We also sometimes feel nervous about sharing a lot of information with DFS, because sometimes they'll go out, they have to do family interviews with offenders and victims and we understand that, but we've had specific problems in the past where they give information that they shouldn't have that can affect the integrity of the investigation….So, as far as sharing information, I think we expect DFS to give a lot more than we're willing to give, which I don't know if it's fair or not but at the end of the day my job is to protect the investigation...

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The criminal investigation took precedence over the civil investigation conducted by

DFS. DFS workers understood the fine line they walk between completing their

mandated investigation and not interfering with a criminal investigation. Child welfare

investigations sit in "pending outcome of criminal investigation" limbo because, as a

DFS worker explained, "if we were to close our case and send a Substantiation Letter and

they appeal their substantiation, then everyone has to come to court and all of their

evidence will be put on the table before they're able to decide if they're going to make

charges." So as not to reveal a law enforcement investigation and risk disclosure of

evidence, DFS put their process on hold. This tension between DFS and the law

enforcement community--both detectives and prosecutors--was described as an issue of

trust among team members. A prosecutor explained:

> Unfortunately, our level of trust with DFS is, is very low…we want the element
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> of surprise when we're interviewing a suspect or, you know, members of the
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> family that may have information, and when DFS is going out and sharing this
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> information, even inadvertently, I'm not saying they're maliciously telling people,
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> I just think they're, they don't realize what they can and can't say, even though
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> we tell them what they can and can't say. Unfortunately, it has caused problems
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> where now the suspect knows that we're coming or knows what the police are
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> going to ask them or sometimes they flee and we never find them so that's been
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> extremely frustrating so our, my level of confidence in many of our DFS workers
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> is low, unfortunately.

This lack of trust is born of the inherent conflict between the child welfare and criminal

justice systems. As the prosecutor stated, the DFS worker wasn't being malicious in

sharing information with the family, but what the DAG didn't acknowledge was that DFS has a different role in these investigations and on the team.

A detective described how trust in team members was tied to their ability to keep confidences, "we have to trust one another to keep the things that have to stay private or away from the family or suspect, that has to stay that way…." The detective explained how the MDT would like to be able to tell the family everything that was going on with the case, but the team members could not do that because they couldn't let privileged information get out about a case that might derail a prosecution, "so we just have to be able to trust one another that…the confidential information we're dealing with stays confidential and doesn't get revealed to anybody that it shouldn't be revealed to."

Tension among team members was not limited to DFS workers and detectives; forensic interviewers were also targeted. Conflict between a detective or DAG and a forensic interviewer was most often about the level of intensity of questioning when the child was being interviewed at the CAC. Law enforcement members were concerned that the forensic interviewer was not getting sufficient information from a child or that the child might be making up a story and, without tough questioning, the lie would not be uncovered. Detectives utilized an interrogation style interview while forensic interviewers clearly stated that they were not conducting a law enforcement interrogation but rather a forensic interview based on a strict, child-friendly protocol.

Forensic interviewers controlled the questioning of the child and explained to detectives that they would not "push" the child or "go at" the child because that was not how the interview protocol was designed. One forensic interviewer shared that she sometimes had to remind law enforcement officers, "this interview isn't about you, it's

about the kid….I never let what's in the best interest of the kid be second, that's always going to be first…that's my mindset." The forensic interviewer concluded, "sometimes, people don't think about anything from a child's perspective." Even though input was taken from the MDT, the forensic interviewer ultimately controlled the interview and decided when to terminate it. This decision often did not sit well with other members of the MDT. A detective described one such encounter, "the forensic interviewer wasn't getting anywhere, she… just stopped the interview and … said 'no… I'm done for the day, we're not doing it anymore,' which kind of upset me a little bit, you know, I get it, but it *really* upset the prosecutor and … words exchanged... in the long run…the forensic interviewer and the prosecutor got their heads together and started talking." [It turned out that the child had been coached to lie about the abuse which explained why the forensic interviewer was getting nowhere with the questioning].

Detectives and prosecutors, while not always in accord with the limits on questioning used by the forensic interviewer, seemed to accept the judgment of the forensic interviewer at the CAC. A detective recognized the restrictions on the forensic interviewer, "they have very strict guidelines on what they can and cannot ask and as an investigator I'm always like, 'if you could just ask this, you know, we could clear this up right now' but on the flip side I understand…that's just a part of the deal." A prosecutor admitted to conflicts with some of the forensic interviewers at the CAC but ultimately seemed to accept the questioning style of the forensic interviewers, "I'm open to listening to…why they think that the questions maybe need to be worded a certain way or that's their comfort level and that's where I say, okay… just learning boundaries and being open to other people's experience and expertise."

Team members acknowledged the specialized skills of the forensic interviewer as being able to elicit information while making the child comfortable. Law enforcement understood that the forensic interviewer's skills would actually "make the case" (secure a disclosure from the child to support a criminal charge). A detective acknowledged the limitations of the interview skills of law enforcement officers when it came to questioning children, "…we know what we need from an investigative side, but also it kind of takes a little bit of humble pie sometimes to realize 'hey, I'm not qualified to do this' or…I may not be able to reach this kid the way that someone else can." One detective expressed admiration for the skills of the forensic interviewer, "I don't know how they do it, I've never been through training for forensic interviewing, but it's like a miracle when you watch it actually happen in person and just the way they interact and get these children…to feel comfortable again…"

The biggest conflict among MDT members sprang from disagreements over whether to file criminal charges and prosecute a case. Detectives and DFS workers often became frustrated with DAGs when they decided not to prosecute cases in which the worker and detective believed charges should have been brought. There were times when a child made a disclosure of abuse during a forensic interview, but the DAG deemed the revelation not significant enough or strong enough to sustain a criminal charge.

Decision-making around prosecution set up the potential for a power struggle between MDT members. Most members agree that decisions at the table were made through a consensus process. Leadership and decision-making on the part of the MDT was shared depending on the decision to be made. For instance, the forensic interviewer led the team when it came to questioning the child and the DFS worker ultimately

decided whether to substantiate abuse charges. At times, DFS workers and detectives teamed up to lobby the DAG in hopes of convincing them to proceed with criminal charges--this occasionally was successful. A DAG admits that "…when they [DFS] don't agree, they'll tell us and that's fine and sometimes, to be honest, sometimes their opinions have changed the way I think about cases."

While decisions were made with input from the team, the DAG ultimately decided whether to approve criminal charges and prosecute the case; it was seen by the MDT as part of the DAGs role on the team. As a prosecutor explained, "we're…the one that's going to have to try it [criminal cases] and we're the one that has to stand in front of the judge and swear that we believe there's probable cause here…that the crime occurred." Although not always in agreement with the decision to decline criminal charges, a detective would defer to the prosecutor because, "…they're the ones who are authorizing it, they're putting their name on it. They're the ones who have to prosecute it in court…you can't expect them to do something that they're not fully comfortable with when they're the one who's ultimately going to have to bear the majority of that burden."

The power differential between team members was exhibited in additional ways. DFS workers complained that detectives sometimes failed to follow through on criminal investigations leaving arrest decisions pending for long periods of time. Because of their strict timelines for DFS investigations, workers felt that they were disadvantaged in their child protection work by these pending decisions. Many MDT members also grumbled that some DAGs take "forever" to make a decision about whether to prosecute a case. One DFS supervisor bluntly stated, "the integrity of a case gets blemished the longer it sits."

DAGs, at times, "call the shots" for other team members and dictate team interventions. A DAG described a situation where they and the detective agreed that children needed to be removed from an unsafe situation immediately and how the DAG, admittedly, used their position of power on the team to make that happen despite resistance from the DFS worker and the DFS supervisor:

> I don't care how difficult it's going to be at this hour or this day…we need to make this happen and you could sense…there was pushback from…DFS at that point and it was clear to me that if I had to go…up my chain to get this done, it needed to be done…I do feel bad because as a prosecutor I get to say, okay, I've told you all what you need to go do, do your work and then I get to go home, bye…and they're still dealing with the families…they still have to find the placement…I'd be frustrated too but you know the goal at the end of the day I think does get achieved, ultimately…I just remember that being one where it was really contentious and a lot of conflict and it…got resolved.

The DAG's ability to achieve their own will despite resistance is an example of Weber's definition of power. The authority of the DAG, while "legitimate" in Weber's terms, highlights the power differential between team members. The DFS worker may have to work with the family and children through the night and the DAG has the privilege to go home.

A "decline prosecution" decision by a DAG has ripple effects on team members and their work. Detectives and DAGs tended to grow frustrated when DFS did not actively intervene to protect a child by taking custody or instituting a safety plan when criminal charges were declined. Most believed that DFS should continue with their civil

legal remedies to protect the child; many times the burden of proof can't be met for a criminal case, but team members believed something has happened and the family needs monitoring or treatment for the sake of the child. One detective explains, "… if I have an expectation of DFS and I think they should be doing something…if I think that kids in danger and I think a safety plan needs to be done, I'm going to say so."

The decisions of the DAG and DFS worker stemmed from different legal standards. The DAG must have met the "near certainty" threshold for undertaking a prosecution which required them to convince a judge or jury "beyond a reasonable doubt" that a crime occurred. DFS must have met their civil legal burden, the lower standard of "preponderance of the evidence" to take custody of a child.

Because it was based on a civil legal standard, substantiating an abuse claim against the parent or petitioning for custody technically had nothing to do with the criminal investigation. A DFS worker explained, "We can still substantiate as harshly as we choose to per the policy even if they [DAG] choose not to proceed criminally…. So, although we work very closely together, we're really independent of one another." Although they were independent investigations and had different burdens of proof, in reality DFS had a much easier time convincing a Family Court Judge to substantiate abuse or permit DFS to take custody of a child if there were criminal charges against the parent. A DFS worker shared their frustration: "…the Department of Justice likes to say, 'oh well DFS…you don't have to have that level of evidence to have a safety concern.' And I'm like no, I get it but…the judge isn't going to view it like that." According to the DFS worker, the lack of criminal charges would prompt questions, "The judge sees there are no charges…'why did you remove this child?' And then we get reamed out and get in

big trouble, so that's where the conflict is." Although DFS had the tools available to them, their decisions were not unilateral and needed to be approved by the Court. Once again, the DFS worker is subject to the more powerful member of the criminal justice system, a Judge.

Decision making about criminal charges and civil remedies was summed up by a prosecutor who explained the two-sided controversy:

Sometimes my decisions get questioned and it's not that I'm saying I'm above being questioned…[but] most members of the team, aside from other prosecutors or law enforcement agencies, don't understand why we can't go forward on cases or they don't understand why, you know, we can't rush out and arrest the offender right away and so that gets frustrating, because I feel like I'm having to explain myself or explain the investigation role a lot, because they just don't understand. On the flipside, I mean I'm sure they get frustrated when I'm asking 'well, what can we do for this child?' or 'why isn't DFS going in and taking this child out of the home?' and they're saying the same thing I'm saying which is 'we can't do that and here's why' so it's both sides, but that does get very frustrating especially when you decide not to prosecute a case and the other members of the team sometimes, DFS especially, can look at you and just say like, 'well if you can't prosecute there's nothing we can do' and so that just makes us feel like 'well, I guess that's my fault' but we have a totally different standard, so that's frustrating.

While criminal justice proceedings are driven by law enforcement, and prosecution wields power through its charging decision, DFS plays only a supporting role

in these decisions; however, DFS workers wield enormous power over families in the civil justice arena. Child welfare professionals are in control of civil justice outcomes and they are the only MDT members who can substantiate a case of child maltreatment against a parent or guardian. Their position of power over families put them in a unique role. A facet of this power relationship between child welfare worker and client is race. Although African-American children make up about a quarter of the general child population in Delaware (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) according to the Children's Bureau's data set on child welfare outcomes (2021), African-American children disproportionately comprise approximately 45% of child victims reported to Delaware's child welfare system.

The Impact of the Pandemic on Team Relationships: "Covid Really Put a Kink in Things"

I conducted participant interviews via Zoom between July and November 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic when some MDT members were still working from home --at least part of the time. The CAC remained closed until September 2020 except for emergency cases that required an immediate forensic interview. Many participants commented on the impact of the pandemic and the team's inability to come together in person. Law enforcement agencies were not allowing non-employees into buildings so the practice of having a DFS worker and/or DAG watch a suspect interrogation at a police department was suspended. Some law enforcement agencies chose not to accompanying DFS workers on home interviews. A detective supervisor explained the pragmatic concerns of law enforcement regarding COVID-19 and criminal investigations

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involving home visits, "We might be able to beat COVID, but what if we bring it home to somebody else who can't?"

A DFS worker pointed out that, even in the midst of the pandemic, people were, "still sexually abusing their children, causing skull fractures and femur breaks," and "probably the confinement doesn't help." A DFS supervisor described how her unit alone had thirty cases pending a CAC interview and the pressure that backlog creates because of the DFS investigation timelines, "…I feel that the MDT doesn't understand… that while we're all pending a CAC interview, the police are just like…it's okay, it's pending CAC, we still have to stay updated and still make sure there's safety…." Again, the strict timelines for child welfare investigations create additional pressures on DFS workers and supervisors especially during the pandemic when forensic interviews were on hold.

The DAGs worked from home for many months and did not attend even the urgent forensic interviews at the CAC in person. They participated by phone because the CAC did not have a secure video conferencing set-up during the early days of the pandemic. Not having the DAG at the table was viewed as a barrier to the smooth operation of the MDT. A forensic interviewer lamented "… I don't think that they're getting the full effect of the interviews…they're not seeing the child's behaviors and the change in the child's behaviors…they're lacking in kind of getting that interaction…." A DAG agreed, "I can't contribute, and I think that the cases can suffer because of that, not having everybody fully involved and getting input…"

During this time, the strength of the team's prior relationships aided them in feeling comfortable enough to brief a team member by phone, send a DVD of an interview to a team member not in attendance at a proceeding, etc. A detective described

the value of relationships during the pandemic, "…just the comfortability of knowing the process and knowing how everybody works and how it used to be…now we have to communicate differently to get that information so I don't think that would be possible without, you know, us being so comfortable with the other cooperating agencies [from] the MDT." During the height of the pandemic, a forensic interviewer would call members of the team just to check in and felt that their outreach efforts "has really made the relationship a lot stronger." The value of the MDT process was highlighted by a detective who explained that, although the routine forensic interviews were suspended for several months during the pandemic and cases became backlogged without resolution, members were not willing to forego the CAC process, "I think because we believe in the process so much that we're not willing to clear cases without a CAC being conducted, because we know the value of that information."

Developing Good Working Relationships: "Once those Relationships Build…You're Golden"

Despite the professional differences between MDT members and the challenges of the pandemic to team functioning, participants overwhelmingly reported good working relationships within the MDT. As with any group, some individuals were described as more abrasive and less collegial than others, but most participants reported getting along with 90 to 95 per cent of their team members. As a detective pointed out, "we're not here for any personal satisfaction or personal glory. We're here to solve problems involving children…." Another detective was clear that, "…if you do have differences you learn to put them aside because you're here to work…you don't have to necessarily be friends outside of it, but we have to be professional, we have to all do our jobs."

Participants described how team members, "agree to disagree" and that they "pick

their battles" when consensus cannot be reached because, when team members are

working against one another instead of with one another, they, "aren't getting the best

outcome for the child." One wonders if team members actually acquiesce to the power of

the DAG and their role as the decision-maker over criminal charges--what organizational

theorists call "compliance to authority" --as opposed to "agreeing to disagree."

Disagreements were inevitable in any "family" according to one detective, "you take any

family out there, everybody has those days we're all going to disagree." A DFS worker

concurred, "Sometimes you might not agree on anything, but if there's that mutual

respect and understanding of their job, it goes a long way." A prosecutor put a positive

spin on disagreements believing that they can, "actually move the ball forward," and get

the team to think about cases in a different way. While members did not focus on team

conflict to any great degree in the interviews, perhaps because they were exhibiting front

stage behavior (Goffman, 1959), disagreements clearly occurred between team members

and were acknowledged by some participants. The MOU (2017) which guides the MDT

process anticipates conflict among team members and lays out the steps to address

unresolved issues:

> Conflict Resolution: The MDT shall make every effort to resolve disputes through
>
> discussion and negotiation at the lowest levels of the agencies. If the dispute
>
> cannot be resolved at this level, then the MDT members involved in the dispute
>
> shall contact their individual supervisors for assistance. Once the chain of
>
> command is exhausted or at the request of one of the supervisors, a team meeting
>
> may be scheduled. Additionally, the Investigation Coordinator's Office may be

contacted to initiate or facilitate communication with other members of the MDT

(p. 101)

The formal process in place in the MOU was viewed as a last resort as team members attempted informal resolutions rather than accepting intervention by supervisors or the Investigation Coordinator.

Most participants spoke of the importance of the team members meeting in person at the CAC to have the "opportunity to speak in real-time," to all provide input into the questioning during the forensic interview, and to puzzle through the next steps for each member. Being together "at the table" [at the CAC] and all being "on the same page" was held up as the pinnacle of team practice. Several participants explained that an important element of their relationships with team members was knowing how each other worked and understanding expectations of other team members.

Team members agreed that when a case involved significant harm or risk to a child, the team works at its best. Members "kick into high gear," petty differences were put aside, and members work together to ensure the child and siblings are safe. An emergency forensic interview was scheduled at the CAC no matter the hour, and a perpetrator was arrested when warranted. Participants reported that there was more team consensus and cooperation in these bright line cases.

Several participants talked about forming close working relationships with other members of the team and "need[ing] each other to successfully do our jobs." Participants talked of becoming close to those they have worked with over time and, despite the serious subjects they were meeting about, found time to laugh and joke during the downtime at the forensic interview. A forensic interviewer explains, "not everybody

could do this or understand what we do, so you tend to develop your own little clique, if you will, and you lean on each other."

Participants described how some teams engage in social activities; happy hours, farewell luncheons for members of the team, one participant even described a celebration dinner following a trial with another team member and both members' spouses. These social activities help team members, "decompress and get to know each other as just normal people with normal lives." As a forensic interviewer put it, "I think having that outside relationship makes us more of a cohesive team when we do the work." A DFS worker found that, "it's easier to work with people that you…can connect with on a personal level…see what they're going through on their end, and in…trying to come to a common understanding."

Participants reflected an appreciation of the experiences of other team members and empathy for one another. Several participants cited high caseloads as a shared misery which presents a challenge for keeping current on case investigations. The strength of the relationships between team members played out in practical ways. A detective described that, although they are now a supervisor and attend forensic interviews less frequently, team members still are in contact to seek their opinion on cases. A DFS supervisor described a poignant example highlighting the importance of relationships among team members. "…had it not been for having that relationship with law enforcement that I had developed they wouldn't have kept me in the loop." The participant explained how a young baby had been seriously injured by his mother and ended up on life support. Although the mother was charged, she received a light sentence which was very upsetting to the MDT handling the case, "…the baby ended up dying and the day the baby died,

…the detective that was involved called me at home to give me the information before I heard it from somebody else. And had I not had that relationship with law enforcement he probably would not have called me." As another DFS worker commented, "…it makes the difficult topics and the really hard stuff that we have to see every day a little easier to know that, you know, there's other people that are working it with you and you're not by yourself." As one long-time MDT member described it, "…once those relationships build then I think you're golden."

Summary

Participants were clear about the purpose of the MDT. The MDT is driven by a mission: to protect this child and prevent harm from happening to children in the future. The law enforcement members--detectives and DAGs--highlighted how criminal prosecution achieved this mission while the DFS worker and supervisors, and forensic interviewers tended to focus on how treatment for the child and family helped achieve this mission. Despite professional tension between child welfare workers and law enforcement officers, which has deep roots and is well-documented in the literature as evidenced in my literature review, and frustrations expressed by other team members when a DAG did not bring a prosecution, the team was able to develop relationships and to coalesce as a unit in furtherance of the shared mission.

Chapter 8: Communication: Barriers to and Facilitators of Team Operations

The MDT is built on the goal of improving collaboration between the agencies that investigate child abuse in Delaware to ensure that there is regular communication between key agencies involved in these cases and to minimize the number of interviews a child victim must endure. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is signed by all the core MDT partner agencies involved in the investigation, prosecution, and intervention of suspected child abuse and neglect cases, provides guidance on how information sharing amongst key agencies should occur through formal communication at various stages in the investigative process.

Formal communication includes, for example, the requirement that a law enforcement agency make an official report to the DFS hotline of an allegation of child abuse within the family that is received by that law enforcement agency. If DFS should receive the report of the allegation first, the DFS worker is required to notify the jurisdictionally appropriate law enforcement agency prior to any contact with the child, caregiver, or alleged perpetrator to ensure the integrity of the criminal investigation. Formal communication also occurred at the table when the team was discussing next steps in a case and when providing other members with official documents, such as hotline call records, or suspect interview recordings. Informal communication occurred when team members contacted one another to bounce ideas off other team members or to seek an opinion on a case.

Participants in my study described team communication, or lack of communication, around the forensic interview, during the investigation phase as well as at case reviews. Communication was often less than perfect as participants related frustrations with delayed or incomplete notifications. Communication was described as both a facilitator and a barrier to team operations: one of the best things about the MDT approach and one of the main areas where there is room for improvement.

Initial Team Communication: "Scheduling…can be frustrating" but it "definitely has gotten better"

Sharing case information was identified as the primary function of communication among MDT members. Communication occurred before, during and after the forensic interview. A detective explained how, once a case was assigned, regular communication with the team began. Detectives discussed cases with the DAG, coordinated with DFS if the child welfare agency was involved, and then contacted the CAC to schedule the forensic interview so that, "it feels very organic when we come into the CAC, nine times out 10 we've already communicated with all the members… it just feels – it's almost so embedded in the way we handle our cases – that it just feels very natural." This early communication between agencies facilitated the MDT process.

However, communicating about the scheduling of the forensic interview at the CAC was the focus of much discussion by participants and was expressed as a source of frustration. As one forensic interviewer described it:

> …Our trouble comes in when law enforcement calls and says 'I want this date and
> time' but guess what, the [DFS] worker is off that day. And now we're in the
> middle of a tug of war…law enforcement takes the lead to be honest, law

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enforcement takes the lead because it's a criminal investigation. We are not

hindering a criminal investigation. Well, DFS doesn't want to hear that so now we

have a conflict. Sometimes it doesn't end pretty and that's where the butting of

heads comes in, unfortunately.

Several DFS workers and supervisors described long-standing concerns about law

enforcement personnel scheduling forensic interviews at the CAC without notifying DFS.

A DFS worker explained how the latest MOU revision, in 2017, focused more attention

on formal communication between the MDT members and set out expectations for

sharing case information and decisions with the team. The MOU now required that law

enforcement agencies contact DFS to coordinate the scheduling of the forensic interview

so that all parties were present.

But policy and practice do not always mesh. One DFS supervisor explained that

law enforcement members scheduled forensic interviews and then notified the DFS

worker, "we'll get emails like, 'oh, this has been scheduled' and we're left scrambling to

try to get someone there and so it is frustrating because our time is just as valuable, our

schedules tend to now revolve around the CAC and the police and that's not fair…." This

supervisor mentioned that DFS had called upon the Investigation Coordinator (IC) to help

enforce this MOU requirement. The Investigation Coordinator, an attorney employed by

the Office of the Child Advocate, has statutory authority to independently track cases of

alleged child abuse or neglect from the initial report to the final criminal and civil

disposition. The IC mediated issues that arose among the MDT agencies. The IC

convened regular case reviews and special case reviews in complicated or lingering cases

to help resolve case investigations in a timely manner.

A practical issue surrounding the scheduling of the forensic interview was the four-day work week for DFS workers. A detective explained how this complicated efforts to schedule all parties for the interview:

The scheduling of it really…can be frustrating at times where you're trying to make sure DFS can be there at the same time that we're able to be there and the prosecutor's able to be there, because we all get assigned the case and then, you know, some people are off on a Friday and that's when the family can get in there so we have to re-schedule or get somebody to cover but they might not know the case as well so that can be a little frustrating sometimes…

According to DFS staff, being included regularly in the scheduling process "isn't fully resolved" but it "definitely has gotten better." Before the MOU revision, a DFS worker explained, "law enforcement just did their thing, they didn't tell us what they were doing, they didn't include us…there was very much a gap in communication" but now, the expected communication among members "makes it a lot easier to work together." Another DFS worker agreed that the MOU revision helped facilitate the MDT process, "what's helped fix a lot of things is the ability to communicate and having that open communication because without it everyone would get really frustrated."

One DFS worker was pragmatic about the lack of communication from law enforcement that still occurred occasionally around scheduling, "it's frustrating, but I was just happy that…the police were moving along and scheduling an interview." The worker went on to say that DFS supervisors were now notified of every forensic interview that was scheduled by the CAC, so the worker was able to use internal channels to learn when interviews were scheduled. Asked about what would happen if a forensic interview was

scheduled by a detective for a family on their caseload without their knowledge, the DFS worker laughed and said, "I would just show up," having been tipped off about the interview by their DFS supervisor.

Several DFS workers reported that the latest MOU revision also allowed DFS to initiate a request for a forensic interview if they had been in contact with law enforcement to notify them of the request. A detective appreciated when DFS took the lead to schedule the forensic interview at the CAC, "Sometimes the Division of Family Services gets ahold of the family first and they'll say 'hey, I've had contact with them, do you want me to go ahead and schedule it?' and I'll have allowed that too, that makes my life a little easier and they've already had contact." Even though a detective described their frustration with scheduling all parties for the forensic interview, they ultimately concluded, "…I think we all work really well together and try to accommodate each other's schedules a lot and accommodate everything that we can for each other."

The Forensic Interview: "Everyone's at the Table"

Multiple participants described the advantages of having the MDT members at the table together for the forensic interview and case review. A long-time detective enumerated the advantages of the MDT members being at the table together: communicating in real time with other members of the team, having everyone hear the same information at the same time, and allowing members to contribute ideas and suggestions for interview questions while the forensic interview was being conducted. Communication at the table was key to gathering as much information as possible at the forensic interview so that subsequent questioning of the child was not necessary. Another detective was more pragmatic about the value of having the team at the table for the

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forensic interview, "I like the fact that we're all there while the interview is going on. I think it's helpful. I think it saves a lot of time and, you know, you don't have to try to play phone tag with somebody to be like hey, this is what was said, what do you want to do? What do you think the next steps should be? We all just discuss it right then and there…." Communication flowed between the forensic interviewer and the MDT members regarding questions and lines of inquiry during the forensic interview. The forensic interviewer took a break during the questioning of the child to consult with the team and receive their input. A forensic interviewer laid out the advantages to having the MDT at the table:

> I think being part of the team, the most helpful thing about the MDT is that we are all in that room together when we do the interview and in case review. We're all sitting at the table together…so in that moment…we all have the same information, so we all know why we're there, we all know what we're worried about, we all know what the kid said…I think hearing the information together is really helpful and everyone being able to communicate in real time about the information they just heard is really helpful as well.

A detective pointed out, "in law enforcement in general there's a lot of working parts, there's a lot of different entities that often don't communicate effectively and this [MDT] is a way to ensure that, figuratively and literally, everyone's at the table."

A DFS worker explained the personal connection of being at the table with other team members versus communicating by email, "Honestly, at the table it's sometimes the nicest to be able to see everybody and be able to talk to everybody about the case at the same time, so everyone is on the same page, which makes it very nice, nicer than doing

the emails." The worker went on to explain that emails help keep the team apprised of case developments, "but it's not the same…you're getting the info, but when you're all together, you're all physically at the same space, it makes it really nice to make sure we're all on the same page and [the case] has to be discussed because we're all there for the same thing."

Although communication happened in other ways, such as via emails and phone calls, being together at the table was held up by many of the participants as the pinnacle of team practice. When the entire team was not together face to face, like during the pandemic, communication was hampered. A forensic interviewer explained, "CAC is still functioning in the office for interviews and law enforcement is coming in person and DFS comes…but Department of Justice is participating by phone so that has been a barrier right now because our technology doesn't allow for them to…participate by phone really well so some…information they've missed."

While DFS and law enforcement agencies attended forensic interviews for urgent cases in person, the Department of Justice's COVID-19 protocol did not permit DAGs to attend forensic interviews in person for several months during the pandemic. Prosecutors were not at the table with other members and were not fully participating in the MDT process according to some participants. A DFS worker described the impact of not having the input of the DAG at the table, "Department of Justice hasn't really been coming to the interviews, they've been participating by phone. I don't think that they're getting the full effect of the interviews…they're not seeing the child's behaviors and the change in the child's behaviors…[they] can't really help much…and then our stuff kind of pends longer."

One prosecutor explained, "Because of COVID, we haven't been able, at least our office has not been going in person to the CAC interviews, which has showed just how drastically things can slow down if you're not together in person." Another prosecutor expressed their frustration with the pandemic restrictions and the impact on team communication, "There's been situations where I'm like on the phone trying to listen to an interview through a speaker and it's just – I'm like this is pointless. I just can't, and I can't contribute, and I think that the cases can suffer because of that, not having everybody fully involved and getting input…" The fact that team members from the DOJ were not attending forensic interviews during the pandemic also highlighted the status differences of the members. Law enforcement officers and DFS workers were still in the field, working in person with clients during the pandemic, albeit at a reduced level with only emergency cases triaged to receive a response.

Several participants described the interactions of the team at the CAC, offering details about the team process for information sharing. Unlike the exchange of information for scheduling and updating case status that occurred between team members, what they described was communication at a deeper level. Seeking and receiving opinions and viewpoints from team member to inform decision-making, seeking validation for a case decision they were making, and needing the perspective of teammates to be assured they were doing the right thing. All professions on the team recognized the benefit of these more substantive exchanges. Trusting one another and having a comfort level with teammates were important facilitators for this deeper communication. One detective said,

We're interacting the whole time at this – well, we call it the 'roundtable',…we're

shooting questions to each other, just trying to come up with game plans…to get

more information on specific events that have happened so we're always just kind

of throwing out details…we kind of just work as a team…I mean we really just

kind of know each other after working with each other for so long, you kind of

know how everybody is going to work and you know what they're going to do,

you know how they're going to ask questions…you just become familiar with

everybody so it kind of just flows...

Although each agency had clear roles and responsibilities to make independent decisions,

MDT members sought the opinion of other team members. A DFS worker explained,

"We kind of work as a team to determine what's going to happen next.…If I have to

change a safety agreement or amend it or terminate it, it's usually something that I will

ask the team if everybody is in agreement. I ultimately have…the final decision in that, in

planning for child safety, but I do like to ask the team's input." A DFS supervisor found

it helpful to seek the prosecutor's input at the table on the civil legal procedure of

substantiating an allegation of child abuse:

It's helpful to pick their legal brain and be able to say 'do you think we have

enough to support this in court? If this client challenges the substantiation based

on what you've heard here today, do you think we'll be successful?' And so that

to me is very helpful… and I also think… where maybe we didn't see something,

having the police or having the DAG there to kind of bounce opinions and ideas

off of helps us in our investigation process... so the information sharing is just a

wonderful tool to have, and I like that we do it that way.

A DFS worker stated that other team members seek their input, "law enforcement and AGs do really well to…ask what my opinion is, ask if I need any specific questions asked [at the forensic interview]." Another DFS worker clarified, "A lot of times I think it also depends on who, like which attorney general we're working with or which MDT member we're working with. Some of them look to DFS and ask for our opinion and some don't." Although the final decision about whether to pursue a criminal charge lay with the DAG, a DFS worker felt that, "If the child has made a disclosure, we all have our say, what we think should happen…and then it's discussed as a team…" Another DFS worker described how decisions are made through exchanges at the table:

> A lot of times, it's a team decision or at least a discussion…ultimately, we [DFS] make the decision how we're going to close a case [civil portion], what our next steps are, but I like to, you know, I like to talk about that stuff with the AGs and law enforcement, get their perspective, ask them how they feel like 'if I do this, would you guys agree with that?, 'what are your thoughts?', that sort of thing, because in the end, you know, we are a team.

A DFS worker made a distinction between "run-of-the-mill" cases and severe cases when describing team communication. In severe cases of abuse or neglect, the team tended to default to the DAG to make a charging decision for the criminal case but in the less serious cases, the team held a "chat and chew" at the table, "It really is just us in there talking about the best approach to ensure the child's safety…it's more of everybody just bringing ideas to the table…what next steps are going to be and, you know, where we're going to go from here, essentially." A prosecutor concurred that team response differs depending on the nature of the case. In "clear-cut" cases, there had not been

disagreements, in the DAG's experience, but, "Where there's no disclosure or a weak disclosure, and where there's potential other avenues to go, there have been minor disagreements. It's normally resolved with an unheated discussion of where we can go and what we can do." A detective concluded, "I think we have an open enough line of communication that there's really no barriers...anything that comes up, you know, we talked about – using conflict resolution... I think we have the tools in place and the comfortability with the individual members that we could work our way through those barriers as they come up…." Decision-making was described by another detective as being based on "a consensus of opinion" of the members. One prosecutor explained how seeking input from team members can head off problems:

> Most people weight in and I think most prosecutors are going to want that input from everybody, you know, even though it's ultimately your call, you want your investigator onboard, you want your…DFS [worker] to understand what's going on …that's a lot of times where there's, not tension but where, you know, DFS will be like 'we have to charge' and…I just can't make that charge, but communication helps. I mean if not you get that resentment that you don't want on the team so making sure that you're getting input from everybody makes the decision much more palatable….I think by having that communication within the team – that helps the process tremendously.

This DAG acknowledges that the criminal charging decision is ultimately their call but, by seeking input from other member of the MDT, they exhibit the value they place on teamwork and team communication.

The communication at the table fostered working relationships among team members. According to one DAG, an MDT teammate from DFS helped by pulling records for them on past investigations by the child welfare agency. The DFS worker, "will, absolutely…get us, you know, the records in a heartbeat…and that's very helpful. There's not like these roadblocks where you can't trust people…So, it's about the relationships you build around the table…." A prosecutor described how working in a small jurisdiction helped them form relationships on the team:

Because we're so small we deal with the same people super often, so I've been able to generate quickly a close working relationship with all of those involved, whether it's law enforcement, the CAC, DFS, members of my office, and because we are able to meet in person to discuss the case it's--given the opportunity to speak in real-time, and discuss what we see as issues whether it's DFS issues they see for the individuals staying in the home, safety plan ideas, for law enforcement, what issues they see with the investigation….I think being in person and everyone meeting has been extremely helpful for the cases I've had.

Effective communication at the table during a forensic interview was not always without conflict. A detective recalled that, "A lot of times through spirited debate, we just arrive at the next step….We may not necessarily agree, but we do establish a shared path forward." The detective went on to say, "Conflicts are normally just resolved by continued communications. I mean the best way forward is just that daily contact. It's just different agencies with the same goal, but we all have a different idea to get there sometimes. It's just the best place to iron it out."

One DFS worker expressed concern about what they perceived as disrespect toward the victim's family during some team discussions. Although the worker stated that the team was always professional when interacting with a family after the forensic interview, they mentioned that:

> At different times…kind of a side remark is made about the family from different members, which I don't agree with by any means, because, unfortunately, a lot of families that do come in, not all, but a lot, are of lower socioeconomic status or in poverty and there are times they come in, they don't look the best, they don't smell the best and…I think members can forget to take off their White middle-class glasses, to take them off for the families that are coming in …something bad has happened to them and it's remembering that. That may not be your kid being interviewed right now but that's someone's kid. I've said this before [to MDT members] and I got really nasty stares, but it needed to be said.

This exchange was telling. On the one hand, the members involved in that exchange were called out by the DFS worker who has the closest interaction with families and who also possesses enormous power over those families. The DFS worker recognized and challenged the comments for what they were--racist and classist remarks by White, middle-class professionals. The "really nasty stares" by other members of the team seemed to indicate that members didn't appreciate being reprimanded by someone they may perceive as less powerful or a newcomer to the team.

On the other hand, I found it interesting that members felt comfortable enough with each other to joke, however inappropriately, about families of victims behind closed doors. Gallows humor, in my experience in the criminal justice system, was often a

coping mechanism for professionals who are confronted with serious, disturbing, and painful situations daily. There was a level of trust required to make those type of jokes in a professional setting. While it was a troublesome example, it did highlight one of Wenger's 14 indicators of a CoP that the group, "shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter" (1998, p. 125).

Another DAG acknowledged that, if there was a problem between team members at the table, "conflict that's not resolved tends to bleed over into other cases which I think can be problematic." A forensic interviewer observed, "…there are a lot of personalities at the table and a lot of the personalities are very big and very 'type one' and I'm probably one of the people who have that type of personality, so, you know, if I don't feel heard I'm definitely going to make sure you hear me." Being together at the table at the CAC allows the team the privacy needed for hashing out differences. Strong personalities, divergent professional perspectives, and power differentials between team members can be expected to lead to conflicts. Conflict and the expression of differing opinions can be viewed as healthy for team functioning and a barrier to groupthink within a CoP.

Having a voice at the table and in the decision-making of the team was highlighted by a few participants as an important facet of team communication. A detective commented, "Everybody comes to the table and, you know, everybody at some point has a voice. I think the CAC does a good job of having people go around the table and everybody speaks before it concludes…everybody kinda shares that. It works pretty well." A DFS worker described their willingness to speak up at the table because they "feel like an equal part of the team." The worker concluded, "I'm confident in voicing

my opinion even if it does differ at the time from the police or the prosecutor and it's never been an issue….I've been able to voice my opinions and at least have them explain their point of view so I can understand it and, you know, kind of determine how DFS plays a role." A DFS supervisor explained:

A thing that is really a positive about the [forensic interviews at the] CAC is at least at all the ones I've attended, and I've attended many, there's never that awkward – I never felt like I couldn't say what I was thinking about or couldn't say what my concerns were. It's an inclusive environment where everybody has a role and I feel is able to contribute successfully.

According to one prosecutor, the opinion of new members also was solicited by the team, "I feel like we're pretty, you know, welcoming to any new members so if there's a new member from DFS or if it's a different officer that we haven't dealt with before, we're pretty welcoming to those people in hearing what they have to say about the case." Another prosecutor agreed that the team was welcoming but,

You kind of have to have your own voice. I don't think it's typically an 'all right DFS, what do you think? 'All right law enforcement, what do you think?' 'All right DOJ…' it's not, sort of the kumbaya speech shtick sort of approach so you've got to get in there and you say like hey, this is what I think, and this is what I know. So, I would say 'welcoming' yes, but if you don't come in with your piece, then you're not going to get your piece out.

While their opinion may be sought by other team members, new members can slow decision-making at the table because they must check with a superior before making a determination about a case. According to a forensic interviewer, "Sometimes with the

newer people, you're not able to get a clear, concise decision made at the table that day…it might take a little bit longer because they have people that they need to ask… they have to get ahold of their supervisor or someone else to help make a decision for them." A detective pointed out that the newer DAGs on the team also tended to check in with their DOJ peers or supervisors when making a decision but believed that this extra step was necessary and valuable, "They will usually talk about it with, you know, other DAGs whether it's their supervisor or whether it's other people in their unit… because whether they make the decision 'to charge' or 'not to charge' I know they'll have to talk to their supervisors….There's kind of that checks and balances--you can't necessarily go rogue…."

A detective compared the MDT to a sports team in the way they worked together toward a common goal at the table, "You can see kind of like how the communication, it's flowing, you know…on a good case, on your ideal case, it's going to be doing like what a team does--like in team sports…you see there's constant communication for the goal of, you know, providing justice for the child victim." A DAG explained the communication at the table and beyond:

> Except for just a few outliers, I think for the most part everyone communicates very well around the table, everyone is respectful, we listen to one another… while we have different roles, we all kind of have the same goals in mind. So, I think the communication around the table is generally very good and then outside I also think everyone is very responsive so you're mostly communicating via email and [everyone is] super responsive.

A DFS supervisor agreed with the DAG's assessment of good communication at the table but wasn't convinced that it continued after that stage, "When we're at the table, we're pretty good at making decisions in the sense of next steps and things like that, but it's the follow up that is sometimes challenging." Communication was seen as being a facilitator of team practice at the table but the lack of follow-up afterwards--incomplete communication--can be a barrier.

Participants were clear that regular communication facilitated a smoother investigation and infrequent, incomplete, or completely lacking communication fomented misunderstandings and conflict. Detectives and DFS workers were mandated by the MOU to communicate at key junctures during the initial reporting and investigation process which helped a DFS worker avoid an overstep into the criminal investigation. A major complaint of DFS workers and supervisors was not being kept updated on the status of the criminal investigation by the law enforcement team members--the detective and the prosecutor. As one DFS supervisor described it, "We're left kind of hounding police or DAGs for information…we spend more time trying to gather information…we're behind the eight ball…" The DFS supervisor explained that sometimes a DFS worker isn't notified of case closures, "They've already closed their case, 'oh by the way, I forgot to tell you' and then we're like, 'oh, come on! Just--it's an email, it's a text!' So that's one of our bigger frustrations."

Another DFS supervisor pointed out that it was not only lack of notice of a final decision about a case but the lack of timeliness of a decision on the part of other members that caused frustration, "The lack of a timely decision, that's a big frustration…that keeps cases open for longer lengths of time and then we also have to deal with not only the

victims but also the family's frustrations and you know that's a big factor, the lack of communication…is also difficult…" The supervisor felt that their unit has "seasoned, diligent DFS workers" that are "sometimes taken badly by other MDT members, because we're eager to get things done and rolling and started and going and my people are always on top of it…They want to know outcomes…what's going to happen for the kids and what they need to do next." The supervisor believed that there were "some dedicated members on the team at times but [I] can't say what their dilemmas are, I only know what I've experienced from my side of the fence working with them." The supervisor concluded:

> It's also good that we can come together and discuss what we're going to do next, what the next steps are and what needs to happen. It's just that after we leave that table sometimes there's a long delay, that's all… I hate to say this, you know, but sometimes what's a priority for DFS is not a priority for the police or the DAG. If it doesn't rise to that level, you know, there's definitely been instances where I know I've personally tried to contact someone after a CAC [forensic interview] and it's been like pulling teeth. It's not often, but it is frustrating.

A DFS worker lamented that the DAGs do not communicate decisions in a timely way, nor do they have a good understanding of the role of DFS and therefore do not appreciate their civil case investigations. The DFS worker described the disconnect, "They're not very involved in what we're doing, they kind of will take as long as they want [to make a prosecution decision]…sometimes the detectives will help in pushing [to] get a decision sooner, but I think that is somewhere we could really improve…." The worker highlighted the impact of a delayed prosecution decision, "I have families, oh,

kids, teenagers, they'll ask like 'what's going on?' and they'll ask why nobody has done

anything and… that's sad for them, that's sad that these kids are asking us these questions

because it's pending with Department of Justice." Victims and their families turned to the

child welfare workers for updates. While DFS workers and supervisors desired more

frequent and substantive communication with team members, they were often left out of

the communication loop and were unable to offer case status updates to families.

A DFS worker thought communication was a double-edged sword, "One of the

things that I love or that I think works great is the communication [but] communication

can be very frustrating." This DFS worker described how differences in communication

styles of team members was challenging, "I mean we have certain detectives that we

work great with, we communicate on a daily basis, and then there's some that we just, we

only hear from maybe once in a blue moon and it's after an interview has happened." The

worker was clear that, "It's not just the police, it's all the parts of the MDT and I'm sure

that DFS is guilty of that as well." A DFS supervisor reported a disconnect in

communication between the child welfare agency and the DOJ, "What we used to do is

DFS was able to call or email the assigned deputy attorney general [asking] 'hey, what's

the status of this case', 'hey I know it's pending AG decision, what's the status?' About

two years ago, we were told to stop doing that [because] they wouldn't have any

information and we need to just go through the police."

Two prosecutors reported that there was selective communication following the

forensic interview when the parties were attending to their specific roles. One DAG

discussed how they sought feedback from DFS on certain cases, "There are times that it's

good to get their input…not necessarily what charges--but the culpability level maybe

from a parent--you know, depending on the history, that's important." However, the prosecutor explained that "Generally the charging decision will happen after…we've already left the interview, and it may not include DFS… I'd say the majority of our cases are decided just between law enforcement and prosecutor." Detectives and prosecutors often made decisions between themselves and did not include the team member from DFS who had the closest connection to the victim. The value placed on team communication clearly varied by member.

Another prosecutor explained the lack of communication between DFS and the DOJ during the investigative phase:

In terms of what we do and what DFS does, we operate completely independently…we information share at the beginning, we do the investigation…Between that first CAC [forensic interview] and the case review, we don't have contact on the multidisciplinary team. [W]e don't call DFS when we do something, DFS doesn't call us when they do something. You might find out about it in the course of your investigation if DFS and the police department are in contact, but it's very, very rare…there's no meeting [scheduled] in the middle [of the investigative process] so unless the case review [happens] while the investigation is still ongoing--but even in that incidence, [DFS] typically will close or substantiate… independent of our investigation and typically before we've made a decision on our investigation in a lot of the cases…I'm sure us charging, if we did that before they made their decision, might be helpful and I know a lot of the time their substantiation hearing…falls after our

prosecution…but those two decisions are not because we communicated with one

another. They're very independently made.

This lack of communication by both parties feeds turf issues, an element of the IOC theme of change.

Lack of communication was clear in the parallel decision-making that occurs between the criminal investigation on the part of law enforcement--detectives and prosecutors--and the civil substantiation of abuse handled by DFS. The decisions were made independently by agencies that have separate statutory authority for criminal and civil justice system responses to child abuse. Lack of communication was also evident in a situation described by a detective who simply closed out a case investigation because they did not get a response from the prosecutor despite multiple emails.

One DFS worker designed a plan for keeping up to date with law enforcement colleagues on the MDT, "…Especially the ones that I have a closer relationship [with], I'll tell them…'you're going to get at least one email or call from me a week, if you don't respond to it, I guess that's up to you, but just expect it from me.'" That DFS worker suggested that there be a team email each week to all involved MDT members, "I would make communication regular, if I could pick, I would like an email once a week to go through like 'here's my update on my end of the case', 'what are you doing?', 'where are you at?' that would be my preference…once a week…from everybody on the team." A detective expressed appreciation for the regular emails from DFS workers because the requests for regular updates, "Keep me on my toes." A seasoned detective, who had been a member of the MDT for several years, was philosophical about communication with prosecutors and offered an engagement strategy:

Communication is the key. Letting them know what my intentions are…just

communicating with them. Prosecutors, some of them like communication, some

of them don't because they're busy and they don't want to feel like they have to

make a decision all the time, you know, and so a lot of times I won't

communicate with them until I need to. They don't care when I'm interviewing

the suspect or witnesses…but I'll keep them in the loop when necessary and try to

schedule things ahead of time saying, 'hey, when can we have a phone

conversation about this? I need about 20 minutes of your time to update you.' So,

definitely, communication's the key. I think we're all pretty good about it. There

are some people…that don't respond to emails and phone calls, and it delays the

process and that's frustrating when it happens, but I tried to tell myself well, I

don't know what they've got going on... I just try to not judge anybody based on

their lack of communication and try to always be an open book myself.

When communication stalled, some participants pointed to how they leveraged

other members of the team to get case updates. As a last resort, a few team members from

DFS contacted the Investigation Coordinator (IC) for help. When the IC requested case

information, members of the team knew that the case was "on the radar screen" and that

the IC's office was monitoring the case. Updates tended to be provided swiftly when the

request came from the IC's office. Although many participants expressed that

communication after the forensic interview was fragmented and that the lack of regular

communication was frustrating, a DFS worker underscored how the team will step up in a

crisis, "If something terrible has happened, it strikes, I think, passion in each one of us

personally…You want to get this done, you want to get this right and so we're constantly in contact."

Case Review: "Like Groundhog Day"

The standard case review meeting convened representatives of the MDT member agencies 60 days after the initial forensic interview, and at 60-day intervals thereafter, to monitor cases that were under investigation. DFS, DOJ, the CAC and various law enforcement agencies sent designees, most often supervisors, to the standard case reviews to update the MDT member agencies about the status of their criminal and civil investigations.

A special case review was in addition to the standard case review process and scheduled for the purpose of comprehensively discussing an on-going case. Most often, a special case review was convened in cases that had been lingering for months in the investigation stage and required a final decision to be made about proceeding with criminal prosecution or because a case was particularly complex, for instance, if more than one law enforcement jurisdiction participated in the investigation. Special case reviews required the participation of the individual team members specifically assigned to the case, not an agency representative. The IC ran the case review process.

The standard case review meetings were described as generally beneficial by several participants. One prosecutor, "like[d] the idea of having a case review process. I like that everyone has eyes on the same case. I like that everyone has the same list and we kind of all have a honey-do list going forward on the case." A DFS supervisor, who regularly attended standard case reviews as an agency representative, said, "Case reviews, I find them beneficial when we have all MDT members providing updates,

because we all have the same case, but we all just have different pieces of the puzzle." A DFS worker was more pragmatic, "The monthly case reviews are helpful because a lot of times [we're] waiting for law enforcement or Department of Justice to do something, so during those meetings it gets brought up…that we're kind of waiting on them still and sometimes it helps…sometimes it doesn't."

Although some participants complained that standard reviews are rote and not real dialog about cases, a DFS supervisor described a situation where they were able to convince the DOJ supervisor attending a case review meeting to reconsider the decision made by the DAG assigned to the case. The assigned DAG didn't believe the case was strong enough to pursue and declined prosecution. The DFS supervisor shared, "At case reviews one day I said, hey, can you just look at this? Like [the DFS case is] still open and we really believe something happened…and he looked at it and he assigned it to another deputy to look at and they pressed charges, they were like, 'yes, we have enough'."

The case review process provided the team with another chance to consider the case and often acted as a tickler system to keep items, like pending forensic evidence reports, on the team's radar screen. An upcoming case review prompted a detective to communicate with the assigned DAG about the status of the case so they will be prepared for questioning by the IC. If one of their cases was on the case review list for discussion, a detective explained how they would contact the prosecutor to ask, "Before we get yelled at [at the case review meeting], is there a way we can kind of wrap this up or tie up some loose strings? Have you made any progress that we can bring to the case review?" The detective concluded, "Everyone is at the case review, and they all have an opinion on

your case and you probably don't want to BS at the review and say 'oh, I haven't looked

at this case…since last case review.'" Standard case review was described by participants

as a check-in along the way to keep the communication flowing. As one DAG described

it, at the forensic interview stage, the team comes together to figure out "here's what

we're going to do, here's the plan" and at case review, "did we do the plan and what

additional plan do we need to make?" The standard case review meeting allowed for an

explanation of why charges weren't brought or why an arrest wasn't made.

Some participants described the standard case reviews as "very mechanical" and

the number of cases scheduled for discussion at each review "daunting." Participants

shared that the standard case review meetings can run to three hours and include dozens

of cases for review. A DAG said standard case review, "tends to have more of a

paperwork feel to it, like let's check the boxes, make sure that we've got everything, you

know, that nothing's slipped through the cracks. I mean there's definitely a purpose for it

but it's not as collaborative, I think, as it is when you're actually sitting with the

team…during an interview." Another prosecutor expressed frustration with the process

but admitted that the standard case reviews did help facilitate communication about

cases:

> They would read through this list…that we all could have read ourselves and we
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> would say 'declined' and give a date or 'charged' and give a date and DFS would
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> say 'closed' or 'substantiated', 'unsubstantiated' and then they would check a box
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> and go to the next one. That was *not* what I thought the point of it was,
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> [chuckling] although it was a great catch for big caseloads and open investigations

to say 'where am I on this one, have I gotten this follow up'--you know that's

always helpful.

A few participants said they would have preferred to do a simplified paper review rather than attend a meeting. They wanted to spend the team's time in person at special case reviews discussing the tough cases. One prosecutor advocated for special case reviews to be scheduled as a problem-solving meeting early in the investigation process to allow the team to puzzle through complex cases and "do a deep dive." A DAG expressed:

I just wish there was a way that we could maybe pick out the most important cases to discuss at these meetings or cases where we want to round-table how to help this family. There have been times where I will go in and I'll say 'hey, I'm up in the air on whether I want to prosecute this, what do you guys think?' and I roundtable it. It would be a lot better if we weren't just mechanically going through a 50-person list of these cases.

Another prosecutor stated, "I don't find them to be particularly productive" explaining that, because representatives of MDT member agencies attend instead of the detective, DFS worker and prosecutor actually assigned to the case, the case review was limited in its usefulness. The agency representatives attending case review were only able to carry messages regarding next steps or final decisions that had been made by the assigned team member. They read a case status update to the group. Once that decision was shared, the agency representatives carried that information back to the assigned MDT member within their own agency. More often, cases were listed as "still pending investigation" and would roll from one case review agenda to the next. A prosecutor explained:

We would go back and forth like 'could you not just read the blurb [case update]?' or…'can we put cases at the beginning that actually need to be talked about?'…It was like Groundhog Day, it was just the same meeting over and over again and sometimes the same cases over and over again. You know we'd get some of the really old ones and it would be like 'waiting for police follow up'…but we'd [heard that at] the last four meetings!

If the investigation did not result in a prosecution and was closed at case review, "those were particularly important conversations," according to a DAG, because the team discussed, "how do we continue to prevent harm to this child; how do we make sure that this child is okay mentally and emotionally" in the absence of a criminal prosecution. That same DAG described a special case review meeting that was particularly impactful. The assigned MDT members were included in the conversation about a case that the prosecutor was struggling with:

We couldn't prove it…. We talked a lot about what else could we do to get there, is there anything else we could do [to enable a criminal prosecution]? And it was all-hands on deck…not just our office, but us and the police… and DFS saying, you know, what can we do? What are our next steps? And we ultimately could not save the investigation and decided it was declined but even in doing that, had conversations about what disclosures could be made, if any, to other concerned parties to prevent any, you know, misconduct going forward. So, that was…the first time that I felt very much like the multidisciplinary team was working, because it wasn't just a check the box, we couldn't do it, okay cross this one off the list…it was we are having a conversation with multiple people, with multiple

resources that are different from one another trying to figure out what, if anything,

we could do.

This prosecutor's assessment about a meaningful case review conversation highlighted

the value of and desire for deeper communication among team members. Even those who

found standard case reviews to be useful expressed that they would have preferred more

substantive discussions of cases through special case reviews earlier in the process and

not as a last resort to clear a case off the case review list, "once it is 300 days old."

Building a Team: "The Secret Sauce is Communication"

Many participants described both formal and informal communication among

MDT members as key to building team relationships. A DFS supervisor described their

interaction with the forensic interviewers at the CAC, "Anytime I've had a question or

like maybe I wasn't sure, I just pick up and call them, 'hey, I'm wondering about XY or

Z, you know, what do you think or what have you seen?' And they've always been

helpful." In turn, a few of the forensic interviewers mentioned that they informally

contacted detectives or prosecutors outside of the forensic interview or case review

process if they had questions or were curious about some aspect of the law. In one

county, a pair of DFS workers coordinated a lunch meeting with a group of new

detectives recently assigned to the Family Services unit of a major law enforcement

agency to open dialog with the new members so each agency would know, "what we

need from them and what they need from us." A DFS worked explained how team

members informally relied on each other for support:

I've got a couple detectives that I've gotten really close with over the years and

I'm pretty good friends with. I'll go to them to vent about things, they'll come to

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me to vent about things because we understand what each other are doing. So, instead of taking things home with us and bringing work home, which if you're not in this job you don't get it…. It's helpful having them to kind of go to and call and vent to and they'll do the same thing you know they'll kind of reach out if they're having issues with certain people and I'll do the same and then they can kind of help push things a little bit from a different end so that…is helpful, too, it's just being able to talk to each other.

Participants described on-going communication as happening through regular phone calls and emails. Communication via email was preferred by most of the participants although it was also reported as common for detectives to brief the DAG via a telephone call. Team members talked about sending group texts and group emails to keep the team informed with updates and to share information. According to one DFS worker, if the Sergeant in a law enforcement agency was supportive of the MOU mandates for team communication between law enforcement and the child welfare agency and required their detectives to abide by the MOU, then communication happened.

A Detective talked about how, in the past, law enforcement investigations would be kept confidential, and information was not shared with other members outside the law enforcement community. Now, case information was shared with the MDT, "that's the purpose of the team, to communicate." Detectives and DAGs were seen to have the closest contact because they were required to communicate to complete the investigation and prepare the case for trial. Most participants mentioned how team members were communicating differently due to the pandemic. DFS workers and DAGs had not been

able to watch suspect interviews in person, for instance, so information about the suspect interview was communicated by the detectives. Pre-Covid, all parties could be together in person for the interrogation.

The depth of the communication around a difficult case often depended on how seasoned the team members were. A DAG described a case involving the death of a baby where the autopsy results were inconclusive, and prosecution was not possible. Being able to talk through the decision-making steps with veteran team members helped the MDT process the emotional case:

> We knew something had to be done, but there was no good answer, and it was just a matter of talking through it….luckily these were a more seasoned DFS worker and investigators so I think everyone was able to kind of go to their corners, understand what was going on, come back and have an intelligent conversation…it is such an emotionally charged issue that emotionally you're still probably grappling with why nothing happened, but logically at least have figured out, okay, this is why something didn't happen.

On-going communication was at the heart of decision-making for the team. Participants explained, "The best way forward is just that daily contact…it's just constant communication" and "round-tabling." When conflict occurs, the team, "just continues communicating." As one detective concluded, "The secret sauce is communication."

Summary

Effective communication helped the team meet their common goal of keeping children safe. Communication to participants meant a variety of things – the formal notifications and case updates required under the MOU as well as the informal

conversations that occurred at the CAC during breaks between forensic interviews and quick check-in texts between MDT members. Members of the team from DFS seemed to desire more communication from the team, perhaps because they were most often the member who was not included when law enforcement and prosecutors were making a decision. Keeping the lines of communication open so team members were apprised of the arrest of a suspect, or the development of a safety plan, all supported the mission of the MDT and enhanced team cohesion and collaboration.

Chapter 9: Formal and Informal Learning among Team Members

Learning among team members occurred formally, through training courses, the Division of Family Services (DFS) coaching program, and shadowing with seasoned staff, as well as informally, by observing and participating with other team members in the forensic interview and case review process. While competence to be "at the table" at the CAC was assumed by virtue of their professional role, team members described the learning curve they experienced when joining the MDT, what they learned by being part of the MDT, suggestions for improving the onboarding and training process for team members, and other models for team investigations.

Joining the Team: "Sink or Swim"

Through my interviews, I learned from participants that their training prior to joining the MDT varied widely. All the forensic interviewer participants and over a third of other participants had attended a multi-day training called *Finding Words* (later known as *Child First*) which is one of the nationally recognized forensic interview training programs designed to build knowledge and skills for interviewing children. Only a few participants attended the training as part of their onboarding process while many others attended once they were already active members of the team.

A few members had been sent by their agencies to relevant national trainings and many mentioned that they attended the *Protecting Delaware's Children* conference held every two to three years in the State. Again, these training opportunities occurred once they were already part of the team. One detective recalled being sent to a one-day training

as soon as they were assigned to the detective unit, and they also received departmental in-service training from the forensic interviewers at the CAC. A DFS supervisor related that the Division of Family Services offered a coaching program whereby new workers were sent to observe a forensic interview at the CAC as part of their DFS orientation process. This separate professional education, based on the organizational culture and priorities of the member agencies, is reflective of the IOC theme of change.

Formal training prior to joining the MDT was rare. In explaining the onboarding process they underwent when joining the MDT and how well prepared they felt to contribute to the MDT, several participants described their experience as, "sink or swim," "a huge learning curve," and being "just thrown in" at the outset.

A DFS worker felt it was part of the vetting process for new workers, especially those assigned to the serious abuse unit, "You're just kind of thrown into the deep end and they're going to see if you swim or not, because this job isn't for everybody and they're not going to keep people around that can't keep up…." A detective points to their own leadership as the reason why more hands-on training was not offered by their law enforcement agency, "My sergeant in the unit is also very much…a sink or swim guy, so he won't encourage us to hold their hand all the way through the process, but definitely...we'll prepare them for the sidewalk but we're not walking it for them…" A long-time detective recalls, "Years ago [when] I was very new, I was kind of just thrown into this…it was kind of like sink or swim."

A detective from a small law enforcement agency recounted, "I don't think I was prepared at all. It was a steep learning curve for me to learn how everybody operates and what the important considerations are in a child sexual assault case or a physical abuse

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case….there just wasn't a lot of training leading up to that." One detective pragmatically described their introduction to the MDT, "You'll learn when you get there." A seasoned DFS worker recalled that, when she was first assigned to attend forensic interviews at the CAC many years ago, "I did not have any training regarding the CAC, it was kind of flying by the seat of my pants."

Another DFS worker, who mentioned that they took a course in college about the child welfare system, including the operations of the MDT, believed that, even with academic preparation, "it's been experience and learning and getting your feet wet and just diving in--I'm throwing you off the deep end--and learning if you have what it takes to learn how to swim or not in this field." A detective described his learning process, "it was a steep learning curve at first, I didn't have much to contribute. I was there, you know, just trying to absorb as much as I could and learn the process." A prosecutor candidly discussed their initiation to the team and level of preparedness:

> I thought 'I don't know what I'm supposed to say, I don't know why I'm here.' I was afraid to talk to families, because I didn't want them to get mad at me. I had to look laws up constantly to help out. I didn't have any knowledge. I was kind of just thrown in and, you know, honestly that's something that comes with time, but I think our office, too, doesn't have a huge amount of resources to send over a senior deputy with me. They were kind of like, hey, this is your case, go over there, good luck. Figure it out on the fly. But in the beginning, very unprepared, yes, kind of scary to be honest…

While many participants revealed that they did not feel well equipped to initially contribute to the team due to their perceived lack of training, one DFS worker took a

different view of the "sink or swim" analogy, "I was there to observe [accompanied by a colleague whom the worker was shadowing] and it was pretty much a sink or swim thing because, you know, at that point, if you don't know what you're supposed to be bringing to the table, you shouldn't be sitting there." As in many professions, preparation came in the form of "on the job training" for several members of the MDT. Even those who had the benefit of attending *Finding Words* or other targeted training did so after they were already part of the team. The one group of participants who all felt prepared as team members were the forensic interviewers. They go through extensive formal training before conducting forensic interviews with children at the CAC.

Shadowing as Learning: "Show me the Ropes"

As described above, several participants mentioned the lack of a formal training process when members join the MDT, but many participants did describe how they were able to shadow colleagues from within their agency as a form of on boarding. A detective explained that in his law enforcement agency, "…we're trying to get them in there with seasoned detectives as soon as we can…to kind of alleviate some of that nervousness [and] make sure that they're seeing it before it's really their case and they're in there by themselves as law enforcement." A supervising detective explained how they give new detectives in the unit case simulations to walk them through the process, described the logistics of setting up a forensic interview at the CAC and assigning the new detective to a seasoned detective to shadow.

A detective stated that new law enforcement team members are never at the CAC alone their first time, that they're always shadowing someone who is more experienced, "Your first time there you don't really have any responsibility…you observe, you see

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how things are done and you kind of get an idea of what your goal is on that team." The

detective explained that, by the time a member of a law enforcement agency takes an

active role in the team, "You're not just thrown in....You have an idea." A detective

related that he was fortunate to shadow an outgoing detective from his unit, "…he was

able to kinda show me the ropes as far as, you know, how everything gets handled, the

team aspect of it and just familiarize me with the whole process…."

As part of their internal training process, DFS workers are assigned a mentor. One

DFS worker described how their mentor explained everyone's role on the team and

helped prepare the worker for when they were on their own at the CAC. A DFS worker

stated that child welfare workers always shadow a senior worker before they take a case

to the CAC on their own; the senior worker introduces the new worker to the team at the

CAC and sends out an introduction via email to the broader team membership. Every

DFS worker has a mentor who, "explains how the team deals with issues, what people's

roles are, and prepares the new worker to be on their own at the forensic interview." A

senior DFS worker states, "If I've got a mentee, I take them along with me so that they

can see the process, so that they can start to become familiar with members and they can

be included and *feel* included. And they're usually welcomed very warmly." All the

forensic interviewers described how they observed seasoned forensic interviewers and

conducted mock interviews with more experienced peers before they were permitted to

conduct interviews of children. The forensic interviewers also participated in quarterly

case conferences where they reported that they puzzle through challenging cases with

colleagues at the CAC.

Due to their own solo initiation at the CAC where, "I didn't know anyone and they're looking at me like 'who the heck are you,'" a supervisory DAG explained how they sent a more seasoned prosecutor with any new prosecutor going to the CAC for the first time. They introduce the new prosecutor to the team and show them how the process works, "Just to be there, sitting there in case someone has a question or someone starts challenging my younger prosecutor…Just to have someone feel like you've got their back." Although this supervisory DAG went out of their way to team up a new prosecutor to shadow a seasoned one, they pointed out that the Attorney General's office did not routinely provide strong mentoring for new prosecutors. This DAG related how the law enforcement and child welfare members of the team were more likely to provide a mentor to their new team members, "Ninety per cent of the time I'd say…DFS and the police agencies do a great job…of not just setting [the new team member] off to float and see what happens."

According to the DAG, having a more seasoned detective or DFS worker accompany a new team member to the CAC lent credibility to the novice. "Officer Smith will…bring Officer Jones and say, 'he's new, we really trust him' or 'he's learning'…and then that person can see what's happening with a senior person from their agency there, which is what we were lacking at Department of Justice."

A DFS worker had an interesting perspective on the shadowing process used by law enforcement agencies. The DFS worker observed that if the "FTO [field training officer] isn't following the MOU [Memorandum of Understanding which guides the MDT process] in cases, the new officer won't get on board," because the new detective is likely to have a stronger allegiance to their training supervisor than the members of the

MDT. One detective from a small department described how they were mentored by law enforcement officers from larger agencies, "I had a lot of people that…mentored me from other agencies…there was a lot of people that were involved in these types of crimes that I leaned on a lot and I learned…I think that's what has benefitted me and made me the investigator that I am today." To "pay it forward," this detective stated, "I'm big on teaching other officers the way that these investigations are run."

Learning as a Team: "We Kind of All Mentor Each Other"

In addition to learning about the process by shadowing a superior or colleague, MDT members described how becoming part of the team involved learning from other members outside their professional silos. This joint training reflects the IOC theme of capacity and helps to build the MDT's capacity to work collaboratively. A detective conveyed how the existing team members act as a resource for newer members by explaining to the new member, "…this is what we do, this is how we do it and if you have any questions, you can ask…your team there [at the CAC] and they kind of just help guide you through it."

A DFS worker recalled how other team members helped prepare them for solo team participation when they were no longer shadowing their DFS mentor, "I definitely feel like everybody worked together to prepare me for when I was on my own." As new members join the team, they bring a fresh perspective. A detective described how, "…every case is different…every time you go [to the CAC] it's going to be different and that's one of the things I do like about it…you get people that throw out things, like 'wow, how did he or she think about that?'…just different people just bringing different

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thoughts and ideas to the table." A DFS supervisor echoes the importance of incorporating new members into the team and the value new members bring to the team:

> …it's that information sharing that allows you to increase your knowledge, you put it in your knowledge bank, and it allows you to be a better worker or supervisor and just kind of, you know, hone your skills, sharpen your tools to become better, so I like having new people in. I think it brings a fresh perspective and I think that by actively encouraging them to speak and kind of see what they saw, it also lets you know as a team, what you're doing well…if they feel like they learned something or they feel like they picked up on something then…you can know as a team that…you're doing it right, you're getting it done.

One DAG described their on-boarding process as a combination of gleaning information from colleagues within the DOJ, not being assigned serious cases at the outset of their involvement in the MDT to allow them to gradually learn the ropes, and also relying on team members. "I did speak with each of the members of my unit [within the DOJ] about the CAC--how they work, the types of things to explore, when a case should be closed or not closed…but then I went [to the CAC] and was very reliant on the experience of the other members." A prosecutor remembered how, when attending the forensic interviews at the CAC as a new team member, "I felt like they were teaching me…it was just like me more …sitting back and observing things."

Another prosecutor described how they relied on the detectives on the team when they were new to the MDT, "That's where the local agencies--law enforcement--really came in handy, because most of the detectives that I work with are more experienced than I am, they've been with their agency longer and so they were really able to help me out."

A detective described how they mentor newer prosecutors by acting as a sounding board regarding the MDT process when a new prosecutor is unsure of themselves, "Are we doing this right? Is this how this is normally done? Is this all sounding correct?" are common concerns from a new DAG which the detective can address. At times, the shoe is on the other foot according to a detective, "Nothing really prepares you for the interviews and setting up questions because for your first couple of interviews…you lean on the prosecutor's office [heavily]." A seasoned DAG describes how they mentor a new detective:

> It would follow on the prosecutor, if it was a green investigator, to sit down and say 'okay, hey, I know you're used to investigating domestic assaults, here's the nuances that are going to be different and when you're listening to the interview, you know, pay attention to this and, you know, as the elements of the crime are this, we're going to have to investigate and make sure we have this squared away and this squared away and this squared away. So, it ends up being a little bit more of a teaching process…

This same senior DAG recalled their own initiation into the team and how they learned from team members, "I think coming in green I was relying mostly on my history as a prosecutor and then as I developed, I went to trainings, you know, learned a lot of medical, learned a lot of…Division of Family Services processes…you then become the prosecutor you need to be."

A supervisory detective, who now acts as a field training officer for newer detectives, described how they were sent off by their commanding officer to attend an

MDT meeting with minimal information and how learning about the MDT process

happened at the table at the CAC through input from other team members:

You go to the CAC, you listen, you take notes, you type a warrant, or you don't

type a warrant, case is unfounded or you're making an arrest--like that was kind

of the way it was explained to me [by the commanding officer]. So going to the

CAC you just kind of knew that you were going to have an interview, you knew

that you were going to listen to a kid, you don't really know where to go …you

don't know where to sit and you're just sitting there and you're just waiting for

the interview. And I remember the feeling of going to a case and they'd ask

simple things like, 'Hey, do you have a case number assigned to this yet?' and

you're like 'No, I don't'. They're like, 'Okay, well then when you get back to the

office can you send us a case number, because everybody needs to know the case

number.' It's--so like…even little things…you aren't really prepared for it.

A few DFS workers described how they communicate with new law enforcement

members on the team to explain the child welfare system process and the DFS worker's

role on the MDT, and to encourage the detectives to reach out with questions, as a way to

build rapport with the new team members. One DFS worker admits, "Law enforcement

can be a little frustrating sometimes when they're newer because they don't necessarily

understand the MDT process." The worker suggested to new detectives, "Hey, go

download the Delaware MOU app…this is what you should review," to assist with their

learning process. According to one DFS worker, team members are willing to help the

curious new DFS workers but felt that, because of the frequent turn-over of staff within

the child welfare agency, existing team members wouldn't go out of their way to educate

a new DFS worker who may not stick around long enough to become a participating member of the team. "I have a curious personality so when I first got involved, I was asking a bunch of questions to the prosecutors…the police officers I was working with and the…[forensic] interviewers--asking more about the process…." But, the worker observed, "…[if] you're asking, and they're very good, they're going to give you anything you want detail-wise, but unless you're asking, I don't feel they're going to go out of their way to explain what's going on to you…."

Another DFS worker believed that they had license to question team decisions as part of their learning. "I feel like…it was more of an 'educate me,' like 'help me understand why this is what we're doing.'" A detective concluded, "It's a nurturing group so like they're not in there to see you fail." A long-time DFS worker felt, "What's been important is learning from the other members, understanding what their position is, understanding how they operate and together we work as a team. No one is above the other."

Multiple team members discussed how each profession contributes knowledge to the learning process. The DAG informs the team about the law and appropriate criminal charges, DFS educates team members about the civil legal processes of the child welfare system and the elements of a safety plan, medical personnel teach about injury patterns and what implements might cause such injuries, and from forensic interviewers, the team learns ways to talk to a child and best practices for interview techniques. A detective spoke about how they learned about interacting with kids from the forensic interviewers and DFS workers. The detective also learned from the child welfare workers "what civil remedies DFS can provide for bad situations that aren't criminal." In turn, a DFS

supervisor reported that, through the MDT, they learned how to engage better with law enforcement partners in the community, "…just having a better understanding of what their investigation process looks like…understanding what their role is at the CAC, definitely helped us understand what questions to ask, what not to ask…to make sure we weren't compromising a police investigation…"

Several DFS workers and detectives mentioned how being exposed to each other's interview techniques has been helpful in their understanding of the other team member's role and helped them "think outside the box for our individual professions." This exposure helped grow the capacity of the MDT. Detectives accompany DFS workers on home visits and observe their interview process with family members as workers gather information for substantiating abuse and putting safety plans in place. DFS workers watch suspect or other witness interviews conducted by detectives as part of law enforcement's criminal investigation.

One example recounted by a DFS worker was about a situation where the worker saw something that the detective missed. The DFS worker described how they wanted to get a skeletal survey for a child based on previous injuries and similar issues with a sibling. The DFS worker needed the assistance of law enforcement to transport the child they had taken into temporary protective custody, but the law enforcement officer balked at the need to take the child to the hospital for a skeletal survey. Once at the medical exam, the doctor agreed that, given the case history, a skeletal survey and emergency forensic interview at the CAC was necessary. The DFS worker recalled:

> DFS kind of--we caught it, because that child ended up having some additional
> injuries that weren't presenting and then there [were] some other injuries that

were in like various stages of healing that, had we not pressed for that skeletal

survey, it just wouldn't have presented and so I think it was eye-opening to that

particular police person that was working because, you know, they didn't know

and it really just was based on our history, we're child welfare investigators so

like we're going to see more and do more follow up…I do think that it was eye

opening.

A DFS worker observed that the "new detectives come in learning the new way

[current MDT procedures under the MOU regarding joint investigations]…[which]

makes it a lot easier because they understand the process whereas some of the old-school

detectives didn't and they didn't…really work it with us." A long-time detective, who

accompanied DFS workers on home visits, admitted:

I knew DFS existed obviously…I'd had cases where I referred to DFS and all, but

I really didn't know what their struggles were or what their timelines were and

their criteria…for different things. You know, there's always that longstanding

police/DFS relationship where you know they question why we do things, and we

question why they do or don't do things and all and I've learned a lot more about

the process as a result of the MDT.

As one DFS worker concluded, "I think the MDT process in the whole is helpful because

it gives me different inputs and insights."

A forensic interviewer explained how they teach the team about child

development benchmarks and at what age children can grasp the concept of time. The

forensic interviewers describe to the team a child's inability to pinpoint timing to prepare

the team to draw on context clues that the child reveals during the interview. Especially

for on-going abuse, a child may be able to tell the forensic interviewer that it occurred 'when we lived in the blue house' but won't be able to specify that it occurred during which months or even which year.

The majority of the forensic interviewers, who are based at the CAC, stated that they feel responsible for educating the team about the logistics of the interview and the resources offered by the CAC staff. A DFS worker credits the forensic interviewers for doing "a really good job with kind of bringing us into the team, working with us, and being understanding, you know, when we're new workers and still kind of figuring it all out." An important role, according to the forensic interviewers, is to let the team know, "that disclosure [of abuse] is a process and looks different for everyone." A few forensic interviewers mentioned how they turn to the DAGs on the team to better understand the elements of certain criminal charges to sharpen the questions they ask during their interviews with children.

Both a DFS worker and a DFS supervisor shared that they learned new interview techniques from the forensic interviewers that helped them change their approach when talking with children. The DFS worker recounted, "…what I've learned most is from the actual [forensic] interviewers. I think it's definitely heightened my interview skills…I've used techniques and other ideas that I've learned from working with the team…to interview people that I'm talking to on my own." The DFS supervisor stated, "Learning from the techniques that the CAC [forensic interviewers] used helped me to better coach my workers as a supervisor."

A few of the DFS workers and supervisors mentioned that some of the forensic interviewers were former DFS workers. This fact seemed to add credence to the

suggestions of the forensic interviewers. "That was essential for me, because [the forensic interviewer] was able to say, 'in my previous experiences'…so I kind of had a more educated response…because [the forensic interviewer] had previously dealt with it…." This connection also helped that DFS worker make the case to their supervisor, "When conferencing my supervisor, I could say, so hey, when [the forensic interviewer] worked for the division [DFS] and had a similar situation, this is how [they] proceeded with it."

A detective from a small law enforcement agency, who has been part of the MDT for many years, described how they help to "bring along" newer members:

I'm a pretty direct person so if I have an expectation of DFS and I think they should be doing something, I'm gonna usually say it professionally and tactfully I think that goes, lends itself a little to the trust aspect because they know there's no hidden agenda there's no 'I'm gonna beat around the bush'. If I think that kid is in danger and I think a safety plan needs to be done, I'm going to say so… there's no doubt about it. If I think that the prosecutor is kind of, you know, on the fence about a case, I'm going to let them know exactly what I think…and how I see it from my standpoint….[With] a newer [forensic] interviewer or a brand new DFS worker there may be more input needed and that's always delicate. You don't want anybody to feel like you are telling them how to do their job by any means because that's not the goal at all but…sometimes it's like, 'well, I had a case like this last month and this is how we handled it' and things like that and just suggest some things and it all works out in the end.

Because the behaviors this detective described during my interview seemed to indicate it, I asked if, as a veteran member of the MDT, they saw part of their role as mentoring

other members. The detective, clearly uncomfortable with the suggestion, as evidenced by body language, laughed, and said, "I've never really considered myself a mentor," and joked that I should ask other members of the team who might tell me, "We're tired of hearing [that detective's] opinion." The detective concluded, "I think we kind of all mentor each other. I don't think there's a lot of egos about who's been doing it longer or anything like that, at least I try…not to be like that." A DFS worker, who describes the learning process for new team members as a combination of shadowing a mentor from one's own profession and receiving guidance at the table from the other members of the MDT, concludes, "We mold everybody to where we want them to be."

Training Recommendations to Enhance Team Learning: "CAC 101"

Participants not only described the formal training and informal learning they received as on-boarding and continuing development on the team, but many participants also made recommendations during their interviews about the types of training that should be available to MDT members which would help the collaboration grow its capacity. Participants who addressed training needs all suggested some type of formal on-boarding for new members.

Training was suggested not only for new MDT members, but also for infrequent participants at team meetings. A DFS worker observed, "it's the newer people and the infrequent people that would benefit, you know, most from training to understand everybody else's role…Law enforcement and AGs should at least have basic training as to what DFS is, to why we need to be a part of the team and are important." Another DFS worker echoed those same sentiments. While this DFS worker found attending training with the regular members of their team helpful they suggested the focus of training

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should be on those team members who "infrequently work with us and don't fully know what we do…. they need to have a basic understanding of each role, not just their role." Most often, the "infrequent participants" at the MDT table are patrol officers who are handling less serious cases of child abuse or patrol officers from small departments, without specialized detective units, who are investigating more serious child abuse cases. A forensic interviewer also suggests that patrol officers need training about the CAC process and the MOU that requires children to be interviewed at the CAC. The forensic interviewer would like to create a "CAC 101" to introduce the concepts to all law enforcement officers at police roll call trainings or in-service trainings to prepare them for the eventuality that they will have to take a case to the CAC at some point in their career.

A DFS worker explained that, if they were in charge of trainings for DFS workers, they would invite the DAGs who prosecute child abuse cases to "come into new hire training or have them come into the DFS office and do some type of presentation [to] kind of just explain their role and their expectations of us…I perform better as an employee when I know my expectations. So, I think just explaining responsibilities would be a huge part…." A detective shared their well-formed idea of having cross-disciplinary training for detectives whose caseloads will necessitate MDT involvement:

> One thing that might be good [for] a detective whose full-time job is Family
> Services work, [for instance] most of their caseload involves things that go to a
> CAC, that involve the collaborative work of others…[would be] after their initial
> training period as a detective, [for] maybe they even a week…maybe two
> weeks…[they shadowed] with social services, [to] see what they deal with, see

what their thresholds are, what their capabilities are…[then they should] do the

same thing with the prosecutors to see…you know, what their lens is coming into

the team…there's a lot more crossover between, you know, the legal side and the

social services side so to almost have, you know, like a temporary assignment

there to just get a better understanding. Also, if you have that temporary

assignment, you'll develop those personal contacts…

As this detective explained, not only would this type of cross training between team

members give them insight into the role and capabilities of other MDT partners but

would also forge relationships that could have the added benefit of creating professional

networks. A forensic interviewer supported the idea of joint training for team members

even if it meant having other professions join discipline-specific training:

Law enforcement does their own training specific to their discipline, obviously at

the CAC we do ours, DFS same thing, DOJ, but it's all very siloed….There isn't a

multidisciplinary formal training. Even if it [training] were specific to one

discipline, it may be helpful to have other MDT members there so we can

understand them. Whether it's an MDT-based training or it's specific disciplines

but open to all MDT members, I think something like that would be very, very

helpful.

Several other participants recommended joint training as a team. A detective thought

sending the core MDT group to training would be best so the group could learn

techniques to improve the process in Delaware. A DFS supervisor suggested that all team

members attend *Finding Words/Child First* together for the value of the joint learning

and to improve the interviewing skills of the team. Another DFS supervisor

recommended the local *Protecting Delaware's Children* conference as a learning vehicle and to enable the MDT members to have, "that networking and exchange" with each other.

A forensic interviewer described how "a great MDT group" of front-line workers and administrators went to the national child abuse symposium together a few years ago and, "that helped build our relationship, for sure." A few participants mentioned that they have attended national trainings and seen other MDT members at them but were not sent to the trainings as a team. One detective recalled that members of law enforcement and other MDT partner agencies may both be sent to a national or regional training:

> …[but] it's not something where we're being told 'hey you guys are going as a team' or this type of thing. I think that would make sense actually to do it that way where [we're told], 'We want you guys to think of some new ideas…while you're here and discuss the training while you're there together since you guys are working these cases together.' That would make a lot of sense to me but that's not how it's been at this point.…if we're going to all be going to this training, just everybody get on the same page and maybe make it mandatory that we come back with some sort of mini-training that we could present to the rest of the people that didn't go or something like that, um, along with some sort of idea that, you know, we learned from the training as a group that we can work it into you know, our MDT I think that that would be something that would be a really good idea.

Another detective found learning value in MDT group training and learning from national experts:

So, if you were to go to a group team training and…they bring in different people

from across the country…and they talk about what worked for them, what didn't

work for them…how to work better as a team…ways to improve as a team…how

to make that interview process a little bit better and…how to interact, probably,

with that child a little bit better…that's the reason why I love having, you know,

multiple members at the table and picking people's brains. That's why I would

love to have training with, you know, people who've done what we've done and

pick their brains and see what's worked for them and what hasn't worked for

them, how they look at certain cases, what do they do, do they do anything

different?...I know what we do, but out in California I mean they may do it

different. They may have a different approach…So, I think any type of training

would be beneficial as a group and everybody can learn that way and also, if there

were only, say, myself there for this training, you know, you're not just relying on

me to bring back all this information, [if] I'm there with five other

members…everybody is picking [up] different aspects of the training…

Co-locating MDT member agencies: "One-stop shopping"

A few participants discussed the learning value of a "family/children's justice

center" model which exists in other states and cities. In those jurisdictions, a small group

of highly trained professionals from law enforcement, child welfare, and the prosecutor's

office form the MDT and are co-located in the same building to facilitate collaborative

work on investigating child abuse cases.

A detective, a prosecutor, and a DFS supervisor all specifically mentioned this

model and the value of learning more about it for the Delaware teams. The prosecutor

appreciated hearing about how other jurisdictions conduct their MDT process, "I've always been a big fan of like one-stop shopping type places, where everything's in one location…I've heard about some really great places in different states and so like learning more things about how we can take things from maybe those MDTs and improve [Delaware's MDT process]." The DFS supervisor described the set-up in a neighboring state, whereby the CAC is in the same building as law enforcement's special victims' unit and the county's child welfare agency. According to the supervisor, "That's like my dream!...to have the police right there or the CAC right there [where I can] sit at your desk and wait for you…" A detective explained how, in the family/children's justice center model, a few seasoned detectives are assigned to the center and they handle all the case investigations. "I can see a benefit in that for consistency." The detective explained that the model would benefit the team and solve a problem by eliminating unskilled law enforcement officers from investigating child abuse cases:

> I would imagine a big frustration for other team members would be OK, we have this sexual assault case and it's in a jurisdiction where there's not a lot of sexual assaults with children and…this is the first one he's ever handled, and we have to educate him…and then there's probably a lack of confidence in his or her abilities. I see that as a bigger problem than anything, because if you have a jurisdiction where the police don't normally handle this type of complaint…things could get, could slip through the cracks that way on the investigative side.

The family/children's justice center model may improve the quality of investigations because team members are highly trained, seasoned professionals in their fields. A family/children's justice center model can improve communication and trust

among the team as well as build relationships and grow the capacity of the MDT.

According to another prosecutor:

> I think it's still that spectrum of experience [that] makes a big difference. If you
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> get, you know, an investigator that's been doing this for a long time, coupled with
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> a DFS worker and prosecutor that's doing it for a long time, the conversations I
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> think are deeper and the flow is a lot easier, whereas if you have a green
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> investigator, you know, you have to point out things, you know, you have to be
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> teaching as well as communicating, you know, that makes a difference on the
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> team so experience definitely is big.

Summary

Contradictions existed in the on-boarding experiences of participants to the MDT.

Several participants described their introduction to the team as "sink or swim" even

though they were able to shadow a senior colleague for a team meeting or two. The

shadowing equated to a brief period of 'on the job' training which some participants felt

was inadequate to prepare them for the complexities of participating effectively in the

MDT. Others had the opportunity to receive mentoring through an established training

process within DFS. Some were fortunate to be paired with a senior colleague who took a

keen interest in assuring that they were prepared and felt supported in their new role as a

team member.

Once they were at the table, many found ways to utilize more seasoned team

members for guidance when they were unsure about processes or expectations. In a

variety of ways, both formal and informal, participants learned the skills necessary to be

contributing members of the MDT. Echoing Wenger's CoP framework, forensic

interviewers spanned professional boundaries as the facilitators of the CAC process and informal trainers for all new members. Old timers also spanned boundaries within the MDT when they took a "green" newcomer from another partner organization outside their professional silo under their wing. Other ways that members spanned professional boundaries included having DFS workers and law enforcement conduct joint home visits and having DFS observe suspect interviews so that previously siloed work becomes collaborative as team members learn to break through the boundary markers of jargon and practices of other members' professions.

Participants described how training before a new member joined the team would be helpful to the new member's understanding of what is going on at the table at a forensic interview or case review, the procedures for setting up the interviews, and the next steps expected after the interview. Most importantly, it would help new members understand the role and responsibilities of other team members, for instance, why the forensic interviewer asked certain questions but cannot ask other types of questions or what were the mandated child welfare investigation timeframes facing DFS workers. Adequate training seemed to help facilitate a better understanding of team operations and better collaboration among MDT members. Ultimately, a well-trained MDT is more skilled and confident at team decision-making.

Chapter 10: Team Identity: Who Belongs

Membership on the MDT was a function of a participant's job role but "who belongs" to the team was more nuanced. Participants made a distinction between those who they viewed as core members of their team and others who were newcomers, occasional members, or outsiders. Team members also commented on the roles within the MDT, describing how members from the participating agencies were viewed by other team members and, at times, how they viewed themselves.

Newcomers: Building Rapport

Many participants spoke about how they felt unsure of themselves when they first joined the MDT as the newcomer. Several people said they observed team operations at first, and only began participating as a full member once they had developed a rapport with other members. A DFS worker related that, until "your competence and your relationship with the team [developed], it's more of an observational position." Now that the worker had participated in well over 200 forensic interviews, built relationships with other team members, they felt, "Like an equal part of the team."

To facilitate their sense of competence, a DFS supervisor sent her new staff to observe different types of cases at the CAC, "to get their name out there" so that the team knows "that they are part of the MDT process." A DFS worker recognized the importance of experience with the team after several years as a member, "I learned so much in regards to the whole MDT process and being a member. I feel like I can bring a lot more…to really make good decisions…when it comes to the information I'm able to

provide to the MDT members…” A detective explained, “I think in the beginning, you know, you really don’t know what you’re doing and what to do at the CAC and you’re a little lost.” But as time went on, the detective felt, “Then the more you are in that role, you start kind of taking some more control of the case…okay, I need this done, I need that done. And then…[you] start to have better working relationships with the prosecutors on cases, because now we start having cases together all the time.” A prosecutor similarly expressed how with experience came more confidence, “I can have intelligent, meaningful conversations about these cases with people who have more experience than me…with confidence and experience comes also the ability to know when you’re wrong or the ability to take on other ideas or thoughts….”

When a new member joined the team, very often they were introduced by their colleague who was the current member. A detective related that, “There’s always that breaking in period” and “There’s always an adjustment when you have a new person become a member of the team.” According to a forensic interviewer, the new member, “Will start coming to the CAC, observe a couple interviews [and the CAC staff] will put a face to the name, try to learn a little bit about them. [We] will talk with them about the CAC and we try to be as inviting as possible…I mean, pretty much right away, we try to have that connection, definitely.” A DFS worker went out of their way to “Build a rapport with the new people because it is going to be somebody that’s a part of the team that I’m going to be working with.” A detective discussed how the team interacted once new members were incorporated:

> Once you’re there for a while, and I would say probably a good year or so, and
> you start to become familiar with everybody, it’s really like one big--I want to say

it's more than a team, it's almost like a team of family members.…You just

become so comfortable and familiar with these people…instead of, you know,

having to go through emails…they'd text you at various hours of the day, call you

at various hours of the day, group text with everybody…and you just become

more comfortable with everybody and you know how everybody works.

Eventually, after you get to work with everybody, so you know how everybody is

going to act, you know…what role they're going to take during…the interview

and I think that's the most beneficial part is, you know, being comfortable with

everybody on your team.

A forensic interviewer believed that, "Trust grows over time…off the bat, there's

a level of trust but I do believe that it will grow…[if] a new member comes along in DFS,

or law enforcement, I'm going to trust you but I'm hoping that as we grow…and I see

you more frequently, you become a stronger member, that that trust is going to grow,

too." As discussed in the chapter on relationships, trust was assumed among members of

the MDT until a member does something to violate that trust bond, as when a DFS

worker "steps out of their lane" and interviews a suspect before the detective interviews

the subject. Trust can be built through developing rapport and maintaining regular

communication between members.

DFS Staff: "Learning we do have a Voice"

The majority of DFS staff, both workers and supervisors, reported feeling that

their opinion was not respected or that they did not feel they belonged to the MDT--at

least initially. A DFS worker "think[s] it's because of the high turnover rate we have and

when they see a new worker, they're like 'oh, yes, we probably won't see you again, you

probably will be scared and have quit by the time a new case comes around,'" but concluded that the workers who remained in the unit long-term were accepted because of their consistency on the team. Another DFS worker said, "I hate to say this, but sometimes it feels like they look at--look down on you--not that they look down on DFS, but look at us like 'oh, well your input doesn't matter.'" As the worker became more experienced and was viewed as more competent by the team, the worker believed they had earned the team's respect. A third DFS worker related, "[W]e feel like we're almost a forgotten team member in a sense sometimes…some of us feel that way…and it's learning we do have a voice." A fourth DFS worker shared, "In the beginning…I felt like I didn't belong there….I had no clue what was going to happen or how it was going to happen….I was an intruder. As time went on, I became a part of the team."

A DFS supervisor described her initial relationship with members of other MDT agencies at case review, "They didn't want our [DFS] input. They didn't see us as a valuable member." As the supervisor gained confidence to question decisions by other members at the case review meetings, the supervisor stated, "I think at times they think of me as a thorn in their side…it's a battle…I think what we've learned is that not everybody values DFS and that's not just the clients we work to serve, but it's also members of the team."

Other members of the MDT also commented on the role of DFS on the team. A forensic interviewer believed that the team's focus on the criminal prosecution led to the DFS workers and supervisors not being viewed as equal members of the team: "I think sometimes they feel not as important or like their role is not as important because maybe you don't feel like you're being considered because they're only focusing on charging

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and that's…seen as most important." A prosecutor was pragmatic about their team's

members, "I work best with the law enforcement agencies, but that's because I'm with

them all the time. DFS isn't sitting next to me at a trial, the detective is…but there are

DFS workers that I really, really trust and that I am happy to have on cases with me." A

detective prioritized team members based on the primacy of the criminal case:

> [T]he prosecutor's office and law enforcement…we're kind of running the
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> show…and then the forensic interviewer is number two and then DFS, three…if
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> you had to assign something to them. Like I don't want to say most important
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> because that's not what I'm saying…but I'm just saying like as far as, you know,
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> your four generals you've got prosecutor, law enforcement, we're bouncing a lot
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> of stuff off of the forensic interviewer and then DFS is also adding pieces…but
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> because they're not governed by what we do, usually, for the most part…they can
>
> substantiate a case and go on their way.

A prosecutor agreed, "The dynamic is police agencies probably take the lead, with our

office second, and DFS is kind of a minor role." A forensic interviewer observed, "I

would say Division of Family Services workers, when they're present for the interview,

there's not a whole lot of taking charge or making decisions on their end. I would say

they're more of the passive team member."

Because DFS only investigated intra-familial abuse, they were not active with the

MDT on all cases. The other team members--law enforcement, prosecutors, forensic

interviewers--were involved in all cases of child abuse, whether perpetrated by a family

member or someone else, so their interactions with one another were more frequent.

Also, DFS had a specialized unit in each county that investigated sexual abuse and

serious physical injury. Workers assigned to that unit had more opportunity to interact with the MDT because all of the cases on their caseloads required a forensic interview per the MOU.

A detective distinguished between regular DFS workers who handled less serious abuse and those assigned to the specialized investigation unit, "[With] DFS, if it's physical abuse, you're liable to get anybody. If it's a sexual assault, there's a special unit and I think there's three or four people in that unit and three of them I'm very familiar with and have worked several cases with them so that's not too much of an issue." The detective went on to explain that in cases of minor physical abuse, "You never know which DFS worker you're going to get and it's, you know, not uncommon for me to get a DFS worker I've never met before….I don't think that's necessarily bad, you know, [but]…the sexual assaults definitely need the same team…working on them." A prosecutor described how regularly working with the same members had its benefits, "You're seeing the same detectives over and over, you're seeing the same DFS workers, you know who does physical abuse versus sexual abuse…that kind of thing. So…just being more comfortable with the partners and knowing…how this person works, I know…how responsive they're going to be."

A prosecutor admitted that they would be more inclined to keep a DFS worker informed of case developments if they had prior contact with the worker through the MDT, "If I have a case where the DFS worker comes in, it's someone I know, and they're saying you know 'here's what I think'…I might be more inclined in the middle of the investigation to reach out and just be like, 'hey, here's something that's of note to us, don't know if you're aware of it, just wanted to keep you in the loop.'" A DFS worker

observed that the detectives, DAGs, and physicians with whom DFS worked regularly

were the team members who "get it," and understood DFS's role on the MDT, "but that's

because they talk to us on a, you know, on a weekly basis, they see us all the time, we

have,often have,…four, five, six cases with the same detective, same AG and so it's the

same people working every day."

Patrol Officers, Supervisors and Other Outliers

While the DFS worker quoted above identified who "gets it," they concluded that

patrol officers, who were not regularly engaged with the MDT, did not understand DFS's

role on the team: "It's basic patrol, those are the people that don't see DFS as team

members." Other participants also did not consider patrol officers, who were occasional

attendees at the forensic interviews at the CAC, to be part of the core team members. A

DFS worker explained, "Patrol is really where the issue comes in. Detectives are mostly

experienced when they're coming in, but patrol can be very frustrating sometimes

because they'll just kind of go do their…thing and then call [DFS] and [say], 'hey, by the

way, we did…this….'" Because they were not regular members of the team, some

participants believed that patrol officers from municipal law enforcement agencies did

not know or understand the expectations of the MDT regarding on-going communication

about case investigations.

A forensic interviewer commented, "There are some outliers and some law

enforcement agencies that we do struggle with in terms of building a good relationship

with them and that sometimes plays into maybe their lack of participation during the

interview or lack of participation during case review process and so we do have some

strained relationships." Another forensic interviewer stated that, "The biggest problem we

have is reaching out to the guys who are patrolling the roads. They always have cases that are involving children and they're the ones that are interviewing the child on the side of the road or in the backyard. They don't know about the CAC." An inexperienced detective, "Who didn't have a lot of experience at the CAC, who had a very strong personality… [and] didn't know what he was talking about but he wanted to sound like he knew" was deemed an outlier by one of the forensic interviewers: "I think that person was an outlier because…they weren't used to being in our center and doing those types of cases. I think the people that are on…the family service unit or the special victim unit that deals specifically with child crimes…have a much better way to communicate….I think they respect roles, people's roles."

Patrol officers and inexperienced detectives were not the only outliers identified by participants. Supervisors from member agencies, who provided input on decision-making to their staff on the team, were viewed as outsiders by several participants. A detective explained:

> When there's an issue, and it always revolves around DFS, and we all agree at the table that such and such needs to be done and then they [DFS workers] go talk to the supervisor and the supervisor's like 'nope, we're not doing that,'…the supervisor wasn't there to hear all the minor details and, you know, I think that if somebody outside of the MDT is going to make that kind of decision, then maybe they need to be part of the MDT… I do see that as an issue sometimes where, you know, it's clear what the right thing to do is at least in everybody's opinion at the table and then a supervisor overrides it [who] wasn't there for any of those discussions.

A DFS supervisor described a dispute in which the MDT members made a group decision only to have it overturned by a unit supervisor in the AG's office. The team members at the case review table agreed to leave child death cases on the case review calendar pending autopsy results. The DFS supervisor admitted that these cases had not undergone a forensic interview because the child was deceased and therefore the cases were outside the CAC process. However, the supervisor believed it was important and helpful to DFS to keep child death cases on the case review calendar for updates. DFS was often involved with the deceased child's family and may have removed siblings from the home as a safety precaution until the results of the autopsy were known (natural causes, accidental death, or homicide). Either the detective or prosecutor in attendance at case review could provide autopsy status information.

The DFS supervisor believed that the supervisory DAG had overstepped and did not have the right to overrule a decision made by the team members, "This is what the team agreed on…it's supposed to be majority rule and when we first agreed [the team] said 'yes, that's no problem' and then [the supervisory DAG] came in and was like 'nope, nope, I'm not doing it, I'm not doing it.'" The DFS supervisor appealed to the Investigation Coordinator who mediated the dispute in favor of having the decision of the team members stand.

Although they interacted with team members around tracking and monitoring cases, convened the case review meetings and, at times, were enlisted by DFS to compel other team members to adhere to the provisions of the MOU or to settle a dispute as described above, the Investigation Coordinator (IC) was not considered by many participants to be a member of the MDT. The IC was viewed as an outside administrator.

A detective related the contents of an email received from the IC asking, "What you did and didn't do with your case…that is pretty frustrating because… they kind of Monday-morning-quarterback you in your decision making." The detective explained that the IC, "Frustrate[s] everybody on the team, not just law enforcement, not just prosecutors, not just DFS because they pop up…like a mole out of the ground and…you're like 'who are you?'…and they don't know the subtleties of the case." According to the detective, the IC asked, "Black and white questions but there's a lot of gray…that might be their responsibility and their role and that's fine, but…they don't understand the cases, they're just looking at it and usually they're casting blame…and you're like 'hey, we've already done that' then they'll disappear for a little while and then you might see them again in a couple months."

A detective from another law enforcement agency in another county recounted how the IC sent out an email following the death of a baby directing the team to complete certain investigative tasks, "But it's kind of odd, because they're not at the house and they don't come to the crime scene, they don't talk to the family, but they kind of tell you like what to do a little bit…They just kind of are the overseers to make sure, I believe, that no other cases fall through the cracks like ones in [the] Earl Bradley [case]." The detective was clearly frustrated by the email from the IC, "I know to do that, and I've been doing it for seven years. Like, you're not even at the scene so you don't even know what to ask or what to look for." The detective concluded that the IC was an "Annoyance…I never see them, I just get emails from them" but felt that, "The rest of us work well together."

A detective recounted the involvement on the MDT of Adult Protective Services (APS) and was clear that the APS worker was decidedly not part of the team even though they attended meetings to provide input on cases involving the abuse or neglect of adult persons with cognitive disabilities. In one specific case, the APS worker interjected during the forensic interview telling the team, "This is the question [the forensic interviewer] needs to ask him because this is what he's going to say when you do." The detective and the prosecutor at the table stopped the line of questioning, "We're like 'that's not how this works' like you know, they [forensic interviewer] ask a question and he answers it or he doesn't answer it. We can't interject our opinion in this case." The detective and prosecutor reminded the APS worker, "This interview is going to get played at trial and you can clearly see…we're 'leading' the victim down a path of what we want and that's not the way this works." The APS worker "butted heads" with the regular members of the team--the forensic interviewer, detective, and prosecutor-- "telling us how to run the interview and that's not how it works." The lack of understanding of the forensic interview process and the lack of collegiality on the part of the APS worker were highlighted by the detective.

An interesting observation was made by a forensic interviewer about the role of the medical professionals on the MDT. While they were key members of the team on cases involving children who required medical examinations related to physical or sexual abuse, access to these medical professionals varied by county. The forensic interviewer understood that, in other parts of the State, the child abuse pediatricians were active members of the team but related, "We don't really have a lot of communication with them…it's very different [in other counties] when it comes to medical because [they] rely

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on them pretty heavily whereas [in this county] it's like we don't really even consider them part of our team sometimes because we don't really hear from them." Although the forensic interviewer acknowledged the contributions of the pediatricians, they did not identify these medical professionals as being part of their team.

Team Membership: "A Small World of People"

Just as MDT members articulated who did not belong, they were also clear about their team. Participants talk of "becoming comfortable" with other team members and how the level of "comfortability" facilitated teamwork. A prosecutor explained, "You have interactions with the same people, especially over the course of [a few] years…the same detectives are assigned to Sex Crimes [unit] from each individual agency, DFS has, you know, sort of a small world of people so you develop relationships, the CAC obviously is very small so those people you're with every day almost." Another prosecutor, when explaining the team dynamic, chuckled when they recounted that they "groan when I find out I have a case with a certain person…they probably do the same with me, it's fine and that's going to happen." The prosecutor concluded:

It's generally the same DFS workers who are dealing with these cases, it's the same officers and it's the same prosecutors. So, the fact that we all know each other so well for the most part, the fact that we all know kind of what the other is thinking on a particular case. When you get to see this many cases, you know, oh [name] is not going to like that one…So generally, I have confidence that our team works really well together.

Many participants described how team activities and decision-making flowed because of the relationships team members developed with one another: "We…try to

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come to…a collaborative joining to make sure that we all have an understanding of what we need to do," "When we're at full capacity for the case reviews it's great, you can get a lot of information. We can move forward with our cases…it's almost like a domino-effect, like if you don't have one main member…then your [case is] still lingering," "Having that familiarity and friendship and knowing that you can rely on them [is important]," "As the relationship builds so does the level of trust."

Even when a member moved on to a new assignment, some MDT members contacted former teammates to get their input on current cases. A DFS worker explained how they reached out to a detective they had formed a professional friendship with through their previous work together on the MDT, "I would sometimes call him and say 'hey you know this is the situation'…how would you normally proceed with this? So, I think it's just building those relationships where you can call these individuals and kind of understand how they would approach it from their side." A detective described how current MDT members continued to be in contact with them even after they received a promotion and was no longer a member of the team. Team members asked the detective, "What would you do in this case?" and relied on the detective's expertise due to their previous relationship. According to the detective, there was a "comfort level" between the former teammates who "trusted my judgment" because, "you just know each other."

Summary

Although occasional members, supervisors, and IC administrators, interacted with team members around tasks, they were deemed as outsiders. According to participants, team membership was not only based on role and the contribution a member made to the functioning of the MDT as an agency representative--it went deeper. Goffman (1959)

described a team as a secret society which is held together by a bond that outsiders don't share. Viewing the MDT in this light helps to explain how and why members drew a dividing line between regular team members and outliers who were not identified by the core team as being part of "us." Belonging to the team meant feeling accepted and being recognized by others as a contributing part of the group.

Chapter 11: Systemic and Process Issues – Challenges for the MDT

Several systemic and process issues emerged from the participant interviews. Lack of time and high caseloads were intertwined frustrations. MDT members described challenges posed by the criminal and civil justice systems as well as issues with the MDT process, including the impact of member turnover.

High Caseloads: "How can anyone Operate with that many Cases?"

Caseloads carried by child welfare and law enforcement members of the team were the first systemic issue raised by MDT members. As one detective put it, "[I]t just feels like there's not enough time in a day…. that's a complaint of…anyone in government or anyone in these social agencies: there's too much work, too little time." A forensic interviewer concurred, "Each agency, naturally, could use more people. There's not enough detectives, there's not enough DFS workers…there are individuals who have over 100 cases and how can anyone operate with that many cases?...The one detective has over 100 cases!"

During the Covid-19 pandemic, official reports of child abuse declined as children were isolating at home away from mandatory reporters--teachers, school counselors, medical professionals (Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Families website, 2021). Generally, DFS caseloads dipped as hotline calls dropped off. However, the specialized unit in DFS which investigates sexual abuse and serious physical injury saw no such decline. A DFS supervisor explained, "Unfortunately, my unit has still been very active through all of this. Our caseloads are still up there where

other units have had maybe two or three cases. My average is 17." DFS investigation workers were statutorily mandated to carry no more than 11 active investigations. While a caseload of 17 was one and a half times the limit set forth in statute, it was low compared to the February 2018 pre-pandemic average caseload of 25.2 cases per investigative worker (Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Families, 2021, p. 32)

A detective commented about their caseload, "I hate to say it, it is probably too many cases to do good investigations on all your cases just because…you have to prioritize, you just know you can't give the time to something that's--I don't want to say 'trivial'--but…you've got to prioritize what's super important and then kind of go down the list and do what you can." While forensic interviewers did not carry caseloads in the typical sense, the number of interviews they conducted was burdensome according to a few participants who specifically mentioned it. A detective, describing the number of interviews conducted by the forensic interviewers, stated, "I think we have a number of cases where the CAC is, at times, very overworked." Another detective explained, "There's not that many forensic interviewers and they get worn down. They do multiple interviews a day. They're tired…I mean you could just tell by…the look on their face…wow, she had a long week."

Time: "There's not a lot of it"

One of the byproducts of these large caseloads was the missed opportunity to participate in team activities. A DFS worker explained that, while team training was offered, "[I]t came at a time when I was unable to go. They [trainings] were all voluntary, they weren't mandatory, my caseload was high--I believe very high at that time--so I did

not go and it also involved a whole week away from the office, which was not conducive to my caseload." A detective similarly felt pressed by the demands of a high caseload when training was offered, "Honestly, as busy as we are in detectives, unless it's a really great training…I feel like they just take away time from my normal everyday things that I have to get done."

Even the new forensic interview protocol used at the CAC was viewed by some in a negative light because of the amount of new investigative work it had the potential to create for team members. A forensic interviewer explained that the current protocol required the interviewer to screen for multiple forms of abuse to determine if the child was the victim of more than one type of abuse. While the team members were supportive of the new protocol, there was concern about workload. According to the forensic interviewer, detectives expressed concern over the new protocol, "They know it's good, they say it needs to happen, but then, of course, it could potentially create more work because they might have to follow up…let's say a case came in for sexual abuse, but the child discloses physical [abuse], they now have to cover physical abuse with that family and possibly look at charges." The forensic interviewer concluded that, "It's created a little bit of talk." A DAG also addressed changes to CAC protocols that add a new responsibility, "We didn't use to go [to the forensic interview] if the suspect was under the age of…12, we didn't used to go to those but now we do…it's always changing…."

A prosecutor was frustrated by a lack of time for the team to discuss complex cases at a special case review, "a lot of times, it becomes a function of time--there's not a lot of it." Another prosecutor explained how the regular case review format was not the best use of the team member's time:

We don't have time to sit down every Friday…and go through a list of cases and just talk about them, I mean that was always sort of the frustration of these case review meetings…it was three hours long and…there were so many other things we could have been utilizing our time for so I think the caseload is difficult for all of the agencies in taking out the time to sit down and just talk about cases…I always thought that maybe if the process changed and there weren't meetings with 100 cases on [the agenda]…if, you know, the process had changed, then we might be able to have more efficient meetings even in light of the caseload.

This prosecutor advocated for, "…Meetings earlier in the process and for a smaller number of cases," believing that it would be more effective to "…actually go through those cases with the people that are involved in those cases [to determine if] you learned anything else in the last two weeks." The DAG suggested that the team gather a few weeks following the forensic interview for an interim meeting to discuss next steps. This DAG believed it would be a more productive use of time and prevent cases from getting lost in the shuffle of enormous caseloads.

A third prosecutor struggled with what they perceived to be the inefficiency of the standard case review and, "Think[s] everyone has been trying to find out different ways to make it less so." Echoing some other team members, this prosecutor felt the format of sending an agency representative to the case review meetings did not provide the MDT with all the necessary information for making effective and timely decisions but recognized that requiring the team member directly involved with a case to attend each case review would be time consuming and inefficient. "[I]f you don't really have…the people that are engaged in the investigation, I just--I don't find it to be that helpful, but I

think…it's not practical to expect everyone to appear at those [case reviews] as frequently." A detective was pragmatic about an individual MDT members' ability to be involved in both forensic interviews and standard case review meetings, "There would be no way that team could be the same people every time because they'd never leave the CAC."

The theme of time also emerged as an issue for some MDT members when discussing forensic interviews. A DFS worker wished, "A CAC [forensic interview] could be set up, we could respond immediately," to cases involving sexual abuse or serious physical abuse allegations by scheduling same day interviews. While several participants acknowledged the flexibility of the CAC staff and the willingness of the forensic interviewers to respond to an urgent request for an interview outside of normal business hours, the CAC did not have the staffing bandwidth to offer interview slots around the clock for less urgent cases.

Investigative Timeframes: "We Have Less Time to Work with than They Do"

Different investigative timeframes between the criminal and civil justice systems were mentioned by DFS participants as a systemic issue. DFS operated under strict time guidelines for completing an investigation and were required to review an open case monthly while detectives and prosecutors were not subject to such time parameters. As one DFS worker pointed out, "Our policy says we have to see these kids every 30 business days and especially if there are safety plans in place, it's very difficult to keep a safety plan in place and maintain [it] when they [DOJ] are dragging their feet for four, five, six months because they don't have the time to review [the case]…." Caseloads of the prosecutors contributed to the delay. A DFS supervisor explained the time pressures

created by their agency's investigative deadlines, the desire to allow the MDT process to run its course, and the need to satisfy superiors:

> With the MDT, the police are the ones that take the lead, and we try to accommodate the best we can but…we have less time to work with than they do. We only have 45 days to make a case. If we can't make a case in 45 days, we either have to close it or transfer it. Because there are certain elements that the MDT offers to that case, we wind up having to keep it open for longer than we probably should and then you get…phone calls from higher above that want to know the numbers and, unfortunately, this is not a number thing. Sometimes cases have to be open longer because it's necessary.

While issues like investigative timeframes are the purview of individual agencies, the members looked to the MOU, under which the MDT operates, to help resolve some of the challenges facing the team. The MOU was reviewed and revised, as needed, every three years by the Child Protection Accountability Commission, the State body with administrative oversight of the MDT. The agencies involved in the MDT process all had a seat on the Commission. One MDT process issue recently addressed by an MOU revision was the practice by which a case could be closed at case review. A prosecutor explained:

> We were all getting frustrated with the fact that…you needed all of us to agree to close that case and we were getting local [law enforcement] agencies that weren't responding or basically thought, 'hey, our role's over' because, to be fair, their role probably is over, but they weren't actively saying 'we're closing the case.' So, you had this case that was sitting out there for months and every meeting,

DFS and our office would say 'we've closed it' and so now, you can have two out

of the three people agree to close it.

Allowing two of the three team members to close a lingering case reduced the list of

cases required to be scheduled for a case review meeting. Several participants discussed

how the MOU facilitated the MDT process. A DFS worker hailed the MOU as putting

team members on a level playing field and credited recent policy changes to keep DFS

"in the loop." Another DFS worker appreciated having the set of guidelines set forth in

the MOU, "[It] lays out best practices…what to kind of do….Having a guideline to

follow helped, too, because it wasn't just like--a free for all--everyone doing what they

wanted." A detective appreciated how, "Through technology, everything has gotten

better…now there's an app…that you can put on your phone that actually has the

MOU…and it actually identifies what job each discipline has."

Systemic Issues

In addition to specific procedural issues, a few participants discussed more global

concerns. The inherent limitations of the criminal justice system were a concern for a

forensic interviewer. They described a particularly difficult case where:

The little girl would not go in the courtroom, she was so scared and just so

petrified that the DAG on the case…tried everything to get this little girl to go in.

We couldn't get the girl to go in and the judge had enough. Case dismissed. We

had a known pedophile who had other kids…leave, walk out and yes, all because

the little five-year-old, five, couldn't take the stand.

While the members of the MDT understood the legal threshold that must be met for a

conviction in a criminal case, the lack of a child-friendly justice system was a concern for

some members and was also discussed as a cause of burn-out. Not being able to bring a successful prosecution significantly impacted the child victim and those who worked as part of the team. Law enforcement officers got "fed up" when they "arrest a person for the same crime over and over and over again" and bail was set low, or a child was unable to testify, and the suspect was freed.

When charges were not able to be brought, one DAG was troubled by what they defined as a gap on the MDT to provide a safety net for the child:

So many of these kids, even when we can't prosecute, have significant issues at home…and the fact that there wasn't, you know, more treatment providers as part of this team was always something that sort of shocked me, because when we would sit there and talk about 'well what are we going to do?' [and all members of the team closed the case] and that was it. Nobody was supervising anymore…we think something happened but we just can't prove it so I always found that very frustrating that there wasn't, you know, sort of a catch-all…something at the end to say, listen, we can't do more with this despite the fact that we want to, but at least we know that there's this treatment provider that's going to check in…so that was sort of my frustration with the MDT, while well-intended I think it sort of is missing a component.

A detective agreed that other disciplines would be useful additions to the team, "I think that eventually…there's going to be more disciplines that are going to be part of this, at least that's my hope….I would love to see someone from the schools be a part of the MDT at some point." The detective believed that for school-aged children, school

personnel could be a valuable source of information not only about the child but also the family.

Despite the fact that my interviews occurred shortly after the murder of George Floyd, an incident that raised national attention to issues of race and social justice, participants rarely mentioned issues of power, race, and class. Although this study was not aimed at exploring these issues directly, they are central to the child welfare and criminal justice systems, and one may wonder why they didn't arise more often in this context.

MDT Structure and Turnover

Turnover of members on the team was viewed as a barrier to team process by some members. As a detective explained, "You can have the greatest team and…because of transfers, promotions, I mean that team gets depleted very quickly and, you know, you're starting from the beginning again and I think that's the biggest downfall of the team…." The detective felt that having the same teammates over a period of time created, "The best team that you're going to be a part of--working together--just because everybody knows each other…everybody is familiar with each other." Another detective described a broader impact of turnover among members on team functioning, "Our MDTs are kind of dynamic--they change--so if it were the same group it would probably be a lot easier to communicate, there'd probably be a stronger social, some kind of networking outside of the office, but the fact that they change so much, that's probably difficult to establish."

The structure of the MDT provided a framework to operate within even when there was turnover among team members. A detective described how a new member was

incorporated into this existing structure and pointed out that the MDT was, "Set up in a way that each one of those detectives can go in and maybe not necessarily know that…new DFS worker or DAG, but the system that's set in place, I think, keeps it moving forward…if it's a new member, I feel like the pieces are in place [and] allow for the smooth transition of new members." A DAG explained the strength of the MDT structure when there was turnover of team members:

> There have been personnel changes, but I don't believe any of those changes have had an impact…I think that the CAC process, the MDT process, is such a collaborative effort that even when one individual changes, it tends to, at least in my opinion, run the same way and function the same way. I have been reassigned cases where other deputies [DAGs] initially went to the CAC and in reviewing the interview and the notes, it ran and functioned the same way, not identical but the same way it would have run had I been there. So, there are some changes when there's different law enforcement agencies at the table because some of the agencies don't have units specifically tailored to these types of cases so the law enforcement officer may not, in my opinion, be as experienced as officers from other agencies, but I have not seen where when one person is switched in for someone else it drastically changes everything. So, that's why if people change in the process personnel-wise I think the collaborative nature helps for it to run similarly.

The organizational structure of the MDT set up a framework for work to continue even as the team members cycled on and off the team.

A detective spoke to the importance of the MDT process during the Covid-19 pandemic when forensic interviews were put on hold for all except emergency cases. The detective stressed that:

The process works great…I hate to keep mentioning Covid, but I think that only strengthens that it works great because…we're so used to using that [forensic interview] as an investigative step…we're so used to it being a vital part of us making sure that we're delivering the best end result, making sure everybody's safe, making sure that we have all the information…I think because we believe in the process so much that we're not willing to clear cases without a CAC [forensic interview] being conducted, because we know the value of that information.

Although the team members were candid about some of the systemic and process issues confronting the MDT, a prosecutor was hopeful that the strides made toward addressing team issues, were showing results, "The culture is now correct, and I think because it's so good now I think that, you know, if we substitute different people in, it'll just keep going the way it's going--hopefully."

Summary

Concerns about team processes were shared by participants as well as frustrations with justice system issues. Lack of time for training and meaningful exchanges about case investigations were often the result of high caseloads carried by team members.

It will be interesting to learn how the use of time-saving technology, particularly video conferencing tools like Zoom and WebEx, may be adopted by the MDT to replace some in-person meetings, particularly standard case reviews. The MOU which guides MDT practice underwent its regularly scheduled, triennial review in 2021. The

modifications to team processes, necessitated by the pandemic, may inform this latest

MOU update.

Chapter 12: Conclusions, Practice Recommendations, and Directions for Research

In this final chapter, I explore the "goodness of fit" of the CoP theory with the practices of the MDT as related to me through participant interviews and survey responses. I also comment on how the team operations mesh with the theories and the themes of IOC research--commitment, communication, trust, capacity, and change--that were highlighted at several points in the interviews. Recommendations for MDT practice enhancements and directions for future research complete the chapter.

MDT as a Common Domain

In Wenger's terms, members of the MDT shared a common domain: the investigation of child abuse. The ways in which the members of the MDT described their work with the team reflected Wenger's domains of shared practice: mutual engagement--members built a CoP by establishing relationships and norms through their interactions that lead to the creation of shared meaning around the investigation of child maltreatment. The IOC themes of commitment and capacity also are evident as they speak to a shared vision, values, purpose, and goals as well as a willingness to collaborate by holding a common understanding and approach to solving problems--at least as far as MDT practice is concerned. Many IOC researchers have noted that having a common purpose, values and vision is essential for building and ensuring the continued success of a collaboration (Children's Alliance Family Resource Project, 2004; Hall, 2005; Huxham & Vangen, 2005, Ivery, 2008; San Martin-Rodriguez, et al., 2005; Sloper, 2004; Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003).

As practitioners whose professions require them to engage in joint investigations--
Wenger's "joint enterprise"--members shared resources and a shared practice due to the
specialized nature of their work. The MDT developed a shared repertoire--resources like
language, artifacts, and tools produced by the team--that were used to negotiate meaning
and to facilitate group learning. The team had its own jargon and shortcuts to
communication--what Wenger described as "reification." On a more formal level, the
MOU and the enabling statute that mandates joint investigations in cases of child abuse
reified how members investigate child abuse and participate as a team. The IOC literature
discussed the importance of clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and accountability for
team members (Sloper, 2004) as well as clearly defined protocols for information
exchange (Bai, Wells & Hillemeier, 2009; Cross, Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2005;
Darlington, Feeney & Rixon, 2005). Cross and colleagues (2005) recommended the
establishment of memorandums of understanding to address such issues as joint home
visits and joint interviews with children, families, or perpetrators.

Unlike organic CoPs that grow up around a shared interest with voluntary mutual
engagement and a desire to learn on the part of its members, the MDT is mandated, and
joint working is required by law. The MDT role is part of a team member's professional
assignment. Although some of the members of the team described how they requested to
work on child abuse cases, for others, particularly professionals in law enforcement and
prosecution, being assigned to criminally investigate or prosecute child maltreatment
cases was another rung on the career ladder. While it provided valuable experience and
an opportunity to learn new skills, it was not necessarily a sought-after assignment by
some. For others, it was a calling. Uneven entry into this specialized assignment and to

the team required the MDT members to work harder to incorporate newcomers into this community. Those who were less committed and who viewed it as a stop along their career path were often the same members who were less communicative, and they hung on the periphery without fully engaging in team information sharing and learning.

The MDT lost its masters (old-timers) when members were re-assigned or promoted which impacted the capacity of the team through the loss of institutional memory and stable relationships. Changes in membership also created "fractures in the trust-building cycle," according to IOC researchers Vangen and Huxham (2003, p. 20), as trusting relationships disappeared once members left the collaboration. The importance of these long-term relationships on the team was reflected in comments from a detective who described how MDT members continued to contact him after he left the team seeking his opinion and input on challenging cases.

Less populous counties have fewer human resources which resulted in less turnover of team members. These members tended to rely on each other and built solid relationships. Participants in these counties reported more informal socializing and face-to-face networking like stopping by each other's offices. Smaller law enforcement agencies had fewer detectives so a detective may have participated for several years on the MDT if their department only had a two- or three-person detective unit. Smaller counties have fewer advancement opportunities for those who wish to remain local. This can be a positive for the MDT because with a smaller universe of people who perform these functions, members stay longer on the team.

Recommendations:

- It takes time to form good working and personal relationships. The MDT partner

agencies should consider three-year, staggered terms on the team so that law

enforcement, DFS workers and DAGs develop expertise, and the MDT has stability

among its membership to enable a CoP to form.

- Agencies should consider recruiting motivated members to assign to those units/cases

  that will have MDT involvement. A professional with an interest in the work of the

  MDT increases the capacity of the team through their willingness to collaborate.

  Although agencies are mandated to participate in the MDT process by statute, it

  would be helpful to the practice of the MDT if individual members were at the CAC

  table voluntarily.

- Because promotion usually results in a member leaving the team for a new

  assignment, agencies should create opportunities for promotion/advancement for

  professionals which allow them to maintain MDT membership.

Learning to be a Productive Member of the Team: A Need for Training

Although MDT members expressed commitment to a multidisciplinary response

to child maltreatment as best practice, we should not assume that professionals know how

to collaborate as a team. Being part of an MDT requires skill building, training, and

communication about expectations if the collaboration is to operate effectively. In a

traditional CoP model, learning and mentoring takes place between CoP participants, but

participants in my study crossed boundaries and not only acted as teachers at the CAC

table for newer members but also mentored new members from their own professional

silo to help prepare them for participation on the MDT. One detective from a small

department credited a detective from a larger department for showing them the ropes with

child abuse investigations. The detective from the larger department would invite the

small-town detective to shadow on investigations to gain experience. Learning was networked--between MDT members, within members' own departments (siloed learning), through formal training and shadowing and, in the example above, learning within their profession from another member outside their agency but within their professional sphere.

Interacting on cases both at the table and in the field (law enforcement accompanying DFS on home visits, for instance) was a form of learning together and building rapport and trust among team members. Ongoing learning that furthered the understanding of the pressures and limitations on other team members helped sustain members' mutual commitment. Some members were the constants on the team, became the "masters (old-timers)" per Wenger, and provided the core membership of the teams. They were the teachers and guides who managed the formal and informal exchanges that took place when a "newcomer" joined the team.

Lave and Wenger's concept of "legitimate peripheral participation" was writ large by participants who described their initiation into the team as "sink or swim." Within this concept of legitimate peripheral participation, even "newcomers" (apprentices) were expected to contribute to the work and learning of the CoP. And so it was, too, for the MDT. There was an expectation that if a person was "at the table" at the CAC working on a child abuse investigation, they belonged there. While the agencies that assigned them to participate on the MDT may have believed they belonged, the "newcomers" were less sure. Others at the table expected the new members to contribute to the cases being jointly investigated but were willing to offer guidance and explanation to indoctrinate the new members and increase the capacity of the team.

Becoming a productive member of the MDT meshes well with Wenger's four components of learning: meaning (learning as experience), practice (learning as doing), community (learning as belonging), and identity (learning as becoming). MDT members bring experience from their own profession to the table, they learned by doing and "sink or swim." MDT members build community as a team through shared practice and regular communication which developed into relationships, both conflictual--reflecting the power infrastructure of the team--and supportive--based on trust and mutual respect. They could readily identify "who belonged" to their team and who were classified as outsiders. MDT members expressed diverse opinions during the interviews and through survey responses and there were no obvious differences between their responses in the two modalities.

Training and preparation to join the team varied widely. The forensic interviewers had a well-developed, evidence-based training protocol which included "continuing education" wherein the forensic interviewers would formally meet for case conferences to share knowledge and build interviewing skills. DFS also had formal training for workers newly assigned to the DFS sexual assault and serious abuse unit. However, a new DFS worker from a non-specialized investigative unit would also occasionally take cases to the CAC. Their lack of formal training about the MDT process and their "outsider" status made them less connected and easily dismissed by members of the team.

Law enforcement agencies provided rudimentary pre-training for their newly assigned MDT members, consisting of shadowing a seasoned detective once or twice at the CAC. Prosecutors tended to rely on their knowledge of criminal law as "training" for their MDT role. A few prosecutors candidly admitted that they didn't know what they were doing when they first joined the MDT and didn't have enough background

knowledge about child abuse investigations or the procedures at the CAC but felt they were looked to by other members of the team as the final decision-maker, at least on whether to pursue the criminal case, and therefore needed to be a quick study to be able to provide direction on next steps in the investigation process to the detective. One prosecutor, who felt ill-prepared when they joined the team, was committed to accompanying new prosecutors they supervised to cases at the CAC to show them the ropes and let the newcomer know that someone "has their back."

Pre-service training for professionals prior to a job assignment that involved the MDT and training for the MDT as a team were hampered by a lack of time and a lack of resources. Once members joined the team, they may have been offered training opportunities, but some declined because of crushing caseloads. Participants highlighted how the pandemic had impacted in-person trainings as well as in-person meetings at the CAC.

Recommendations:

- One of the best suggestions for training new law enforcement members of the MDT came from a detective I interviewed who suggested that new detectives should be embedded with DFS for a few weeks to gain first-hand experience on what child welfare workers do, and to appreciate the challenges DFS workers face in the field. This type of cross-training could serve as a trust-building exercise and enhance relationships between team members, by improving communication and understanding of the various roles of team members. As Cross and colleagues (2005) suggested, although difficulties may arise between law enforcement and child welfare workers due to differences in their mission, training, experience and methods,

collaborative work on child maltreatment should be promoted and cross-training should be implemented. I recommend cross-training for all members of the team.

- The CAC should consider offering facilitated training around group processes to assist members in becoming more comfortable working as part of a multidisciplinary team. Training could include methods for building a team approach including developing effective communication skills with team members, managing team conflicts, and setting expectations around team practice because what is acceptable to one member may be less than adequate to another.

- Training for new team members should occur before or shortly after they are assigned to cases that will involve the MDT. Many members attended training but only after spending some period of time as a team member first. Early training should be a high priority and the MDT/CAC should create a "MDT/CAC 101" course as was recommended by a forensic interviewer during a research interview. Having joint training at the outset can help built trust and communication skills, two key pillars of well-functioning IOCs. Given the current societal focus on social justice and the history of racial inequity in both the child welfare and criminal justice systems, it might be prudent to address issues of implicit bias in any initial team training.

- The MDT should consider a formal mentoring system in which new members are assigned to a seasoned member (either within or across professional boundaries) to facilitate learning.

DFS has its own civil process and the DFS worker decides whether they seek substantiation of a case of child abuse. However, DFS sometimes faces an uphill battle to substantiate abuse cases if the prosecutor does not bring criminal charges, so, while these

decisions are technically independent, in practice, a substantiation is often contingent on criminal charges.

Recommendations:

- Cross-disciplinary training for criminal division prosecutors about the DFS civil processes would facilitate understanding of the way decision-making flows between the criminal and civil justice systems. Both DFS and the Civil Division DAG assigned to represent DFS are resources to provide this training.

- Training should be offered for judicial officers who are making determinations about child abuse substantiations to enhance their understanding of the civil remedy of substantiation as a stand-alone resolution that need not be tied to a criminal case outcome.

System Changes

Several members related that in-person meetings (being "at the table" together) were the gold standard of MDT practice. Due to privacy and security concerns, absent members did not have remote access to MDT meetings using video teleconferencing platforms at the beginning of the pandemic. A call-in option via a conference line was available but deemed an inadequate substitute for being together at the table for in-person discussion and observation of the forensic interviews. This lack of access hampers the learning and practice of the CoP.

Recommendation:

- Although in-person meetings are preferred by MDT members, improved technology at the CAC is one way to include members who might otherwise need to be absent from a forensic interview or case review. Using a secure video conferencing platform

will enable members to participate remotely in critical forensic interviews and key discussions at case reviews and, by having all members effectively participate, decision making may be expedited.

The case review process was reported to be repetitive and time consuming as it is currently structured. While case review is an important part of the process, according to participants, it needs to be streamlined.

Recommendation:

- Prioritize the case review list so the team can consult on the difficult or complex cases that are taking time to resolve. Status updates on lingering cases can be done via a paper review or meetings using a video conferencing platform. Use the in-person case review time to puzzle through challenging cases.

Varying investigative timeframes were a source of frustration. The pandemic exacerbated delays in decision-making. At the pre-arrest stage, law enforcement personnel have no set timeframe to complete an investigation. The DAG might consider charges for weeks or months before making a decision about whether to pursue a criminal case. Often, the prosecutor is awaiting further investigation of the case by the detective. When criminal investigations linger, there were negative impacts to team functioning and, most importantly, child victims and their families did not receive resolution. The lack of a decision about criminal charges also negatively impacted the DFS investigation and substantiation process because DFS was operating under its own strict timeframes which required decisions to be made swiftly.

Recommendation:

- For the effective functioning of the MDT, deadlines and timeframes for decision-making about pursuing a criminal prosecution should be instituted.

Power Relations and Teamwork

Power relations evident in organizations clearly played out among MDT members. As described by IOC researchers San Martin-Rodriguez, Beaulieu, D'Amour and Ferrada-Videla (2005), the social, cultural, educational, and professional systems that existed between the MDT members, like disparate social status among the professionals on the team, contributed to power differences. Forensic interviewers had the power to stop an interview if they felt it was unproductive or traumatizing to the child, however, they usually explained their rationale to the team using these scenarios as teachable moments. Dyadic relationships between DFS and law enforcement staff, and between prosecutors and law enforcement personnel created teams within the team. Detectives and prosecutors had a close working relationship throughout the investigation process, and as the two pillars of the criminal justice system, literally sat side by side at the prosecution table during trials. Law enforcement members, who were part of a paramilitary structure within their own departments, were clear that the DAG had the final say on whether a prosecution would be brought. But seasoned detectives sometimes helped guide a "green" prosecutor with next steps or new angles for the investigation or provide input based on the detective's experience with prior cases. There were learning opportunities within the power relations.

The sibling-like "love-hate" relationship was most noticeable between law enforcement and child welfare workers and was well documented in the literature as

discussed in Chapter 3. Reflecting their subordinate position in relation to criminal justice professionals, participants from DFS described how they needed to prove themselves, at least at the outset, as adding value to the team. DFS workers and detectives were mandated by the MOU to conduct joint investigations and team up on home visits or interviews. Trust was assumed in the MDT relationships--until a member did something to violate that trust bond, as when a DFS worker "steps out of their lane" and interviewed a suspect before a detective does. Tipping off a family member that they may be considered a suspect can ruin a criminal investigation and caused a break in trust between the detective and the DFS worker. On the flip side, law enforcement officers sometimes assisted DFS workers by accompanying them to on a home visit when a DFS worker interviewed a parent or removed a child from a volatile household, or by providing DFS workers with important case updates. Relationships formed and grew among members as they learned about other members' roles and challenges. They had each other's back in most cases and developed empathy for other team members who also carried enormous and emotionally draining caseloads. When there were disagreements, team members knew that they had to arrive at some level of consensus, or at least compliance, to move the case forward.

Recommendation:

- Training about other team members' roles and responsibilities can help address the power differentials that existed between team members. By understanding the professional duties and obligations of all team members as well as the procedures of member agencies, team members can learn the value of the contributions of other MDT partners. Regular, meaningful communication can avert many of the conflictual

situations that arose among MDT members. If law enforcement and DFS workers followed the MOU protocol, they should be conducting joint interviews at the CAC and in the field. This shared practice may help solidify their working relationship and build trust.

The MDT reflected Goffman's "team" quite closely. His description of "intimate cooperation" fit the work of the MDT, and MDT members were bound by "the privilege of familiarity." Goffman described a team as a "secret society" held together by a bond that outsiders don't share. MDT members provided support for each other to be a sounding board and to process the grief and misery inherent in child maltreatment cases. Despite the inherent conflicts between agencies and disciplines, team members needed each other. As one DFS worker described how they would reach out to a law enforcement member of the MDT to vent, rather than take home the stress of these cases, it was clear that team members had a bond that others didn't share. The bonds between team members that were described by some as "family," echoed Goffman's description of team relationships as accepting and trusting. As with any closely knit team or "family," outsiders, including me as a researcher, are only made privy to the information members were willing to share especially about team controversies and dysfunction. The highly specialized and emotionally challenging content of the work of the MDT necessitated such a bond.

Is the MDT a CoP?

The IOC themes of commitment, communication, capacity, change, and trust were evident in the MDT model. The MDT is a reasonably well functioning IOC with

both barriers and facilitators to interorganizational collaboration present. All of the IOC themes identified in research were present and operational in the MDT.

The MDT had several of the hallmarks of a CoP. It was not a perfect fit with the idealized model of a CoP because the MDT was comprised of members from diverse, albeit related professional silos, where their primary allegiance lies. However, the commitment and mutual engagement created around the joint enterprise of investigating and addressing child abuse did reflect the key elements of a CoP. Members formed sustained mutual relationships--both harmonious and conflictual. There was a rapid flow of information with no need for introductory preambles because members understood the problems to be discussed and were in an on-going process of engagement, using jargon and shortcuts to communicate. Members came to know what others know, what they could do, and how they could contribute to the enterprise. They also shared a sense of who belonged to the team. The team had a shared way of doing things using the tools and artefact of the MOU as its guide.

The learning value of the team--a critical feature of a CoP--was evident in the MDT. The learning that members experienced through their participation on the team helped develop and sustain the MDT process through changes in membership. This turnover in staff reflected the element of change, a theme in IOC research.

As evidenced by the participant interviews, disagreements existed and were resolved or at least managed to keep the focus on the end goal of child safety. Members brought their own professional perspectives on how to address child maltreatment based on their position in the criminal justice system or the child welfare system--two systems often at odds in their methods and goals. The positionality of the MDT members based on

their profession and personal backgrounds dictated their approach to solutions to child maltreatment as well as their skill in collaborative working. Wenger (1998) clarified that participation in a CoP was not tantamount to cooperation, "It can involve all kinds of relations, conflictual as well as harmonious, intimate as well as political, competitive as well as cooperative" (p. 56). The Delaware MDT reflects all these types of relationships that Wenger captured.

Directions for Further Research

Because the MDT includes more than the core members who were participants in my current study, it would be interesting to expand the universe of study subjects to include the medical and mental health professionals and CAC family resource specialists as participants in a future study. Further research could focus on how the consultative and support roles of these participants on the team contribute to the IOC and the CoP. Another important direction for future research would be to understand perspectives not represented by my study participants, particularly those of non-White professionals on MDTs. There is a need to explore gender, race, and class dynamics in CoPs and MDTs in future studies to better understand how these intersecting identities affect members' experiences as part of a team.

A central aspect of the CoP model is its emphasis on shared learning and joint practice. Future research could look at case outcomes as a function of the quality of the joint enterprise of the MDT. Does a well-functioning team (well-functioning would need to be defined) that operates as a learning CoP with a stable membership and well-trained professionals produce better quality investigations that resulted in a higher percentage of

criminal convictions than teams that don't share these characteristics? Do better teams produce higher satisfaction rates among victims and families involved in these cases?

Because training is understood to be a critical facilitator of an IOC, it would be interesting to study a team that did not have pre-service training on the MDT model and compare it to a team that was afforded the opportunity to train together as they began their partnership as team members. Does training as a team matter to how well the MDT functions as a CoP?

Finally, my research interviews were conducted during a pandemic when face to face interaction was suspended for the MDT for a time. If the CAC and MDT formally adopt technology solutions to allow members to participate via video teleconferencing platforms, will cases be decided in a more timely way, with more complete information and more input from the team? And how does remote participation affect the formation of a learning Community of Practice?

Final Remarks

Having been part of the planning group that created the CAC's MDT process 25 years ago, it was gratifying to come full circle to be able to give voice to professionals who served as MDT members and to conduct the first study of the Delaware MDT process as it has been operating for several years. While few things in life go exactly as planned, the MDT process does seem to operate with the hallmarks of a CoP. As the team processes and procedures continue to evolve, I hope that future members will rely on their MDT teammates as they engage in the horrifying but necessary work of investigating crimes against children and remain committed to the CoP they helped

create. In the words of Helen Keller, "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much."

Appendices

Appendix A: State of Delaware: Memorandum of Understanding for the Multidisciplinary Response to Child Abuse and Neglect

MOU Between
Department of Services for Children, Youth,
and Their Families
♦
Department of Justice
♦
Children's Advocacy Center of Delaware
♦
Division of Forensic Science
♦
Office of the Investigation Coordinator
♦
Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children
♦
Delaware Police Departments

Prepared by
the Child Protection Accountability Commission
February 8, 2017

Prior Revision Dates: 2009, 1998, 1994, 1989 (Original)

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* For electronic access to full MOU, visit https://courts.delaware.gov/childadvocate/cpac/cpac_reports.aspx

I. MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE IN DELAWARE

Sections 901 and 906(b) of Title 16 of the Delaware Code require the use of a multidisciplinary team (MDT) response to child abuse and neglect cases in the State of Delaware.

DELAWARE CODE
State Response to Reports of Abuse or Neglect

16 Del. C. § 901 states: "The child welfare policy of this State shall serve to advance the best interests and secure the safety of the child, while preserving the family unit whenever the safety of the child is not jeopardized. The child welfare policy of this State extends to all child victims, whether victims of intra-familial or extra-familial abuse and neglect. To that end this chapter, among other things:
(1) Provides for comprehensive and protective services for abused and neglected children;
(2) Mandates that reports of child abuse or neglect be made to the appropriate authorities; and
(3) Requires various agencies in Delaware's child protection system to work together to ensure the safety of children who are the subject of reports of abuse or neglect by conducting coordinated investigations, judicial proceedings and family assessments, and by providing necessary services."

16 Del. C. § 906(b) also states: "It is the policy of this State that the investigation and disposition of cases involving child abuse or neglect shall be conducted in a comprehensive, integrated,
multidisciplinary manner that:
(1) Provides civil and criminal protections to the child and the community;
(2) Encourages the use of collaborative decision-making and case management to reduce the number of times a child is interviewed and examined to minimize further trauma to the child; and

(3) Provides safety and treatment for a child and his or her family by coordinating a therapeutic
services system."

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) seeks to establish best practice protocols for a MDT response in the following types of cases: Physical Injury to a Child; Serious Physical Injury to a Child; Child Death; Child Sexual Abuse; Child Neglect; and Juvenile Trafficking. This includes best practices for cross reporting, investigating, prosecuting and providing services to children and families. The memorandum serves to provide those involved in the investigation, prosecution and intervention of suspected child abuse and neglect cases with guidance based on existing best practice recommendations; however, the facts and circumstances of each case will determine which investigative actions should be taken. The Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC), the commission responsible for creating these best practice protocols,
believes that consistency in the approach to these complex cases will greatly increase the effectiveness of Delaware's response to these cases. CPAC acknowledges these guidelines will depend to some degree on the availability of the MDT's resources and the necessity of balancing priorities among multiple cases.

Delaware's MDT, which includes the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF) – Division of Family Services (DFS), Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS), and Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS); the Department of Justice (DOJ); the Children's Advocacy Center of Delaware, Inc. (CAC); the Division of Forensic Science (ME); the Office of the Investigation Coordinator (IC); Delaware Hospitals; and Delaware Police Departments (Law Enforcement or LE), recognizes that a coordinated response to child abuse and neglect cases has many benefits for children, families and MDTs. Therefore, in an effort to improve the quality of services and to provide more adequate interventions, these agencies are committed to interagency cooperation and agree to
utilize a MDT approach in these cases when possible. MDT intervention begins at the initial report and includes, but is not limited to: first response, pre- and post-interview communications, forensic interviews, consultations, advocacy, evaluation, treatment, case reviews, and prosecution. This memorandum may be helpful to those wishing to understand the framework for the multidisciplinary team response. However, the primary intended audiences are those involved in the investigation, prosecution and intervention of cases that fall within this MOU. This document does not create any legal rights for anyone including those facing charges or other proceedings arising out of any event covered herein.

B. ADMINISTRATION OF THE MOU
CPAC shall be responsible for the review, dissemination, and implementation of this memorandum. As legislative changes are made, the statutory citations will be updated accordingly, and electronic versions of the document will be disseminated to all signatory agencies. Should an agency make an internal agency policy or procedure modification that impacts the effectiveness or application of a provision contained in the MOU, that

agency will notify CPAC of such policy or procedure modification at the next regularly scheduled CPAC Commission meeting to determine whether a revision to the MOU is warranted. Otherwise, a review will be conducted by CPAC every 3 years to ensure current and best practice.

This memorandum shall become effective upon the signature of all parties and may be modified or terminated by notifying the Chair of CPAC. Modifications or termination may only occur with written agreement by all the parties.

C. DEFINITIONS

Abuse:
means causing any physical injury to a child through unjustified force as defined in § 468(1)(c) of this title, torture, negligent treatment, sexual abuse, exploitation, maltreatment, mistreatment, or any means other than accident.

Cause of Death:
the disease or injury that initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death.

Child:
means a person who has not reached his or her eighteenth birthday.

Children's Advocacy Center (CAC):
means a child forensic interviewing center that employs best practices by applying and adhering to nationally recognized standards and assists in the response to multidisciplinary cases.

Child Care Facilities:
include transitional living programs, residential childcare, foster homes, licensed child day care facilities, emergency shelters for children, correctional and detention facilities, day treatment programs, all facilities in which a reported incident involves a child/children in the custody of the DSCYF, and all facilities which are operated by the Department.

Child Welfare Proceeding:
means any Family Court proceeding and subsequent appeal therefrom involving custody, visitation, guardianship, termination of parental rights, adoption or other related petitions that involve a dependent, neglected or abused child or a child at risk of same as determined by the Family Court.

Dependency (or Dependent Child):
means that a person, who has care, custody or control of a child and who does not have the ability and/or financial means to provide for the care of the child, fails to provide necessary care with regard to: food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, medical care or other care necessary for the child's emotional, physical or mental health, or safety and general wellbeing. This includes a child living in the home of an adult individual who

fails to meet the definition of relative on an extended basis without an assessment by DSCYF, or its licensed agency.

Extra-familial Child Abuse or Neglect:
involves an alleged perpetrator who is not a member of the child's family or household, and the report does not involve institutional abuse/neglect. Extra-familial reports received by DFS are reported to the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction.

Forensic Interview:
a forensic interview is a single session, recorded interview designed to elicit a child's unique information when there are concerns of possible abuse or when the child has witnessed violence against another person. A forensic interview is conducted in a supportive and non-leading manner by a professional trained in a nationally recognized forensic interviewing protocol. Forensic interviews may be observed by representatives of the MDT agencies involved in the investigation (such as law enforcement and the Division of Family Services).

Institutional Child Abuse or Neglect:
any child abuse or neglect which has occurred to a child in DSCYF's custody and/or placed in a facility, center or home operated, contracted or licensed by the DSCYF.

Intra-familial Child Abuse or Neglect:
any child abuse or neglect committed by: a parent, guardian, or custodian; other members of the child's family or household, meaning persons living together permanently or temporarily without regard to whether they are related to each other and without regard to the length of time or continuity of such residence, and it may include persons who previously lived in the household such as paramours of a member of the child's household; and, any person who, regardless of whether a member of the child's household, is defined as family or a relative.

Manner of Death:
the categorization of the death based on cause. The 5 categories are natural, accident, homicide, suicide, and undetermined.

Multidisciplinary Case:
means a comprehensive investigation by the multidisciplinary team for any child abuse or neglect report involving death, serious physical injury, physical injury, human trafficking of a minor or sexual abuse, which if true, would constitute a criminal violation against a child, or an attempt to commit any such crime, even if no crime is ever charged.

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT):
means a combination of the following entities as required by law to investigate or monitor multidisciplinary cases – the Division, the appropriate law enforcement agency, the Department of Justice, and the Investigation Coordinator. The team may also include others deemed necessary for an effective multidisciplinary response, such as medical personnel, the Division of Forensic Science, a children's advocacy center, the Division of

Prevention and Behavioral Health Services, mental health experts and the child's attorney.

Neglect (or Neglected Child):
means that a person, who has care, custody or control of a child and who does have the ability and/or financial means to provide for the care of the child, fails to provide necessary care with regard to: food, clothing, shelter, education, health, medical or other care necessary for the child's emotional, physical, or mental health, or safety and general well-being; or chronically and severely abuses alcohol or a controlled substance, is not active in treatment for such abuse, and the abuse threatens the child's ability to receive care necessary for that child's safety and general well-being; or fails to provide necessary supervision appropriate for a child when the child is unable to care for that child's own basic needs or safety, after considering such factors as the child's age, mental ability, physical condition, the length of the caretaker's absence, and the context of the child's environment.

Unjustified Force:
force shall not be justified if it includes, but is not limited to, any of the following: throwing the child, kicking, burning, cutting, striking with a closed fist, interfering with breathing, use of or threatened use of a deadly weapon, prolonged deprivation of sustenance or medication, or doing any other act that is likely to cause or does cause physical injury, disfigurement, mental distress, unnecessary degradation or substantial risk of serious physical injury or death.

D. INVOLVED PARTIES
After-Hours Caseworker:
a DFS caseworker who receives calls made to the 24/7 Child Abuse Report Line and makes responses to said reports when they meet the criteria for a priority 1 or priority 2 response. The after-hours caseworkers respond to the cases on non-traditional work hours including nights, weekends, and holidays.

Civil Deputy Attorney General (DAG):
Civil DAGs prosecute civil dependency/neglect cases, termination of parental rights cases, and Child Protection Registry cases in the Family Court of the State of Delaware. Civil DAGs also provide legal representation to DSCYF in Family Court.

Criminal Deputy Attorney General (DAG):
Criminal DAGs are lawyers that represent the State of Delaware on behalf of the public and are responsible for the prosecution of criminal cases throughout the State from misdemeanors to murders. This responsibility includes the preparation and presentation of criminal cases before the Superior Court, the Court of Common Pleas, Family Court and in some matters before the Justice of the Peace Courts.

DOJ Special Victims Unit Investigator:
means a sworn DOJ employee responsible for assisting DAG's and various Delaware police agencies in conducting pretrial investigations from misdemeanors to felonies. In

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addition, the employee is responsible for assisting the DOJ with on scene serious physical injury or child death cases.

Designated MDT Medical Services Provider:
a physician who has received specialized training in the evaluation and treatment of child abuse.

Detective:
a police officer who conducts detailed and often complex investigations into serious felony crimes, which may require the use of specialized resources such as search warrants, subpoenas, electronic data, and evidence collection, for the purpose of arresting and assisting with prosecuting perpetrators of crime. Detectives may specialize in a particular field such as drug crimes, property crimes, fraud, persons/major crimes, youth crimes, family/domestic violence, or homicide.

Family Assessment and Intervention Response (FAIR) Caseworker:
a DFS employee responsible for conducting family assessments about reports made to DFS alleging child abuse, neglect or dependency. The employee may also directly provide or coordinate ongoing services, as needed, beyond the family assessment period for a maximum of ninety days. The FAIR caseworker may be assisted by a Family Service Assistant. FAIR services may also be provided by DFS contract.

Family Resource Advocate:
a CAC employee who serves as the primary liaison between the CAC and caregivers for child, adolescents, and adult victims/witnesses seen at the CAC and who is charged with assessing and addressing - through referrals to appropriate community resources - information, support and service needs, including but not limited to, mental health and social services. The Family Resource Advocate serves as a member of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), providing information and insight and advocating for the best interests of the child and family throughout the investigation.

Forensic Interviewer:
a professional member of the multidisciplinary team who has received specialized training in a nationally recognized forensic interviewing protocol to conduct forensic interviews in a supportive and non-leading manner.

Forensic Investigator:
a specially trained individual at the Division of Forensic Science that investigates sudden unexpected and unexplained deaths.

Forensic Nurse/Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner:
forensic nursing provides a specialized level of care for victims of interpersonal violence and trauma. Forensic Nurses bridge the gap in the medical-legal care of victims of violence by providing specialized care to patients who have experienced some type of abuse or trauma. A forensic nurse is a RN who has completed Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner training. Forensic Nurses have extensive knowledge in evidence collection and

legal testimony expertise. The skill set of a forensic nurse also include documenting patient's medical findings, collection of evidence, evaluating the scope and nature of a patient's injuries, and storage of physical and biological evidence. The Forensic Nurse becomes that liaison between the medical profession and that of the criminal justice system.

Forensic Pathologist:
a specially trained physician at the Division of Forensic Science who examines the body of the person who dies suddenly, violently or in an unexplained manner and through the review of events leading to the death and/or physical findings will determine the cause and manner of death.

Hotline Caseworker:
a DFS caseworker who receives calls made to the 24/7 Child Abuse Report Line. The caseworker documents the information made by the reporter utilizing a tool to determine whether: (1) the report meets the criteria for investigation or assessment by DFS (screen in), (2) the report indicates an investigation by another entity such as law enforcement is warranted (screen out) or (3) the reported information is documented in the internal information system or forwarded to an active DFS caseworker, if applicable.

Institutional Abuse (IA) Caseworker:
a DFS employee responsible for the investigation of allegations of physical and sexual abuse in out-of-home settings. These settings include transitional living programs, residential childcare facilities (group homes), foster homes, licensed child day care facilities (childcare homes, childcare centers), shelters, correctional and detention facilities, day treatment programs, all facilities at which a reported incident involves a child(ren) in the custody of DSCYF, and all facilities operated by the DSCYF.

Investigation Caseworker:
a DFS employee responsible for investigating reports made to DFS alleging child abuse, neglect, or dependency. The Investigation caseworker may be assisted by a Family Service Assistant.

Investigation Coordinator (IC):
the IC has the authority to track any case of child abuse or neglect, and is required to monitor each reported case, both intra-familial and extra-familial, involving the death of, serious physical injury to, or allegations of sexual abuse of a child from inception to final criminal and civil disposition. The IC reviews and analyzes these cases to ensure the criminal and civil legal response and protection system has followed best practices to achieve punishment for perpetrators and legal protections for victims. In addition, the IC oversees the establishment and maintenance of an independent database case tracking system for cases within the IC purview. The IC is responsible for analyzing collected data and statistics, identifying child welfare system issues and trends, providing pertinent data to the Child Protection Accountability Commission and members of the multidisciplinary team and making recommendations for system improvement in accordance with State and Federal law.

Patrol Officer:
a uniformed police officer who provides public assistance and preserves the peace by conducting traffic enforcement, investigating traffic collisions, conducting criminal investigations of misdemeanor crimes and some felony crimes, and apprehending and arresting perpetrators of crime.

Special Victims Unit (SVU):
a unit within the Criminal Division of the DOJ, which handles all felony level, criminal child abuse cases involving the death or serious physical injury of a child, as well as all sexual abuse cases.

Treatment Caseworker:
a DFS employee responsible for the provision of case management services to a family that has been substantiated or has been identified at risk for child abuse, neglect, or dependency. The services may be provided directly by the Treatment caseworker or involve the coordination of services provided by a DFS contracted provider, community-based provider, DPBHS, DYRS, or another State agency. The Treatment caseworker may be assisted by a Family Service Assistant.

Victim Advocate:
professionals trained to support victims of crime.

Appendix B: IRB approval for remote data collection method

← IRB permission to use Zoom for interviews

Lori Sitler
Wed 7/1/2020 12:52 AM
To: Leslie Alexander

Hi Leslie,

I hope this message finds you well. I have begun receiving responses to the screening survey for my study of multi-disciplinary team members and would like to begin to schedule interviews. I'm aware that in-person interviews are currently not permitted due to the pandemic and am writing to ask permission from the IRB to conduct interviews via Zoom as instructed on the IRB webpage.

I have a Zoom Pro account which requires a password to access the session. In keeping with my IRB proposal, I still plan to only audio record the interview using a micro-cassette recorder while conducting the interview. Data storage of the audio files will be the same as I originally proposed.

I am conversant with the Zoom platform and comfortable using it. Most agencies (governmental and non-profits) in Delaware have been using Zoom for meetings, court hearings, interviews, etc. for the past few months. I am confident that the majority of my interviewees will be conversant with the Zoom platform but if a potential interview subject requests an in-person meeting, I will defer their interview until the IRB permits in-person interviews. In some agencies, potential interview subjects are still working from home (at least part of the time) so Zoom could prove to be a more convenient way for them to participate in an interview.

Can you please let me know how to proceed with this request to conduct interviews via Zoom and if the IRB requires additional information?

Thank you,
Lori

Lori Sitler, MSS, MLSP
Doctoral Candidate
GSSWSR

Leslie Alexander
Wed 7/1/2020 9:37 AM
To: Lori Sitler
Cc: Leslie Alexander; Carrie Young

Using Zoom is just fine. You can also get a Zoom account via the College. You can record the interview using Zoom, which should work fine. You just want to be sure to save it to your computer, not the CLOUD and then transfer it to the ONEDRIVE within 24 hours after recording it. It might be easier not to have to use the audio-recorder in addition to Zoom.

I would check with the HELP desk about this. Recording on Zoom is not an IRB directive, but it seems it would be easier just to have to use one operation. Or you can certainly transfer the interviews from the recorder to the OneDrive. I just wouldn't leave anything on the recorder very long.

I am so glad you are beginning to get some responses.

My best -

Leslie

PS Carrie Young is cc'd because she is the RA for the IRB and will transfer all records to the IRB's OneDrive.

Leslie B. Alexander, PhD
Mary Hale Chase Professor Emeritus in the Social Sciences and Social Work and Social Research
Research Professor
Acting Chair, Bryn Mawr College IRB AY 2019-20
Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research
Bryn Mawr College
300 Airdale Road
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
(P) 610-520-2635
(F) 610-520-2655
email: lalexand@brynmawr.edu

Appendix C: Email memo from agency leadership

To: All Detective and Patrol Personnel

From: Chief XXX (or Division Supervisor in larger police department)

Date: Date

Re: Multidisciplinary Team – research project

For all who have attended the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) within the past three (3) years, you may be receiving an email from Lori Sitler (lsitler@brynmawr.edu) in the next few weeks asking you to participate in her study of the MDT. Her research will look at how the members of the MDT work together as a team to investigate allegations of child abuse. Ms. Sitler is looking to get feedback from current and past law enforcement members of the team in each county as part of her doctoral dissertation.

I have been apprised of the research and agree that personnel can participate if they choose to do so. Ms. Sitler is known to many in the justice system through her work over the years as the executive director of CHILD, Inc., faculty at Wilmington University and victim services director and PIO in the AG's office.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer and can terminate participation at any time. No one in this department, including [Chief XXX or Division Supervisor in larger police department] will know whether you have participated in the study nor will any of your responses that might identify you be shared with anyone else, including individuals in this department.

To: All Deputy Attorneys General

From: Deputy Attorney General XXX - Unit Head – Special Victims Unit

Date: Date

Re: Multidisciplinary Team – research project

For all who have attended the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) within the past three (3) years, you may be receiving an email from Lori Sitler (lsitler@brynmawr.edu) in the next few weeks asking you to participate in her study of the MDT. Her research will look at how the members of the MDT work together as a team to investigate allegations of child abuse. Ms. Sitler is looking to get feedback from DAGs who are/were part of the team in each county as part of her doctoral dissertation.

I have spoken with Ms. Sitler and the Attorney General about this research. The Attorney General and I agree that personnel can participate if they choose to do so. Ms. Sitler is known to many in the justice system through her work over the years as the executive director of CHILD, Inc., faculty at Wilmington University and victim services director and PIO in this office.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer and can terminate participation at any time. No one in this department, including [Deputy Attorney General XXX - Unit Head – Special Victims Unit] will know whether you have participated in the study nor will any of your responses that might identify you be shared with anyone else, including individuals in this department.

To:	All DFS Investigators and Supervisors
From:	Division Director (or Regional Administrator)
Date:	Date
Re:	Multidisciplinary Team – research project

For all DFS workers and supervisors who have attended the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) within the past three (3) years, you may be receiving an email from Lori Sitler (lsitler@brynmawr.edu) in the next few weeks asking you to participate in her study of the MDT. Her research will look at how the members of the MDT work together as a team to investigate allegations of child abuse. Ms. Sitler is looking to get feedback from child welfare system staff who are/were part of the team in each county as part of her doctoral dissertation.

I have spoken with Ms. Sitler and the Cabinet Secretary about this research. The Secretary and I agree that personnel can participate if they choose to do so. Ms. Sitler is known to many in the child welfare and justice systems through her work over the years as the executive director of CHILD, Inc., faculty at Wilmington University and victim services director and PIO in the AG's office.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer and can terminate participation at any time. No one in this department, including [Division Director or Regional Administrator] will know whether you have participated in the study nor will any of your responses that might identify you be shared with anyone else, including individuals in this department.

To: CAC Forensic Interviewers

From: CAC Center Director

Date: Date

Re: Multidisciplinary Team – research project

For staff who have conducted a forensic interview as part of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) within the past three (3) years, you may be receiving an email from Lori Sitler (lsitler@brynmawr.edu) in the next few weeks asking you to participate in her study of the MDT. Her research will look at how the members of the MDT work together as a team to investigate allegations of child abuse. Ms. Sitler is looking to get feedback from forensic interviewers who are/were part of the team in each county as part of her doctoral dissertation.

I have spoken with Ms. Sitler and the Executive Director of the CAC about this research. The Executive Director and I agree that personnel can participate if they choose to do so. Ms. Sitler is known to many in the child welfare and justice systems through her work over the years as the executive director of CHILD, Inc., faculty at Wilmington University and victim services director and PIO in the AG's office.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer and can terminate participation at any time. No one in this department, including [CAC Center Director] will know whether you have participated in the study nor will any of your responses that might identify you be shared with anyone else, including individuals in this agency.

Appendix D: Screening instrument transmittal email to prospective participants by profession

Screening instrument transmittal email for Law Enforcement Officers

Hello [name]. By now, you should have received an email from your [Chief or division supervisor] about research on the MDT process in Delaware. I am writing to ask you to participate in this study.

My name is Lori Sitler and I'm a doctoral student at Bryn Mawr College, where I am conducting the MDT research. I'm currently the Executive Director of CHILD, Inc., was a faculty member at Wilmington University, and worked in the AG's office in both victim services and as the PIO during my career.

I am studying how the MDT process functions through the collaboration of law enforcement, prosecutors, forensic interviewers and DFS investigators and supervisors. I plan to interview members of those professional groups from each county in Delaware. This study is not a program evaluation of the MDTs. I will be asking you to describe your own experience working as a member of the MDT.

First, I need to gather some basic background information which should take you less than 5 minutes to provide. The link below will take you to a confidential screening survey which uses Qualtrics, a secure web-based survey platform that provides a secure (encrypted) connection to the host survey service provider. It is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to complete all or part of the survey with no repercussions. No one from your department will know whether you end up participating or not. Your responses will be confidential and will only be reviewed by me.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at 302.762.8989 or lsitler@brynmawr.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board of Bryn Mawr College at: 610-526-5298.

QUALTRICS SURVEY LINK HERE

Thank you!

Lori Sitler

Screening instrument transmittal email for Prosecutors

Hello [name] By now, you should have received an email from the Unit Head of the Special Victims Unit about research on the MDT process in Delaware. I am writing to ask you to participate in this study.

My name is Lori Sitler and I'm a doctoral student at Bryn Mawr College, where I am conducting the MDT research. I'm currently the Executive Director of CHILD, Inc., was a faculty member at Wilmington University, and worked in the AG's office in both victim services and as the PIO during my career.

I am studying how the MDT process functions through the collaboration of law enforcement, prosecutors, forensic interviewers and DFS investigators and supervisors. I plan to interview members of those professional groups from each county in Delaware. This study is not a program evaluation of the MDTs. I will be asking you to describe your own experience working as a member of the MDT.

First, I need to gather some basic background information which should take you less than 5 minutes to provide. The link below will take you to a confidential screening survey which uses Qualtrics, a secure web-based survey platform that provides a secure (encrypted) connection to the host survey service provider. It is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to complete all or part of the survey with no repercussions. No one from your department will know whether you end up participating or not. Your responses will be confidential and will only be reviewed by me.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at 302.762.8989 or lsitler@brynmawr.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board of Bryn Mawr College at: 610-526-5298.

QUALTRICS SURVEY LINK HERE

Thank you!

Lori Sitler

Screening instrument transmittal email for Child Welfare Workers/Supervisors

Hello [name]. By now, you should have received an email from the Division Director or Regional Administrator about research on the MDT process in Delaware. I am writing to ask you to participate in this study.

My name is Lori Sitler and I'm a doctoral student at Bryn Mawr College, where I am conducting the MDT research. I'm currently the Executive Director of CHILD, Inc., was a faculty member at Wilmington University, and worked in the AG's office in both victim services and as the PIO during my career.

I am studying how the MDT process functions through the collaboration of law enforcement, prosecutors, forensic interviewers and DFS investigators and supervisors. I plan to interview members of those professional groups from each county in Delaware. This study is not a program evaluation of the MDTs. I will be asking you to describe your own experience working as a member of the MDT.

First, I need to gather some basic background information which should take you less than 5 minutes to provide. The link below will take you to a confidential screening survey which uses Qualtrics, a secure web-based survey platform that provides a secure (encrypted) connection to the host survey service provider. It is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to complete all or part of the survey with no repercussions. No one from your department will know whether you end up participating or not. Your responses will be confidential and will only be reviewed by me.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at 302.762.8989 or lsitler@brynmawr.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board of Bryn Mawr College at: 610-526-5298.

QUALTRICS SURVEY LINK HERE

Thank you!

Lori Sitler

Screening instrument transmittal email for CAC Forensic Interviewers

Hello [name]. By now, you should have received an email from your Center Director at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) about research on the MDT process in Delaware. I am writing to ask you to participate in this study.

My name is Lori Sitler and I'm a doctoral student at Bryn Mawr College, where I am conducting the MDT research. I'm currently the Executive Director of CHILD, Inc., was a faculty member at Wilmington University, and worked in the AG's office in both victim services and as the PIO during my career.

I am studying how the MDT process functions through the collaboration of law enforcement, prosecutors, forensic interviewers and DFS investigators and supervisors. I plan to interview members of those professional groups from each county in Delaware. This study is not a program evaluation of the MDTs. I will be asking you to describe your own experience working as a member of the MDT.

First, I need to gather some basic background information which should take you less than 5 minutes to provide. The link below will take you to a confidential screening survey which uses Qualtrics, a secure web-based survey platform that provides a secure (encrypted) connection to the host survey service provider. It is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to complete all or part of the survey with no repercussions. No one from your department will know whether you end up participating or not. Your responses will be confidential and will only be reviewed by me.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at 302.762.8989 or lsitler@brynmawr.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board of Bryn Mawr College at: 610-526-5298.

QUALTRICS SURVEY LINK HERE

Thank you!

Lori Sitler

Appendix E: Screening instrument by profession with informed consent created in Qualtrics

Screening Instrument for Law Enforcement Officers

Q1 This is a confidential screening survey. The data is being collected using a secure (encrypted) connection to the host survey service provider. Results are stored in a password protected account accessible by only the researcher and system administrators. While no absolute guarantees can be made regarding security, these measures provide safeguards against outside agents accessing the electronic data.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you can terminate participation at any time. No one from your agency or anyone other than me will know if you complete this screening survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be stored on Bryn Mawr College's secure Qualtrics survey management server.

Q2 I understand the consent statement above and I agree to participate in the study.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If I understand the consent statement above and I agree to participate in the study. = No

Q1 Name

_____

Q2 Telephone number

_____

Q3 Email address

_____

Q4 Since January 1, 2017, have you taken a case to the CAC?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q5 If you answered "Yes" to Question 4 above:

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Did you observe a forensic interview? (1)	○	○
Did you participate in a Case Review? (2)	○	○
Have you had a case open/active with the MDT within the last 90 days? (3)	○	○

Q6 Which law enforcement agency do you currently work for (if DSP, please also include Troop)

_____

Q7 Have you worked for other law enforcement agencies in Delaware in the past?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q8 If you answered "Yes" to Question 7 above, which law enforcement agency/agencies in Delaware have you worked for previously?

_____

Q9 In what year did you become a sworn law enforcement officer?

_____

Q10 What is your current rank?

_____

Q11 What year were you promoted to this rank?

_____

Q12 Name of your current unit (for example, Major Crimes)

_____

Screening Instrument for Prosecutors

Q1 This is a confidential screening survey. The data is being collected using a secure (encrypted) connection to the host survey service provider. Results are stored in a password protected account accessible by only the researcher and system administrators. While no absolute guarantees can be made regarding security, these measures provide safeguards against outside agents accessing the electronic data.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you can terminate participation at any time. No one from your agency or anyone other than me will know if you complete this screening survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be stored on Bryn Mawr College's secure Qualtrics survey management server.

Q2
 I understand the consent statement above and I agree to participate in the study.

 ◯ Yes (1)

 ◯ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If I understand the consent statement above and I agree to participate in the study.   = No

Q1 Name

_____

Q2 Telephone number

_____

Q3 Email address

_____

Q4 Since January 1, 2017, have you taken a case to the CAC?

 ◯ Yes (1)

 ◯ No (2)

Q5 If you answered "Yes" to Question 4 above:

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Did you observe a forensic interview? (1)	○	○
Did you participate in a Case Review? (2)	○	○
Have you had a case open/active with the MDT within the last 90 days? (3)	○	○

Q6 What year did you begin working for the Delaware DOJ as a Deputy Attorney General?

_____

Q7 Which county office do you currently work in?

○ New Castle (1)

○ Kent (2)

○ Sussex (3)

Q8 Have you worked in another county office in the past?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q9 If you answered "Yes" to Question 8 above, which county/counties have you worked in previously?

☐ New Castle (1)

☐ Kent (2)

☐ Sussex (3)

Q10 Name of your current unit:

_____

Q11 Did you work in another unit at DOJ in the past?

○ Yes (4)

○ No (5)

Q12 If you answered "Yes" to Question 11 above, which unit(s) have you worked in previously?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q13 What is your current job title/DAG level?

_____

Q14 What year did you begin working in your current job title/DAG level?

_____

Screening Instrument for DFS Investigators and Supervisors

Q 1 This is a confidential screening survey. The data is being collected using a secure (encrypted) connection to the host survey service provider. Results are stored in a password protected account accessible by only the researcher and system administrators. While no absolute guarantees can be made regarding security, these measures provide safeguards against outside agents accessing the electronic data.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you can terminate participation at any time. No one from your agency or anyone other than me will know if you complete this screening survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be stored on Bryn Mawr College's secure Qualtrics survey management server.

Q2 I understand the consent statement above and I agree to participate in the study.

  ○ Yes (1)

  ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If I understand the consent statement above and I agree to participate in the study. = No

Q1 Name

_____

Q2 Telephone number

_____

Q3 Email address

_____

Q4 Since January 1, 2017, have you taken a case to the CAC?

  ○ Yes (1)

  ○ No (2)

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Q5 If you answered "Yes" to Question 4 above:

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Did you observe a forensic interview? (1)	◯	◯
Did you participate in a Case Review? (2)	◯	◯
Have you had a case open/active with the MDT within the last 90 days? (3)	◯	◯

Q6 Name of your current unit within DFS:

_____

Q7 Which county office do you currently work in?

◯ New Castle (1)

◯ Kent (2)

◯ Sussex (3)

Q8 Have you worked in another county office in the past?

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

Q9 If you answered "Yes" to Question 8 above, which county/counties have you worked in previously?

☐ New Castle (1)

☐ Kent (2)

☐ Sussex (3)

Q10 After earning your bachelor's degree, what year did you begin working in the field of human services in either a public (state) or private (non-profit) agency?

_____

Q11 What year did you begin working at DFS?

_____

Q12 What is your current job title?

_____

Q13 What year did you begin working in your current job title?

_____

Q14 Did you have another job title within DFS in the past?

○ Yes (4)

○ No (5)

Q15 If you answered "Yes" to Question 14 above, what was your previous job title within DFS?

_____

Screening Instrument for CAC Forensic Interviewers

Q1 This is a confidential screening survey. The data is being collected using a secure (encrypted) connection to the host survey service provider. Results are stored in a password protected account accessible by only the researcher and system administrators. While no absolute guarantees can be made regarding security, these measures provide safeguards against outside agents accessing the electronic data.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you can terminate participation at any time. No one from your agency or anyone other than me will know if you complete this screening survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be stored on Bryn Mawr College's secure Qualtrics survey management server.

Q2 I understand the consent statement above and I agree to participate in the study.
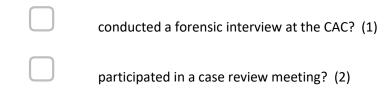
○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If I understand the consent statement above and I agree to participate in the study. = No

Q1 Name

_____

Q2 Telephone number

_____

Q3 Email address

_____

Q4 Within the last 90 days, have you (check all that apply):

☐   conducted a forensic interview at the CAC? (1)

☐   participated in a case review meeting? (2)

Q5 Which county CAC do you currently work in?

○ New Castle (1)

○ Kent (2)

○ Sussex (3)

Q6 Have you worked in a CAC in another county in Delaware or at a CAC in another State in the past?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q7 If you answered "Yes" to Question 6 above, which county or State have you worked in previously?

☐   New Castle (1)

☐   Kent (2)

☐   Sussex (3)

☐   CAC in another State (indicate which State) (4)
_____

Q8 After earning your bachelor's degree, what year did you begin working in the field of human services in either a public (state) or private (non-profit) agency?

_____

Q9 What year did you begin working at the CAC of Delaware?

_____

Q10 What is your current job title?

_____

Q11 What year did you begin working in your current job title?

_____

Q12 Did you have another job title within the CAC of Delaware in the past?

○ Yes (4)

○ No (5)

Q13 If you answered "Yes" to Question 12 above, what was your previous job title at the CAC of Delaware?

_____

Appendix F: Consent Form for Research Study - Bryn Mawr College

1) Title of Study: Delaware's Multidisciplinary Teams for the Investigation of Child Abuse: Communities of Practice?

2) Purpose and General Description of the Study

This research study is being conducted by Lori Sitler, MSS, MLSP, a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research (GSSWSR) at Bryn Mawr College, in partial fulfillment for her Ph.D. The Director of Work for this research is Julia Littell, Ph.D. who is a Professor in the GSSWSR.

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the functioning of the three multidisciplinary teams (MDT) that operate within the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) of Delaware to learn how people from different professional background, namely, law enforcement officers, DFS workers, prosecutors and forensic interviewers, interact to conduct joint investigations of child abuse. Data collection for this research is anticipated to take nine months to a year.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a current or past member of one of the three MDTs. You were one of approximately 50-60 professionals who completed a screening survey for this study. Because you have been an active member of an MDT within the past three years, you were invited to be part of an in-person interview. I plan to conduct interviews with 27-30 MDT professional who completed the screening survey. I want to ensure that law enforcement officers from various police departments as well as DFS workers, prosecutors, and forensic interviewers from the three county teams are represented in the study.

3) What does participation involve?

Initial data was collected through the screening survey you responded to through Qualtrics, a secure web-based survey platform. Following the screening survey, you were invited to participate in an in-person interview because you are a current or past MDT member who can help me understand how the MDT operates in one of the three counties. The in-person interview and short survey following the interview are estimated to take one hour of your time. If I have any follow-up questions or need clarification after the interview, I may call you for a short conversation. The interview will take place at a location of your choice where we can have privacy and an uninterrupted hour to talk.

This study is not a program evaluation of the MDTs. I will be asking you and other participants to describe their own experience working as a member of the MDT. I am interested to learn how the MDT process is working, how team members interact, how new members are incorporated into the team, and what barriers or conflicts may exist.

While I will do everything possible to maintain confidentiality – records will be kept on secure computer servers and I won't share any information about what we discuss or even whether you participate in this study - there is always a possibility that your employer, others in your agency or other members of the MDT may learn about your participation.

4) Confidentiality, Data Storage, Data Deletion at end of Research

Maintaining confidentiality is very important and I want you to know how I plan to ensure that your participation in this study is protected from disclosure:
- Everything we talk about today will be confidential.

- Your responses will be combined with responses from other interviewees so that no participants will be identified by name in the study.
- Audio recordings of interviews will be transcribed either by me personally or by a reputable transcriptionist who will sign a confidentiality agreement. The audio files will be deleted from the micro recorder after the interview is transcribed.
- Transcripts will be maintained electronically on the OneDrive storage system at the College. Paper copies of transcripts that I will use to code responses will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my locked home office.
- To maintain confidentiality and protect your identity, I will assign a unique ID number to your interview transcript, and I'll maintain the list of names/professional affiliations for you and other interviewees and the matched ID number on the OneDrive electronic storage system at the College.
- The short survey that I'll ask you to complete on paper at the end of the interview will be transcribed into a spreadsheet and will be linked to your interview transcript through the ID number that I'll assign to you. The spreadsheet will be maintained on the OneDrive electronic storage system at the College.
- The paper copies of the transcripts and the surveys will be cross-cut shredded at the conclusion of my dissertation.

5) Risks of participating in the study

Although I will not reveal your participation in this research study to anyone and will protect your identity in the final report, there is a chance of an inadvertent disclosure to your employer or colleagues. Such a disclosure may create psychological discomfort for you including a sense of vulnerability that someone in your workplace is aware that you participated in an interview and may have provided a candid assessment of the MDT process. To protect against any inadvertent disclosure, I will conceal your professional affiliation (detective, DFS worker, etc.) and the county where you participated in the MDT whenever possible so that you cannot be identified in the final report. I will check back in with you to make sure you are comfortable with any quotes or paraphrased comments that I plan to use in the report that a reader might attribute to you even if I conceal your county.

6) Benefits to participants or others

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research, however, you may appreciate the opportunity to discuss your professional experience with an interested interviewer and to contribute to research that may benefit the field.

7) Compensation

You will receive a gift card to a local coffee shop of your choice (Dunkin Donuts, Wawa, Starbucks, Brew Ha Ha) as a small thank you for your time in speaking with me.

8) Deception

There is no deception used in this study.

9) Voluntary participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to answer. If you choose not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of any benefits for not participating. You are free to participate or not and nothing will be revealed about your participation to anyone in your agency.

10) Questions about the research and rights of research participants

If you should have any questions about the research, please feel free to call or email me, Lori Sitler, (the Principal Investigator for this study) at 302-762-8989 or lsitler@brynmawr.edu, or the director of my research, Julia Littell, Ph.D. at jlittell@brynmawr.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please be in touch with Leslie Alexander, Professor and Acting Chair, Bryn Mawr College IRB (lalexand@brynmawr.edu; 610-520-2635)

I am 18 or older: Yes _____   No_____

I have read this consent form or it has been read to me: Yes_____   No_____

I have had all my questions about the study answered to my satisfaction. Yes____   No____

I have been given a copy of this consent form.   Yes____   No____

I agree to participate in this research. Yes____ No____

I give permission to audiotape my interview.   Yes____   No____

I give permission for the Principal Investigator to contact me by phone after
the interview if clarification is needed.   Yes ____ No ____

Respondent Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____Date: _____

Interviewer Name (please print) _____

Signature_____Date:_____

Appendix G: Confidentiality agreement with professional transcriptionist

As a transcriber of this project, I understand that I will be listening to audio recordings of private and confidential one-on-one interviews. The information relayed in these audio recordings has been willingly revealed by participants who requested and have been assured strict confidentiality. Therefore, it is of the upmost importance to maintain full confidentiality when conducting duties as a transcriber during a research study.

Below is a list of expectations I will be required to adhere to as a transcriber.

1. Keep all research information that is shared with me (e.g. audio recordings; transcripts) confidential by not discussing or sharing this information verbally or in any format with anyone other than Lori Sitler, the principal investigator of this study.

2. Hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews;

3. Ensure the security of research information (e.g. audio recordings; transcripts) while it is in my possession. This includes:
- Using closed headphones when transcribing audio taped interviews;
- Keeping all transcript documents and audio recordings of interviews on a password protected computer with password-protected files;
- Closing any transcription programs and documents when temporarily away from the computer;
- Keeping any printed transcripts in a secure location such as a locked file cabinet;
- Permanently deleting any email communication containing the data once the transcript is produced

4. Not make copies of research information (e.g. audio recordings; transcripts) unless specifically requested to do so by the principal investigator;

5. Give all research information (e.g. audio recordings; transcripts), back to the principal investigator upon completion of my duties as a transcriber;

6. After discussing it with the principal investigator, erase or destroy all research information (e.g. audio recordings; transcripts) upon completion of my duties as a transcriber.

Transcriber name _Elizabeth Gaffney_

Transcriber signature _Elizabeth Gaffney_

Name of Business and Title (if applicable) _The Rainbow Connection_

Date _09/03/20_

Appendix H: MDT Interview Guide for Participants

Thank you for completing the consent form and for agreeing to talk with me today. Before we start discussing your experience on the MDT, I just want to review a few items:

- For the sake of confidentiality of clients and case information, please don't share any names – victims, offenders, etc. – with me. We also can't discuss any allegations or illegal activities stemming from the MDT cases.
- You can ask me to go "off the record" to discuss anything you don't want me to record. If you request to go "off the record," I'll immediately turn off the recorder and stop taking notes. I won't resume recording until you tell me it is OK to do so.

[Note to Self: If a participant asks to go "off the record" during the interview, at the conclusion of the interview, I will ask whether any of the information shared during the "off the record" segment can be used – not as a direct quote - but in a general way to support a theme or patterns noted in other interviews or in the literature.]

OK, let's get started.

What do you think is the central purpose of the MDT?

      Probe for: role/value of forensic interviews and case review meetings

Can you describe your work on the team?

      Probe: what knowledge and skills do you bring to the group?

      Probe: what have you learned?

      Probe: what do you get from other members of the team – information, knowledge, mentoring?

      Probe: what has been frustrating to you about your work on the team? What has been helpful?

      Probe: your level of contribution to forensic interviews or case reviews

      Probe: how well prepared are you to contribute to team; training; experience

      Probe: has your role changed on the team over time; relationship with other MDT members; with partner agencies

How would you describe the dynamics among the MDT group member?

       Probe: level of trust; communication; leadership

       Probe: incorporating new members into the group process; mentors and apprentices

       Probe: process for making decisions as a team: consensus, majority rules, one person dominates

       Probe: conflict among team: give example of a time there was disagreement and how it was resolved by the team

       Probe: How do you think the MDT process is working currently? What supports MDT operations? What barriers exist?

       Probe: How well do you think your team members work together? Why?

Thinking about your team, I'd like you to reflect on the MDT as a collaboration

       Probe: what types of opportunities do your team members have to collaborate outside of the MDT sessions at the CAC? Meetings, trainings, social

       Probe: Are there ways in which the collaboration between MDT partners could be better/improved? Are there barriers to collaboration?

       Probe: Have there been changes to the team operations [since you joined the MDT] [during your time on the MDT]? Describe changes – positive/negative, what caused changes – policy, legislation, personnel

OK, now for some survey questions. [Share screen so participant can see survey questions and the Likert scale. Read questions and Likert scale responses to them.]

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