

## Mastering Role Clarity: Supervisory Strategies for Empowering Multidisciplinary Team Facilitators

As part of Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center's (WRCAC's) efforts to strengthen the multidisciplinary team (MDT) response in our region and with our partners across the country, I have partnered with Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center's (SRCAC's) Program Manager for MDT Development, Lydia Johnson Grady, to more deeply explore the importance of supervision specifically for MDT facilitators. This deeper dive comes from our desire to help empower and help sustain professionals in the MDT facilitator's role, many of whom have multiple responsibilities within their Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). Here are some of the core lessons we would like to share:

### Defining the Facilitator's Responsibilities

In a Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), the success of an MDT hinges not only on the collective efforts of the team members from each discipline, but also on the facilitator's effectiveness. As a supervisor, your role in establishing role clarity for the MDT facilitator is crucial, enabling them to lead effectively, streamline processes, and ensure the team can focus on its goals and work collaboratively.

One of your primary responsibilities as a supervisor is to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of your staff. This includes outlining the MDT facilitator's specific tasks, such as coordinating meetings, facilitating discussions, tracking case progress, and ensuring communication among team members. By providing a detailed job description and clarifying expectations, you empower the facilitator to take ownership of their role and operate with confidence.

### Supporting Professional Development

Role clarity also involves ensuring that the MDT facilitator has the necessary skills and training to perform their job effectively. As a supervisor, you should assess their strengths and identify areas for growth. Offering targeted professional development opportunities—such as training in conflict resolution, effective communication, or team-building strategies—can help them facilitate productive, collaborative discussions and manage team dynamics effectively. Like other disciplines listed in the National Children's Alliance's (NCA's) National Standards for Accreditation for Children's Advocacy Centers, the MDT facilitator role requires both foundational and ongoing training. Finding training that is most appropriate for your facilitator's interests, desired skills, and experience level can be key in helping them succeed in the role.

### Encouraging Open Communication

Creating an environment that promotes open communication is essential for role clarity. As a supervisor, you should actively encourage the MDT facilitator to share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Regular check-ins, consistent one-on-one supervision, and periodic feedback sessions can help you gauge your MDT facilitator's comfort level with their role on the team and provide opportunities for you to clarify any misconceptions about their responsibilities.

### **Promoting Role Clarity**

As a recognized leader, your actions as a supervisor set a precedent for the entire team. By establishing and promoting role clarity for your facilitator and creating ways to educate the team about the facilitator's unique and vital contributions, you demonstrate the importance of clear roles and responsibilities. This modeling can help the facilitator deepen their own understanding of their role while also positively influencing the team's dynamics.

### **Establishing Clear Lines of Authority**

Part of the role of a supervisor in any capacity involves establishing clear lines of authority and decision-making processes. Ensure that the MDT facilitator understands their role in guiding team discussions, making recommendations, and addressing conflicts. By clarifying where their authority begins and ends, you will support their ability to make informed decisions without hesitation, ultimately enhancing team effectiveness.

### **Facilitating Team Integration**

Lastly, as a supervisor, you play a vital role in integrating the MDT facilitator into the larger CAC framework. This includes helping them understand how their role fits within the organization's mission and how they can collaborate with other departments. By facilitating this integration, you reinforce the importance of their role and help them align their efforts with the overall goals of the Center and the MDT.

Establishing role clarity for the MDT facilitator at a Children's Advocacy Center is vital for the success of the entire team. By defining responsibilities, supporting professional development, encouraging open communication, modeling clarity, establishing lines of authority, and facilitating team integration, supervisors can create an environment where the facilitator can thrive. Role clarity empowers the MDT facilitator and enhances the Center's capacity to provide effective advocacy and support for children and families in need.

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Some of this information has been taken from a conference workshop that we have developed called Empowering MDT Facilitators: The Supervisor's Role. This workshop was first presented at the National Children's Advocacy Center's 40<sup>th</sup> Symposium on Child Abuse in March 2024 as well as for CAC directors and supervisors in the Western region virtually in September 2024. We are excited to present this workshop at the Chadwick Center's 40th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment in January 2025. For more information on the conference, visit <https://www.chadwickcenter.org/conference/>.

Other training opportunities available for MDT facilitators hosted by the Regional CACs or one of our partners include:

[Fundamentals of Team Facilitation 1: For New MDT Facilitators](#)

[Fundamentals of Team Facilitation 2: For Experienced MDT Facilitators](#)

[MDT Facilitator Peer Forums](#)

[MDT Facilitator Microlearning Series](#)

For information on other training options available for MDT facilitators, please refer to the [MDT Facilitator Training Guide](#) put together by the Regional CACs.

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Joyce Prusak is a Training Specialist with Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center (WRCAC). In this role, Joyce provides training and technical assistance focused on multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) and other issues related to strengthening the children's advocacy center movement in the Western Region. Additionally, she works collaboratively on training and resources for MDT facilitators through WRCAC's partnership with Regional Children's Advocacy Centers across the country. Joyce has worked in the child advocacy field since 2007. She served as executive director of the Coffee County Children's Advocacy Center for over fifteen years. During that time, she also served as Chair of the Children's Advocacy Centers of Tennessee as well as interim director of the TN chapter. Joyce earned her bachelor's degree in government from Georgetown University and her master's degree in organizational leadership from Johns Hopkins University. Joyce spent the early days of her career life in Washington, D.C., on Capitol Hill and also worked on both state and national political campaigns.

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