

Half A Nation

The Newsletter of the State & National Finding Words Courses



Winter 2005

In this issue:

Indicators of a Healthy Multidisciplinary Team

1

6

Half-a-Nation State Training Calendar

National Training Calendar 2004

7

8

Half-A-Nation State Updates

WINONA
STATE UNIVERSITY



APRI

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Indicators of a Healthy Multidisciplinary Team

Jodi L. Lashley, MSW, LGSW¹

Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) have dramatically increased in number over the past five decades, from a known three in 1958 to more than 1000 in 1985.² In 1997, 33 states indicated that they had "statewide participation" in the multidisciplinary approach to child abuse cases and 11 other states enacted statutes allowing or encouraging multidisciplinary teams.³ The longevity of multidisciplinary teams speaks to their accepted importance. The benefits of the multidisciplinary approach include reducing trauma to children, increasing the effectiveness of interventions, reducing the duplication of services, improving the quality of evidence, and clarifying roles among the various disciplines involved in investigating, prosecuting, and treating child abuse cases.⁴

Communities invested in the team approach to handling child abuse cases know that supporting a healthy, functional, multidisciplinary team is no easy task. The truly complex and challenging nature of forming and maintaining teams becomes apparent from the outset. Soliciting and maintaining the participation of diverse disciplines is an intricate process requiring dedication and hard work. The first step to building a

successful MDT is acknowledging this complex and intricate process. In the state of Georgia, a Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project was undertaken in 2002.⁵ The project's objective was to investigate the nature of MDT's to learn the elements necessary to make them excel. The project began with site visits to fifteen MDT's across the state. Each team held open discussions about its functioning, dynamics, and processes. Team members shared ideas regarding their success, overcoming roadblocks, and future aspirations. Strategies for handling team issues, celebrations, and evaluation were also assessed. Pre- and post-surveys were collected from team members and a general survey was collected from the 15 team facilitators as part of this project.⁶

Through these site visits and surveys, themes for healthy team functioning began to appear. After extensive analysis of the ideas collected, sixteen themes were identified as essential to the functioning of a healthy MDT. These themes became the basis for this article and the Multidisciplinary Review Team and Facilitator Handbook.⁷ These indicators, while not necessarily present in every team, represent the most significant elements of functioning teams as identified by these front line professionals. Consider each indicator and challenge yourself and your MDT to incorporate it, as your team deems appropriate.

1) Accountability for the Team

MDT's must have a plan to ensure they are functioning within their purpose and accomplishing their goals. By holding themselves accountable, MDT's can increase their credibility and demonstrate their abilities. Whether teams need minor tweaking or major overhauling, there are always ways to excel beyond current functioning. By seeking out new ideas and soliciting feedback, MDT's can work toward necessary changes and improvements. Furthermore, some MDT's may have a responsibility to uphold the standards set forth by the National Children's Alliance,⁸ state statutes, state membership coalitions, and/or local child abuse protocols. Accountability to these and other standards can be crucial to maintain funding streams and achieve the collective missions of the partner agencies.

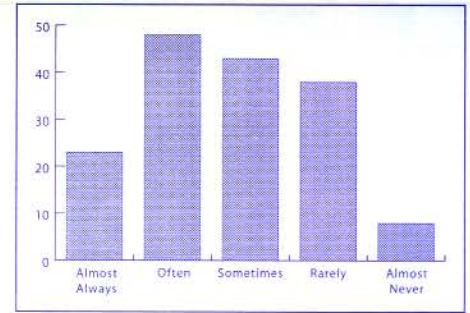
2) Accountability for Team Members

Being a member of a multidisciplinary team means one has certain responsibilities to the team. These can be as simple as attending, being prepared, completing follow-up tasks, and advancing knowledge and skills for the betterment of the MDT. As such, members are expected to uphold their duties and roles. While

individuals are responsible for themselves, unprepared or unreliable members can weaken the power of the MDT. Therefore, it becomes each member's responsibility to hold others accountable. Members must be willing to assist, teach, or even confront weak team members for the wellbeing of the MDT and for what it can accomplish for children. Significantly, almost all of this projects' pre-survey respondents reported that attending team meetings is a priority and that their team members actively participate.⁹

3) Burnout Prevention

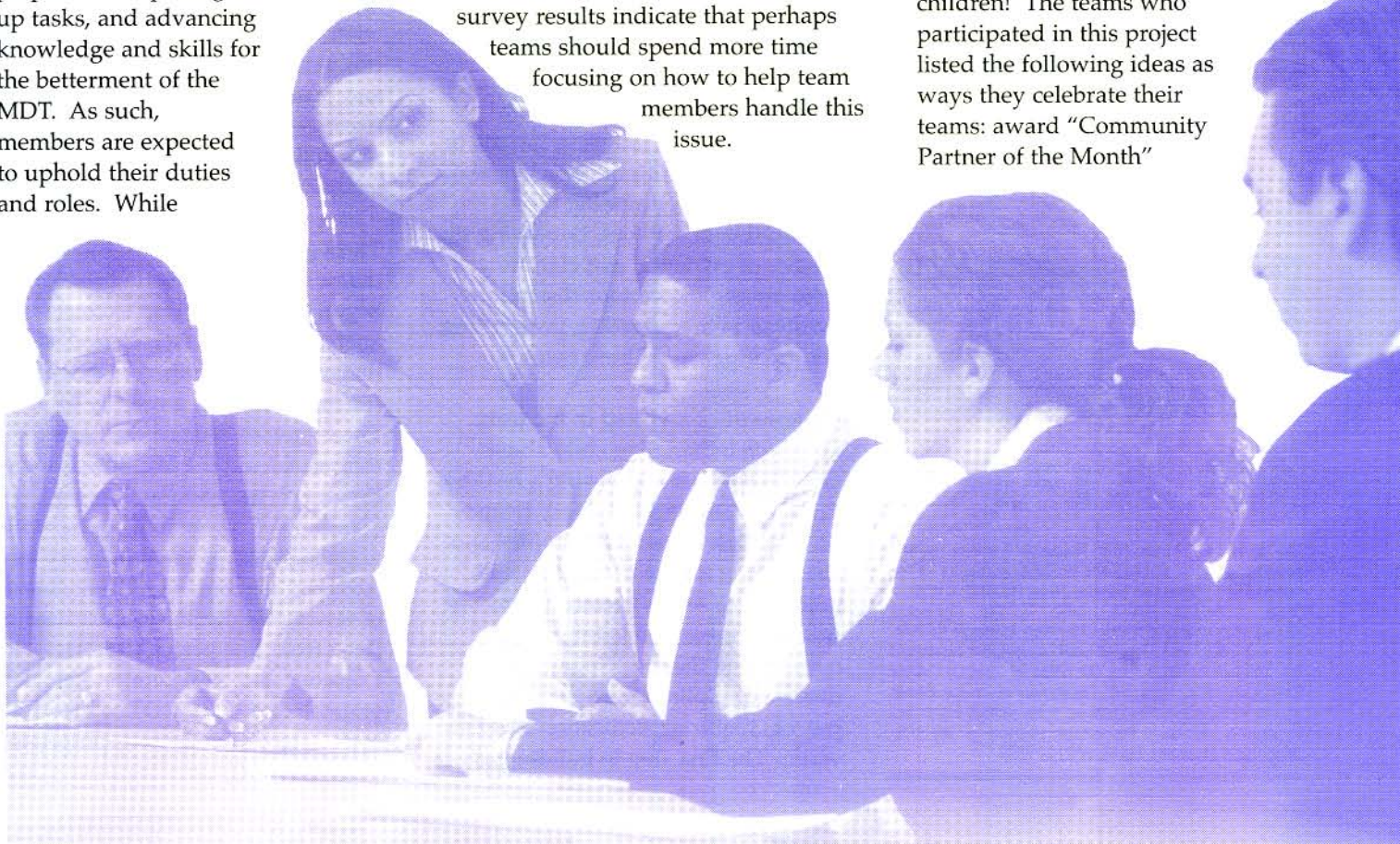
Working in the field of child abuse is stressful and overwhelming. Being a member of an MDT can seem, in itself, even more overwhelming. MDT's can recognize the stress of this work and attempt to create an atmosphere that helps members feel connected while educating members about burnout and its prevention. MDT members can serve as supports for each other as each tries to handle the frustrations and demands of this work. While the importance of burnout prevention was noted by each team involved in this project, survey results indicate that perhaps teams should spend more time focusing on how to help team members handle this issue.



Our team serves as a source of support and/or burnout prevention (167 respondents).¹⁰

4) Celebration

With busy schedules, deadlines, meetings, and endless appointments it may seem impossible to even think about finding time to squeeze in celebration. However, celebrating accomplishments in the field of child abuse is imperative. How often have your MDT members heard "I don't know how you do it" when addressed by lay people. These people know what they are talking about - this is hard work! It is work only tackled by those strong enough and brave enough to believe they can make a difference in the life of an abused child. Celebrate this work - for each member, for the MDT, and for the children! The teams who participated in this project listed the following ideas as ways they celebrate their teams: award "Community Partner of the Month"



certificates, host annual receptions for the team, give small gifts as tokens of appreciation, hold holiday luncheons or picnics, have the team recognized by local civic clubs and newspapers/media, have refreshments during meetings including celebratory cakes or desserts, and hold special celebratory events.¹¹

5) Clear Purpose

MDT's exist for a purpose; while this exact purpose may vary from team to team, ultimately we seek to thoroughly and competently review each child's case through use of a multidisciplinary approach. While some MDT's are geared toward prosecution, others may take a more investigative stance. Whatever the focus, an effective MDT must have a clear purpose that is known and understood by its members. Common sense dictates that for an MDT to do well, members must not only know what they are to accomplish, but also why they seek to accomplish these goals. Purpose statements should include the reason for the MDT and what it hopes to achieve. The majority of the pre-survey respondents in this project indicated that their teams were meeting their goals.¹² However, while these teams understood the importance of having a written purpose and written goals, only 47 percent of them had a written purpose statement and only 27 percent had written goals.¹³

6) Consistent & Total Representation

In order to work well together, MDT members must know each other. This means working together with some consistency. MDT's need at least one consistent representative from each agency to form the relationships necessary for a team identity. In addition, MDT's need representatives from each of the relevant disciplines. Absent representatives put constraints on the information gathered and

shared as well as insights and perspectives, thereby limiting case reviews. Kolbo & Strong (1997) suggest that, "team effectiveness is enhanced through...broader representation of and active participation by different disciplines."¹⁴

"Multidisciplinary Teams that function optimally are those that work together daily, even when not formally holding meetings."

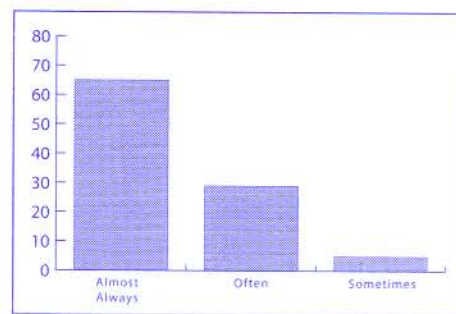
7) Evaluation

Incorporating evaluation is a vital assessment tool. Gathering team members' perspective is essential to truly gaining a sense of how your MDT is doing and whether it is functioning within its purpose and accomplishing its goals. Evaluation need not be elaborate. It may be as simple as a questionnaire or a dedicated meeting, including soliciting external feedback or review. Regardless of the method chosen, two important elements are finding a method that 1) ensures honesty from members and 2) challenges members to think creatively to envision an even more productive future. Team members who participated in this project indicated that their teams' best qualities included collaboration, communication, cooperation, experience, respect, teamwork, and genuine concern for the children.¹⁵ Ironically, some of these responses also showed up in survey questions related to how their teams could improve: better, more consistent attendance, better communication, cooperation, cohesiveness, collaboration, and coordination, having goals, being more organized, having access to more resources, having more time, having written agendas, and having more prepared members.¹⁶

8) Extended MDT Concept

MDT's that function optimally are those that work together daily, even when not formally holding meetings. When MDT members have the relationships to continue the team's work in everyday interactions, the

MDT is truly ongoing and encompassing. Engaging an extended MDT concept means members function better outside the MDT because of their membership on the team. It means members can now put faces to names and have the professional relationships to call and depend on each other when needed between MDT meetings. The extended MDT concept allows for more efficient meetings and more effective casework. The graph below shows the results of team members' beliefs that "Attending meetings helps me understand the details of other member's jobs outside the team."



Out of 98 respondents, not one respondent replied "Rarely" or "Almost Never."¹⁷

9) Identified Meeting Facilitator

Strong MDT's have strong leaders. MDT's need an identified facilitator who can recognize, analyze, and remove barriers to good MDT functioning. A facilitator can ensure the meetings run smoothly by using a written agenda and a preset meeting schedule. A facilitator is needed to create a space where members can say what needs to be said. A facilitator can intervene between members when necessary, avert miscommunication, and dissipate turf guarding. A facilitator can coordinate the MDT effort and help channel the work and energy of the team. An identified facilitator can help the MDT get where it needs to go and help the team achieve long term goals. Of the 15 teams surveyed during this project, 11 were facilitated by a child advocacy center representative, two by the prosecutor's office, one by law enforcement, one by a medical representative, and one by a victim/witness advocate.¹⁸

10) *Knowing Roles/Knowing the "Why"* MDT's consist of members from many different disciplines who work from their own philosophies and agency policies. Each member is unique and important; however, bringing these different disciplines to one table can be challenging. It is important for MDT members to know the role of others on the team, as case review can be arduous when burdened by unrealistic expectations. Sometimes it is helpful to remind members that not all team members "participate in each aspect of the investigation, but together they coordinate the total process, drawing from the resources available."¹⁹ Issues can arise when MDT members do not understand why other members have made certain decisions. Knowing that members are basing decisions on agency policy as opposed to personal preference, failure, or weakness helps members understand.

11) *Orientation*

Each team member must understand the team's purpose and process as well as the functions and expectations of other members. MDT's have a responsibility for orienting new members to their team, including applicable National Children's Alliance standards, state statutes, state coalition standards, and child abuse protocols. Also, knowing the history of the MDT can be significant for members to get a real sense of the team's struggles and successes. MDT orientation can reduce confusion and quickly move new members towards full functioning on the team. In addition, functioning MDT's may encourage new participants to let go of outdated investigative techniques. As would be expected, this is not always easy, as it can be "difficult for some professionals to break from methods that they are familiar with for conducting their own agency's response and investigation."²⁰ Implementing an orientation process can assist by preparing new members

for the more effective collective approach to child abuse. While every team in this project recognized the importance of having an orientation

"team effectiveness is enhanced through... broader representation of and active participation by different disciplines."

process in place, only 40 percent of the 15 teams had one.²¹

12) *County Child Abuse Protocol*

Some states require each county to have written Child Abuse Protocols outlining how child abuse cases will be handled. Clearly, no one protocol will work for every county or area,²² however, there are some common elements protocols should include such as the mission statement and/or purpose and goals of the MDT. This

protocol should be used to clarify each agency's role on the MDT and team member expectations. The protocol can cover confidentiality and serve as an interagency agreement. By having the MDT member agencies participate in the protocol creation process, each agency can be given equal opportunity to include what it believes is important. Going through the process of developing and modifying a protocol can help agencies bond and grow more committed to the team.

13) *Strategies for Dealing with Conflict*

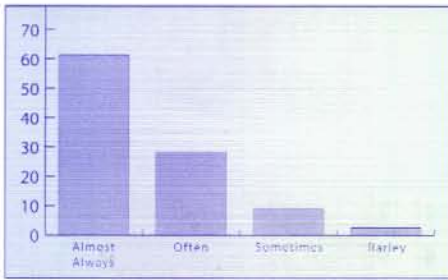
Due to the nature and purpose of MDT's, it is inevitable they will face conflict. Healthy MDT's can be prepared by devising strategies to deal with conflict before problems arise. These strategies can give the MDT a format and starting place, switching the focus from fault finding to dealing with the issue at hand. It is vital that teams address team issues,

not individuals. Allowing all members to have input regarding the resolution of conflict and focusing on strengths while discussing weaknesses is beneficial to team cohesiveness. Defining (or possibly redefining) problems as they relate to the MDT's functioning and purpose may place controversial issues into a more appropriate perspective.



14) *Supervisor Support*

Supervisor support is vital to a healthy MDT. Team members can better understand the importance of MDT meetings and what can be accomplished when the belief in and commitment to the MDT process comes from the top down to the front-line staff. Supervisory support of the MDT promotes easier access to information and better interagency communication and relationships. Additionally, supervisors can educate, encourage, and consult regarding problematic issues or conflicts. Pence & Wilson (1994) state that, "Supervisors need to remain responsible for ensuring that their agency representative(s) support the team concept and mission."²³ Furthermore, it appears that supervisors and agencies will benefit directly, as noted in the graph on the following page.



Participation in our team helps me do my job better (98 respondents).²⁴

15) Trust, Respect & Commitment

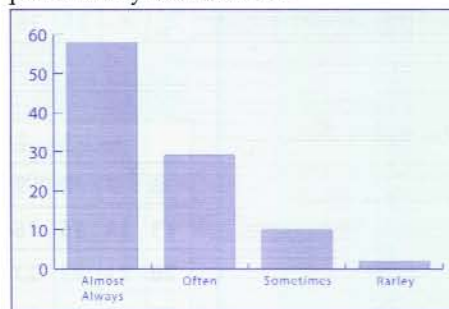
For a successful MDT, members must trust and respect each other, and they must be committed to the team approach to child abuse. To this end, MDT members must know each other's roles and limitations and they must know they can depend on each other. These vital elements come only with time and with members proving themselves to each other. Trust and respect help members speak candidly at meetings, resist overpersonalization of conflict, and communicate openly about challenging situations. In addition to trust and respect, commitment to the MDT process is critical. Committed members believe that being a member of the MDT is valuable and that the work of the team helps abused children.

16) Willingness to Acknowledge Weaknesses and Mistakes

Great MDT's, just like great character, are built upon the willingness to acknowledge and learn from weaknesses and mistakes. Acknowledging weaknesses can help MDT's develop plans to compensate for or correct these weaknesses. By accepting responsibility for mistakes, MDT's can begin the process of learning to improve and avoid making similar mistakes in the future. To do this, MDT's must avoid blaming and be willing to discuss situations as a team. This often calls for members to be vulnerable and put themselves "out there" for review, inspection, contemplation, and most importantly, for a lesson to be learned. Growing and learning only come with reflection and implementation of such lessons.

Functional teams that work hard on behalf of abused children are created and maintained through hard work. These Indicators are intended to help teams discover how to excel beyond current functioning. It should be noted that the necessity and/or appropriateness of each Indicator on this list is, of course, dependent on situational and environmental factors. Your team will need to make decisions regarding applicability upon review of each indicator. A study by Kolbo and Strong (1997) suggests that MDT effectiveness is enhanced through the "use of a variety of teams and configurations that best fit the needs of each state, region, or local community."²⁵

Furthermore, you may think of other Indicators that do not appear on this list. Do not let this list limit you – think outside the proverbial box. When considering whether you believe these Indicators are significant for or relevant to your team, reflect on whether these Indicators are already present and to what degree. If they are not present or need to be improved, think about how you might be able to inspire or implement these Indicators into your team. MDT's can accomplish great feats on behalf of abused children when members have foresight and investment. Note the results of this post-survey statement:²⁶



The children whose cases we review receive better services as a result of our team.

- 1 Training Coordinator at ComerHouse, an Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center in Minneapolis, MN. The author thanks Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia and Michael Buchholz for the opportunity to be a part of the Multidisciplinary Review Team Project.
- 2 As cited in Kolbo, J.R. & Strong, E. (1997). Multidisciplinary team approaches to the investigation and resolution of child abuse and neglect: A national survey. *Child Maltreatment*, 2(1), pp. 61-72.
- 3 Kolbo, J.R. & Strong, E. (1997). Multidisciplinary team approaches to the investigation and resolution of child abuse and neglect: A national survey. *Child Maltreatment*, 2(1), pp. 61-72.
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 62.
- 5 Funded by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services.
- 6 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. One hundred sixty-seven pre-surveys were collected and ninety-eight post surveys were collected. All fifteen teams involved in the project completed general surveys.
- 7 Lashley, J. (2002). Multidisciplinary review team & facilitator handbook. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia, www.cacga.org.
- 8 Murray, B. & Strickland, E. (Eds.) (2000). Putting standards into practice: A guide to implementing NCA standards for children's advocacy centers. National Children's Alliance.
- 9 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 167 pre-survey respondents.
- 10 *Ibid*.
- 11 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 15 general team survey respondents.
- 12 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 167 pre-survey respondents.
- 13 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 15 general team survey respondents.
- 14 Kolbo, J.R. & Strong, E. (1997). Multidisciplinary team approaches to the investigation and resolution of child abuse and neglect: A national survey. *Child Maltreatment*, 2(1), pp. 61-72.
- 15 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 167 pre-survey respondents.
- 16 *Ibid*.
- 17 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 98 post-survey respondents.
- 18 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 15 general team survey respondents. Note: One team had two facilitators.
- 19 Pence, D. & Wilson, C. (1994). Team investigation of child sexual abuse: The uneasy alliance. Sage Publications.
- 20 Winterfield, A. P. & Sakagawa, T. (June 10, 2003). Investigative models for child abuse and neglect – Collaboration with law enforcement. The American Humane Society, Children's Services.
- 21 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 15 general team survey respondents.
- 22 Pence, D. & Wilson, C. (1994). Team investigation of child sexual abuse: The uneasy alliance. Sage Publications.
- 23 Pence, D. & Wilson, C. (1994). Team investigation of child sexual abuse: The uneasy alliance. Sage Publications.
- 24 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 98 post-survey respondents.
- 25 Kolbo, J.R. & Strong, E. (1997). Multidisciplinary team approaches to the investigation and resolution of child abuse and neglect: A national survey. *Child Maltreatment*, 2(1), pp. 61-72.
- 26 Multidisciplinary Review Team & Facilitator Project. Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia. 98 post-survey respondents.

Half-a-Nation State Training Calendar – 2005

JANUARY

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10-14 Wichita, Kansas
24-28 Jackson, Mississippi

JULY

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11-15 Union, Missouri
11-15 Columbus, Ohio
25-29 Fort Wayne, Indiana

FEBRUARY

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21-25 Springfield, Illinois
28-Mar 4 Indianapolis, Indiana

AUGUST

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8-12 Wichita, Kansas

MARCH

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7-11 Columbus, Ohio
7-11 Cape May Courthouse, New Jersey
14-18 Columbia, South Carolina
21-25 Central Maryland
28-April 1 Union, Missouri

SEPTEMBER

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19-23 Jackson, Mississippi
26-30 Forsyth, Georgia
26-30 Western Maryland

APRIL

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11-15 Forsyth, Georgia

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17-21 Sayreville, New Jersey
24-28 Columbus, Ohio
24-28 Indianapolis, Indiana
31-Nov 4 Springfield, Illinois

MAY

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2-6 Charleston, West Virginia
9-13 Wichita, Kansas
9-13 Jackson, Mississippi

NOVEMBER

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7-11 Union, Missouri

JUNE

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6-10 Wayne, New Jersey
13-17 Forsyth, Georgia
20-24 Eastern Maryland

DECEMBER

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5-9 Forsyth, Georgia

National Training Calendar – 2005

JANUARY

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31-Feb 4 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

FEBRUARY

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14-18 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

28-Mar 3 CornerHouse
Advanced Training:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

MARCH

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14-18 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

APRIL

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11-15 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

MAY

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16-20 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

SEPTEMBER

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*12-15 Beyond Finding
Words: Gulfport,
Mississippi
26-30 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

OCTOBER

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17-21 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota
31-Nov 4 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

NOVEMBER

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7-10 CornerHouse
Advanced Training:
Minneapolis, Minnesota
14-18 National Finding
Words: Winona,
Minnesota

DECEMBER

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5-9 CornerHouse:
Minneapolis, Minnesota

* Beyond Finding Words is a three-and-a-half-day course designed to address emerging issues in the field of forensic interviewing. Although open to all interested parties, it is ideally suited to graduates of national or state Finding Words courses or graduates of the five-day CornerHouse forensic interview training program. For more information, contact the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse at 703-549-4253.

Half-a-Nation State Updates

2001 STATES:

SOUTH CAROLINA

In its first four years of existence, Finding Words South Carolina has reached 261 professionals from all parts of the state. The course's impact is evidenced by participation of teams—comprised of prosecutors, law enforcement, CPS, and CAC interviewers—from more than half the counties in South Carolina. The course has filled almost entirely through word of mouth advertising; each session has included at least one new team from a previously untrained county.

Two factors contribute to the success of the program. First, the design of both the RATACTM protocol and the Finding Words course makes for an effective training. The CornerHouse and APRI staff deserve accolades for creating a program that can be packaged and transferred to the states. Second, our local staff and actors are unsurpassed in quality and deserve recognition by name. Our core faculty: Dr. Allison DeFelice, Dr. Alicia Benedetto, and Ray Olszewski. Our actors: Paul Kaufmann, Bonita Peoples, Melissa Schwartz, and Jennifer Stephens.

South Carolina child abuse professionals interested in registering for the course may contact Charles A. Phipps, Children's Law Office - University of South Carolina School of Law, 1600 Hampton St., Ste 502, Columbia, SC 29208; 803-777-1979.

2002 STATES:

INDIANA

The week of November 15 – 19, 2004 Finding Words Indiana completed its final course for 2004, our second full year since certification by APRI. Over 135 child abuse professionals were trained this year. It hardly seems possible that three years have gone by since the Indiana Child Advocacy

Center Coalition was busily preparing for the arrival of the CornerHouse and APRI staff to begin our first training in Indianapolis.

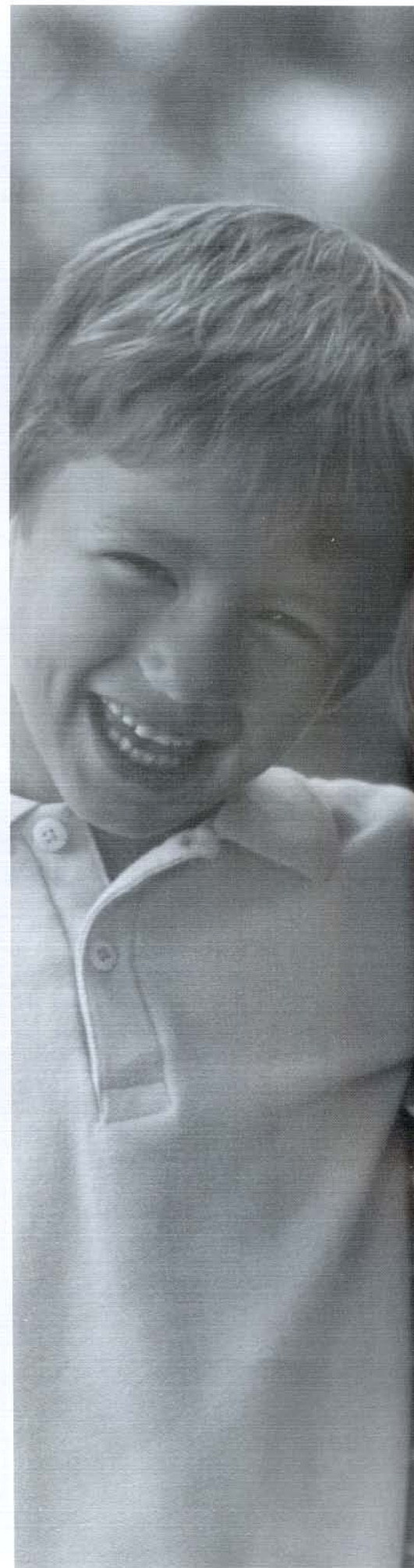
Not only was this most recent course our fourth training of the year, it also represented a new venture for our Coalition. The course was held at the Marion County Family Advocacy Center in Indianapolis, exclusively for Marion County personnel. Thirty-four students were trained including child protection investigators, law enforcement and prosecutors. The decision to serve our state's largest county was at the request of the Family Advocacy Center staff and their desire to train as many of their child abuse investigators as possible. We were thrilled to work with these professionals and look forward to at least two more Marion County training sessions in 2005.

In addition, several have already reserved spots in our traditional course settings for 2005. With a potential of a half-dozen courses in 2005, our volunteer Coalition Board recently voted to hire a paid coordinator. We continue to be amazed at the success of Finding Words and are thrilled to be able to equip, challenge and inspire the dedicated child abuse investigators and prosecutors across the Hoosier State.

Indiana child abuse professionals interested in registering for the course may contact Rita Johnson, current (volunteer) coordinator and Executive Director of Chaucie's Place, 1118 W. Main Street, Carmel, IN 46032; telephone (317) 844-5220/ fax (317) 844-5277/ and email at rita@chaucies-place.org.

MISSISSIPPI

Finding Words Mississippi continues to gain strength as a tremendous change agent for the state of Mississippi. To date, more than 180 multidisciplinary team members have been trained, and three training dates for 2005 have been set. Applications have already been received for the





coming year. This year Finding Words Mississippi produced a multimedia CD brochure to promote the training program and erected a website to enhance the availability of training information.

The first annual Advanced Finding Words Mississippi conference was held December 1-3 in McComb, Mississippi. This annual conference will provide training on advanced issues and updates of the latest research in child abuse investigation and prosecution. The 2004 keynote address was given by Victor Vieth, Director of APRI's National Child Protection Training Center. Ken Lanning, FBI (ret.) presented training on the Typology of the Pedophile. Other training included modifications and updates to the CornerHouse RATACTM protocol, investigations of children from drug endangered environments, forensic interviews in cybercrime cases, medical evidence, and post-recantation interviews. FWM faculty members, Tomiko Mackey and Carol Langendoen also presented their research regarding the influence of race and gender on children's disclosures.

Mississippians are honored that next year, APRI's national Beyond Finding Words conference will be held at the Grand Oasis Resort in Gulfport, Mississippi. Finding Words Mississippi faculty and graduates look forward to extending "Southern Hospitality" to conference participants from across the nation.

Mississippi child abuse professionals interested in registering for Finding Words Mississippi may contact Pat May, Training Coordinator at Southwest Mississippi Children's Advocacy Center, 1-601-684-4009 or visit the web site at www.finding-wordsms.org.

NEW JERSEY

Since April 2002, 251 child maltreatment professionals from 19 of 21 counties have completed Finding Words – New Jersey (FWNJ). FWNJ

continues to develop faculty members from each of New Jersey's three regions. The 2005 schedule includes trainings in Cape May County, Passaic County and Middlesex County. We hope to train an additional 120 professionals by the end of the year.

The program continues to be fully supported by the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. As a result, we are able to provide follow-up and support services to FWNJ graduates, including peer review and court preparation.

The advisory board of FWNJ, in conjunction with the New Jersey Child Abuse Training Institute, has submitted a proposal to the Department of Human Services to create a training curriculum for new caseworkers in conducting forensic investigations in civil cases. If accepted, the program would include participation in Finding Words – New Jersey. We are anxiously awaiting word from the state regarding this collaboration.

Eight faculty members and previous participants of FWNJ attended "Beyond Finding Words" in South Carolina, and were pleased to meet many other graduates and faculty from HAN states. NJ continues to be enthusiastic about the training initiative, and grateful to CornerHouse and APRI for their continued support.

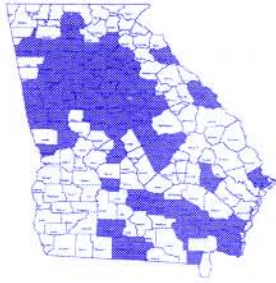
New Jersey child abuse professionals interested in registering for FWNJ may contact Rachel T. Heath, Project Coordinator/Forensic Interview Specialist, (201) 336-8265 or FindingWordsNJ@yahoo.com.

2003 STATES:

GEORGIA

Since certification of the Office of the Child Advocate for the Finding Words program, Finding Words Georgia has conducted seven training courses, graduating 39 prosecutors, 79 child protection workers, 39 children's advocacy center staff, 87 law enforce-

ment professionals and ten from related disciplines. Georgia's Finding Words course serves professionals across the state and has trained at least one professional from each of the highlighted counties on the map shown below.



Finding Words Georgia is proud to welcome the following new faculty to its team:

Amy Economopoulos, MS, LPC is the Clinical Director of the Anna Crawford Children's Center. Ms. Economopoulos supervises clinical staff/students, conducts forensic interviews and extended forensic evaluations, provides abuse-focused therapy to child victims and families, and facilitates multi-disciplinary team meetings.

Anique Whitmore, LPC is the Program Manager of Fulton County's Georgia Center for Children. Ms. Whitmore provides clinical/forensic services to a multitude of culturally diverse children. She has conducted over 500 forensic interviews, multiple forensic evaluations and facilitates the Fulton County multi-disciplinary meetings.

Danielle Levy, PsyD is the Program Manager at DeKalb County's Georgia Center for Children. Dr. Levy provides clinical/forensic services to hundreds of children, supervises clinical staff/students, provides clinical/forensic services to abused children and their families, and co-facilitates the multidisciplinary team meetings.

Georgia child abuse professionals interested in registering for the course will find applications at www.gachildadvocate.org or contact Sandra Darby, Administrative

Assistant to the Child Advocate at 478-757-2664.

MISSOURI

2004 was Missouri's first year presenting the training after becoming certified. Course evaluations gave consistently high marks to faculty and course content. 90 professionals were trained across three sessions with registration preference given to those applying as a team.

The coordination of the training will continue under the direction of Jerri Sites. In November 2004, Jerri began work as the Director of Training for the Missouri Network of Child Advocacy Centers (CAC's). Her position and the entire budget for Finding Words Missouri will be funded for three years through a grant from Missouri Foundation for Health. Jerri will also work with state agencies and CAC directors to develop training related to the standards set by the National Children's Alliance.

Since the coordination of Finding Words Missouri will be handled by the Missouri Network of CAC's, and every county in the state has access to the services of a CAC, professionals will be encouraged to apply to attend the training by submitting their applications through their local CAC. The CAC director will then submit a packet of applications to the MO Network Director of Training. This will increase communication between team members and CAC staff and make the application process less complicated.

2004 STATES:

WEST VIRGINIA

Finding Words WV began in January 2004. Three training courses were held throughout the year with each growing in attendance. West Virginia has now trained and graduated approximately 90 students and received its certification in September 2004. With this, the faculty of Finding Words WV is looking forward to 2005. There are plans to conduct two semi-

nars, one in the spring and one in the fall.

West Virginia child abuse professionals interested in registering for the course may contact Amy Leslie at the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorney's Institute, 304-558-3348 or visit the website at www.wvpai.org for more information.

MARYLAND

Maryland successfully completed its first year of trainings and has been certified as a Finding Words State. Three trainings were held across the state, and almost 120 professionals were trained in the CornerHouse RATACTM protocol. Our faculty continues to grow as we add new members to our already incredibly qualified core team of volunteer trainers. Two core team faculty members, Anne Hoffman and Sue Hazlett, conducted a presentation to educate professionals about the Finding Words program in Maryland. The presentation was part of the Mid-Atlantic Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Ocean City, Maryland last October.

Maryland child abuse professionals interested in learning more about Finding Words Maryland or in attending one of the trainings should contact the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families at (410) 767-4160 or www.ocyf.state.md.us

ILLINOIS

Finding Words Illinois received its certification on November 5, 2004. With our first year completed, we are looking toward our second year and what lies ahead.

During 2004, 119 participants completed the Finding Words Illinois training: 47 law enforcement officers, 17 state's attorneys, 27 children's advocacy center staff members, 25 Illinois Department of Children and Family Services investigators, and 3 additional professionals. Illinois' multi-disciplinary teams have seized the opportunity to receive forensic interview training right here in Illinois.

Illinois child abuse professionals interested in registration information should contact Marcia Rudin, training coordinator, at 217.528.2224.

2005 STATES:

KANSAS

Kansas is well prepared for the first week of Finding Words Kansas, January 10-14, 2005. Thirteen faculty members, from agencies across Kansas, have made the commitment and will be trained during 2005. Registration for the first class session has been filled. Even without advertising, there has been quite a bit of interest for the remaining two weeks to be held in 2005.

Friends University, Wichita, KS has offered the Marriage and Family Therapy complex for all three courses in 2005. It has the perfect setup; individual interview rooms with separate viewing areas wired for sound and cameras. Having this facility has made the initial planning much easier. Wichita State University has supported the program through its School of Performing Arts; eleven student actors have signed up for the training process.

Partial grant funding, which allows the training to be offered free to participants, was received through the Children's Justice Act. Additional funding has also been received thanks to Sedgwick County District Attorney Nola Foulston's support.

Kansas child abuse professionals interested in registering for the course may contact Kelly Robbins at krob-bins@pld.com or 620-872-3706.

OHIO

Preparation for Finding Words Ohio is at a fevered pace with our first training set for March 7-11 in Columbus.

Earlier this year Ohio put out the call for nominations and applications for prospective trainers for our program. We were fortunate to receive numerous highly qualified applicants. After

reviewing all of the applicants, we selected eight highly qualified trainers to represent Ohio. Our trainers come from the four corners of our state and represent social workers, advocacy centers, prosecuting attorneys and law enforcement. Attorney General Petro is energized about our team and is looking forward to seeing them in action during the coming year. Ohio's faculty team recently returned from Winona, Minnesota where they completed their first hands-on training given by CornerHouse and APRI at the National Child Protection Training Center. All agreed that the week was challenging but extremely rewarding. Each of our trainers is very excited about the coming year and bringing Finding Words to Ohio.

2006 STATES:

VIRGINIA

In 2006, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) will begin to sponsor Finding Words Virginia. Our efforts to bring Finding Words to the Commonwealth were bolstered by our multidisciplinary partners including the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council, Department of Social Services, Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, Virginia Sheriffs' Association, and the Chief Medical Examiner. Many thanks to our esteemed colleagues!

Through a rigorous interview process, Virginia has identified nine stellar individuals to serve as state faculty. All faculty members have demonstrated their dedication to serving abused children and exhibit a sense of enthusiasm for sharing their wisdom with others. Virginia's forensic interviewers have historically come from law enforcement, social services, commonwealth's attorneys' offices or the mental health field. Two of our faculty members who specialize in forensic interviewing are from these disciplines. However, another is a full-time forensic interviewer by occupation; we are encouraged to see this approach and the Children's

Advocacy Center model taking root in Virginia.

So much work remains to be done on this project in the upcoming year. We feel grateful to have so many motivated people who understand the plight of child abuse victims and the need for professionals to be trained in the best practices. Theater IV Virginia has graciously agreed to work with us to identify actors for the interviewing component of the program. We will be calling on other community partners to help us identify children for the child interviews. In the words of Aung San Suu Kyi, "We will surely get to our destination if we join hands."

Virginia's course coordinator is Holly S. Oehrlein, Esquire, Children's Justice Act Program Coordinator at DCJS. Ms. Oehrlein can be reached by telephone at (804) 371-0534 or by electronic mail at holly.oehrlein@dcjs.virginia.gov.

ARKANSAS

The Children's Advocacy Center of Benton County opened in January 2000. In May 2000, two young boys were brought to the Children's Advocacy Center for their interviews. The well-intended detective interviewed these boys and despite our suspicions, they did not disclose abuse. Unfortunately, the case was closed.

After that May 2000 interview, we became aware that individuals interviewing children in our state had not received training in child interviewing. In November 2000, we discovered that our child advocate, Janice McCutcheon, could receive training as a Child Forensic Interviewer. Since that time, she has interviewed over 600 children. Now our county has eight individuals who have been trained and these individuals continue to train others.

In May 2004, these same two boys were brought to the center by law enforcement to be interviewed

regarding new charges against the same alleged perpetrator. This time they both disclosed their abuse experiences. To date, six children have been interviewed in this new case.

There is no way to determine the course of events had those two boys been interviewed by a trained forensic interviewer in 2000. This training may have helped protect many other children over these last four years. This was the beginning of our journey that led to applying for Finding Words – Half a Nation by 2010. We strongly desire that child abuse professionals in the rest of our state have these opportunities for training and

are excited about our acceptance for 2006.

DELAWARE

Delaware is very excited to have been selected as one of the States to receive the Finding Words, Half a Nation by 2010 program in 2006. After two years of searching, discussions and meetings to find the best training program available for our front line professionals who deal on a daily basis with child abuse cases, Delaware decided to apply for this program. We were very fortunate in sending two people to the Finding Words program in neighboring Maryland and a review

of the course content and feedback from the participants made this a really easy decision for Delaware. Now that we have been selected, the real work begins for us in training our core faculty, selecting the training sites and locating actors. We look forward to obtaining the best program possible that will allow us to provide standardized training for all members of our multidisciplinary teams.

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