



[00:00:00] **Johnny Vallejo:** There is a sense of helplessness and hopelessness that comes when being placed in a silo. And being on a team, I think, alleviates some of those feelings.

[00:00:12] **Christina Rouse:** Welcome to the SRCEC Exchange, a podcast series for child abuse professionals who are looking to exchange innovative ideas and gain inspiration within the CAC movement.

[00:00:23] **Christina Rouse:** I'm your host, Christina Rouse, Program Manager for CAC Development with SRCAC. This season, we'll be focusing on the invisible threads that sustain the dedicated professionals in Children's Advocacy Centers. Our guests will partake in dynamic discussions around supportive workplace cultures, the importance of MDT relationships, what we are telling ourselves about our work, and so many other topics that will ignite passion.

[00:00:52] **Christina Rouse:** So whether you are a seasoned CAC professional or just starting out in your career, join us as we delve into this critical topic. [00:01:00] Imagine doing some of the most emotionally difficult work in the world. Now imagine having a team by your side, offering constant, sometimes invisible support, helping you keep going day after day.

[00:01:15] **Christina Rouse:** In this episode, we're focusing on the relationship between Children's Advocacy Center staff And their multidisciplinary team partners, teams that don't just work together, but lean on each other in ways that are often unseen. It's this ongoing support, both large and small that make all the difference in longevity and resilience in this critical work.

[00:01:40] **Christina Rouse:** Today, I'm joined by 3 CAC professionals who will share their insights on the collaborative forces that make CACs and MDTs successful. Our guests for this episode are Lydia Crivens, Deputy Director for the Memphis Child Advocacy Center in Tennessee, Christine Woods, Lead [00:02:00] MDT Coordinator for the Barron River Area CAC in

Kentucky, And Johnny Vallejo, MDT coordinator for the Covina CAC in California.

[00:02:10] **Christina Rouse:** Get ready to be inspired. So teamwork in a field as critical as child protection isn't just nice to have, it's pretty essential in our work. And data and research have found that the effectiveness of CACs is directly tied to the strength of our MDT partnerships. So when we think about the saying, teamwork makes the dream work, why does that sense of teamwork between CAC staff and MDT partners matter so much, particularly when we're investigating something as sensitive and critical?

[00:02:50] **Christina Rouse:** As child abuse and Lydia, I'd love to start with you and hear your thoughts about that

[00:02:56] **Lydia Crivens:** teamwork is so important because as we
[00:03:00] know, child abuse has so many layers and there's so many things that come up that having just one set of eyes on that issue is not. To me, the best way to approach responding to child abuse.

[00:03:14] **Lydia Crivens:** So when you have several people from several different disciplines looking at it and talking about it and discussing it, it helps to give a more holistic approach to how we're looking at the child and their needs when they're going through things in this field.

[00:03:32] **Christina Rouse:** And Christine and Johnny, I'd love to pull you all in on this.

[00:03:34] **Christina Rouse:** When we think about teamwork. Historically, those were operating in silos, and now we're all part of the same team. So what have you seen be beneficial with the teams you work with on why that matters?

[00:03:50] **Christine Wood:** So I think for me, one of the biggest things that I think about teamwork is That we are unique as a CAC and being part of this model, and that we have the opportunity to [00:04:00] focus on child sexual abuse.

[00:04:01] **Christine Wood:** Our other teammates, they do not have that opportunity. And so when we can bring that value to our teams and our team members can see that and respect us and see us as experts in that, I think it creates an overall. Respect and just a value of the MDT model, because a lot of times we're meeting with people that maybe we're just told, hey, there's a meeting at 2 o'clock on Tuesday and we need to go back to step 1 and really get them to buy in on the MDT model because we know children are served better when that happens before we can get to step 2 of like, that actually bring that value to that child.

[00:04:37] **Christine Wood:** So we need that framework of understanding one another as a team and respecting one another. And I think it is amazing when it happens, but it does take a lot of work to make that happen.

[00:04:49] **Johnny Vallejo:** So you spoke about silos. I think it's really important to recognize that you can place yourself in a silo sometimes.

[00:04:56] **Johnny Vallejo:** There is a sense of helplessness and hopelessness [00:05:00] that comes when being placed in a silo. And specifically with this work, and being on a team, I think, alleviates some of those feelings. Knowing that you're not the only one working on this case for the benefit of the child, and it's not solely up to you to determine the trajectory of the case.

[00:05:17] **Johnny Vallejo:** I think that's very alleviating. It's a culmination of all the MDTs, which make up the team, the CAC staff and its partners.

[00:05:26] **Christina Rouse:** And because you all have had a role as being MDT coordinators and our facilitators, we know that there are inherent barriers and challenges with working on our MDT. We could have a whole separate podcast about barriers and challenges, but my hope for today is for us to really highlight the strengths that working on a team bring to Not just us as an individual in the field, but as the larger collective.

[00:05:57] **Christina Rouse:** So Christine, I'd love to [00:06:00] hear what everyday actions or behaviors do you see from team members? That contribute to that supportive collaborative relationship.

[00:06:11] **Christine Wood:** So I'll say as an MDT coordinator, whenever I hear my team members say, I called so and so and ran this idea by them, or I stopped in their office and talked to them about this issue.

[00:06:23] **Christine Wood:** As the coordinator, I'm going, yes, that is it. That's it working. And that's amazing. To hear, and so that's kind of 1 of those little things, like, day in and day out that can help me gauge my teams, like, climate or temperature just to see if they're communicating with each other outside of our case review meetings.

[00:06:40] **Christine Wood:** And then, as far as positive things that I try and do that are maybe small, whenever a member comes to the center, and we know that they like a certain snack or a certain drink, or we have 1. member that we know always needs to charge her phone. And so we're like, we have a charger for her because their days are crazy and chaotic.

[00:06:58] **Christine Wood:** And if we at the center can [00:07:00] provide a spot where they can even rest or take their lunch break or know that they feel welcomed here, then that just helps build that team dynamic and know that we are supporting one another, not just when it comes to working these cases, but also as human beings.

[00:07:16] **Christina Rouse:** Yeah, we know teams come in a lot of different shapes and sizes.

[00:07:19] **Christina Rouse:** So, Lydia and Johnny, what have you all seen as far as really positive behaviors that contribute to that overall team culture?

[00:07:28] **Lydia Crivens:** For us at RCAC, we are co located. So, we have law enforcement, the Department of Children's Services, who are on site. We also have medical exams that happen on site. And that co location is truly beneficial for us.

[00:07:45] **Lydia Crivens:** Those natural interactions that Christine talked about when they're like, I just was walking past such and such his office and knocked on the door and we got a chance to talk or even just when they meet up in the kitchenette and they're talking while they're making

coffee. I love that [00:08:00] Christine brought that up because we kind of nerd out on, Oh my God, people are talking and it's not about a case.

[00:08:05] **Lydia Crivens:** So that's always a benefit that I see with co location as far as for our multidisciplinary team.

[00:08:14] **Johnny Vallejo:** Since we have two sites, so we have a satellite site Los Alamitos, we are co located and forensic nurse specialists. So forensic nurses have more interaction with our MDT partners, as well as our interviewers and advocates down there.

[00:08:29] **Johnny Vallejo:** So you get that natural interaction. with them. And we also do SART examinations on sites as well over there. In Covina, we see our staff making more of an effort to reach out to the partners that we don't normally see when they're there, like asking questions about themselves, not centered around the case.

[00:08:52] **Johnny Vallejo:** How is their day? How's their day going? If they found out that they have a child, like, Oh, how old is your child? What is their name? I'm [00:09:00] starting to see more of this. natural conversation happen with the staff members and also our volunteers and interns with our partners. And that just brings them a sense of kind of normalcy.

[00:09:13] **Johnny Vallejo:** They're there for a really horrible case, but the staff, the friendly faces that they see, the natural interactions, like they can just be themselves while at our center. I think that speaks volumes. And those are the kinds of behaviors and actions that I see from my team members with our partners.

[00:09:34] **Lydia Crivens:** Johnny brings up a great point that this lends to resilience on the team.

[00:09:39] **Lydia Crivens:** Those natural interactions and not working in the silos. Resiliency is a really big thing that we focus on in the CAC world. And what he's talking about is great as far as building resiliency within the team members that interaction.

[00:09:56] **Christina Rouse:** What word came to mind when you all were talking was just about the [00:10:00] relationship with one another and not just the relationship surrounding the case, but just the relationship as human beings that team members have with one another.

[00:10:11] **Christina Rouse:** How important is that dynamic of building connection and relationship Really overall impacting that whole team dynamic. How have you guys seen that at play?

[00:10:25] **Lydia Crivens:** It builds trust is what I've experienced. And I've seen that when you see someone and you talk with them regularly, you're able to talk not only about the personal things, but you trust where they're coming from.

[00:10:39] **Lydia Crivens:** You trust their perspective because you know them a bit more than you would know someone you hadn't reached out to or hadn't had a connection with. So that is one of the spaces where I see it.

[00:10:49] **Christine Wood:** I think it also helps on the days where we'll have cases that don't go the way that we want them to. So if you don't have that relationship and you don't support one another, trust one another, like Lydia was saying, those [00:11:00] days are going to be a lot harder than if you can look at that person or your team and you can say, I fully trust you in the decision that you have to make.

[00:11:08] **Christine Wood:** And even though it's not the decision that I want to make, I have that trust in you. And I know That we're going to serve the next child that walks in the door just as well as we serve this child, even though the outcome that I wanted didn't happen. And so I think building those relationships makes that whole process a lot smoother, because if you do not have that, your team falls apart right there.

[00:11:29] **Christine Wood:** Because everyone's just looking at their own perspective instead of looking at it as a team. And I think that's 1 of the things to that. I want to ensure that every member on my team feels like they're an expert in their field and that they're valued because a lot of times in these situations, maybe our investigators on the team.

[00:11:48] **Christine Wood:** or our prosecutors. They might speak up more, might have a louder voice in the room. But when you are someone that sees that child every day or someone that's interacting with them in a more therapeutic setting or [00:12:00] something to that nature, those updates are so critical to the team. We sit in meetings and we'll have an investigator say, I can't locate this child.

[00:12:08] **Christine Wood:** And we'll have some from the school be like, well, they're in math class. And that is the team working right there. Just ensuring that everyone feels like their voice and their value is appreciated by the team. And that that's how it works is with everyone. And when you're not there, we're missing you and making sure they know that.

[00:12:27] **Johnny Vallejo:** I think something that Lydia and Christine said, definitely trust, building that trust, those relationship building is really important, especially when it comes to your partners, because they're more inclined to come back to you if they feel that they can trust you, that you've actually been personable with them and they can trust you as a person.

[00:12:51] **Johnny Vallejo:** And as an institution as well, as an agency, so they're more inclined to come back to you if you spend a few more minutes with that partner, just [00:13:00] getting to know who they are as a person. It also helps the team know that they have their days too. They're not made of steel. They're just human, just like everyone else, and they're investigators in their own rights.

[00:13:14] **Johnny Vallejo:** Whether it's a social worker, a DA, or a law enforcement detective, they're all investigators and they all go through a really hard time. So, I see at our center, a lot of the time, like, it's so alleviating for the partner, too. To just be there, to just unwind, and kind of just decompress. Because they know that that's a place of safety and it's a very friendly environment for not only the family, but also for our partners.

[00:13:44] **Johnny Vallejo:** And that's something that I see at our center

[00:13:46] **Lydia Crivens:** and also when you build trust with the team. It also helps when there are disagreements or when we don't agree on

different cases, because we understand that they're coming from a different perspective. I trust [00:14:00] that where they're coming from. Is from a place of professional knowledge in a place of just their wisdom in their field.

[00:14:07] **Lydia Crivens:** So, if I have that trust and support in you, even when I don't agree with what you're saying, I respect where you're coming from.

[00:14:16] **Christine Wood:** I was just going to add to what Johnny was speaking about of creating this space of peace for them, because. We get to do that. And that's so exciting because we don't know what they're going back to.

[00:14:28] **Christine Wood:** And so we might be the only space where they have the time to decompress or process this specific case or that it didn't go the way they wanted or this different perspective. Like Lydia was saying, like, we might be the only space for that. And so getting to do that is a true opportunity that creates that teamwork, because if they feel comfortable and they feel at peace at your center, then they're going to see the value in the MDT model and in the CAC.

[00:14:53] **Christine Wood:** And like Johnny said, then they're going to return and then we know every child is served better because of that. And that's [00:15:00] amazing when you get to watch that happen.

[00:15:02] **Christina Rouse:** Yeah, with kind of that dynamic of. Understanding each person on your team. Christine, you mentioned you have 10 different MDTs and I'm sure they're like all different children that we have.

[00:15:17] **Christina Rouse:** And so what are some regular practices or maybe some unique things about your teams that bring them together? Whether it's. Inside jokes or swag. What are some things that make your teams feel like, yes, this is my team. I belong to it. I'm a value on it. What are some things you all do?

[00:15:39] **Christine Wood:** So we do an MDT honors award ceremony each year.

[00:15:44] **Christine Wood:** And that's where they are nominated from their fellow members and they receive awards. And it's just an amazing day. We get to really honor that work that we don't know if that's happening. And so we know and get to hear and get to see that [00:16:00] you might spend two weeks trying to locate someone and then you make it out there and they're not there.

[00:16:04] **Christine Wood:** And you're back at square one. Or we get to hear about you going to visit this child on their lunch break because that was the only safe time to do that. We get to hear that and our fellow members get to hear that. And so when they get to nominate each other for that hard work, it is amazing. It's a joy just to be able to read all the nominations, but then to get to have that day where we get to honor them and see maybe past winners or people who aren't even receiving an award come out and support their team.

[00:16:33] **Christine Wood:** Is amazing. Like I call it a bright day at the CAC because it fills me with so much joy and goodness. And just like, this is our team and I'm so proud of you all every day. And it's so amazing. And so I love that. And we also do like quarterly MDT shout outs, things like that through MDT newsletter. We have a shout out board in our monitoring room.

[00:16:54] **Christine Wood:** Um, so just like little things like that or if we hear about team members that maybe have had to stay [00:17:00] at their office with a child because they're waiting placement and we can send them lunch or we can do something just like little things to where if you're listening to them and you hear a need that you can meet that you meet it.

[00:17:11] **Johnny Vallejo:** I think that's incredible, actually. The shoutouts, actually having a newsletter for the MDT, that's really incredible. That's actually giving me a lot of ideas on our end on what we can do for MDT because they're so deserving of that. For us, Words of appreciation always. Swag, whether that's pens, notepads, and stuff like that.

[00:17:33] **Johnny Vallejo:** We're working on getting like stress balls and like fidget toys because those work just as well. But a lot of the times like food, here brings everyone together. So, often times we have lunch together. We'll get like pizza, we'll get like local Mexican food or whatever we're feeling that day. We always include our partners in that equation because we know that our partners are very on the go and maybe they're like [00:18:00] 7 eleven stops, you know, get them that hot dog and we kind of want to just add another alternative of like a meal that day, but lunches and food Really bring us together.

[00:18:13] **Lydia Crivens:** Thousand percent food is the great unifier, breaking bread and chatting over food is always great. Yes. Christine brought up our honors day. It's a hit each year where we honor the team members and we also honor our volunteers and community partners as well. In our honors day, another larger sized event, we have a holiday party where we get together during the holidays and bring the team together.

[00:18:40] **Lydia Crivens:** We have smaller things throughout the year. Like, we'll have an ice cream social. We'll just have a ice cream truck pull up and we'll cover the cost of the ice cream. Things like that are. On a smaller scale than on an awards program, but it all works together in helping to kind of build that [00:19:00] team feeling outside of the work.

[00:19:02] **Lydia Crivens:** And so we also do swag like Johnny does as we do a spring fling where we're outside and we'll have activities and games. So there are so many opportunities to build the work outside of the work.

[00:19:18] **Christina Rouse:** How have you all seen that contribute to individuals? re ignition or re commitment to that vision and mission of the CAC.

[00:19:28] **Christina Rouse:** How do those things impact individuals?

[00:19:32] **Lydia Crivens:** I'm totally going to make up a word, but it kind of de automates what we do because a lot of times we get into our routine and it's very systematic. I'm going to do my cases and I'm going to talk about my case and this and that. Everything is so structured. And so when

you have those times where you like, kind of break away from that break out of the cycle of I'm just doing my work and getting it done.

[00:19:56] **Lydia Crivens:** Oh, these are people I'm interacting with. 1 of the things I say at the beginning [00:20:00] of our case review. I say, remember, we're not just talking about cases. We're talking about people. We're talking about Children. We're talking about families. We're talking about investigators who are real people. So that's just 1 thing that I think it helps kind of humanize us.

[00:20:17] **Lydia Crivens:** I think that's a better word than automate, but it humanizes the process and kind of brings us back to ourselves.

[00:20:27] **Johnny Vallejo:** Yes, that's so important, Lydia, the word humanized. I 100 percent agree wholeheartedly with that, humanizing us. And I've heard from detectives, a lot of detectives, actually a handful of social workers too, that coming to the CAC for them is actually a really nice and fun experience.

[00:20:49] **Johnny Vallejo:** They actually are looking forward to coming to the CAC. And I know it's less so about the circumstances behind their case. Yes, it's about. Coming to the CAC [00:21:00] knowing that they're going to see the staff. Know that they're going to be in good company. Know that it's not just them and that they're working with a really good team that actually cares as well.

[00:21:12] **Johnny Vallejo:** So, that's what I've gotten from a lot of law enforcement and DCFS is that they really enjoy coming to the center and they're looking forward to coming back. Something that I tell my partners, I hope to see you soon, but not too soon. because of the circumstances behind that. I would love to see you just any day, but I know that time cases, they don't a lot for that, but every time that they're here, hopefully it's a good experience.

[00:21:39] **Johnny Vallejo:** Every single time they come back. So, but that's what I've actually heard from people.

[00:21:45] **Christine Wood:** I think on an individual level, when you get to hear words, like, maybe through the shout out or through a nomination from an award from your fellow team members, it just reassures you that you're doing this work and that other people see it and then [00:22:00] that pushes you forward because a lot of times you maybe do feel unseen or you maybe are a brand new investigator and you're like, I have no idea what I'm doing.

[00:22:09] **Christine Wood:** But then you get this just like, yeah, little piece of paper that says, we're so thankful that you stayed with this child all night at the C. A. C. And that that is what matters. Then you can carry that with you on the hard days because there's people that are seeing you when you feel unseen. And I think that makes a huge impact on this team.

[00:22:27] **Lydia Crivens:** That's an awesome point, Christine, I of our award recipients, our award was last month, and I of the award recipients, she was on medical leave actually during the awards. And she was able to come in and she said, this just gave me what I needed to keep doing what I'm doing each day and it was her speech was so inspiring.

[00:22:52] **Lydia Crivens:** I'm a people watcher and I was watching the audience as she was speaking and I was listening to people afterwards who were just so [00:23:00] encouraged to know that it does get hard and it does weigh on us. But knowing that there are people who appreciate what you do each day really helps. and how we keep going in this work.

[00:23:13] **Christine Wood:** I think what Lydia just said there of it does get hard and taking that time to acknowledge that Also is so helpful and not that we're the C. A. C. And we're just like so happy and smiley and like, yes, we are. But we also can sit with you on the hard days and we can help you and encourage you on those days.

[00:23:34] **Christine Wood:** And I think that that's something that's really important when you have these teams that you're coordinating or facilitating and being able to kind of gauge what kind of day they're having. And tune into that and know that there are hard days and that it's okay that there are hard days and that we're going to lean into that hardness instead of feel like we just have to be positive all the time.

[00:23:56] **Christina Rouse:** Yeah, I love that. There's 1 thing about loving the [00:24:00] work, but then also living and sitting with the work as well. So when we think about because we know we have so many different voices on our team and sometimes the loud voices overshadow others. Or big gestures or large behavior overshadow others. I want you to think about some of the champions that you have on your team.

[00:24:22] **Christina Rouse:** Maybe they're in leadership positions. Maybe they're direct service workers. Maybe they're interns. So when you think about those cheerleaders, those conveners, those. What do those team members bring to the dynamic of a team?

[00:24:37] **Lydia Crivens:** So we call our multidisciplinary team ct, which is for the Child Protective Invest, the Child Protective Investigation team and our CT coordinator.

[00:24:48] **Lydia Crivens:** She is so good about sending out notes. To people like notes of encouragement. So not only does she do the formal work of convening. She does the informal [00:25:00] work of, hey, I see you. I'm letting your supervisor. No, this is well, bring such a wonderful dynamic. And that's a perfect person to have in that role is someone who sees the people and sees the work and recognizes.

[00:25:15] **Lydia Crivens:** That we don't always get the recognition that we like or we deserve, but she sees that and does that. And it encourages the team members.

[00:25:26] **Christine Wood:** For me, I think about our team members that maybe hold a lot of history and I've been part of our team for a longer time because I've been in my role for six years and there was only one other person who was part of all 10 teams at the same time as me and I just remember starting and wanting to be like, Can we have lunch?

[00:25:45] **Christine Wood:** Can you tell me about all of these teams and all of these dynamics? Because that is such a unique perspective to sit on all 10 of our teams. And that just holds so much value. And she's also the person I know I can look at in any meeting. And [00:26:00] if I'm like, help me, she like has a joke and that can just like kind of bridge maybe from one

case to the next because maybe this one was really difficult and it's hard to just say, okay, we're going to put it on a 30 day review or 60 day review and you kind of need that bridge.

[00:26:16] **Christine Wood:** And so knowing, like, just with eye contact, you know, that you can just have someone in your corner. And then I just think about. People that truly understand the MDT model on our teams and are there and they are bought in and I just have so much thankfulness when we are going over things or maybe there's a new detective and they're like, Hey, this is what you need to do or.

[00:26:39] **Christine Wood:** Something like that, or we have a wonderful Commonwealth attorney in our home county who's fully bought in with us, and she just ensures that our team understands what the CAC is and that she expects them to use the CAC, so then they in turn have that first time with us, and then we get to take it from there, but just having that buy in [00:27:00] from our team and knowing that who you can kind of count on to fully understand and be like your cheerleader is amazing to it.

[00:27:08] **Christine Wood:** When you're sitting in a room that can be kind of intimidating, especially when I started out. Like, I remember being like, how am I supposed to talk to these people? I'm like, no one to them. And then now forming those relationships and being able to do that with confidence and facilitate my team with confidence.

[00:27:25] **Christine Wood:** But. Knowing that there were people in my corner from day one was really helpful.

[00:27:29] **Johnny Vallejo:** When I think of our champions, our cheerleaders, I really think of our more seasoned staff. So I think of our lead forensic interviewer who has been doing this for over 15 years. Her name is Patsy and she will go above and beyond for anyone and everyone that comes through those CAC doors.

[00:27:56] **Johnny Vallejo:** She's gone above and beyond for every single person, [00:28:00] staffing included. And you know that she is very highly reliable, dependable. She has paved the way for other interviewers as a trainer. And I truly think of her as one of our champions for our

cheerleaders. I look to our volunteers, our interns, the ones who are providing direct service for us every single day.

[00:28:25] **Johnny Vallejo:** They're here free of charge. They don't need to be here, but they choose to be, and they have a deep connection to the mission as it stands. And I look at that. I look at. The person who's done this for many years and the people who are bringing fresh life and energy to the center, that really brings hope that keeps hope alive for me, a lot of the volunteers that we've had, we've actually gone on to hire too.

[00:28:54] **Johnny Vallejo:** So that also brings life in that. Provides hope for other interns and advocates and [00:29:00] volunteers for them to be revered in a really good light by the CAC, to show our appreciation, to show that we see them, we hear them, and we want to give back to even them too, just as they are giving back to us. And those are exactly the people that I think about.

[00:29:17] **Johnny Vallejo:** And not to forget about everyone in between that, because we have cheerleaders from far and wide. and wide within and externally. So many people wanting to support us and I work with them every single day and that for me is such a blessing.

[00:29:37] **Lydia Crivens:** Johnny, I love that your lead forensic interviewer is Patsy. Our lead forensic interview is Patricia and you've been here over 20.

[00:29:46] **Lydia Crivens:** it'll be 24 years this week, actually. And she is definitely a champion of the work. So, I'm glad you put that perspective of the champions who have been in this work and have seen so many different iterations of what the team [00:30:00] looks like, who can champion the work that we do. On the subject of cheerleaders, one thing I've noticed is that it can become contagious.

[00:30:09] **Lydia Crivens:** So I started doing shout outs. I'll just send out an email every time something comes up. There's no regularity with it. I love that you have a newsletter, Christine, but I started sending out shout outs and I said, if you have a shout out, just let me know. And people who I would not have thought of as cheerleaders have been sending in, like, look at the work that this other person is doing.

[00:30:33] **Lydia Crivens:** Please make sure everybody knows this. I think it's important to remember that there are going to be people who may not be the obvious cheerleaders who may come out every once in a while and push the team forward.

[00:30:46] **Christine Wood:** I think with that pushing the team forward when I think about. Champions. I also think about those people that are not afraid to ask the hard questions or to give me honest feedback because we know our teams are in constant [00:31:00] change in their dynamic.

[00:31:01] **Christine Wood:** And so, as facilitators being in tune to that can sometimes be really difficult because maybe they're dealing with something that doesn't have anything to do with our cases. But that has tweaked, like, some sort of dynamic that you thought you understood. And so I think having those people that then can give you really honest feedback and say, Hey, when you ask this, it maybe comes across this way, or maybe avoid that topic for right now, because something is going on.

[00:31:28] **Christine Wood:** I think that that is also being a true champion of the team and is so valuable as a facilitator, especially if you have multiple teams, because. Each team really requires something different of you. And so having those people on each of your teams that you know you can look to and say, Hey, check my blind spots, help me out here or things like that.

[00:31:49] **Christine Wood:** I think that those are really champions of the team. And I'm really thankful for those people. Yeah.

[00:31:53] **Christina Rouse:** I love that you named, you know, sometimes our champions challenge us and they encourage us. to [00:32:00] elevate our practices and think differently and even though maybe in the moment it doesn't seem like they're a champion or a cheerleader, but those types of behaviors do reinforce the work that we're doing and encourage us to be better.

[00:32:14] **Christina Rouse:** And I also love, Lydia and Johnny, that you named those seasoned professionals. That's our hope, that we keep people in the field for a very long time. And this idea that just being part of an MDT is a component that contributes to us being able to stay in the work for a

long time is so important. So to kind of wrap up our conversation, I would love to know from each of you, what's one of the most inspiring examples of teamwork that you've personally witnessed in the field and how has that shaped or maybe reignited your passion to want to keep doing the work?

[00:32:56] **Christine Wood:** We had a case that actually recently went to trial, [00:33:00] and we were able to provide services, forensic interviews. We were able to do a medical exam for this child as she received mental health services here. But the biggest thing where I got to see my team come together is that. There were actually three of our multidisciplinary teams involved in this one case, because as the case continued, we continue to find additional victims, but also continue to find additional locations and jurisdictions involved.

[00:33:26] **Christine Wood:** And so, when you have your investigator in 1 county, and you have your law enforcement, we were dealing with our state police, so they were able to hold the whole case, but they're having to understand all the different pieces. Getting to watch that happen and getting to help facilitate and make sure that all the pieces of her puzzle were being told to the correct people and the people that needed to know, but also holding the information that maybe they didn't need to know, because I think that's also part of it is like, if you don't need to know that you don't need to know, we need to respect her [00:34:00] in that.

[00:34:00] **Christine Wood:** And so trying to find that balance and then having that Right. With three different teams, which is just amazing to watch and then truly lean on one another and truly appreciate one another. And then ultimately, a few weeks ago, we were able to attend trial with her. And I think this is a big part of being a team facilitator is that I don't get to have interactions with these children.

[00:34:25] **Christine Wood:** I get to work with our teams and I love that. But if I can go and support the child in that phase, but also our team, they are there and they are defending their case and their work is on the line there. And so if I'm there and I can support them in that too, and whether this child like knows my face or not, that I'm there supporting her is amazing.

[00:34:46] **Christine Wood:** And then I look over and my from a whole different county is there supporting that prosecutor. And you're just like, this is amazing. While that case did end up in a good way that we wanted it to, I know that that doesn't always happen, but that [00:35:00] teamwork still would have happened. And we still would have ensured that that child was on her healing journey and that we did everything we could do as a team made up of three of our team for her.

[00:35:11] **Christine Wood:** So that one's a little bit complicated, but it was really amazing to watch our teams come together in a really unique way. Lydia, what about you?

[00:35:21] **Lydia Crivens:** There's a specific instance that I'm thinking of, but I see it regularly where we don't always build rapport with our clients or with everybody. You don't it's just human nature.

[00:35:33] **Lydia Crivens:** You don't have an instant connection. So there are times where. There's report built with the D. C. S. investigator, but not necessarily with law enforcement or it's built with the medical provider, but not necessarily with the forensic interviewer. And there have been cases. And there's 1 case. I'm thinking of in particular.

[00:35:53] **Lydia Crivens:** Where the child loved their therapist. She loved the therapist. She was really nervous about what was going to happen when [00:36:00] she went to court. So the therapist, the advocate and the prosecutor all came together and kind of had an informal meet and greet of this is what we do together. We all work together.

[00:36:11] **Lydia Crivens:** We're here for you. Yes, the therapist spoke is this is my friend who we work together and we're working for you and she's going to ask you some questions when you get in there. This is who you're going to see. This is what it looks like. And just saying the 3 of them come not that they had to and they worked on it actually after hours because of the girl's schedule.

[00:36:36] **Lydia Crivens:** Trying to work together to see, make sure that child got what she needed. That was one instance that was just an awesome thing to experience and to watch. Because the prosecutor has a

lot on their plate, and they could have said, I'm not coming here. I don't have time to come meet with this child either.

[00:36:54] **Lydia Crivens:** We show the forensic interview and that's it. But they all partner together and [00:37:00] work to get that done. And so that was an instance where I saw that that teamwork worked so beautifully for the child.

[00:37:08] **Christina Rouse:** I love that you shared that Lydia, because it's a reminder that sometimes we do things that are outside of ourselves.

[00:37:14] **Christina Rouse:** Right? And that the work isn't about us as an individual or the role that we have. And it's really about what would be impactful for that client on that particular case. So I love that your team members saw the value of that and were able to do that. That is very inspiring. All right, Johnny, let's hear what you have as an inspiring story.

[00:37:36] **Johnny Vallejo:** One particular example that I witnessed and coordinated myself, we received a phone call from a local law enforcement agency a few minutes till closing, and they had received a call from their resource officer from a local middle school saying that a child was at an after school program and suddenly just broke down [00:38:00] and started crying in front of her friends.

[00:38:02] **Johnny Vallejo:** She admitted to a lot of things that had happened to her. against her father and that her mother also knew about it. So time was pretty much of the essence because she was due back home and she would be going back to that environment. I spoke with my team and our interviewer was still there and our advocate was still there.

[00:38:26] **Johnny Vallejo:** And they immediately were like, how soon can they get here? No other questions asked. They immediately jumped in and was like, yes, yes, there's no question. We're going to do this, have them come as soon as they're able to, and we're going to take care of this child. So, we stayed until about eight in the evening, but three detectives ended up showing up.

[00:38:52] **Johnny Vallejo:** The social worker was already en route, so one was just assigned, and law enforcement was the one [00:39:00] notified. So they were working really closely with DCFS on this case, something that we don't normally see a lot of the time. But this was just perfect timing for everyone, it seemed. And the end result of all that was that, yes, the child was detained, the mother and father were arrested, and that wouldn't have happened unless the interview happened then and there, and that our team members were ready and willing.

[00:39:28] **Johnny Vallejo:** That was a very important moment for me to see, and also very inspiring that, you know, The people that I work with every day, they're willing to just put aside themselves and want to actually do this work for this child. So that was a very inspiring moment for me.

[00:39:50] **Christina Rouse:** I love all of those stories and I just want to appreciate you all sharing those small moments because we know these moments happen all of the time in our teams and I [00:40:00] think it's easy for us to kind of put our blinders on and forget to see what all the actual work that's happening.

[00:40:07] **Christina Rouse:** On our team. So thank you all so much for joining me on this conversation. I know with the experiences you shared and the insightful thoughts you have around how important team collaboration is, it is going to inspire our listeners to keep doing the hard work. So I just want to thank you each individually, Christine, Lydia, and Johnny, thank you so much for joining me.

[00:40:32] **Christine Wood:** Thank you so much for having me. It was a joy to get to talk about all things teamwork, and I'm happy to be a resource for anyone that's listening to.

[00:40:40] **Lydia Crivens:** Thanks so much, Christina. This was great. Not only did I get to talk, but I learned so much, and thank you, Christine and Johnny, for what you all offered.

[00:40:51] **Johnny Vallejo:** Thank you so much for having me, Christina. It was truly an honor to be on this podcast and to be with such brilliant minds

like Christine and Lydia today. [00:41:00] So thank you so much for having me.

[00:41:02] **Christina Rouse:** As we close today's conversation, I'm reminded of Mother Teresa's words, I can do things you cannot. You can do things I cannot.

[00:41:13] **Christina Rouse:** Together, we can do great things. It's a powerful reminder of how, in the world of child protection, we No one person can do it all. It's this unity, this shared strength that keeps teams moving forward, sustaining their passion for the work, and making a lasting impact for children and families. Thank you for joining us today, and until next time, remember, Teamwork really does make all the difference.

[00:41:43] **Christina Rouse:** Thank you for joining us for a thought provoking conversation. Much appreciation for our guests on this episode. Remember in the moments between episodes, look for the invisible threads that connect you to your purpose. If what you heard sparked your curiosity to learn more. [00:42:00] Hit the subscribe button and follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn at Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center for more learning content.

[00:42:08] **Christina Rouse:** All resources mentioned in this podcast are linked in the show notes below. The SRCAC Exchange podcast is made possible through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U. S. Department of Justice, under award number 15PJDP22GK03059 or call 0 5 9 J. J. V. O. The opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this podcast are those of the guests and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice.

[00:42:42] **Christina Rouse:** The SRCEC Exchange Podcast Season 3 is hosted by me, Christina Rouse, and produced by Peachtree Sound. Music provided by Midnight Dream.