

Investigations

Day 9 - Facilitator Guide



Advanced MDT Coordination

Child Advocacy Center and Law Enforcement

Managing Interagency Conflict

MDT Simulation

Day 9:

Investigations Training Agenda

Thursday	
9:00 – 9:30	Welcome Pre-Test
9:30 – 10:30	Advanced MDT Coordination
10:30 -10:45	Break
10:45 – 12:00	Child Advocacy Center and Law Enforcement
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch Break
1:00 – 2:15	Managing Interagency Conflict
2:15 - 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:30	MDT Simulation
3:30 – 4:00	Wrap Up and Review

Before You Train

Facilitator Resources – Day 9

Materials and Handouts

- Name Tents
- Markers, Pens, Highlighters
- Sticky Notes
- Giant Sticky Note Pad
- Printed Participant Manuals
- Blank paper

DCFS Entry Level Competencies

- | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| • 100-2 | • 101-6 | • 102-6 |
| • 101-1 | • 101-7 | • 102-5 |
| • 101-2 | • 102-1 | • 102-7 |
| • 101-4 | • 102-2 | • 102-8 |
| • 101-5 | • 102-3 | • 104-4 |

DCFS Forms and Publications

- n/a

DCFS Policy And Internal Procedures

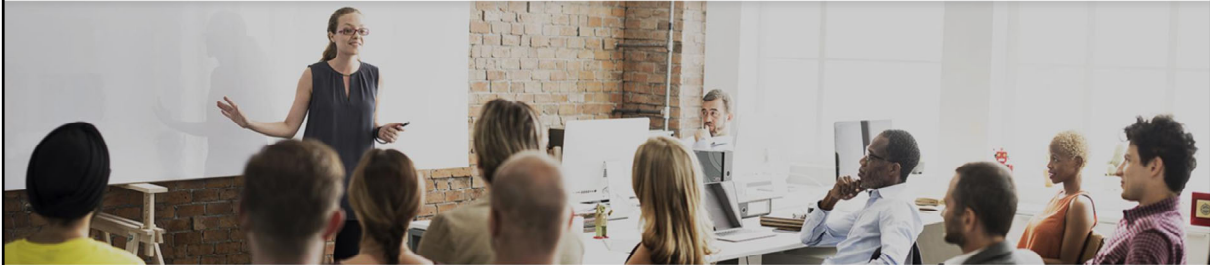
- n/a

Day 9 Sources

- Forensic Interviews: <https://childsafetycenter.org/what-to-expect/what-to-expect-forensic-interviews/>

Investigations

Specialty Training



MidSOUTH
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, HEALTH,
AND HUMAN SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

Day 9

WEEK 8, DAY 9 – INVESTIGATIONS SPECIALTY TRAINING



Advanced MDT Coordination & Case Management

**ADVANCED MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT) COORDINATION & CASE
MANAGEMENT**

MULTI-AGENCY SYSTEM COLLABORATION



MULTI-AGENCY SYSTEM COLLABORATION

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To shift focus from individual specialty skills to multi-agency collaboration, emphasizing how tools like SDM® and Dependency Neglect Benchcards align different professionals around shared case decisions

Say:

Throughout this training, you have developed investigative skills related to information gathering, safety assessment, decision-making, documentation, family engagement, and court preparation. Today, you will shift your focus from the actions of an individual Specialist to the larger system of professionals involved in child welfare investigations.

Child welfare investigations often require collaboration among professionals who bring different areas of expertise, authority, responsibilities, and perspectives to a case. Throughout the investigation process, you may work with professionals such as law enforcement, Child Advocacy Center staff, attorneys, medical professionals, service providers, supervisors, and family support networks.

Each professional involved has a unique role and responsibility; however, effective collaboration requires more than simply sharing information. Strong coordination occurs when professionals work together to develop a shared understanding of the concerns, protective capacities, intervention needs, and next steps for the child and family.

You will also explore how Structured Decision Making® supports consistent communication and decision-making across professional systems. Recent Dependency Neglect Benchcard efforts have been developed to promote transparency, consistency, and collaboration among courts, attorneys, and child welfare professionals.

Throughout Day 9, we will focus on how coordinated practice supports informed decision-making, stronger family engagement, more effective safety planning, and improved outcomes for children and families.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- Why is collaboration important in child welfare investigations?
- What challenges can occur when professionals are working from different perspectives?
- How might coordinated communication improve decision-making?
- What does successful collaboration look like in practice?

Facilitator Answers:

- Better information gathering.
- More informed decisions.
- Improved family engagement.
- Reduced misunderstandings.
- Stronger safety planning.

Facilitator Notes:

- Avoid returning to courtroom testimony or affidavit content.
- Focus on coordination, collaboration, and shared decision-making.

Say:

Before you can coordinate effectively with other professionals, you must understand the unique responsibilities each partner brings to an investigation and how those responsibilities intersect throughout a case.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Investigations involve multiple professional systems.
- Collaboration requires a shared understanding, not just information sharing.
- Coordinated practice supports child safety and permanency outcomes.
- Structured Decision Making® helps create consistency across professional partners.

Target Outcomes



- Understand how multidisciplinary Team collaboration supports coordinated child welfare decision-making.
- Apply collaborative communication strategies that improve information-sharing and professional coordination.
- Assess how coordinated practice influences safety decisions, family engagement, and case outcomes.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: Introduce participants to advanced Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) coordination, shared decision-making across systems, and the role of collaborative information-sharing in supporting child safety, permanency, and well-being decisions

Paraphrase:

By the end of this section, Social Services Specialists will be able to:

- Understand how multidisciplinary Team collaboration supports coordinated child welfare decision-making.
- Apply collaborative communication strategies that improve information-sharing and professional coordination.
- Assess how coordinated practice influences safety decisions, family engagement, and case outcomes.

Understanding Multidisciplinary Team Roles & Shared Responsibilities

UNDERSTANDING MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM ROLES & SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To examine the responsibilities, expertise, and contributions of professionals involved in Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) coordination and explore how shared responsibility supports informed child safety decisions throughout an investigation

Activity Instructions:

- Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on the role of a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) during child maltreatment investigations.
- Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page as a resource throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will capture participant responses on a flip chart or whiteboard, if available.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Review the concept and purpose of a Multidisciplinary Team.
- Identify common professionals involved in child maltreatment investigations.
- Discuss the unique roles and responsibilities each professional contributes to the investigation process.
- Explore how collaboration and shared responsibilities support coordinated decision-making for children and families.

Say:

A Multidisciplinary Team is a group of professionals who work together to support child safety, investigate concerns, coordinate services, and make informed decisions regarding children and families. Each professional brings specific responsibilities, expertise, and authority to the case. However, no single agency has all the information or resources needed to address every aspect of a child welfare case independently.

For example, you may focus on child safety, family functioning, and protective capacities. Law enforcement may investigate potential criminal activity. Medical professionals may assess injuries or health concerns. Child Advocacy Center staff may coordinate forensic interviews and provide victim support services. Attorneys and courts help ensure legal requirements are met while protecting the rights of all involved parties.

Because each professional views the case from a different perspective, effective collaboration requires you to understand your own responsibilities and how your role connects with the work of other professionals.

Challenges can occur when professionals:

- ***Operate with incomplete information.***
- ***Make assumptions about another agency's role.***
- ***Duplicate efforts.***
- ***Communicate inconsistently with families.***
- ***Pursue goals without understanding partner responsibilities.***

Strong Multidisciplinary Teams recognize that each professional contributes to the overall understanding of the case. By combining information, expertise, and observations, the team can develop a more complete picture of family circumstances and child safety concerns.

Effective collaboration does not require every professional to agree on every issue. It requires professionals to understand each other's roles, communicate openly, and work together toward coordinated outcomes that support child safety and family well-being.

Facilitator Questions: (ask and validate responses)

- What professionals commonly participate in a Multidisciplinary Team?
- What unique expertise does each professional contribute?
- Why might different professionals view the same situation differently?
- How can misunderstandings about roles create challenges during an investigation?
- What benefits result from coordinated decision-making?

Facilitator Answers:

- DCFS specialists
- Law enforcement
- Child Advocacy Centers
- Medical providers

- Attorneys
- Courts
- Service providers
- Family supports
- CASA volunteers
- Each professional contributes different expertise.
- No single agency has the entire picture.
- Understanding partner roles improves collaboration and coordination.

Facilitator Notes:

- Focus the discussion on role clarity rather than specific case decisions.
- Avoid going into detailed CAC processes, law enforcement investigations, or conflict resolution, as those topics will be covered later in the day.
- While DCFS focuses on child safety, case plans, and legal custody, CASA focuses strictly on representing the child's individual best interests in court through independent visits and reports
- Encourage participants to consider the broader professional system involved in child welfare investigations, beyond DCFS responsibilities.
- Use this slide to establish the foundation for understanding professional coordination before introducing shared safety analysis.

Say:

Understanding who participates in a Multidisciplinary Team is only the first step. The next challenge is ensuring everyone is working from the same understanding of what is happening within the family and why intervention may be necessary.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Multidisciplinary Teams combine expertise from multiple professional systems.
- Different partners contribute different information and perspectives.
- Understanding roles reduces duplication and confusion.
- Coordinated practice supports more informed decision-making.
- Collaboration strengthens overall child safety efforts.

Building a Shared Understanding of Safety Concerns



BUILDING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF SAFETY CONCERNS

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand how Multidisciplinary Team members develop a common understanding of safety concerns by focusing on observable caregiver behavior, child impact, and behaviorally descriptive information rather than assumptions, labels, or conclusions

Participant Manual Pages: Dependency Neglect Proceedings Benchcard (full document)

Say:

When professionals from different systems become involved with a family, they bring different training, experiences, responsibilities, and perspectives to the investigation. Because of these differences, professionals may initially describe concerns in different ways.

For example, you may focus on immediate safety concerns. Law enforcement may focus on potential criminal elements. Medical professionals may focus on injuries or health concerns. Other partners may focus on family functioning or service needs.

Each perspective provides valuable information; however, effective collaboration requires you to work with partners to develop a shared understanding of what is occurring within the family.

One concept receiving increased attention in child welfare practice is the connection between caregiver behavior and the impact those behaviors have on the child. The Dependency Neglect Benchcard refers to this as the nexus between caregiver behavior and child impact.

Paraphrase:

Rather than relying on labels, conclusions, or generalized statements, focus on describing:

- What actions occurred
- What conditions were observed
- What was reported
- How the child was affected
- Why concerns exist

Using behaviorally descriptive information helps you and your professional partners:

- Communicate more clearly
- Reduce misunderstandings
- Support consistent decision-making
- Improve family understanding of concerns
- Strengthen collaboration across systems

For example, different professionals may interpret the phrase “poor supervision” differently. However, when you describe the specific caregiver actions and the impact on the child, you create a clearer understanding that can be consistently evaluated by all professionals involved.

Developing a shared understanding does not mean every professional will agree on every aspect of a case. It means professionals are discussing the same behaviors, observations, and impacts when evaluating concerns and determining next steps.

A shared understanding creates a stronger foundation for coordinated assessment, planning, and intervention.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- Why might different professionals initially view the same situation differently?
- How can labels create confusion during case discussions?
- What information helps professionals develop a shared understanding of concerns?
- Why is behaviorally descriptive information useful during collaboration?
- How might a family's understanding improve when concerns are described behaviorally?

Facilitator Answers:

- Different professional training and responsibilities
- Different priorities among agencies

- Use of vague language
- Incomplete information
- Different interpretations of the same event
- Observable information creates greater consistency
- Behaviorally descriptive language improves communication
- Shared understanding supports coordinated decision-making
- Clear descriptions improve both professional and family understanding

Facilitator Notes:

- This is the first formal integration of the Dependency Neglect Benchcard concepts.
- Avoid discussing court testimony or affidavit language.
- Focus on collaboration and communication among professional partners.
- Reinforce that behaviorally descriptive language supports both family engagement and professional coordination.
- This slide establishes the foundation for the SDM collaboration content on the next slide.

Say:

Once professionals develop a common understanding of concerns, the next challenge becomes making coordinated decisions about safety, risk, intervention, and case direction.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Professionals may initially interpret situations differently.
- Effective collaboration requires a shared understanding of concerns.
- Caregiver behavior and child impact should be clearly described.
- Behaviorally descriptive information supports consistency across systems.
- Shared understanding strengthens collaborative decision-making.

Using SDM to Support Collaborative Decision-Making



USING SDM TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE DECISION - MAKING

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand how Structured Decision Making® (SDM) supports consistency, transparency, and informed decision-making across professional systems involved in child welfare investigations

Activity Group Discussion:

- Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on the purpose and application of Structured Decision Making® (SDM). Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will display or reference SDM decision points to support the conversation.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Review the purpose of Structured Decision Making®.
- Discuss how SDM supports consistency in investigative decision-making.
- Explore how SDM findings support communication and shared understanding among professional partners.
- Connect SDM assessments to collaborative decision-making throughout the life of a case.

Say:

As child welfare cases progress, you will often work with professionals from multiple systems who need to understand why decisions were made and what

information supported those decisions.

Structured Decision Making® (SDM) provides a framework to help you evaluate information consistently at different points throughout a case. Rather than relying only on individual opinions or experiences, SDM helps you organize information into specific assessment areas to support informed decision-making.

The Dependency Neglect Benchcard identifies several decision points where SDM assessments help inform agency recommendations and case direction. These decision points include safety assessments, risk assessments, case planning, reunification assessments, and risk reassessments.

One benefit of SDM is that it creates greater transparency with professional partners. When you can clearly explain how information was evaluated and how decisions were reached, collaboration becomes more effective.

The Dependency Neglect Benchcard was developed, in part, to improve consistency and increase understanding among courts, attorneys, and child welfare professionals regarding how decisions are made throughout a case.

Using SDM does not mean that every professional will reach the same conclusion. Different agencies maintain their own responsibilities and decision-making authority. However, SDM provides a shared framework that supports productive discussions related to:

- ***Safety concerns.***
- ***Risk considerations.***
- ***Intervention needs.***
- ***Case planning.***
- ***Permanency decisions.***
- ***Family progress.***

When professional partners understand the decision-making process being used, communication becomes more efficient, and misunderstandings may be reduced. Strong collaboration occurs when professionals understand not only the final recommendation but also the information and assessment process that led to that recommendation.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- How might a structured decision-making framework improve collaboration?
- Why is transparency important when multiple agencies are involved in a case?
- How can consistent decision-making processes reduce misunderstandings?
- Why might professional partners want to understand how recommendations were developed?
- How does SDM support communication across different systems?

Facilitator Answers:

- Increased consistency.
- Improved communication.
- Better understanding of recommendations.
- More informed discussions.
- Greater transparency among agencies.

Participants should recognize:

- SDM supports informed decision-making.
- Transparency strengthens collaboration.
- Consistent processes improve communication across systems.
- Understanding decision-making promotes more effective coordination.

Facilitator Notes:

- Focus on SDM as a collaboration tool rather than teaching assessment completion.
- Avoid repeating prior safety assessment instructions from earlier training days.
- Emphasize transparency, communication, and coordinated understanding.
- Connect SDM concepts to future MDT staffing and case coordination discussions.
- This slide serves as a bridge between understanding concerns and coordinating information across systems.

Say:

Even when professionals share an understanding of concerns and decision-making processes, collaboration can still break down if information is not communicated effectively across agencies and systems.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Structured Decision Making provides consistency throughout a case.
- SDM supports transparency and communication among professional partners.
- Different agencies may have distinct responsibilities while still sharing information.
- Understanding how decisions are reached strengthens collaboration.
- Consistent decision-making frameworks support coordinated practice.

Coordinating Information Across Professional Systems

COORDINATING INFORMATION ACROSS PROFESSIONAL SYSTEMS

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand how information moves across professional systems, identify common communication barriers, and recognize strategies that support coordinated case management and informed decision-making

Activity Instructions:

- Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on communication and information-sharing among professionals involved in child welfare investigations.
- Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will ask participants to consider situations where multiple agencies may receive information at different times and how that impacts coordination.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Discuss how information is shared and exchanged during investigations.
- Identify common communication barriers that may affect collaboration.
- Explore how professionals maintain consistency when new information becomes available.
- Examine how communication practices influence decision-making and family engagement.

Say:

One of the greatest challenges in collaborative investigations is ensuring important information is communicated accurately, consistently, and at the appropriate time. Even when you and your professional partners share a commitment to child safety, coordination can become difficult when information is:

- *Incomplete.*
- *Delayed.*
- *Misunderstood.*
- *Interpreted differently.*
- *Shared inconsistently.*

Throughout an investigation, information may come from multiple sources, including:

- *Interviews.*
- *Collateral contacts.*
- *Medical findings.*
- *Law enforcement reports.*
- *Child Advocacy Center activities.*
- *Family meetings.*
- *Service providers.*
- *Safety network members.*

Because information develops and changes over the course of an investigation, professional partners may not always have the same information at the same time.

Effective coordination requires you to:

- *Clarify information.*
- *Provide appropriate updates to partners.*
- *Verify understanding.*
- *Communicate changes.*
- *Identify gaps in available information.*

Communication challenges do not always occur because someone failed to complete their responsibilities. Often, challenges occur as professionals balance multiple responsibilities, timelines, legal requirements, and organizational expectations.

When communication gaps occur, focus on remaining curious rather than making assumptions. Before concluding that another agency is not addressing concerns, consider:

- *Whether the information has been received.*
- *Whether legal limitations affect information sharing or action.*
- *Whether additional assessment is taking place.*
- *Whether different agency responsibilities impact the next steps.*

Coordinated investigations are strengthened when you maintain clear communication with professional partners while respecting each agency's roles and responsibilities.

Information-sharing is not only about exchanging facts. It is about helping professional

partners develop an accurate and current understanding of the family's situation so that informed decisions can be made throughout the life of the case.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What communication challenges can occur when multiple agencies are involved in a case?
- Why might professional partners possess different information at different times?
- How can assumptions create barriers to collaboration?
- What strategies help improve communication across systems?
- How does effective information-sharing support child safety decision-making?

Facilitator Answers:

- Delayed communication
- Incomplete information
- Misunderstandings
- Different agency timelines
- Different professional responsibilities
- Information gaps
- Communication challenges are common in complex investigations.
- Assumptions can damage collaboration.
- Clarification improves coordination.
- Effective information-sharing supports informed decision-making.
- Ongoing communication strengthens collaborative practice.

Facilitator Notes:

- Avoid moving into conflict-resolution strategies; those will be addressed later on Day 9.
- Focus on communication systems rather than interpersonal disagreements.
- Reinforce that collaboration is an ongoing process rather than a single event.
- This slide closes the section by connecting role clarity, shared understanding, SDM transparency, and information coordination.

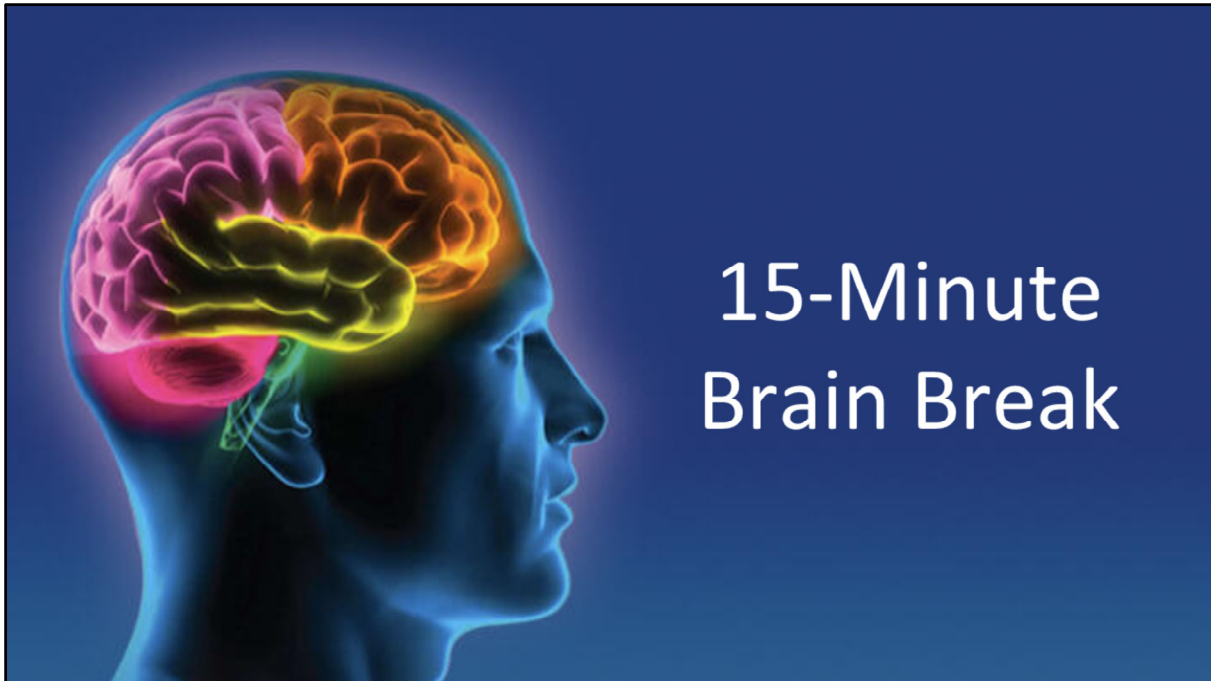
Say:

This morning, we focused on how professionals build a shared understanding of concerns, communicate information, and coordinate decisions. Next, we will examine how Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement partners contribute specialized expertise during investigations and how effective coordination strengthens the overall response to children and families.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Information often develops over time during investigations.
- Professional partners may receive information at different points.
- Communication gaps do not automatically indicate poor practice.
- Clarification and verification strengthen collaboration.

- Effective information-sharing supports coordinated decision-making.



15-Minute Brain Break

15-MINUTE BREAK



CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER & LAW ENFORCEMENT COLLABORATION

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER & LAW ENFORCEMENT COLLABORATION

KEY INVESTIGATIVE PARTNERS: CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS & LAW ENFORCEMENT



KEY INVESTIGATIVE PARTNERS: CACS & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To transition into Section 2 by introducing Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement as primary co-investigative partners, emphasizing how aligned workflows reduce duplication and improve child-centered outcomes. To introduce participants to the role of Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement within child maltreatment investigations and establish expectations for coordinated investigative practice

Say:

Throughout Section 1, you explored how professionals from different systems work together to support child safety, information-sharing, and coordinated decision-making.

In this section, you will focus on two common investigative partners you may work alongside during child maltreatment investigations: Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement.

Each agency has distinct roles and responsibilities; however, investigations are strengthened when you understand how your work connects with the work of other professionals. Effective coordination helps reduce duplication, improve information gathering, support child-centered practice, and promote a more complete understanding of family circumstances.

You will examine how Child Advocacy Centers support investigations through specialized services, coordination, and expertise. You will also explore how law enforcement and child welfare professionals coordinate investigative activities while maintaining their separate responsibilities and authorities.

As investigations become more complex, you must be able to communicate effectively, understand the roles of your professional partners, and coordinate actions that support child safety and investigative integrity.

Throughout this section, you will focus on how collaborative practice supports informed decision-making and coordinated responses to child maltreatment concerns.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- Why is collaboration important during child maltreatment investigations?
- What challenges might occur when agencies do not coordinate effectively?
- How can understanding partner responsibilities improve investigations?
- Why is role clarity important when multiple agencies are involved?

Facilitator Answers:

- Improved information gathering
- Reduced duplication of effort
- Better communication
- Stronger decision-making
- More coordinated responses

Participants should recognize:

- Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement provide specialized expertise.
- Effective collaboration supports investigative quality.
- Understanding roles improves coordination.
- Child safety is strengthened through coordinated practice.

Facilitator Notes:

- Focus on establishing the importance of collaborative investigative practice.
- Set the stage for deeper discussion regarding the Child Advocacy Center and law enforcement coordination.

Say:

Before professionals can coordinate effectively, they must understand the purpose, services, and responsibilities that Child Advocacy Centers bring to the investigative process.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement are important investigative partners.
- Coordinated practice supports stronger investigations.

- Understanding partner roles improves communication and collaboration.
- Effective coordination supports child safety and investigative integrity.

Target Outcomes



- Understand how Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement contribute unique expertise during investigations.
- Apply collaborative strategies that support coordinated investigative responses across agencies.
- Assess how communication, information-sharing, and role clarity influence investigative effectiveness.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To introduce participants to the role of Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement within child maltreatment investigations and establish expectations for coordinated investigative practice

Paraphrase:

By the end of this section, Social Services Specialists will be able to:

- Understand how Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement contribute unique expertise during investigations.
- Apply collaborative strategies that support coordinated investigative responses across agencies.
- Assess how communication, information-sharing, and role clarity influence investigative effectiveness.

Understanding the Role of Child Advocacy Centers

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS (CACs)

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand the purpose, services, and responsibilities of Child Advocacy Centers and examine how Child Advocacy Centers support coordinated, child-focused investigations

Participant Manual Pages: Day 9 Notes Page – Child Advocacy Center & Law Enforcement Collaboration

Activity Instructions:

- Group Discussion: Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will ask participants to identify the services they believe Child Advocacy Centers provide and use responses to guide the conversation.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Review the purpose of Child Advocacy Centers.
- Discuss common services provided by Child Advocacy Centers.
- Explore how Child Advocacy Centers support coordinated investigations.
- Examine how Child Advocacy Centers address both investigative needs and child-centered support.

Say:

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) were established to provide a coordinated response

to child maltreatment allegations while reducing unnecessary stress on children and families during the investigative process.

Before the development of CACs, children were often required to share information with multiple professionals in different locations. This created challenges for both the investigation process and child well-being.

Today, CACs provide a centralized setting where professionals can coordinate investigative activities and access specialized services that support children and families. While CACs do not conduct child welfare investigations, they play an important role by supporting investigative efforts through coordination and specialized resources.

Depending on the needs of the case, CACs may provide or coordinate services such as:

- ***Forensic interviews.***
- ***Victim advocacy services.***
- ***Medical coordination.***
- ***Mental health referrals.***
- ***Case coordination activities.***
- ***Multidisciplinary Team participation.***

A key component of CAC involvement is child-focused practice. CACs help create supportive environments for children during investigative and service-related activities.

Paraphrase:

When working with CACs, you should understand the services they provide and the role they play in coordinated investigations.

Effective collaboration requires ongoing communication regarding:

- Investigative needs.
- Scheduling considerations.
- Case developments.
- Service coordination.
- Family needs.

Understanding how CACs contribute to the investigative process allows you to strengthen coordination and support responses that address both child safety concerns and family circumstances.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What challenges might occur if investigative activities are not coordinated?
- How do Child Advocacy Centers support children during investigations?
- What services may be available through a Child Advocacy Center?
- Why is coordination important when multiple professionals are involved?
- How can Child Advocacy Centers support investigative efficiency?

Facilitator Answers:

- Reduced duplication of effort
- Improved coordination
- Access to specialized services
- Child-focused environments
- Better communication among professionals
- Child Advocacy Centers support coordinated investigations
- Child Advocacy Centers provide specialized services and resources
- Effective collaboration improves investigative efficiency
- Child-focused practice remains a priority throughout investigative activities

Facilitator Notes:

- Focus on the purpose and role of Child Advocacy Centers within coordinated investigations.
- Reinforce that Child Advocacy Centers are collaborative partners rather than investigative decision-makers.
- Build participant understanding of how Child Advocacy Centers support both children and professionals.

Say:

While Child Advocacy Centers provide valuable coordination and specialized services, investigations may also involve law enforcement agencies whose responsibilities and objectives differ from those of child welfare professionals. One of their most critical investigative functions is facilitating the Forensic Interview. Let's step into how that process works and look at your specific role as a DCFS Specialist before, during, and after that interview takes place

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Child Advocacy Centers support coordinated, child-focused investigations.
- Child Advocacy Centers provide access to specialized services and resources.
- Child Advocacy Centers help professionals coordinate investigative activities.
- Effective communication supports successful collaboration.
- Child Advocacy Centers contribute important expertise without assuming the role of investigator.

Forensic Interviewing & The Specialist's Role

FORENSIC INTERVIEWING & THE SPECIALIST'S ROLE

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To examine the forensic interviewing process and identify how DCFS specialists actively participate before, during, and after the interview to inform safety decisions

Say:

A forensic interview is a neutral, non-leading, developmentally sensitive interview conducted by a trained professional to gather facts regarding maltreatment allegations. Rather than sitting back as passive observers, DCFS specialists play an active role in shaping and utilizing the interview to drive safety assessments and case planning.

To understand how we collaborate with Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) during this process, we look at a forensic interview in **three distinct phases**:

1. **Pre-Interview Phase:** The preparation stage where information, case context, and child-specific considerations are shared with the interviewer before the interview begins.
2. **Live Interview & Observation Phase:** The real-time execution of the interview where MDT partners observe the conversation from a separate room via closed-circuit monitor.
3. **Post-Interview & Integration Phase:** The immediate debriefing where findings are synthesized and integrated into safety assessments, legal actions, and case planning.

Activity Instructions:

Now that the three phases are established, guide participants through each phase with targeted questions to process map forensic interviews and to draw out their operational responsibilities as specialists.

1. Pre-Interview Phase

Facilitator Question: (ask the following and validate answers)

- Before the child ever walks into the interview room, what critical information does the Specialist need to provide to the forensic interviewer?"

Facilitator Answers:

- Case context: specific allegations, safety concerns, and family dynamics.
- Child's developmental age, verbal ability, and any special accommodations needed.
- Information on the alleged perpetrator, household members, and safety factors.

2. Live Interview & Observation Phase

Facilitator Question:

While the child is with the interviewer, MDT partners-DCFS, CACD/Law Enforcement, and Prosecution- are watching via closed-circuit monitor in the observation room. Why is observing in real-time so critical for your investigation?

Facilitator Answers:

- Prevents trauma: The child only has to share their experience once to a single trained interviewer.
- Real-time collaboration: Partners can message or briefly pause the interviewer to ensure key safety questions are addressed before ending.
- Direct observation: The Specialist sees non-verbal cues, behavioral responses, and primary disclosures firsthand.

3. Post-Interview & Integration Phase

Facilitator Question:

- Once the interview concludes, how do you take what you learned in that room and apply it directly to your investigative responsibilities?"

Facilitator Answers:

- Information feeds directly into SDM tools, child safety assessments, and immediate safety plans.
- Prevents duplication: The Specialist avoids conducting repetitive, detailed disclosures with the child.
- Debriefing with MDT partners (CACD, CAC staff, law enforcement) to determine

immediate legal or protective next steps.

Facilitator Notes:

- Emphasize that while the CAC interviewer asks the questions, the DCFS Specialist remains the primary investigator responsible for child safety.
- Highlight the partnership between DCFS, CACD/local law enforcement, and CAC staff in the observation room.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Forensic interviews provide neutral, child-focused disclosures.
- Live observation minimizes re-traumatization and prevents repetitive questioning.
- Interview findings directly inform DCFS safety tools, SDM assessments, and case planning.

Source:

- Forensic Interviews: <https://childsafetycenter.org/what-to-expect/what-to-expect-forensic-interviews/>

Coordinating Investigations with Law Enforcement

COORDINATING INVESTIGATIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand the role of law enforcement during child maltreatment investigations and identify practices that support effective coordination while maintaining distinct agency responsibilities

Participant Manual Pages: Day 9 Notes Page – Child Advocacy Center & Law Enforcement Collaboration

Group Discussion Activity Instructions:

- Participants will participate in a group discussion focused on the role of law enforcement during child maltreatment investigations.
- Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will ask participants to consider how child welfare and criminal investigations may intersect while maintaining separate responsibilities.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Review the role of law enforcement in child maltreatment investigations.
- Discuss differences between child welfare and criminal investigative objectives.
- Explore how coordinated communication supports effective investigations.
- Examine how agencies maintain separate roles and responsibilities while working toward shared goals.

Say:

Law enforcement and child welfare professionals often work together on the same case; however, they are not conducting the same type of investigation. In Arkansas, this includes both local law enforcement (police and sheriff's departments) and the Crimes Against Children Division (CACD) of the Arkansas State Police. While CACD shares statutory co-investigative authority with DCFS on severe maltreatment, our day-to-day focus remains on operational coordination; how we loop in CACD or local officers during an active case, handle Hotline referrals, and align timing without stepping on criminal investigations. While both agencies may focus on child safety, their responsibilities, legal authority, and investigative objectives are different.

Paraphrase:

Law enforcement may focus on:

- Determining whether criminal violations occurred.
- Collecting evidence.
- Identifying suspects.
- Supporting potential prosecution.
- Addressing immediate public safety concerns.

Child welfare professionals focus on:

- Assessing child safety.
- Evaluating caregiver protective capacities.
- Understanding family functioning.
- Identifying intervention needs.
- Determining whether ongoing safety planning is needed.

Because these responsibilities differ, you and your professional partners may view the same information from different perspectives. For example, information that does not meet a criminal threshold may still indicate significant child safety concerns. Likewise, information important to a criminal investigation may not directly impact child welfare decision-making. Effective collaboration requires you to understand these differences and recognize when coordination with partners is needed.

Strong coordination includes:

- Sharing relevant information appropriately.
- Communicating significant developments.
- Clarifying investigative activities.
- Avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- Understanding partner responsibilities.
- Maintaining professional communication.

Say:

At times, agencies may move at different speeds or prioritize different actions. This does not always indicate disagreement; it often reflects the different responsibilities each agency must fulfill. Successful collaboration occurs when you understand your role, respect the roles of your partners, and maintain communication throughout the

investigative process. When professionals coordinate effectively, children and families benefit from a more organized and informed response.

Facilitator Questions: (ask and validate responses)

- How do child welfare and law enforcement investigations differ?
- Why might agencies approach the same information differently?
- What challenges could occur if communication is limited?
- How can professionals maintain coordination while fulfilling different responsibilities?
- Why is role clarity important during joint investigations?

Facilitator Answers:

- CACD shares statutory co-investigative jurisdiction on severe allegations, while local police handle general criminal charges and immediate safety support
- Different legal responsibilities
- Different investigative objectives
- Different timelines
- Information-sharing needs
- Communication challenges
- Child welfare and criminal investigations serve different purposes
- Effective coordination improves investigative quality
- Communication helps reduce confusion and duplication
- Understanding roles supports stronger collaboration

Facilitator Notes:

- Frame CACD as an operational partner: Rather than re-visiting baseline statutory agreements from Foundations, keep the focus on operational coordination during live cases.
- Clarify the operational difference between working with CACD (joint child maltreatment investigations) versus local municipal/county law enforcement.
- Avoid discussing criminal procedures in detail.
- Focus on coordination rather than legal processes.
- Reinforce that different agency responsibilities do not prevent effective collaboration.
- Build understanding of how child welfare and law enforcement efforts complement one another.
- This slide lays the foundation for the discussion of information sharing and professional boundaries on the next slide.

Say:

Even when agencies communicate regularly, collaboration requires careful consideration of what information can be shared, when information should be shared, and how professionals maintain their respective responsibilities throughout the process.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Law enforcement and child welfare professionals have distinct responsibilities.

- Different agencies may view information through different lenses.
- Communication supports coordinated investigations.
- Role clarity helps reduce confusion and duplication.
- Effective coordination benefits children, families, and investigative outcomes.

Sharing Information While Maintaining Professional Responsibilities



SHARING INFORMATION WHILE MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand how professional partners exchange information during investigations while maintaining agency responsibilities, respecting legal requirements, and supporting coordinated case planning

Participant Manual Pages: Day 9 Notes Page – Child Advocacy Center & Law Enforcement Collaboration

Activity Discussion Instructions:

- Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on information-sharing and communication between agencies during child maltreatment investigations.
- Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will ask participants to consider how information is shared between agencies and how communication impacts coordinated investigative efforts.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Discuss the purpose of information-sharing during coordinated investigations.
- Examine common communication challenges when multiple agencies are involved.
- Explore how professionals maintain responsibility to their own agency while participating in collaborative efforts.

- Identify practices that support accurate, timely, and effective communication.

Say:

As investigations become more complex, you will often rely on information from other agencies, service providers, and professional partners. Effective coordination requires more than simply exchanging information. It requires understanding what information is needed, how it supports decision-making, and how communication contributes to coordinated action.

Information-sharing helps you and your professional partners:

- ***Develop a more complete understanding of family circumstances.***
- ***Identify emerging concerns.***
- ***Recognize family strengths and resources.***
- ***Coordinate investigative activities.***
- ***Support informed recommendations.***

While collaboration is essential, you remain responsible for the decisions, actions, and documentation required by your role and agency. For example, receiving information from another professional does not remove your responsibility to assess child safety, evaluate available information, and make child welfare decisions consistent with policy and practice requirements.

Paraphrase:

Effective collaboration requires you to:

- Communicate clearly.
- Seek clarification when needed.
- Verify understanding.
- Provide updates regarding significant developments.
- Distinguish between facts, observations, and professional opinions.

Communication challenges may occur when information is:

- Incomplete.
- Delayed.
- Interpreted differently.
- Shared without sufficient context.

Strong collaborative practice requires ongoing communication rather than assuming all professionals have the same information or understanding. When you share information effectively, investigative activities become more coordinated, decision-making becomes more informed, and families receive more consistent communication from involved agencies. Collaboration is strengthened when you communicate openly while continuing to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to your role and agency.

Facilitator Questions: (ask and validate responses)

- Why is information-sharing important during coordinated investigations?

- What communication challenges can occur when multiple agencies are involved?
- Why is clarification important when receiving information from others?
- How can professionals maintain accountability to their own agency while collaborating with partners?
- What practices support accurate and effective communication?

Facilitator Answers:

- Improved understanding of family circumstances
- Better coordination of activities
- Reduced confusion
- More informed decision-making
- Stronger communication among agencies
- Information-sharing supports collaboration
- Professionals must still fulfill their own responsibilities
- Clarification improves understanding
- Communication strengthens coordinated practice
- Ongoing updates support informed decisions

Facilitator Notes:

- Reinforce that collaboration requires both communication and professional accountability
- Emphasize that information sharing supports but does not replace professional judgment
- Prepare participants for the upcoming application activity

Say:

Understanding professional roles, coordination practices, and information-sharing strategies is most meaningful when you apply them to real investigative situations. Next, you will work through a coordinated response scenario and examine how professional partners contribute throughout the investigative process.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Information-sharing helps professionals develop a more complete understanding of a case.
- Collaboration does not replace agency-specific responsibilities.
- Clarification and verification improve communication.
- Effective communication supports coordinated decision-making.
- Professionals remain accountable for actions taken within their own role.

Collaborative Response

COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE ACTIVITY: COORDINATING THE INITIAL INVESTIGATION

Time: 25 Minutes

Purpose: To provide participants with an opportunity to apply Child Advocacy Center, law enforcement, and child welfare collaboration concepts by analyzing how agencies coordinate during the early stages of a child maltreatment investigation

Participant Manual Pages: Day 9 Notes Page – Child Advocacy Center & Law Enforcement Collaboration

Activity Instructions:

Participants will remain seated with their table groups. Each table will receive a scenario to review and discuss. One participant will serve as the recorder and capture key discussion points. Groups will prepare to share their responses during the report-out.

1. Read the scenario as a group.

Scenario:

A Priority I report is received alleging physical abuse involving a nine-year-old child. The child has visible injuries requiring medical attention. The alleged offender remains in the home. Law enforcement has been notified and is responding. A Child Advocacy Center is available within the county. Multiple professionals are preparing to become involved as the investigation begins.

As a group, determine how the agencies should coordinate their response during the

initial stages of the investigation.

2. Discuss the following:
 - Identify the roles and responsibilities of each professional partner.
 - Discuss what information each agency may need during the initial response.
 - Determine how agencies should coordinate investigative activities.
 - Identify opportunities to support communication and information-sharing.
3. Prepare to share your group's key discussion points with the larger group.

Say:

This activity provides an opportunity for you to apply the collaboration concepts discussed throughout this section.

As you review the scenario, focus on how multiple agencies coordinate their efforts during the initial stages of an investigation. Consider the information each agency may need, the responsibilities each professional brings, and how communication supports a coordinated response. Think about how Child Advocacy Center personnel, law enforcement, and child welfare professionals contribute different expertise while working toward the shared goal of protecting children and supporting informed decision-making.

As you work through the scenario, focus on:

- ***Agency responsibilities.***
- ***Information needs.***
- ***Communication opportunities.***
- ***Coordination strategies.***
- ***Investigative efficiency.***

Remember that coordinated investigations do not require every agency to complete the same tasks. Effective collaboration occurs when you understand how your responsibilities connect with the responsibilities of other professionals. Your discussion should focus on how agencies can organize their efforts, communicate effectively, and support a coordinated response during the initial stages of the investigation.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What responsibilities belong to each professional partner in this scenario?
- What information would be important to communicate early in the investigation?
- How can agencies coordinate their efforts without duplicating work?
- What communication opportunities should occur during the initial response?
- How does coordination support child safety and investigative effectiveness?

Facilitator Answers:

- Child safety assessment activities
- Medical coordination needs
- Law enforcement response responsibilities
- Child Advocacy Center involvement

- Information-sharing opportunities
- Ongoing communication needs
- Different agencies contribute different expertise
- Coordination improves investigative effectiveness
- Communication supports informed decision-making
- Information-sharing reduces duplication
- Child safety remains the central focus of collaboration

Facilitator Notes:

- Encourage groups to discuss multiple approaches
- Validate reasonable responses that demonstrate coordination and communication
- Focus the discussion on collaboration rather than policy compliance
- Listen for examples of role clarity, information-sharing, and coordinated planning
- Use participant responses to identify situations where professional perspectives may differ

Say:

As you share your responses, pay attention to where recommendations, priorities, or approaches may differ. These differences are common in coordinated investigations and will be the focus of the next discussion.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Coordinated investigations require communication among professional partners.
- Different agencies contribute specialized expertise and resources.
- Information-sharing supports informed decision-making.
- Collaboration helps reduce duplication of effort.
- Child safety remains central throughout coordinated investigations.

When Professional Perspectives Differ

Navigating Different Priorities Within
Coordinated Investigations

WHEN PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES DIFFER

Time: 10 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants recognize why professional partners may interpret situations differently and identify strategies that support productive collaboration when priorities, perspectives, or recommendations differ

Participant Manual Pages: Day 9 Notes Page – Child Advocacy Center & Law Enforcement Collaboration

Discussion Activity Instructions:

- Participants will remain seated in their table groups for the debrief.
- The facilitator will reference responses from the previous activity to guide the discussion.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Identify examples where agencies may have approached the scenario differently.
- Explore why differing perspectives may occur among professional partners.
- Discuss how professionals can maintain collaboration when recommendations or priorities differ.
- Identify strategies that support continued communication and coordinated decision-making.

Say:

As you worked through the scenario, you may have noticed that professional partners did not always approach the situation in the same way. Some of you may have prioritized immediate safety interventions, while others may have focused on medical concerns, investigative sequencing, evidence collection, family engagement, or service coordination.

These differences are common in child welfare investigations because professionals evaluate the same situation through different roles, responsibilities, and decision-making frameworks.

For example:

- *You may focus on immediate child safety and caregiver protective capacities.*
- *Law enforcement may focus on evidence collection and potential criminal violations.*
- *Child Advocacy Center personnel may focus on coordinating services and supporting child-centered practices.*
- *Medical professionals may focus on diagnosis, treatment, and injury assessment.*
- *Attorneys may focus on legal sufficiency and procedural requirements.*

Because responsibilities differ, professionals may:

- *Ask different questions.*
- *Prioritize different information.*
- *Recommend different actions.*
- *Identify different concerns.*
- *Operate under different timelines.*

Paraphrase:

Different perspectives do not automatically indicate poor teamwork. Collaborative investigations are strengthened when professionals bring different expertise and viewpoints to the case. The goal is not for every professional to think the same way. The goal is for professionals to communicate effectively, understand each other's concerns, and coordinate informed decisions. Challenges often occur when differing recommendations are viewed as opposition rather than as a reflection of different roles and responsibilities.

Strong collaboration occurs when you and your professional partners:

- Seek clarification.
- Remain open to different perspectives.
- Explain your reasoning.
- Maintain respectful communication.
- Continue focusing on child safety and family well-being.

Understanding why perspectives differ helps you navigate complex investigations while maintaining productive professional relationships.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What differing perspectives emerged during the activity?
- Why might agencies prioritize different concerns?

- How can differing viewpoints strengthen decision-making?
- What challenges can occur when professionals misunderstand another agency's role?
- What communication strategies help professionals work through differences?

Facilitator Answers:

- Different agency priorities.
- Different legal responsibilities.
- Different timelines.
- Different information needs.
- Different recommendations.
- Differing perspectives are expected.
- Professional roles influence recommendations.
- Open communication improves understanding.
- Collaboration benefits from multiple viewpoints.
- Child safety remains the shared objective.

Facilitator Notes:

- Keep the discussion focused on professional perspectives rather than conflict.
- Avoid delving into conflict-resolution strategies.
- Reinforce to the participants that differing viewpoints can be valuable.
- Use this slide to focus on communication challenges and interagency conflict.
- Emphasize that collaboration requires understanding, not uniformity.

Say:

Today, we've examined how Child Advocacy Centers and law enforcement contribute specialized expertise, how information moves across systems, and why professionals sometimes approach situations differently. Next, we'll explore how communication challenges can emerge during collaboration and how professionals maintain effective working relationships when disagreements occur.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Different professional responsibilities create different perspectives.
- Differing recommendations do not necessarily indicate disagreement.
- Multiple viewpoints can strengthen decision-making.
- Understanding partner roles improves collaboration.
- Effective communication supports coordinated responses.



LUNCH BREAK



MANAGING INTERAGENCY CONFLICT & PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

MANAGING INTERAGENCY CONFLICT & PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

NAVIGATING DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES & COMMUNICATION



NAVIGATING DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES & COMMUNICATION

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To frame professional differences as a strength in MDT collaboration, shifting the focus toward effective communication strategies for resolving friction during complex investigations

Say:

Throughout today's training, you have explored how professionals from different systems contribute unique expertise, responsibilities, and perspectives during child welfare investigations. As you saw in the previous activity, professional partners may not always interpret situations the same way. Differences in responsibilities, priorities, available information, and decision-making authority can lead to different concerns, recommendations, or next steps.

Different viewpoints are not necessarily a problem. In many cases, they lead to more thorough discussions and more informed decisions. Challenges often occur when communication breaks down. Frustration may develop when professionals do not understand another agency's reasoning, when assumptions replace clarification, or when individuals focus on defending their position rather than understanding another perspective. This section focuses on communication strategies that support collaboration during challenging situations.

You will examine:

- *Why communication challenges occur.*

- *How differing perspectives influence professional interactions.*
- *How to explain recommendations clearly and professionally.*
- *How to maintain collaborative relationships during disagreement.*
- *How communication supports coordinated decision-making.*

Strong professional communication does not require you to agree on every issue. It requires you to communicate in ways that promote understanding, transparency, and continued collaboration while maintaining focus on children and families.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- Why do communication challenges occur during collaborative investigations?
- How can differing professional perspectives affect communication?
- What happens when professionals make assumptions instead of seeking clarification?
- Why is communication important when agencies have different responsibilities?

Facilitator Answers:

- Different priorities.
- Different responsibilities.
- Incomplete information.
- Misunderstandings.
- Assumptions.
- Differing recommendations.
- Communication influences collaboration.
- Differing perspectives are expected.
- Clarification improves understanding.
- Professional communication supports coordinated decision-making.
- Effective communication strengthens collaborative relationships.

Facilitator Notes:

- Avoid discussing conflict resolution techniques in depth yet.
- Build directly from discussion regarding differing perspectives.
- Reinforce that disagreement and conflict are not the same thing.
- Set the stage for examining common sources of interagency conflict on the next slide.

Say:

Before you can effectively navigate communication challenges, you must first understand why those challenges occur and the factors that may contribute to tension among professional partners.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Communication is essential to effective collaboration.
- Differing professional perspectives are common during investigations.
- Assumptions can create unnecessary challenges.

- Understanding improves when professionals seek clarification.
- Professional communication supports coordinated responses and informed decision-making.

Target Outcomes



- Understand how communication influences collaboration, coordination, and professional relationships during child welfare investigations.
- Apply techniques for clarifying concerns, explaining recommendations, and maintaining collaborative relationships.
- Assess strategies that help maintain collaboration during complex or difficult situations.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To introduce participants to the role communication plays in collaborative investigations and establish expectations for navigating professional differences, communication challenges, and coordinated decision-making

Paraphrase:

By the end of this section, Social Services Specialists will be able to:

- Understand how communication influences collaboration, coordination, and professional relationships during child welfare investigations.
- Apply techniques for clarifying concerns, explaining recommendations, and maintaining collaborative relationships.
- Assess strategies that help maintain collaboration during complex or difficult situations.

Understanding Sources of Interagency Conflict

UNDERSTANDING SOURCES OF INTERAGENCY CONFLICT

Time: 10 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants identify common factors that contribute to communication challenges among professional partners and recognize how differing responsibilities, expectations, and priorities can influence collaborative interactions

Participant Manual Pages: [Day 9 Notes Page – Interagency Conflict & Professional Communication](#)

Discussion Activity Instructions:

- Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on factors that may impact collaboration among professional partners. Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will capture participant responses on a flip chart or whiteboard, if available.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Identify factors that may create challenges during collaboration
- Discuss how differing agency responsibilities can influence communication
- Explore common misunderstandings that may occur among professional partners
- Examine how communication challenges can impact coordinated decision-making

Say:

When you hear the word conflict, you may think about arguments, tension, or disagreement. However, many communication challenges begin before conflict becomes visible.

During collaborative investigations, communication difficulties often occur because professionals work within different expectations, responsibilities, timelines, and decision-making requirements. For example, one agency may need immediate information to make a safety decision, while another agency may still be gathering information before making recommendations. Both professionals may be acting appropriately within their roles, but frustration can occur when those differences are not understood.

Communication challenges commonly occur when professionals experience:

- ***Differing priorities.***
- ***Incomplete information.***
- ***Unclear expectations.***
- ***Role confusion.***
- ***Assumptions about another agency's actions.***
- ***Inconsistent communication.***
- ***Competing timelines.***

Paraphrase:

These situations do not automatically create conflict; however, they can increase the likelihood of misunderstandings. Another common source of tension occurs when you assume other professionals have access to the same information, concerns, or observations. In reality, agencies may receive information at different times and from different sources.

You and your professional partners may also interpret information differently based on your training, responsibilities, and organizational requirements. What appears urgent to one professional may not appear urgent to another because each person is evaluating the situation from a different perspective. Recognizing these differences helps you approach communication challenges with greater understanding and curiosity. The goal is not to eliminate differing perspectives. The goal is to identify factors that may affect collaboration and respond in ways that support productive communication. Understanding where communication challenges come from is an important first step toward improving collaboration.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What factors commonly create communication challenges among agencies?
- How can differing timelines affect collaboration?
- Why might professionals interpret the same information differently?
- How can assumptions contribute to misunderstandings?
- What benefits result from understanding another agency's responsibilities?

Facilitator Answers:

- Different priorities
- Different timelines
- Different responsibilities
- Incomplete information
- Miscommunication
- Assumptions
- Unclear expectations
- Communication challenges often have multiple causes
- Differing responsibilities influence decision-making
- Assumptions can create unnecessary tension
- Understanding partner roles improves collaboration
- Effective communication begins with understanding perspectives

Facilitator Notes:

- Keep discussion focused on systems and communication rather than personal conflict.
- Encourage participants to think about the causes of communication challenges rather than assigning blame.
- Reinforce concepts introduced in Sections 1 and 2 regarding differing perspectives and responsibilities.
- Prepare participants to explore communication strategies on the next slide.
- Avoid discussing resolution techniques yet; focus on identifying causes.

Say:

Once you understand why communication challenges occur, you are better positioned to navigate those challenges in ways that strengthen understanding rather than increase tension.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Communication challenges often stem from differing responsibilities and expectations.
- Agencies may possess different information at different times.
- Assumptions can contribute to misunderstandings.
- Different professional perspectives are normal.
- Understanding contributing factors supports stronger collaboration.

Recognizing Communication Barriers Before They Escalate

RECOGNIZING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS BEFORE THEY ESCALATE

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants recognize common communication patterns that can create misunderstandings, increase frustration, and interfere with effective collaboration during investigations

Participant Manual Pages: Day 9 Notes Page – Interagency Conflict & Professional Communication

Activity Discussion Instructions:

- Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on how communication challenges develop and impact collaboration. Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will ask participants to consider communication situations that became more difficult over time rather than immediately.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Discuss how communication challenges may develop gradually.
- Identify warning signs that collaboration may be becoming strained.
- Explore communication habits that contribute to misunderstandings.
- Examine how professionals can recognize and address concerns before they escalate.

Say:

Communication challenges rarely begin with major disagreements. More often, they develop through a series of smaller interactions that create frustration, confusion, or misunderstandings over time. During collaborative investigations, communication barriers may develop when you begin to make assumptions about another professional's intentions, responsibilities, or actions.

For example, you may assume:

- ***Another agency is not responding quickly enough.***
- ***Information is being withheld.***
- ***Concerns are not being taken seriously.***
- ***Someone understands information that was never communicated.***

Over time, these assumptions can affect communication and create additional challenges.

Warning signs that collaboration may be becoming strained include:

- ***Repeated misunderstandings.***
- ***Unanswered questions.***
- ***Unclear expectations.***
- ***Limited information-sharing.***
- ***Increasing frustration.***
- ***Reduced collaboration.***
- ***Conversations focused on positions rather than solutions.***

Communication challenges often increase when you focus on what you believe another person is thinking rather than seeking clarification. Recognizing these warning signs early gives you an opportunity to address concerns before relationships become strained and collaboration becomes more difficult. Strong professional communication requires you to pay attention not only to what is being communicated, but also to areas where information may be missing, incomplete, or misunderstood. The earlier you recognize communication concerns, the easier they are to address.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What warning signs suggest communication may be becoming strained?
- How can assumptions contribute to misunderstandings?
- Why do small communication issues sometimes become larger problems?
- What communication barriers are most common during collaborative investigations?
- Why is early recognition important?

Facilitator Answers:

- Assumptions
- Frustration
- Unclear expectations
- Missing information
- Limited communication
- Misunderstandings

- Communication challenges often develop gradually
- Assumptions can create unnecessary barriers
- Early intervention prevents escalation
- Communication requires ongoing attention
- Recognizing warning signs supports collaboration

Facilitator Notes:

- Focus on recognizing communication patterns rather than resolving them.
- Avoid introducing communication repair strategies yet.
- Encourage participants to focus on systems and communication processes rather than on individual personalities.
- This slide sets up the next discussion regarding restoring collaboration when communication challenges occur.

Say:

Recognizing communication barriers is important, but awareness alone does not resolve them. You must also know how to re-engage professional partners and restore productive communication when challenges occur.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Communication barriers often develop over time.
- Assumptions can contribute to misunderstandings.
- Warning signs can indicate increasing communication challenges.
- Early recognition supports stronger collaboration.
- Effective communication requires ongoing attention and clarification.

Rebuilding Collaboration When Communication Breaks Down



REBUILDING COLLABORATION WHEN COMMUNICATION BREAKS DOWN

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants identify strategies that restore productive communication, strengthen professional relationships, and support coordinated decision-making after communication challenges occur

Participant Manual Pages: Day 9 Notes Page – Interagency Conflict & Professional Communication

Activity Discussion Instructions:

- Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on repairing communication and strengthening professional collaboration. Participants will reference their Day 9 notes page throughout the discussion.
- The facilitator will ask participants to consider how professional relationships can recover after misunderstandings occur.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Discuss the impact of leaving communication challenges unaddressed.
- Explore strategies that help restore collaboration.
- Identify actions professionals can take to refocus conversations on shared goals.
- Examine how communication repair strengthens professional relationships.

Say:

Even in strong professional partnerships, communication challenges will occur. Information may be interpreted differently, priorities may compete, and frustration may develop when concerns are not understood or addressed. The goal of professional communication is not to prevent every challenge. The goal is to respond effectively when challenges occur. When collaboration begins to weaken, you can take steps to restore productive communication before relationships become strained. One strategy is to refocus conversations on shared objectives.

Although agencies have different responsibilities, professionals involved in child welfare investigations often share common goals related to:

- *Child safety.*
- *Family well-being.*
- *Informed decision-making.*
- *Coordinated service delivery.*

Another strategy is separating concerns from assumptions. Instead of focusing on another professional's intent, focus on:

- *Available information.*
- *Identified concerns.*
- *Needed clarification.*
- *Next steps.*
- *Collaborative problem-solving.*

Communication is strengthened when you acknowledge uncertainty and seek additional information rather than defending positions before all information is understood.

Restoring collaboration may require you to:

- *Revisit expectations.*
- *Clarify responsibilities.*
- *Address misunderstandings directly.*
- *Communicate updates.*
- *Identify areas of agreement.*

Strong professional relationships are not built because challenges never occur. They are built because you continue working together constructively when challenges arise. The ability to restore communication and maintain collaboration is an important skill in Multidisciplinary Team practice and coordinated investigations.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What happens when communication challenges are ignored?
- How can shared goals help restore collaboration?
- Why is clarification important after misunderstandings occur?
- What actions help rebuild productive communication?
- How can professionals maintain relationships during difficult situations?

Facilitator Answers:

- Increased frustration.
- Ongoing misunderstandings.
- Reduced collaboration.
- Loss of trust.
- Delayed decision-making.
- Communication challenges should be addressed early.
- Shared goals support collaboration.
- Clarification improves understanding.
- Professional relationships benefit from direct communication.
- Collaboration can be restored even after difficulties occur.

Facilitator Notes:

- Focus on communication repair rather than conflict resolution techniques.
- Avoid framing disagreements as failures.
- Reinforce that collaborative relationships require ongoing effort.
- Encourage participants to think about practical communication strategies they can use in the field.
- This slide prepares participants for the upcoming application activity.

Say:

Recognizing communication challenges and discussing communication strategies are important, but these skills are most valuable when you apply them during real professional interactions. Next, you will work through a scenario involving a difficult professional conversation and explore how communication choices influence collaboration.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Communication challenges are a normal part of collaborative work.
- Shared goals can help restore productive dialogue.
- Clarification supports understanding and coordination.
- Effective professionals address concerns directly and respectfully.
- Strong collaboration includes the ability to recover from communication challenges.

Professional Consultation In Practice

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTATION IN PRACTICE

Time: 10 Minutes

Purpose: To provide participants with an opportunity to apply professional communication skills by analyzing a challenging consultation scenario and identifying strategies that support productive dialogue, clarification, and collaborative problem-solving

Participant Manual Pages: Day 9 Notes Page – Interagency Conflict & Professional Communication

Activity Instructions:

- Participants will remain in their table groups. Each table will receive a consultation scenario to review and discuss. One participant will serve as the recorder, and groups will prepare to share their recommendations during the debrief.
- Read the consultation scenario as a group.

Scenario:

A Specialist is staffing an investigation with a professional partner regarding ongoing safety concerns. The Specialist believes additional intervention may be necessary based on recently obtained information. The professional partner believes the concerns can be addressed through existing services and does not currently support additional action.

The conversation becomes increasingly difficult because both individuals believe they have already explained their reasoning. Neither person believes the other fully understands their concerns. The Specialist must determine how to move the conversation forward while maintaining a productive working relationship.

Discuss the following:

- Identify the communication challenges present
- Determine what information needs clarification
- Discuss how the Specialist should approach the conversation
- Identify communication strategies that may support a productive discussion
- Prepare to share your group's responses during the debrief

Say:

Professional communication is often most important when you and your professional partners do not immediately have the same understanding of a situation. In this activity, your goal is not to determine who is right or wrong. Instead, focus on how communication can help move a difficult conversation forward.

- ***As you review the scenario, consider what information may need clarification, what questions could improve understanding, and what communication approaches may support a productive discussion.***
- ***Consider how you can remain focused on understanding concerns, gathering information, and maintaining collaboration when recommendations differ. Effective consultation involves creating opportunities for additional understanding rather than trying to convince another professional to immediately adopt a specific viewpoint.***

As you discuss the scenario, focus on:

- ***Clarification.***
- ***Understanding.***
- ***Professional dialogue.***
- ***Information gathering.***
- ***Collaborative problem-solving.***

The goal is to identify communication practices that help you and your professional partners continue working together during challenging situations.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What communication challenges are present in this scenario?
- What information may still need clarification?
- What questions could help improve understanding?
- How can professionals keep the conversation productive when recommendations differ?
- What communication approaches are most likely to support collaboration?

Facilitator Answers:

- Unclear understanding of concerns
- Communication fatigue
- Differing recommendations
- Information gaps
- Need for clarification
- Need for additional discussion
- Understanding should occur before problem-solving
- Clarification supports productive dialogue
- Questions can improve understanding
- Communication influences collaboration
- Professional relationships benefit from respectful discussion

Facilitator Notes:

- Do not focus on solving the case.
- Keep the discussion centered on communication strategies.
- Validate multiple reasonable approaches.
- Encourage participants to focus on understanding before responding.
- Use participant responses to prepare for the final communication takeaways discussion.

Say:

Throughout this section, you have explored how communication challenges develop, how you can recognize barriers, and how collaboration can be strengthened through effective communication practices. Before lunch, you will bring these concepts together and identify key communication lessons that support successful collaboration in the field.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Challenging conversations are common during collaborative work.
- Clarification often improves understanding.
- Productive consultation focuses on information and concerns rather than positions.
- Communication influences collaborative outcomes.
- Professional dialogue supports coordinated decision-making.

Moving From Communication To Coordination



MOVING FROM COMMUNICATION TO COORDINATION

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To reinforce key communication concepts and help participants connect professional communication practices to successful collaboration, coordinated investigations, and ongoing professional relationships

Participant Manual Pages: [Day 9 Notes Page – Interagency Conflict & Professional Communication](#)

Activity Discussion Instructions:

- Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on key communication lessons from this section. Participants will reference their notes from previous activities and discussions.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Identify major communication lessons from the section.
- Discuss concepts they believe will be most useful in practice.
- Connect communication skills to future Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) staffing and coordinated case planning activities.

Say:

Throughout this section, you have examined the communication side of collaborative practice. You explored how communication challenges develop, how misunderstandings can occur when information, expectations, or perspectives

differ, and how you can strengthen collaboration through understanding, clarification, and productive dialogue.

Communication challenges are common in child welfare investigations. You regularly work with professionals who have different responsibilities, priorities, expertise, and information. Effective collaboration is determined not only by whether professionals agree, but by how you communicate when differences arise.

Strong professional communication helps you:

- *Exchange information effectively.*
- *Build understanding.*
- *Strengthen working relationships.*
- *Support coordinated decision-making.*
- *Maintain focus on children and families.*

As you continue developing professionally, communication skills will be essential during staffing discussions, case consultations, Multidisciplinary Team meetings, and coordinated decision-making activities. The ability to navigate challenging conversations professionally strengthens partnerships, improves collaboration, and supports informed outcomes for children and families. This afternoon, you will apply these concepts during a larger Multidisciplinary Team staffing simulation.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What communication concept was most meaningful to you?
- What communication challenges do you anticipate encountering in practice?
- How can communication influence collaborative decision-making?
- What strategies can help maintain productive professional relationships?
- How might today's content support future MDT staffing discussions?

Facilitator Answers:

- Clarification
- Active listening
- Understanding perspectives
- Communication repair
- Professional dialogue
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Communication influences collaboration
- Different perspectives are expected
- Understanding improves coordination
- Professional relationships require ongoing communication
- Effective communication supports informed decision-making

Facilitator Notes:

- Keep the discussion brief and focused on key takeaways.

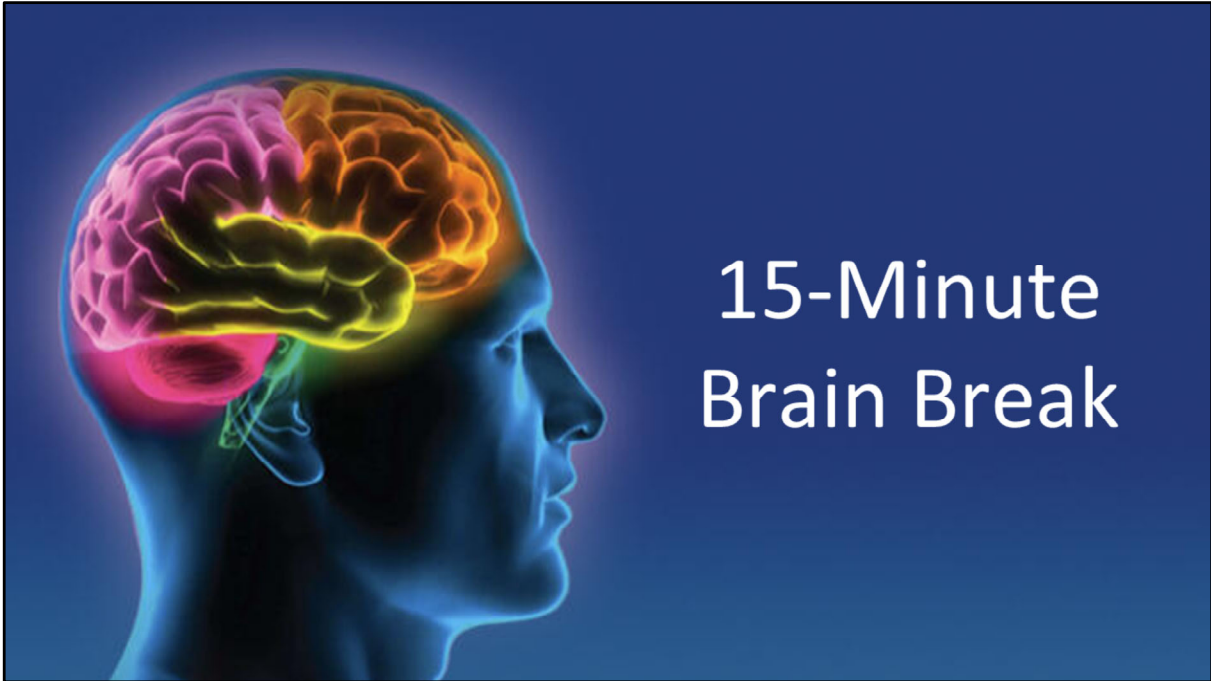
- Avoid introducing new content before lunch.
- Preview the MDT Staffing Simulation scheduled for after lunch.

Say:

This morning, you focused on how professionals collaborate, communicate, and coordinate across systems. After lunch, you will bring those concepts together through a Multidisciplinary Team staffing simulation where you will apply today's learning in a realistic case discussion.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Communication is a foundational component of collaboration.
- Differing perspectives are a normal part of professional practice.
- Clarification and understanding support productive dialogue.
- Professional communication strengthens coordinated decision-making.
- Effective communication contributes to positive outcomes for children and families.



15-MINUTE BREAK



MDT STAFFING SIMULATION AND COORDINATED DECISION MAKING



Collaboration Through MDT Decision-Making

COLLABORATION THROUGH MDT DECISION-MAKING

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To transition participants from theoretical discussion to practical application, setting expectations for the Flowers family MDT simulation by framing it as an exercise in collaborative decision-making, communication, and information-sharing rather than finding a single "correct" answer

Say:

This afternoon, you will shift from discussing collaboration to actively practicing it. Throughout today's training, you have explored how professionals coordinate information, communicate across systems, navigate differing viewpoints, and maintain productive working relationships during complex investigations.

The MDT staffing simulation provides an opportunity for you to apply those concepts during a realistic case discussion. This simulation is not focused on identifying a single correct answer. Instead, you will practice how professionals contribute information, ask questions, evaluate concerns, share observations, and work toward informed recommendations.

The Flowers family case has been used throughout much of this training. You are already familiar with the family's history, reported concerns, investigative activities, collateral information, safety considerations, and court involvement. This familiarity allows you to spend less time learning a new case and more time practicing collaboration.

During the simulation, you will be expected to:

- ***Analyze available information***
- ***Contribute observations***
- ***Consider multiple perspectives***
- ***Participate in professional discussions***
- ***Evaluate possible options***
- ***Support collaborative decision-making***

The focus is not on proving who is right. The focus is on understanding how collaborative discussions help you evaluate information and make informed decisions. Today's simulation reflects the reality that child welfare decisions often involve multiple voices, perspectives, and sources of information. The ability to participate effectively in these discussions is an important professional skill that extends beyond any individual case.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- Why is collaboration important during case staffing?
- What benefits result from hearing multiple professional viewpoints?
- How might staffing discussions improve decision-making?
- What skills from today's earlier sections may be useful during the simulation?

Facilitator Answers:

- Information-sharing
- Communication
- Clarification
- Case analysis
- Professional discussion
- Collaborative planning
- Staffing discussions support informed decision-making
- Multiple viewpoints contribute valuable information
- Communication influences collaboration
- Professional dialogue supports coordinated practice

Facilitator Notes:

- Avoid re-teaching MDT roles, CAC responsibilities, or law enforcement functions.
- Focus on preparing participants for application.
- Reinforce that the simulation is discussion-based rather than performance-based.
- Encourage active participation from all groups.
- Set a positive tone for the afternoon simulation.

Say:

Before the staffing begins, you will review the available case information, identify key considerations, and prepare for the collaborative discussion.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- The simulation focuses on collaboration rather than finding a single correct answer.
- Multiple professional perspectives contribute to understanding the case.
- Communication and information-sharing influence decision-making.
- Participants will apply concepts learned throughout Day 9.
- Effective staffing discussions support coordinated case planning.

Target Outcomes



- Understand how multidisciplinary Team staffing supports collaborative assessment and coordinated decision-making.
- Apply strategies that support information-sharing, clarification, and coordinated planning.
- Assess how information from multiple professional partners influences case recommendations.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To introduce participants to the MDT staffing simulation and establish expectations for collaborative discussion, coordinated decision-making, professional communication, and case analysis throughout the afternoon simulation experience

Paraphrase:

By the end of this section, Social Services Specialists will be able to:

- Understand how multidisciplinary Team staffing supports collaborative assessment and coordinated decision-making.
- Apply strategies that support information-sharing, clarification, and coordinated planning.
- Assess how information from multiple professional partners influences case recommendations.

Reviewing the Flowers' Case

REVIEWING THE FLOWERS' CASE

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants organize information gathered throughout the Flowers investigation, identify significant developments, and prepare for the upcoming MDT staffing discussion

Participant Manual Pages: Flowers Family Staffing Packet

Facilitator Resources: MDT Simulation Facilitator Guide

Activity Set Up:

- Participants remain in table groups.
- Each participant has access to the Flowers Family Staffing Packet.
- Groups review information gathered throughout the training.
- One participant serves as recorder.

Activity Instructions:

1. Review the Flowers family information contained within the staffing packet.
2. Discuss major events that have occurred since the original referral.
3. Identify information that has had the greatest impact on the investigation.
4. Determine what concerns remain unresolved.
5. Identify strengths, supports, and positive developments that have emerged.
6. Prepare to share observations with the larger group.

Say:

Throughout this training, you have followed the Flowers family through multiple stages of the investigative process.

What began as a referral progressed through interviews, collateral contacts, safety assessments, documentation, court involvement, and ongoing planning. As investigations progress, information develops over time. New details emerge, concerns may change, strengths may become more apparent, and additional questions may arise. Before participating in the staffing discussion, review where the case stands today rather than where it began. Use this opportunity to identify the significant developments that have influenced the investigation and professional decision-making.

As you review the case, consider:

- ***Which events most influenced the direction of the investigation?***
- ***Which discoveries changed how professionals viewed the situation?***
- ***Which actions had the greatest impact on child safety?***
- ***Which supports appear most significant at this point?***
- ***Which questions still need to be answered?***

The goal of this review is not to re-investigate the case. The goal is to organize the available information, identify key themes, and prepare for the staffing discussion. As you move into the simulation, understanding how the case has progressed is just as important as understanding its current circumstances.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What information had the greatest impact on the investigation?
- Which developments changed the direction of the case?
- What strengths have emerged throughout the investigation?
- What concerns continue to require attention?
- What information would you still want before making future recommendations?

Facilitator Answers:

- Information obtained during interviews
- Collateral information
- Safety planning efforts
- Court-related developments
- Family engagement efforts
- Support network involvement
- Investigations evolve over time
- Information gathered throughout the process influences decision-making
- Strengths and concerns should both be considered
- Some questions may remain unanswered
- Case progression provides important context for staffing discussions

Say:

Now that you have reviewed the current status of the Flowers case, the next step is to prepare for the staffing discussion by identifying the information you will bring to the conversation and the issues the team will need to explore together.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- The Flowers case has evolved significantly since the initial referral.
- New information influenced investigative decisions throughout the process.
- Both strengths and concerns should be considered.
- Case progression helps inform current discussions.
- Reviewing information prepares participants for staffing.

MDT STAFFING SIMULATION – FACILITATOR GUIDE

Purpose: This simulation allows participants to apply collaboration, communication, information-sharing, and coordinated decision-making skills within a realistic Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) staffing discussion.

Simulation Objectives:

Participants will:

- Analyze case information.
- Share observations and concerns.
- Consider multiple professional perspectives.
- Participate in collaborative discussion.
- Evaluate possible recommendations.
- Practice coordinated decision-making.

Facilitator Role:

The facilitator is responsible for guiding discussion rather than directing outcomes.

The facilitator should:

- Encourage participation from all groups.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Keep discussions focused on available information.
- Support collaborative problem-solving.
- Avoid steering participants toward a single "correct" answer.

Simulation Ground Rules:

- Respect differing viewpoints.
- Support recommendations using available information.
- Focus on child safety and family functioning.
- Avoid personal criticism.
- Remain solution-focused.
- Participate professionally.

Pause Option:

The facilitator may pause the simulation at any time to:

- Clarify information.
- Support participant learning.
- Refocus discussion.
- Address confusion.
- Introduce additional information.

Participants may also request a pause if they need assistance, clarification, or guidance.

Suggested Debrief Questions:

- What information most influenced your recommendations?
- What viewpoints differed during discussion?
- How were differing opinions addressed?
- What information gaps still exist?
- How did communication affect the staffing process?
- What strengths emerged during discussion?
- What would you want to explore further before making final recommendations?

Facilitator Reminder:

The purpose of the simulation is not to reach the "right answer."

The purpose is to demonstrate how collaborative discussions contribute to informed decision-making.

MDT Simulation Preparation

MDT SIMULATION PREPARATION

Time: 20 Minutes

Purpose: To prepare participants for the MDT staffing simulation by organizing information, identifying discussion priorities, and assigning professional roles for the staffing process

Participant Manual Pages: Flowers' Family Staffing Packet

Facilitator Resources: MDT Staffing Simulation Facilitator Guide & Role Cards

Activity Set up:

Participants will remain in their table groups. Each participant will be assigned a role and receive the Flowers Family Staffing Packet to review. Groups will organize their information before beginning the staffing simulation.

Activity Instructions:

1. Review your assigned staffing role.

Suggested Roles:

- DCFS Specialist
- DCFS Supervisor
- Child Advocacy Center Representative
- CACD Representative
- Local law enforcement Representative
- CASA Volunteer/Representative
- Service Provider

- Court Representative/Attorney Ad Litem
- Support Network Member
- Family/Support Network Representative

Facilitator Note:

Adjust role assignments as needed based on class size.

2. Review the information in the Flowers Family Staffing Packet.
3. Prepare for the staffing discussion by:
 - Identifying the information most relevant to your assigned role.
 - Determining the concerns, observations, or questions your role may bring to the discussion.
 - Organizing your notes for the simulation.
 - Preparing to participate from the perspective of your assigned role.

Say:

Successful staffing discussions begin with preparation. Before participating in a staffing meeting, you should review the available information, consider your concerns, and identify the issues that need discussion. This preparation helps you contribute meaningful information and ask thoughtful questions.

During this activity, you will prepare for the staffing discussion by reviewing the case from the perspective of your assigned professional role. The purpose is not to act out the role, but to consider how different professionals may interpret the same information based on their responsibilities and expertise.

As you review the staffing packet, focus on:

- ***Information relevant to your role.***
- ***Issues that require further discussion.***
- ***Questions that remain unanswered.***
- ***Observations that may help the team.***
- ***Factors that may influence future planning.***

You will not all focus on the same information or identify the same concerns. Those different perspectives strengthen the staffing discussion by providing a more complete understanding of the family's circumstances. As you prepare, consider what information your assigned role would want the team to understand and be ready to contribute that perspective during the staffing discussion.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What information seems most important from your assigned role?
- What concerns would your role likely want the team to discuss?
- What strengths or resources may be important to highlight?
- What questions would your role want answered?
- What information may influence future planning decisions?

Facilitator Answers:

Responses will vary depending on assigned roles.

- Different professionals may focus on different information.
- Roles influence what information receives attention.
- Preparation improves participation.
- Questions can be as valuable as recommendations.
- Multiple viewpoints contribute to a broader understanding of the case.

Facilitator Notes:

- Keep preparation focused and organized.
- Encourage participants to remain grounded in available case information.
- Avoid allowing groups to begin solving the staffing scenario during preparation.
- Remind participants that the purpose is to prepare for discussion, not reach conclusions.
- Ensure all participants understand their assigned role before beginning the simulation.

Say:

You are now ready to begin the staffing discussion. During the simulation, you will share information, raise concerns, ask questions, and work through the issues currently facing the Flowers family.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Preparation supports meaningful participation.
- Different professional roles may emphasize different information.
- Questions and observations contribute to staffing discussions.
- Multiple perspectives support a comprehensive case review.
- Participants should be prepared to contribute from their assigned role.

ROLE CARD #1 – DCFS SPECIALIST

Your Role: *You are the primary specialist assigned to the Flowers family investigation.*

Your Focus:

- Current child safety concerns.
- Family functioning.
- Protective capacities.
- Progress since the original referral.
- Remaining areas of concern.
- Long-term planning considerations.

As You Participate:

Be prepared to discuss:

- What information influenced major decisions.
- What concerns remain unresolved.
- What progress has occurred.
- What information still needs exploration.

Questions You May Consider:

- What factors currently support child safety?
- What concerns continue to require attention?
- What additional information may be needed?
- What recommendations should the team consider moving forward?

Remember: *Your responsibility is not to convince others. Your responsibility is to help the team understand the current status of the case.*

ROLE CARD #2 – DCFS SUPERVISOR

Your Role: *You are supervising the investigation and helping evaluate the overall direction of the case.*

Your Focus:

- Sufficiency of information.
- Quality of decision-making.
- Remaining information gaps.
- Planning considerations.
- Long-term case direction.

As You Participate:

Be prepared to discuss:

- Areas requiring additional clarification
- Information still needed before future decisions
- Strengths and concerns influencing planning
- Case progression since the referral

Questions You May Consider:

- What information appears most significant?
- What questions remain unanswered?
- What assumptions should be examined further?
- What should the team continue monitoring?

Remember: *Focus on helping the team think critically rather than providing answers.*

ROLE CARD #3 – MDT PARTNER ROLES

(Use one of the following based on class size)

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER REPRESENTATIVE

Your Focus:

- Child-centered considerations.
- Service coordination.
- Family engagement supports.
- Ongoing resource needs.

Questions You May Consider:

- What support may benefit the child?
- What services should remain involved?
- What barriers may affect participation?

LAW ENFORCEMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Your Focus:

- Investigative information.
- Safety concerns.
- Accountability considerations.
- Coordination needs.

Questions You May Consider:

- What information remains important to review?
- What concerns continue to require attention?
- What coordination efforts should continue?

SERVICE PROVIDER

Your Focus:

- Family participation
- Service engagement
- Progress achieved
- Areas requiring additional support

Questions You May Consider:

- What progress has occurred?
 - What challenges remain?
 - What support may strengthen stability?
-

ATTORNEY AD LITEM / COURT REPRESENTATIVE

Your Focus:

- Child's best interests.
- Available information.
- Ongoing concerns.
- Future planning considerations.

Questions You May Consider:

- What information supports current recommendations?
- What concerns remain unresolved?
- What additional information would be helpful?

SUPPORT NETWORK MEMBER

Your Focus:

- Family strengths.
- Informal supports.
- Natural helping relationships.
- Ongoing accountability.

Questions You May Consider:

- What strengths exist within the support network?
 - How can the network continue supporting the family?
 - What concerns should the network remain aware of?
-

FAMILY REPRESENTATIVE

Your Focus:

- Family perspective.
- Family progress.
- Strengths and successes.
- Remaining challenges.

Questions You May Consider:

- What positive changes have occurred?
- What concerns does the family have?
- What support would be most helpful moving forward?

Remember: Regardless of role, contribute information, ask questions, and help the team develop a more complete understanding of the Flowers family's current circumstances.



MDT Simulation

MDT SIMULATION

Time: 60 Minutes

Purpose: To provide participants with an opportunity to participate in a realistic MDT staffing discussion by reviewing case information, sharing professional observations, exploring differing viewpoints, and developing coordinated recommendations regarding the Flowers family

Participant Manual Pages: Flowers' Family Staffing Packet

Facilitator Resources: MDT Staffing Simulation Facilitator Guide & Role Cards

Activity Instructions:

Participants will remain in their assigned staffing roles while each table conducts its own MDT staffing discussion. The facilitator will monitor discussions, provide guidance as needed, and answer questions throughout the activity. Participants may reference any Flowers family case materials used throughout the training.

Phase 1: Information Sharing (15 minutes)

Each participant will share information from the perspective of their assigned role, including:

- Significant observations.
- Current concerns.
- Relevant strengths.
- Information the team should consider.

Phase 2: Discussion and Analysis (20 minutes)

As a group, discuss:

- Areas of agreement.
- Issues requiring further discussion.
- Information gaps.
- Factors influencing future planning.

Phase 3: Recommendation Development (15 minutes)

As a group, develop:

- Key recommendations.
- Follow-up considerations.
- Ongoing monitoring needs.
- Supportive actions moving forward.

Phase 4: Staffing Summary (10 minutes)

Prepare to report the following during the debrief:

- Major discussion themes.
- Key recommendations.
- Remaining questions.
- Information that influenced the group's conclusions.

Say:

This staffing simulation gives you an opportunity to apply many of the concepts you have explored throughout this training. There is no script to follow and no predetermined outcome to reach. Use the information from the Flowers family case, your assigned role, and the perspectives of your professional partners to participate in a meaningful staffing discussion.

As the discussion progresses, pay attention to how information is introduced, how questions shape the conversation, and how recommendations begin to develop. You may find that some information is more significant to one professional than another, and some recommendations may require more discussion before the group reaches consensus. These differences are a normal part of the staffing process.

As you participate, consider:

- ***What information needs additional discussion?***
- ***What patterns are emerging?***
- ***What progress has been made?***
- ***What questions remain unanswered?***
- ***What factors may influence future planning?***

The goal of this simulation is not to eliminate every question or develop a perfect recommendation. The goal is to experience how collaborative staffing discussions help professionals organize information, explore options, and evaluate a case from multiple

perspectives. Use your assigned role to contribute relevant information, observations, and questions that support the discussion. Remain engaged throughout the process and work with your professional partners to develop the most complete understanding of the family's circumstances.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

Use throughout the simulation as needed:

- What information seems most significant at this stage of the case?
- What information may need additional clarification?
- What themes are emerging from the discussion?
- What factors appear most important moving forward?
- What information is influencing your recommendations?

Facilitator Answers:

Responses will vary based on group discussion.

The facilitator should encourage:

- Information-based discussion
- Consideration of strengths and concerns
- Exploration of differing viewpoints
- Identification of information gaps
- Thoughtful recommendation development

Facilitator Notes:

- Allow groups to work independently whenever possible.
- Avoid steering groups toward specific recommendations.
- Use pauses strategically if participants need support.
- Encourage quieter participants to contribute.
- Remind participants that reasonable recommendations may differ between groups.
- If discussions stall, redirect participants toward available information rather than supplying answers.
- The facilitator may pause the simulation at any time for coaching, clarification, or learning opportunities.
- Participants may also request a pause if additional guidance is needed.

Say:

Thank you for your participation in the staffing simulation. You will step out of your assigned role and reflect on the staffing process, the factors that influenced the discussion, and the lessons learned from today's simulation.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Participants actively contribute from assigned roles.
- Discussion remains grounded in case information.
- Multiple perspectives are considered.
- Recommendations are supported by the information discussed.

- The focus remains on collaborative analysis rather than finding a single correct answer.

Reaching Decisions Together

REACHING DECISIONS TOGETHER

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants evaluate the staffing experience, reflect on how information influenced discussion, and identify insights gained through collaborative case review and professional dialogue

Participant Manual Pages: Flowers' Family Staffing Packet

Facilitator Resources: MDT Staffing Simulation Facilitator Guide & Role Cards

Debrief Activity Discussion Instructions:

- Participants will return from break and step out of their assigned staffing roles. This activity will focus on reflecting on the staffing process from the perspective of a participant rather than a specific professional role.
- Tables will be prepared to share key observations from the simulation during the discussion.
- During the debrief, participants will:
 - Reflect on the staffing experience.
 - Share significant observations from their group's discussion.
 - Discuss factors that influenced recommendations.
 - Identify lessons learned from hearing multiple perspectives.
 - Reflect on how the staffing process shaped their understanding of the case.

Say:

Now that you have stepped away from the simulation, focus on what occurred during the staffing discussion itself. Each group worked with the same case information; however, discussions may have developed differently from table to table. Some groups may have focused more on family strengths, while others may have focused on unresolved concerns, service needs, future planning, or information gaps. These differences demonstrate the value of staffing discussions. Different perspectives allow professionals to identify themes, ask questions, and recognize details that may not have been considered individually.

As you reflect on the simulation, consider:

- ***Information that shifted the conversation.***
- ***Observations that generated discussion.***
- ***Questions that encouraged deeper analysis.***
- ***Perspectives that challenged assumptions.***
- ***Factors that influenced recommendations.***

Staffing discussions create opportunities to test ideas, explore uncertainty, and organize information before making significant decisions. The process encourages you to think critically, listen to different perspectives, and consider information that may not emerge during individual case review. As you share your observations, focus on what you learned from the discussion process rather than whether your group reached a specific recommendation. Today's simulation was designed to strengthen your ability to participate effectively in collaborative discussions that support children, families, and professional decision-making.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What information had the greatest impact on your group's discussion?
- What question generated the most meaningful conversation?
- What observation caused your group to reconsider something?
- What did you learn from hearing viewpoints different from your own?
- How did the staffing process influence your understanding of the case?

Facilitator Answers:

- New interpretations of information
- Additional concerns
- Previously overlooked strengths
- Different planning considerations
- Information gaps
- Alternative viewpoints
- Discussion can influence understanding
- Different perspectives contribute value
- Questions can deepen analysis
- Collaborative review broadens thinking
- Staffing discussions support informed decision-making

Facilitator Notes:

- Keep participants focused on reflection rather than defending recommendations
- Encourage discussion regarding the process rather than the outcome
- Validate differences between group experiences
- Highlight examples of thoughtful questioning and analysis
- Use the discussion to prepare participants for the final reflection of Day 9

Say:

Today's simulation demonstrated that investigations rarely involve a single perspective or a single source of information. Before you conclude the day, you will take one final opportunity to reflect on how collaboration, communication, and coordinated decision-making support investigative practice.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Different groups may focus on different aspects of the same case.
- Questions and observations can shape discussion outcomes.
- Hearing multiple viewpoints broadens understanding.
- Staffing discussions encourage thoughtful analysis.
- Collaborative review supports informed planning and decision-making.

From Training Scenarios To Real Investigations



FROM TRAINING SCENARIOS TO REAL INVESTIGATIONS

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants connect the knowledge and skills developed throughout training to real-world investigative practice and prepare for the transition from classroom learning to field application

Discussion Activity Instructions:

Participants will participate in a whole-group discussion focused on reflecting on the overall training experience rather than a specific activity or case. The facilitator will guide a forward-focused conversation about applying skills in future practice.

During the discussion, participants will:

- Reflect on the skills developed throughout training.
- Discuss how those skills apply to real investigations.
- Identify areas of confidence and opportunities for continued growth.
- Identify resources that support ongoing professional development.
- Prepare for Day 10's focus on field practice and professional growth.

Say:

Over the past nine days, you have explored many responsibilities involved in child maltreatment investigations.

You have reviewed referrals, conducted interviews, gathered information, assessed safety, evaluated risk, participated in planning discussions, completed

documentation, prepared for court involvement, and engaged in collaborative decision-making.

Throughout training, you practiced these skills through structured activities, simulations, and case discussions. Field practice will look different.

Real investigations often involve incomplete information, unexpected developments, competing priorities, changing circumstances, and decisions that must be made without having all the answers.

You may encounter situations where:

- ***Information continues to develop.***
- ***New concerns emerge unexpectedly.***
- ***Plans require adjustment.***
- ***Difficult conversations occur.***
- ***Uncertainty remains.***

The transition from training to field practice is not about knowing everything. It is about knowing how to approach situations professionally, gather information thoughtfully, use available resources, and continue learning through experience. Professional growth occurs through experience, supervision, consultation, reflection, and a willingness to continue developing your skills. As you prepare for field practice, consider not only what you have learned, but also how you will continue building your knowledge, skills, and confidence. The goal of this training is not to create experts in ten days. The goal is to provide a strong foundation that supports continued growth throughout your career. Tomorrow, you will focus on the transition to field practice and explore the realities, challenges, and opportunities that come with professional investigative work.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate responses)

- What part of investigations currently feels most comfortable to you?
- What aspect of investigations do you believe will require the most continued growth?
- What resources or support will help you continue learning?
- What professional habits do you want to carry into field practice?
- What are you most looking forward to as you begin applying these skills?

Facilitator Answers:

- Interviewing skills
- Documentation
- Safety assessment
- Court involvement
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Decision-making
- Confidence develops through experience
- Continued learning is expected

- Supervision and consultation are valuable resources
- Growth occurs over time
- Professional development continues beyond training

Facilitator Notes:

- Keep the discussion future-focused rather than case-focused.
- Avoid revisiting specific Flowers' case decisions.
- Encourage honest reflection regarding professional growth.
- End the day on an encouraging and realistic note.

Say:

Thank you for your participation today. Tomorrow, we'll conclude our training by focusing on the transition from classroom learning to investigative practice, including professional growth, field realities, support systems, resilience, and lessons learned throughout the Flowers family's journey.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Training provides a foundation for professional practice.
- Real investigations often involve uncertainty and changing circumstances.
- Confidence develops through experience and support.
- Continued learning is an expected part of professional growth.
- Supervisors, mentors, and colleagues remain important resources.
- Effective investigators continue developing throughout their careers.



Target Outcomes Evaluation

TARGET OUTCOMES EVALUATION

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To assess the learning outcomes for this training day

Facilitator Note:

Before ending this day, direct participants to the QR code on the slide. Participants will need to use their phones to scan the code to complete the section target outcomes evaluation in Qualtrics.