Team Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse

The Uneasy Alliance

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IVPS

Interpersonal Violence:

2

Building Teams

Given the unique investigative complexities described in the previous chapter, it is little wonder that the disciplines involved in the child sexual abuse intervention system have increasingly come to realize that they can maximize their resources only by coordinating their efforts. The concept of using teams in child abuse intervention is not new: The first multidisciplinary, hospital-based teams were established in 1958 in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and Denver (Krugman, 1988). In recent years, the lessons of the hospital-based teams have been applied in investigative settings. Each investigative agency has unique strengths and authority, but individually none "has all the tools needed" (Colorado Department of Social Services [CDSS], 1991). Together, the involved disciplines have far more power to determine what did or did not happen than the individual entities have in acting independently.

❏ **History of Cooperation:**
Child Protective Services and Law Enforcement

The concept of joint investigation is not new and, in some form or fashion, joint efforts between law enforcement and child protective services (CPS) appear common in this country. A recent study by the Police Foundation involving 606 sheriff's and police departments revealed that 94% conduct at least occasional joint investigations with child protection agencies (Sheppard, 1992). The authors have traveled to many communities in all parts of the country and have been struck by the diversity of arrangements that local agencies will call *joint investigation* or *teamwork.* They range from sharing written case information or holding periodic meetings around specific high-profile cases to those communities where all the actors function as a cohesive unit. In the latter cases, such a team is truly more powerful than the individual components.

> *In some high-profile cases, teamwork is more powerful than the individual components.*

The same Police Foundation study supports the suggestion that the arrangements that exist for "joint investigation" in many jurisdictions fall short of fully functioning teams that meet the needs of all involved. Indeed, the study found that only 44% of law enforcement respondents from larger departments found joint investigations, as they exist in their communities, to be helpful. On the other hand, of the 51 officers responding to another survey of investigators in Tennessee (where team investigation is a priority), 84% indicated that CPS and law enforcement teams improved the accuracy of investigation. Only one officer in the Tennessee survey actually disagreed with a statement about improved accuracy (14% expressed no opinion) (Tennessee Network for Child Advocacy, 1990).

Relationships between law enforcement and child protective services have evolved on several levels during more than 25 years of shared responsibility. Today, in most jurisdictions there are neglect and even abuse cases that are, for all practical purposes, the sole responsibility of the child protection agency. These typically involve cases where only minor injuries have been reported or where the CPS intervention is based purely on the risk of future injury. Other forms of maltreatment such as educational neglect or emotional abuse also often fall within this category. Many states have no requirement for reporting this type of allegation to law enforcement (Martin & Besharov, 1991). Even if reports were required for these types of cases, there is reason to believe that many law enforcement agencies would not respond because of staff limitations and the poor prospects of criminal prosecution.

There are, however, a variety of situations in which CPS and law enforcement do come into contact. Generally, one of the first steps in any child protection investigation is to see the child. At times, parents or other caregivers deny CPS workers access to the child. When confronted with this resistance, CPS staff often rely on the more generally accepted authority of law enforcement to gain access to the child. Even if a court order is necessary, the officer will be in a much stronger position to enforce the order.

As protective services emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s, the CPS agency often relied on law enforcement to remove a child from the home when necessary. This practice developed despite authority for CPS to act to remove children without police involvement in 20 states (Besharov, 1990). Again, the more universally accepted authority of law enforcement officers was perceived to facilitate what is often a highly emotional and physically volatile situation. Some child protection professionals also suggested that another benefit of this arrangement would be that the client would associate the adversarial nature of the removal with law enforcement, thereby making it easier for the CPS worker to enter into a "helping relationship" with the client. Undoubtedly, this subtle distinction is lost on many clients, who readily recognize that the CPS worker is at least a major actor in the decision to remove the child.

Increasingly, in recent years another role for law enforcement involvement in CPS investigations has emerged. The child protection worker, even on the most straightforward neglect cases, must sometimes go into some of the most violent neighborhoods of our cities. By the same token, the workers are often, by definition, dealing with unstable and violent people. They go to these situations un-

armed and generally without any special training in personal defense. Making matters worse in most communities is the fact that these workers do this without any direct means of telecommunications. In this day of cellular phones and hand-held radio communication, CPS workers in rural areas are going to remote homes miles from the nearest telephone to confront potentially dangerous adults without backup or any means to summon help if needed. The problem is just as acute in metropolitan areas, where the growing violence of the drug culture exposes the CPS worker to intensified risk. In these situations, CPS officials must rely on law enforcement officers to accompany the worker and keep the situation as stable as possible.

Traditionally, when both CPS and law enforcement responded to a report of maltreatment, they conducted their respective investigations on parallel tracks. Each went about its business without coordinating efforts or sharing information. In the 1970s, and even today in many jurisdictions, this was the predominant way of investigating serious physical abuse and many forms of sexual abuse. This meant that each witness, including the child, had to be interviewed separately by both agencies. Because their efforts were not coordinated, the varying pace of the investigators could produce conflict, such as when a premature CPS interview with the alleged perpetrator resulted in the destruction of physical evidence.

Another variation of the CPS–law enforcement relationship is in cases where law enforcement has principal responsibility. In these cases, CPS is relegated to providing any information it may have in the agency records that might be helpful to the investigation. Such cases vary dramatically by state. In several states, CPS is limited primarily to cases where relatives are the alleged perpetrators, whereas elsewhere CPS shares sexual abuse investigative responsibility with law enforcement for all types of allegations, including strangers. Other situations in which law enforcement acts alone generally include child homicides without surviving minor siblings and allegations of past sexual abuse by an adult who was abused as a child (and where the statute of limitations has not expired).

The final variation of CPS and law enforcement involvement is the team. The investigative team is the most complicated of these variations and the one with the greatest payoff for the child victims and

involved agencies. The successful team draws on a mutual support network that reaches beyond the mandated investigative agencies and includes prosecutors, medical professionals, mental health clinicians, and others, as needed.

❏ Teams

Investigative training teaches us to attempt to answer five pertinent questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? (See Box 2.1.) When examining the entity of the multidisciplinary team, it is helpful to answer these key questions.

Box 2.1: Essential Questions About Teams

Who composes the team?
What are teams? What do they do?
When is the team concept to be used?
Where do teams work?
Why are teams the best way to investigate child sexual abuse?

WHY INVESTIGATIVE TEAMS?

Increasingly, those who are involved in investigations of child maltreatment recognize the need to maximize skillful interviewing, eliminate duplication of efforts, promote proper and expedient collection of physical evidence, and reduce the secondary trauma associated with the investigative process. By working together, team members can be more efficient by sharing investigative tasks, more effective by assigning tasks to the members best prepared to accomplish them, and less injurious to the child by reducing the number of duplicate contacts and by building stronger cases for protection and prosecution (with a resulting increase in pleas and reduced need for child testimony). By working together, the team can accomplish the goals of all investigative agencies in a more efficient manner and with enhanced results.

WHAT ARE TEAMS?

Teams are entities composed of professionals from varying disciplines and organizations. They bring a diversity of skills, backgrounds and training to the investigation, and the result is stronger than the individuals acting alone. Teams share a common mission, and the members identify themselves as part of a collective effort to protect children.

WHO COMPOSES THE TEAM?

Generally, we are referring to teams of at least child protective services workers and law enforcement officers. Teams also include prosecutors, and often mental health clinicians and occasionally others such as medical professionals. The teams we refer to in this book are field investigative teams rather than consultative teams, which exist in some communities to advise frontline investigators after the fact.

WHAT DOES THE TEAM DO?

All team members will not actually work all aspects of the case, but all will be actively involved in the coordination of the total process as it draws from the resources available to member agencies. In effect, each agency and individual has unique strengths, and the team concept allows their full exploitation. Individual shortcomings are minimized by the depth of the team's talents and skills. The investigative responsibility rests with the team as much as it does with individual investigators or their agencies.

WHERE HAVE INVESTIGATIVE TEAMS WORKED?

Investigative teams have been effective in several jurisdictions. In some places, such as Tennessee, the team concept is mandated by state law, and local agencies are guided and coordinated at the state level. In other states, the law supports team investigation (for example, Colorado Section 19-3-308(4)(a) CRS, 1990), and state-level inter-agency task forces provide direction. Other teams have been estab-

lished without any formal legislative involvement. These teams exist because of the personal leadership of an individual or group of individuals. Such teams develop their own procedures and protocols and may seek support from statewide organizations. Locally inspired efforts have produced one of the premier models of effective team work, the Child Advocacy Center concept developed in Huntsville, Alabama. The center-based model fosters interdisciplinary cooperation while providing a "child friendly environment" at the center. In the final analysis, team investigations have worked in major metropolitan areas and in remote rural communities and depend more on the will of those involved than on legislation or funding. That will is challenged further when the team moves from talking about making it work to the actual operation of a multidisciplinary investigative team.

❑ Uneasy Alliance

Establishing teams is easier said than done. Getting people to work together as a team in any professional environment is challenging. One must address the interpersonal dynamics and work-style variations, even when the team exists within a single organization or discipline. In multidisciplinary investigative teams, major differences exist in the organizational cultures of law enforcement and child protection agencies. Adding to the stress are the divergent philosophies and orientations of the allied professionals involved in the broader team network. Child protection agencies are generally built on a social work model and have professional and legal pressures to focus on maintaining families, where possible. By contrast, law enforcement has a clearer mandate to gather evidence of criminal activity and, with the prosecutor, aggressively seek a conviction. The successful investigative team must recognize these differences and potential sources of conflict and meet them head on.

For the team to work, each discipline must seek to understand the unique perspective of the other. It is these special experiences and perspectives that give the team concept its strength. We do not propose to blend the disciplines into a homogeneous mix in which

law enforcement officers are indistinguishable from CPS workers or the mental health perspective is identical to that of the prosecutor. Rather, we want to create a final product that retains the unique perspectives of all involved. By understanding why others believe and act as they do, we are better able to accept, if not always agree, with the action of other team members (Pence & Wilson, 1988).

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

Most CPS agencies operate in a so-called social work tradition. They generally see themselves as part of a helping system that seeks to strengthen the ability of families to care for their own children. They sometimes are less comfortable with their roles as agents of social control. CPS agencies, in fact, do have a dual mission as embodied in state and federal law. On the one hand, they are responsible for protecting children from maltreatment at the hands of some statutorily defined set of persons. This daunting task entails investigation and the careful assessment of the risk of future abuse or neglect. On the other hand, the same agencies are charged with preserving the very family that abused the child (Faller, 1990).

Law enforcement's mission in these cases is more straightforward. It investigates crime by gathering facts and drawing logical conclusions to determine, in fact, whether a crime has been committed and by whom. When confronted with a case of child sexual abuse, most officers see criminal prosecution and incarceration as the desired outcome. They often find any interest on the part of CPS to preserve the family abhorrent. Law enforcement officers often feel the parents had their chance at raising the child and that they chose to use the child for their own or someone else's sexual gratification. Now they feel the parents do not deserve another opportunity to care for the child. If the child is placed in foster care, any discussion about reunification meets with the same level of outrage. Officers view punishment as a priority over social service delivery as a means of curtailing abuse (Trute, Adkins, & MacDonald, 1992).

These differences in mission and organizational philosophy can be a source of strife on the team. The caseworker particularly may be sensitive about these issues and indignant comments by officers. He

or she may envy the clarity of mission of the law enforcement officer. The worker also has talked with the child and felt the same human outrage at the pain inflicted. He or she may well agree on a personal level that the parents deserve little consideration, but the worker may also have statutorily defined responsibilities to try to work with the family.

Differences in mission and organizational philosophy can be a source of strife on the team.

Furthermore, the caseworker is generally far more acutely aware of the problems with the alternative living situations to the child's home. For most children, removal from the home means placement with relatives or in foster care. To the child both these alternatives, with the accompanying changes in caretakers, school, sibling relationships, and friends, as well as the fear of the unknown, may be undesirable. In today's foster care system, there are too few foster homes, so those available in many jurisdictions tend to be overcrowded. Foster placement means that sibling groups often are split apart, and children who may have been severely traumatized by the abuse are retraumatized by being moved from one foster home to another because of their abuse-related behavior problems. Officers and other team members are less acutely aware of the adverse effects of foster care, may advocate for quicker reliance on placement, and resist the idea of reunification with the nonoffending parent, even if the offender is out of the home.

DIFFERENT DECISION-MAKING STYLES

Law enforcement officers are accustomed to rapid, autonomous decision making. Officers do not typically seek out the opinions of their superiors before acting in the field. Many CPS agencies, however, have developed a shared decision-making system. This translates into the need for the worker to consult by phone with a supervisor or perhaps the agency attorney before making selected key decisions such as removing a child. Police officers find this need to consult frustrating and inefficient. They may find their frustration soaring if the supervisor overrides the judgment of the officer and worker on

the scene. CPS agencies, on the other hand, find this consultative style of decision making useful in avoiding overactions based on the emotions of the moment.

MULTIPLE LAW ENFORCEMENT JURISDICTIONS

An incongruence between the geographic jurisdictions of the local CPS agency and law enforcement agencies can create confusion. Where both share common boundaries, there is little room for confusion as to whom to contact, but a county divided into many separate police jurisdictions may well undermine the team concept. Unless adjustments are made, the team will be composed of an ever-changing cast of actors, some of whom will work so few cases that they will never develop the necessary expertise. Without coordination, the agencies involved may pass the buck or work at cross-purposes on cases that blend jurisdictional boundaries.

FAMILY CONTACT

A related issue that sometimes produces conflict on teams is the nature of family contact for a child victim who has been placed in foster care. Traditional child welfare thinking is that early and frequent visitation with the family from which the child is removed is in the child's best interest. Child welfare professionals have found that children isolated from the world they knew, both good and bad, tend to be more traumatized by the foster care experience than those who are able to have contact in a safe way with their parents and siblings. Isolation tends to lead to idealization of the parents and minimalization of the problems, and it contributes to a possible recantation of the allegation. In addition, the family or juvenile court may routinely order visitation, even if supervised. Law enforcement officers and prosecutors, on the other hand, may strongly oppose any family contact, fearing the family will use the opportunity to pressure the child to recant the allegations. In fact, given the opportunity, many families will do exactly what the officers fear, while isolating the child will have the adverse consequences feared by CPS.

DISPOSITION

Many new teams must confront real or anticipated differences in what the team members perceive as the desired case outcome. Law enforcement officers entering this work generally see long-term incarceration of the offender as the desired outcome. In fact, they may harbor a desire to deliver themselves what Pence calls "blue steel therapy." If treatment is to be provided to the offender, most officers will initially support its delivery only in prison. The idea of diversion, suspended sentences, probation, or parole-based treatment is often rejected. For many social workers, the desired outcome may be the elimination of abuse in the home and preservation of the family if feasible and safe. If this can be accomplished without criminal sanctions or through the use of community-sentencing alternatives, then new CPS team members may find themselves advocating for the least drastic alternative. Whether or not the actors play these stereotypical roles is less important at the outset of team formation than the process the team develops to resolve these conflicts.

In reality, the team experience tends to draw the divergent points of view closer together. The "hawks" on the team quickly realize that too few offenders actually spend any significant time behind bars and even fewer remain behind bars until they are no longer threats to children. With experience, these officers may conclude that the most important outcome is the prevention of future abuse. The "doves" on the team

> *The team experience tends to draw divergent points of view closer together.*

also learn that the offender-treatment process is enhanced through ties to the coercive power of the criminal justice system wherever possible. It also does not take teams too long to encounter an offender whose sexual orientation to children is so entrenched or his impulse control so low that all agree the only way protect the children is to incarcerate the individual for as long as possible.

MEASURES OF TEAM SUCCESS

On the front end, the team needs to agree on its mission and what constitutes success. The CPS worker might measure success as a thorough investigation, a sense that an accurate determination of what happened was made, and that the risk of further abuse has been controlled. The officer or prosecutor, however, might see his or her efforts as successful only if a criminal conviction is obtained. If all parties stick to these standards, then they will probably be frustrated. The team needs to recognize the importance of accurately determining that abuse did not occur, if that is the case, and take pride in sorting out valid cases from those that should not be substantiated. In intrafamilial cases, the criminal justice professionals must also see their role in protecting children in juvenile or family court as vital even if no criminal prosecution occurs. Mature teams tend to have CPS workers invested in gaining criminal convictions in those cases that the teams decide to pursue, while law enforcement officers are vitally interested in children's safety and well-being even when no charges are sought.

WORK-STYLE DIFFERENCES

Once teams work through the organizational and professional conflicts, they confront the interpersonal issues that can undermine the effectiveness of the team. One such issue is work-style differences. Some investigators are so-called Type A in orientation and anxious to get on with the investigation. These folks have little patience for much front-end planning or information processing. They tend to move rapidly from one interview to another without pausing to assimilate the data. The same orientation may spill over into the actual interview style. Some interviewers feel a need to get right to the issue with a child, leaving little time to develop rapport with the child or to assess the child's general developmental level.

Other investigators move at a slower pace, the so-called Type B individuals. These folks tend to want to plan things more and to take time between interviews to process what has been learned. These investigators are more comfortable with slower-paced interviews that allow the child time to acclimate. When Type A and Type B

people are paired on a team, they must learn to accommodate each other's needs and styles or they risk frustration and confusion. They must also learn how to take advantage of the diversity, using the differing styles as a strength to be exploited by the team.

CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

People of both genders and of different racial or ethnic groups may communicate in ways that can lead to team conflict. These differences are well documented elsewhere. For example, women may ask questions of peers to initiate a discussion even when they are not seeking specific guidance. Men tend to assume that anyone asking a question wants direction about how to proceed (Tannen, 1990). Female team members may raise an issue with male team members (or vice versa) in a manner that results in a mutually unsatisfactory interchange. Even the way in which one gender communicates a request for action to the other can lead to conflict. For example, women tend to phrase such requests in a way that males are inclined to perceive as an order, one that they may be inclined to resist (Tannen, 1990). Sometimes, it is not necessarily the wording of the question, but the tone of voice that is interpreted as commanding and which rankles: "Jack, would you go in and get that offender file?" Similar problems exist in communications between members of different racial or ethnic groups. Where there are generational differences between team members, friction also has been noted and can become a serious problem.

REAL OR PERCEIVED INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS

Teams are composed of different disciplines and often different genders (see Box 2.2). The differing organizational cultures of these agencies might also lead to misunderstanding, particularly in combination with gender or racial differences. For example, it might be standard practice at the sheriff's department to gather at a local bar for drinks after the shift to "decompress." A male deputy might innocently invite the new female CPS team member to the bar to join in the ritual. Unfamiliar with the culture of the sheriff's office, the female caseworker might believe the invitation is sexually oriented,

leading to a strained working relationship as she attempts to avoid what she perceives as an awkward personal situation.

Box 2.2:
Types of Interpersonal Problems Encountered

Honest misunderstandings
Sexual harassment
Sexual involvements
Racism
Divergent ages
Sexism

On the other hand, the interactions between male and female team members can cross the line into consensual sexual involvements that may serve to affect adversely the objective balance of the team. Unfortunately, some interactions between members of the opposite sex can become sexual harassment. One example reported to the authors was of a male officer who whispered sexually suggestive comments in the ear of the female social worker while she was using an anatomically detailed doll in a child interview. The behavior was widely discussed, with the result that no female CPS worker in the county wanted to work with the officer.

Similar problems, real and perceived, can arise among members of different racial or ethnic groups. The use of racial stereotypes or slang can quickly undermine a relationship, just as the misinterpretation of an innocent statement by a new team member can produce strained relationships on the team.

Divergent ages represented on the team also can cause some conflict. Older personnel may have little appreciation for the "fledglings" on the team. They may devalue, consciously or unconsciously, the contributions of these younger members and, if possible, assign them to the least significant tasks. Although we recognize the need for new people to become oriented and educated and find their "sea legs," they will never develop professionally or become respected team members until they are "mentored" appropriately.

Conversely, some younger individuals come to the team full of enthusiasm and ideas but with little grounding. They may be reluctant to accept the experience and wisdom of those who have more experience. The slower pace with which some of their older counterparts move is frustrating. The newer members may not yet have developed an appreciation for the beneficial ebbs and flows of a successful investigation.

We have also noted on teams a situation that Pence has labeled the "my girl syndrome." When speaking to male team members, particularly law enforcement officers, Pence noted that some praised the teams highly and viewed them as unqualified successes. When pressed to explain what contributed to the success, many of these men praised their working relationships with female social counselors or mental health therapists. They commonly expressed variations on this theme: "My girl is great. She will do anything I want her to do. If I need something done, all I have to do is tell her and it gets taken care of." This type of attitude does not speak well for the balance of power on the team. The female co-workers of these men did not have the same rosy view of the team functioning. Almost universally, they felt like drones or administrative assistants to the males. They are not happy campers. A few "traditionalist" women are comfortable with this style of relationship, but this is not the norm and should not be encouraged or tolerated by supervisors. This dynamic reduces the likelihood of full participation by valuable members and sets the stage for successors to start out trapped in an unfulfilling role.

❑ Addressing the Problems

Recognizing the possible sources of conflict can help the team avoid problems in functioning. Recognition alone is not enough, however. Professionals establishing teams can take assertive action to improve team operation at both the system and personal levels. If the conflict is minimized and diversity properly channeled, the investigative goals of all involved can be achieved and the secondary traumatization of the victim in the investigative process can be minimized.

SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation of the following recommendations will help to ensure the team's smooth and effective functioning:

- Establish formal teams
- Understand and use team dynamics
- Establish investigative protocol
- Provide adequate personnel
- Provide joint training
- Engage in team building

Establishing Formal Teams

Much of the conflict is exacerbated when individuals rarely work together. Trust and predictability that comes from working together over time allows individuals to look beyond issues of acute disagreement. Teams can formalize themselves through a combination of predictable membership (and a resulting sense of belonging to the team) and development of predictable behaviors such as meeting times, places, structure, and formal agreements on roles or duties. Teams can be established on a community basis (e.g., DuPage County, Illinois) or across an entire state by statutory direction (e.g., Tennessee).

Understanding and Using Team Dynamics

The development of teams goes through stages sometimes referred to as "forming, storming, norming, and performing." In the first stage, *forming,* team members are learning skills and roles, testing one anothers' commitment, and defining the tasks. In the next stage, *storming,* a new team often competes for control: It may set unrealistic goals, focus on tasks over outcomes, and make little real progress. During the *norming* stage, the team members begin to give and accept feedback and share ideas while setting realistic operational norms and actually making progress. Finally, the team moves into the *performing* stage, in which it diagnoses and overcomes operational problems while using feedback to make changes and continuously improve performance.

Looking at it another way, the team is making the transition from a working group to a fully effective team. The working group usually has a strong focused leader and each individual is accountable independently and maintains his or her individual work products. With teams, leadership is shared, accountability is both individual and mutual, and work products are collective (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). The process of this transition has been visualized in phases: the *work group,* the *pseudo team,* the *potential team,* and the real team (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). The team needs to anticipate this process and allow enough time to work through normal developmental stages.

Struggles for leadership can be particularly destructive, and the team needs to decide who will convene the team and chair its meetings. Using the relatively neutral mental health member might be a good compromise. If the team is perceived by most agencies as under the control of one person or discipline, such as the prosecutor, then others' levels of commitment may be diminished. The team must belong to all.

Once operational, the team can anticipate numerous challenges. One of the most common is the introduction of a new member after a veteran departs. It is natural for the new person to question the way things are done, and it is equally normal for the rest of the team to resent the challenge to the status quo. The team must prepare for any changes in personnel and help the new member to acclimate to team operations.

Another challenge is the way in which the team handles adverse publicity. If news media can generate or orchestrate divisions between the disciplines, then the old "divide and conquer" effect may work. Effective teams need to recognize that all publicity will not be good and prepare for the inevitable in a positive fashion. It is best not to believe that one team member has made a particular comment to the news media until it is directly confirmed in person. Other team challenges include maintaining energy over time, the involvement of new supervisory or management personnel, and changes in agency priorities. Each requires the team to develop a careful strategy that will overcome the emerging barrier to success.

Establishing Multijurisdictional Teams Where Needed

In those communities with many small police jurisdictions, follow the experience of multijurisdictional drug task forces and allow experienced officers to work across jurisdictional boundaries. Nationally, there are more than 1,000 such drug task forces (Levine & Martin, 1992), and the same level of cooperation needs to be applied to sexual abuse investigation. Where multijurisdictional drug, drunk driving, or gambling task forces or teams exist, the process needs to be studied and duplicated, if at all possible. What kinds of agreements were necessary? What level of hierarchy was necessary to get the job done? Would getting the public involved help the process? Can the need be established as a result of "botched" or inefficient investigations? Will the prosecutor's office be a strong supporter and participant? What are the logistical impediments to be tackled and overcome? Are there any funding sources that could help sell the concept?

Establishing Investigative Protocols

Investigative protocols clearly lay out standard operating procedures and roles for the various team members. As described in Chapter 4, the protocol need only serve as a basis of interaction; the team should be free to modify it to unique case situations.

Tennessee's state protocol, for instance, calls for the team to interview the alleged victim before the child's parents. Specific circumstances, however, may dictate a deviation from normal practice: For example, in an out-of-home perpetrator case, the team might first interview the parents about the child's contacts with the suspect.

Providing Adequate Personnel for All Team Agencies

When one agency commits significantly more staff resources to the team than the other—typically, either CPS or law enforcement—it sets itself up to do a disproportionate share of the work. Beyond the inequity of this, it may well mean that one agency ends up triaging cases, with those considered serious receiving follow-up interviews and contacts from the whole team or, even worse, the other agency

alone. In such cases, the efficiencies of the team are lost, and the victim and others must endure several interviews. Additional problems can arise such as CPS staff members being unable to wait for law enforcement to interview the alleged perpetrator and thus proceeding and inadvertently confounding the delayed criminal investigation. In fact, shortages of law enforcement personnel were cited as a barrier to effective joint investigation by more than 57% of CPS and law enforcement agencies surveyed by the Police Foundation. Similar concerns were expressed about CPS in more than 40% of the respondents to the same survey (Sheppard, 1992).

Joint Training

Joint training is one of the keys to effective multidisciplinary teams (Pence & Wilson, 1988). Experience tells us that the joint training is essential in implementing interagency agreements and should be delivered before team operations begin (Martin & Besharov, 1991). This type of training helps the team member understand the nature of the member agencies' respective missions and philosophies. Many of the potential system conflicts can be brought into the open and discussed in the relatively objective environment of the training. In one state, law enforcement routinely expressed frustration that CPS workers inadvertently spoiled crime scenes. After joint training, CPS workers became aggressive in encouraging proper collection of physical evidence. Conversely, joint training helped law enforcement officers understand the legal mandates for "reasonable efforts to prevent removal" of even sexually abused children from their homes.

Team Building

At any stage in the team's development, it can benefit from activities designed to build team cohesion. This can take the form of simple recreational activities or shared professional experiences. It also can include exercises that help the team to better understand individual communication styles and personality traits. One such process that investigative teams in several states have used is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1987).

❑ Individual Recommendations

The following recommendations also may help team members work more effectively with one another:

- Become educated about other disciplines
- Develop personal relationships
- Share professional literature
- Keep communications open
- Confront problems openly
- Keep supervisors involved

SELF-EDUCATION

Each member needs to learn more about the culture of the other team agencies, including how they operate and what they value. If members work with the other gender or members of another race or ethnic group, then they should seek out ways to enhance cross-gender or cross-cultural communication. In some cases this will not be a problem, but in others it can seriously undermine the team. The individual should adjust his or her conduct to minimize behavior that is offensive to other team members.

DEVELOPING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Each member should get to know other members on a personal level, including about their families and how they spend their personal time. At the same time, members should demonstrate that they see others as professional colleagues.

SHARING PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Sharing professional literature such as books, articles, legal analyses, and even agency operations manuals with those in other disciplines educates other team members while sending the message that they are viewed as colleagues.

KEEPING COMMUNICATION OPEN

Even if formal protocols do not require it, the team should be kept current on case events such as court dates and decisions (criminal as well as juvenile), decisions about family visitation or reunification, and investigative contacts.

CONFRONTING PROBLEMS OPENLY

Inevitable conflicts should be addressed in a nonthreatening yet straightforward manner. The issue should be on the table for the entire team to discuss. Some issues can be resolved, whereas the team may agree to disagree on others. Even a heated discussion in a team meeting is better than a heated discussion at 10 p.m. in the emotionally laden atmosphere of an investigation. Disagreements are to be expected even in the most successful teams.

KEEPING SUPERVISORS INFORMED AND INVOLVED

The agency supervisors should feel free to attend team meetings and schedule periodic meetings to evaluate team operations. Supervisors need to remain responsible for ensuring that their agency representative(s) support the team concept and mission. When anticipated, the varying missions, philosophies, and procedures of the member agencies or the occasional misunderstandings of persons of divergent backgrounds and styles need not present an insurmountable barrier to team operation. In fact, diversity is what makes the team concept so powerful. Communication at both the system and personal levels is the key to making interagency teams work. When teams fail because of these problems, we are generally no worse off than before we tried the team concept. When the team concept works, it works for the involved agencies, for the individual professionals working on the team, and, most important, for the young victims of child sexual abuse.