

## Forming a Child Protection Team

### Objectives:

1. Participants will better understand the role of the Child Protection Team in the Indian community.
2. Participants will learn the importance of having a mission statement and protocols for the Child Protection Team.
3. Tasks and duties of the Child Protection Team will be discussed so that participants will fully understand their role.

### Activities:

Break the large group into small groups of 5-7 people, with members of established CPTs in groups together. Ask each group to develop a mission statement and protocols for their CPT. If they already have a CPT and established mission statement and protocols, ask them to revisit them and improve or make changes where needed. Give the small groups 30 minutes. After 30 minutes ask each group to assign a spokesperson to report back to the large group. Discuss each group's mission statement and protocols and make improvements if needed.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What is the role of the CPT in Indian communities? How are they looked at by community members?
2. What responsibility does the CPT have in Indian communities?
3. Who should be active members of the CPT and what can they contribute?
4. How can your CPT become advocates for children and families in your community? Why is this necessary?

Related Training Modules (Power Point Presentations):

[CPT overview](#)

[Difference between MDTs and CPTs](#)

## Forming a Child Protection Team

Creating a CPT involves several steps: identifying and recruiting members, developing a mission statement and protocol, establishing and maintaining good working relationships among team members, and evaluating the team's performance.

### What is a CPT?

There can be a variety of definitions of CPTs and MDTs. For the sake of simplicity, a MDT will be defined as a prosecution based team, focusing on child abuse and neglect cases involved in the legal/judicial system, while a CPT focuses on child protection.

A CPT has the responsibility to insure that children who are victims of abuse or neglect are protected from additional maltreatment. While CPTs and MDTs may share members from the same agencies, there are important differences.

### Team Participants

Many agencies work very well together in an informal environment. With the creation of a CPT you will need written protocols that will detail the involvement and activities of each agency member. It is important at the protocol development stage to assure that each agency is willing to take on the responsibility and commit to being involved with the CPT.

Everyone on the team must be committed to the concept that a coordinated and collaborative process is required for successful investigation of child abuse and/or neglect. This may take several meetings before the team begins to grasp the team concept.

The CPT must have the support of the leadership of its members' agencies and organizations. For instance, one study has revealed that in a jurisdiction where a CPT created a close working relationship between law enforcement and child protective services, three out of four cases were referred for criminal prosecution, and nearly 95 percent of those cases resulted in convictions (Tjaden, Anhalt, 1994).

Possible team members might include: Indian Child Welfare, law enforcement, prosecutor (tribal and/or state), criminal investigator, Indian Health Service physician/pediatrician, victim advocate, Bureau of Indian Affairs social service, tribal housing personnel, substance abuse program personnel, mental/behavioral health program personnel,

### Writing a Mission Statement:

A mission statement is a general declaration of the purpose, scope of activities and the guiding principles of the team. It should be short and clearly describe the reason the team was formed and the purpose it will serve. Your team should consider the following questions when writing a mission statement.

- Why was the team formed?

- Who is on the team?
- What jurisdiction will the team serve?
- What types of cases will the team address?
- What other functions will the team perform?
- What challenges will the team face?
- How will the team meet those challenges?

Don't attempt to include the answer to all of these questions. A mission statement should be short and specific enough to provide an adequate measure of success. It should be simple and direct and must also be tied to the everyday work of the team's member agencies.

Your Mission Statement Should....

- Express your team's purpose in a way that inspires support and ongoing commitment
- Motivate those who are connected to the team
- Be articulated in a way that is convincing and easy to grasp
- Use proactive verbs to describe what your team does
- Be free of jargon
- Be short enough so that anyone connected to the team can easily repeat it

### **Developing a Protocol**

A protocol is a written document detailing the understanding of the role and responsibility of each agency involved in the CPT. It is a practical, working document and serves as a reference when questions or disputes arise within the team. Protocols typically reduce conflict within teams because there is a shared understanding of the responsibilities of team members and their agencies. The agencies and individuals signing the document signify their mutual commitment to the team and the team's mission statement.

The development of a CPT will be greatly influenced by the purpose for the team. A CPT can provide one or more of the following services:

- protection
- case management
- case follow-up/tracking
- sponsoring activities
- activism
- providing recommendations to the court
- coordination
- education
- support for Team members
- advocacy
- discussion/problem solving
- data collection

- provision of multidisciplinary input.

### **IHS identifies six potential functions for a CPT:**

- 1) development of policies and procedures for handling situations involving child abuse and/or neglect
- 2) identification, coordination, and management of these situations
- 3) developing and implementing protocols and screening instruments in clinics where high risk families can be identified
- 4) development of necessary protocols and procedures for gathering and recording information for reporting, legal, clinical, and monitoring purposes
- 5) developing and coordinating child abuse/neglect training for the CPT members and the general community
- 6) identification and prevention activities in the schools with staff and children

Issues of confidentiality are paramount for any CPT. The type of information shared within CPT meetings is extremely sensitive. Everyone is concerned that information only be shared on a "need to know" basis and that their personal contributions to case discussions do not violate their agency or professional ethical guidelines. Confidentiality concerns can be a major barrier to inter-agency cooperation. The development of multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement (MOUs or MOAs) must address how information can be shared within each agency's confidentiality standards. The fewer the team members, the fewer the chances for violations of confidentiality.

The inclusion of community members or political representatives often raises confidentiality concerns. Professionals such as physicians, social workers, and mental health providers are subject to professional and agency sanctions for violations of confidentiality. Community members may not face the same sanctions and may lack training regarding confidentiality. Teams that are composed solely of professionals or administrators, however, may include few or no community members. A community may desire a team that reflects the values of that community and may want to develop teams that include adequate representation by tribal members.

To address confidentiality concerns, most CPTs require members to sign confidentiality statements. Several teams include a Confidentiality Declaration as part of the meeting attendance sheet. As each member signs the meeting attendance sheet, they must consciously reaffirm their commitment to maintaining confidentiality.

### **Tasks of a CPT**

There are several tasks that the CPT should be willing to tackle. These include:

- **Advocacy** – This is one of the most important tasks the CPT can do for children and families of the community. Many Indian children and families are not aware of the services available to them or the requirements they must meet in order to receive services. The CPT must advocate for families to receive the services they need to either regain their children or to participate in services to become better

parents.

- **Case Review/Determination** - CPTs are designed to review each case as it comes into the child protection system. This ensures that cases are dealt with in a timely manner and that appropriate services are identified and provided.
- **Determination of Services** – Identifying services is critical so that families can receive the necessary services to meet their case plan. It is very helpful to families to know what services are available so that they can receive and participate in services, parenting classes, etc. a timely manner. The CPT, as a group, can come together and discuss the issues of each case and each member can inform other members of services available within their agency or other services they are aware of that the family might need.
- **Provide Training and Technical Assistance to CPS** – As a group, the CPT will have many years of training and experience. They can assist each other in the dynamics of dysfunctional families, as well as domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and other issues affecting Indian families.
- **Provide Feedback on Progress of Each Case** – CPTs can continue to review cases until they leave the system. In providing feedback on each case, the team can determine the efforts that are being made by families and what might better help them.

### **Role of the CPT in the Community**

There are many roles of the CPT in Indian communities. Some of these would include:

- **Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect** – The CPT can create awareness of child abuse and neglect in various ways. They can decide to print brochures on the definitions, indicators, what happens when a report is made, who must make a report, etc. and distribute or post in each member's agency.
- **Sponsor Community Education Activities** – It is the responsibility of each agency in the community to make community members aware of child abuse and neglect. If each agency/member was willing to participate in a community training on child abuse and neglect, there would be little effort on one person. Each agency/member could do a half hour/one hour presentation on their expertise, i.e., domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, etc.
- **Prevention Efforts** – Prevention activities are an important part of the CPT. There are many activities that the CPT could do in Indian communities to get the word out about child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, etc. Many CPT have set up booths at the annual pow-wows or tribal events for a safe place for kids who are lost, need first aid, etc. This not only is a service to the community, but also makes the community aware of the CPT and their activities in the community.