



**National  
Children's  
Alliance®**

*The Force Behind  
Children's Advocacy Centers*

2022

# Healing, Justice, & Trust

A National Report on Outcomes for  
Children's Advocacy Centers

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**PUBLIC REPORT**





# Healing, Justice, & Trust

A National Report on Outcomes for Children’s Advocacy Centers

## Healing



97%

of caregivers agree that Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) provide them with **resources to support their children.**



99%

of professionals working with CACs believe **clients benefit from the collaborative approach** of the multidisciplinary team (MDT).

## Justice

## Trust



99%

of children say CAC staff were **good at listening to them.**



This report uses data from Outcome Measurement System (OMS) surveys administered in 2021 to explore how CACs are doing in three categories: healing, justice, and trust.

National Children’s Alliance (NCA) offers multiple OMS surveys that CACs can use to evaluate their programs in order to increase the quality of services they provide to children and families and improve the collaborative efforts of their MDT members.

The questions on each survey were designed to measure two overarching outcomes:

- 1. The CAC facilitates healing for children and caregivers.
- 2. The MDT approach results in more collaborative and efficient case investigations.

The first outcome is measured through two caregiver surveys and the newly developed Youth Feedback Survey, and the second outcome is measured through an MDT survey. Youth and caregivers are both asked to complete a survey at the end of their first visit to the CAC, and then a follow-up survey is offered to caregivers approximately two months later to provide feedback on the family’s experiences with the CAC. MDT surveys are given to all team members once every six to 12 months, so they can give feedback on the current functioning of the MDT across all cases.

**In 2021, 852 Children’s Advocacy Centers submitted a total of:**



**56,249**

INITIAL VISIT  
CAREGIVER SURVEYS



**10,657**

CAREGIVER  
FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS



**15,485**

MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
TEAM SURVEYS



**13,245**

YOUTH FEEDBACK  
SURVEYS





# Development of the Youth Feedback Survey

A new survey, piloted in 2020 and launched nationally in 2021

*“All the people are really nice, and I could let out all my emotions and things I had to say.”*



AGE 11

*“They made me feel more calm and collected while talking about what happened.”*



AGE 15

*“I liked how I was in control the whole time, it made me feel safer with everything going on.”*



AGE 13

*“I really loved how nice everyone was. I felt safe and heard.”*



AGE 16

The CAC model is based on giving youth a voice to share what has happened to them and what they need to heal and thrive in the future. By asking youth for feedback about their experience at the CAC directly, we are showing youth that their opinions are truly important to our work. Youth also have a unique perspective compared to the feedback from caregivers and MDT members—putting together all three perspectives gives us a more complete picture of our work. For all of these reasons, we believe youth should have an opportunity to give feedback.

Standardizing the questions all CACs ask nationally through OMS allows the entire CAC field to identify needed resources based on the same core set of information.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The OMS Youth Feedback Survey was developed based on the following guiding principles:



### Research-based

- The questions and survey collection process should reflect research on best practices for surveying youth, tools should be piloted with a diverse group of CACs to ensure they are generalizable to the CAC field, and the final surveys should be verified valid and reliable.



### Developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and empowering

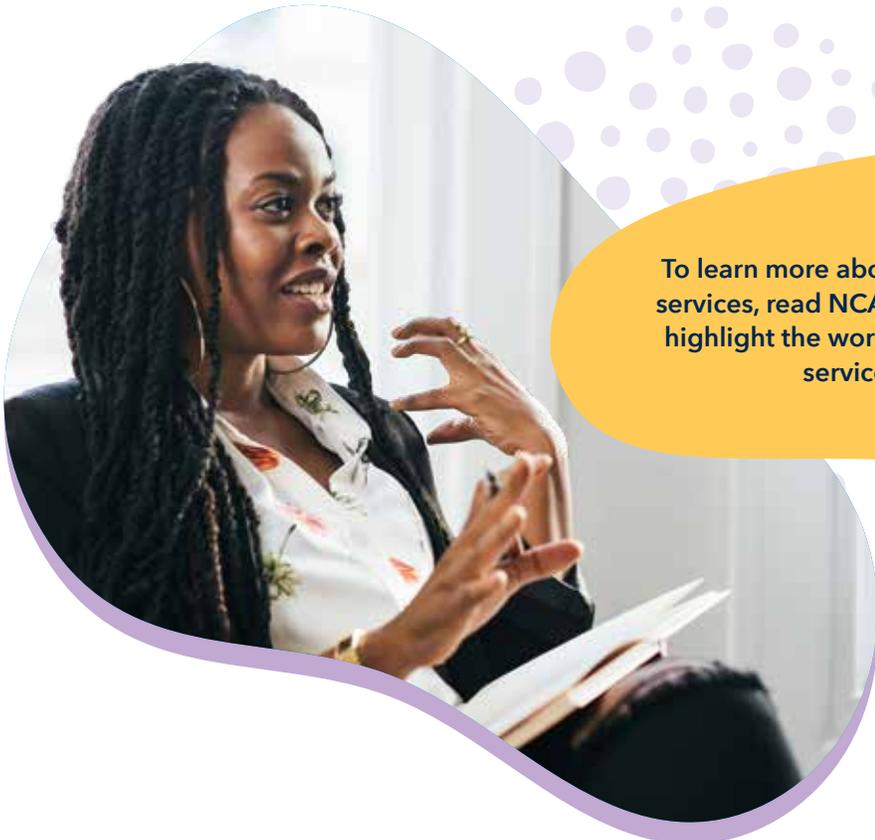
- With a target age range of 10 to 17, a second-grade reading level, familiar terms, and an inviting format are essential.
- The approach must be trauma-informed, like all CAC best practices.
- The experience of giving feedback should be empowering for youth, giving them an authentic opportunity to share their voice in the CAC process.



### Anonymous and private

- Like all OMS surveys, anonymity is key. The survey should not capture any names, case numbers, or other identifying information that could link responses back to the child or case.
- To avoid potential bias from caregivers and unwanted disruptions to the child's life outside of the CAC, the survey should only be offered on-site.

In the first year after the survey launched nationally in January 2021, **332** CACs in **46** states collected **13,245** Youth Feedback Surveys.



To learn more about how this survey can impact CAC services, read NCA's *2021 Annual Report*, in which we highlight the work of [ChildSafe San Antonio](#) to align services with youth feedback.



# Healing

CACs help children and families heal

For youth, being able to speak about what happened to them helps them heal:

*“I like how I can be very open with my feelings and not keep everything bottled up.”*



AGE 15

*“Talking about this really helped me, this is part of what I needed to do to heal.”*



AGE 13

*“This center helps me understand more about my feelings and my secrets.”*

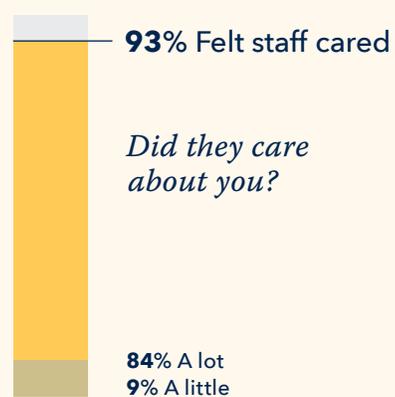


AGE 11

*“I liked how they are respectful of feelings and boundaries.”*



AGE 16



Caregivers appreciate CACs' guidance and support:

*"I appreciate the guidance on how to keep my children and family safe and healthy at this time."*



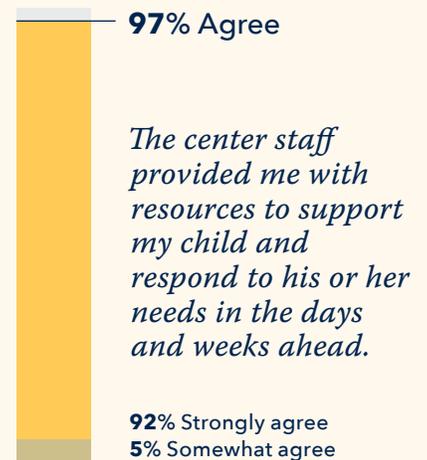
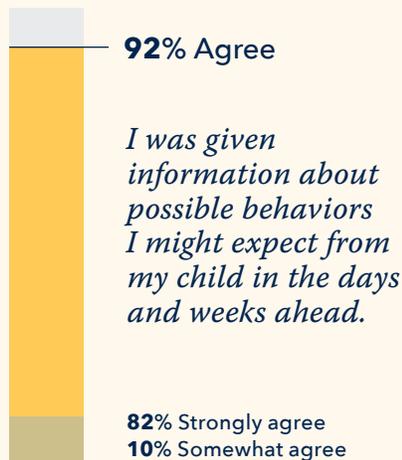
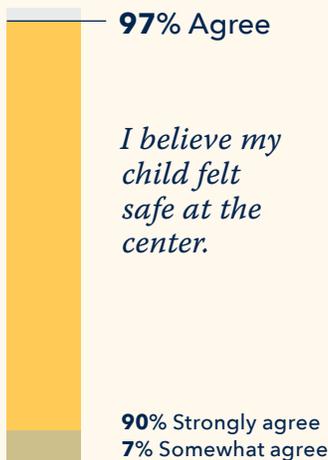
*"You are helping my grandson become a healthy individual."*



*"The staff was super nice to me and my son and gave great support and offered counseling so we can start healing."*

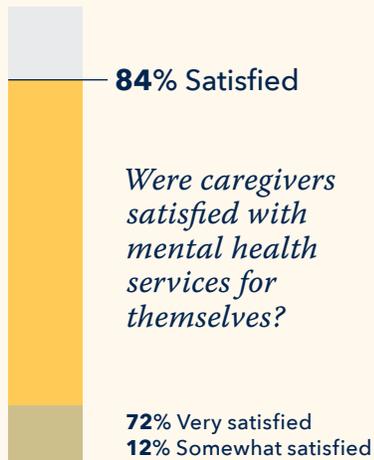
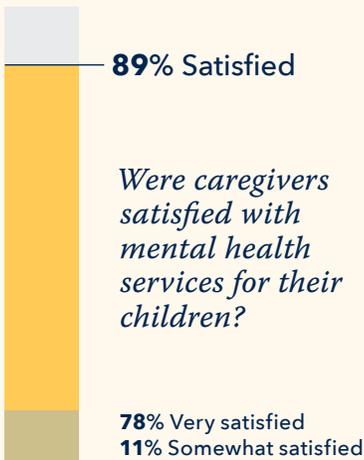
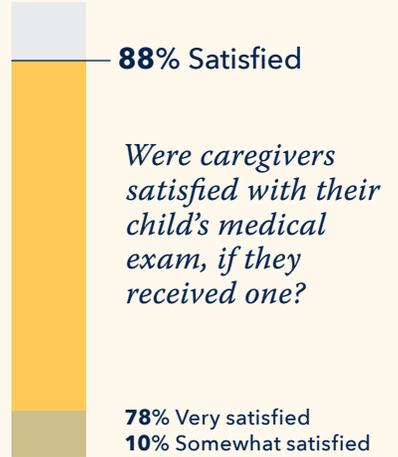
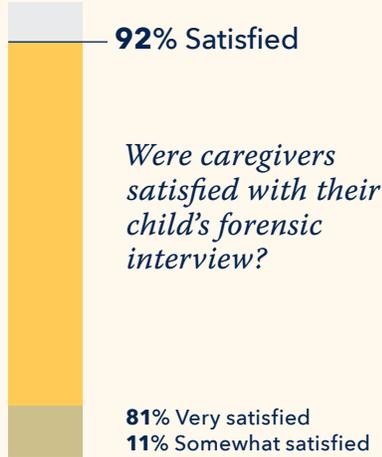
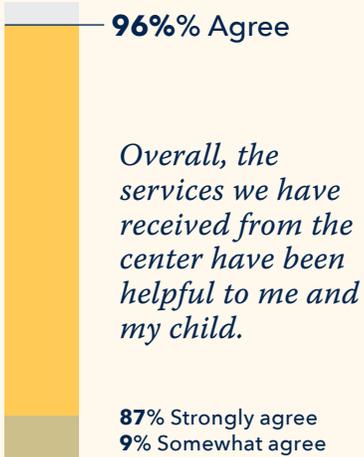


*"This gave my son an opportunity to speak out and get the help he needs to cope and heal."*





# Healing



Most caregivers are satisfied with the types of services available from CACs. Only **2-6%** of caregivers indicated they would have liked additional services at either the initial visit or by the time of the follow-up survey, either for their child or for themselves.



MDT members see children and families begin to heal at CACs:

*“Many children have benefited from the services and been able to heal from a lot of trauma. This is one of the greatest resources we have.”*



*“The MDT is a wonderful opportunity to help our kids find success, health, and happiness in life.”*



*“The advocates and mental health providers do a great job working with families, engaging families in mental health treatment, and work very well with other MDT members.”*



*“Victims and their families are treated with the utmost care and compassion and are provided with and referred to a variety of services/resources that enable them to feel empowered and to begin the healing process.”*



Full national results are available exclusively to NCA members on the [OMS Learning Center page](#) on NCA Engage.



# Justice

CACs strive to ensure just outcomes for children and protect them from abusers

Youth feel validated, accepted, and reassured at CACs:

*“I loved how accepted they made me feel. I felt like my story was valid.”*



AGE 13

*“Everyone did very well at informing me on what will and was happening.”*



AGE 17

*“I liked that it wasn’t just about getting my side of the story but also about knowing me and understanding me as a person.”*

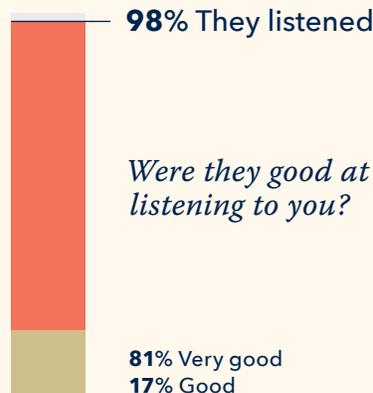
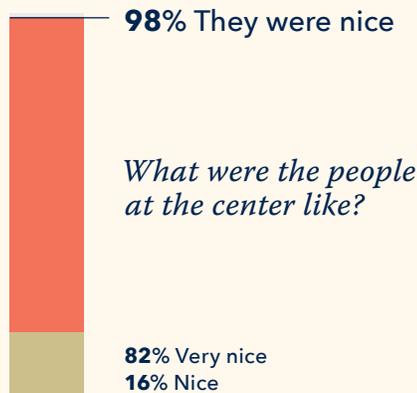


AGE 15

*“Helped feel confident I was doing the right thing.”*



AGE 15





CAC staff and MDT members guide caregivers and children through the investigative process:

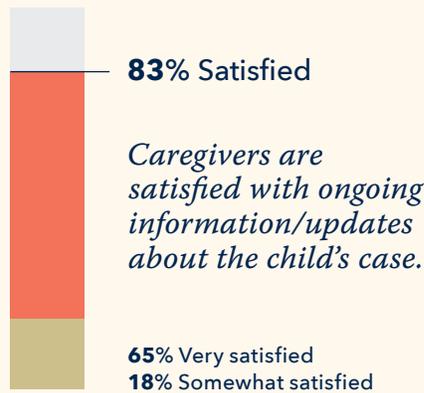
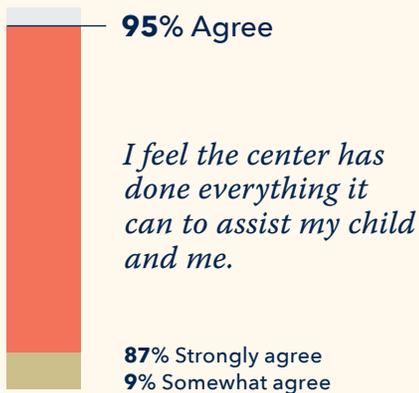
*“Everyone here is so kind and supportive of my children and myself. Everything was explained and we all knew what to be expecting.”*



*“All the staff helped exactly as I expected. They are awesome as a team!”*



*“I appreciated that the staff took time to make us comfortable with the process and helped us understand what the investigation meant/how to handle it.”*





MDT members see the benefit of the collaborative CAC/MDT approach:

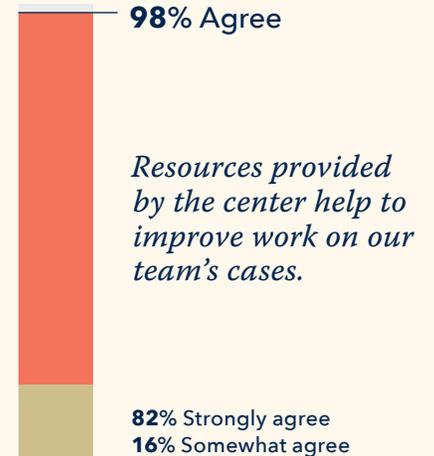
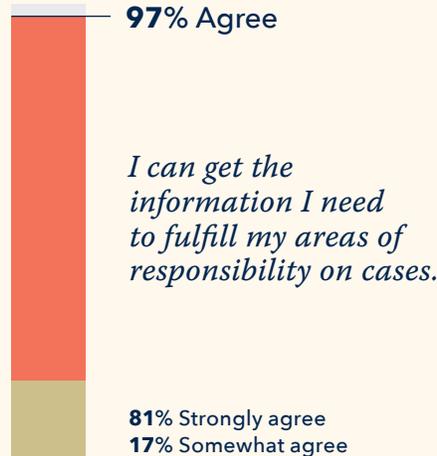
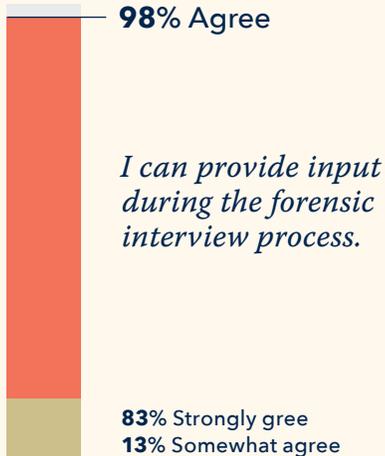
*“The CAC is a great organization with great people. They are integral to the mission of protecting children and bringing offenders to justice.”*

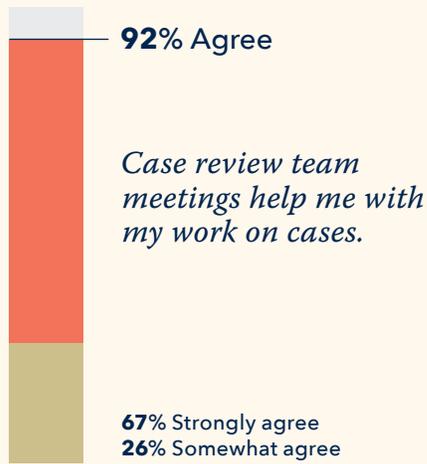
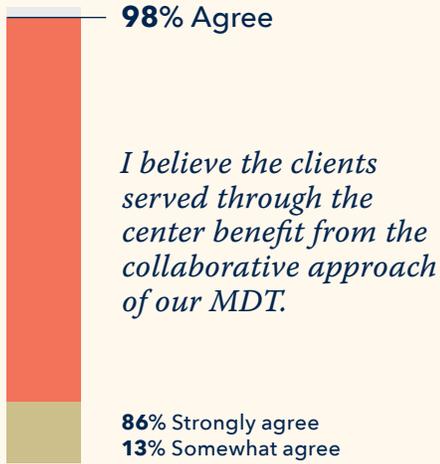


*“The CAC is an integral part of our investigative process. I appreciate their work and expertise that they provide.”*



*“In order to get victims the services and justice they need, it takes team work. The MDT gets this accomplished.”*





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# Trust



For children, families, and MDT members, trust is an essential component of the CAC model

Youth served at CACs can tell that the centers prioritize being a safe space for them:

**Testimonial 1:** "I liked that everyone got to help me answer some questions that I had. I trust them and I know I'm safe." *AGE 17*

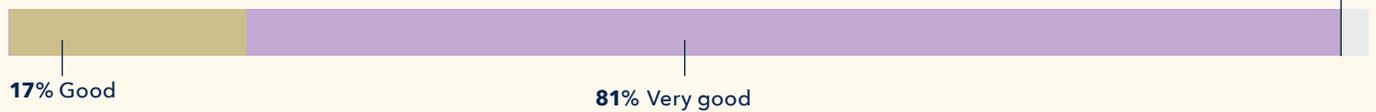
**Testimonial 2:** "The employees here are really nice and supportive and made me feel like I really could trust them." *AGE 13*

**Testimonial 3:** "I liked how genuine and honest everyone was. I felt so comfortable and safe." *AGE 16*

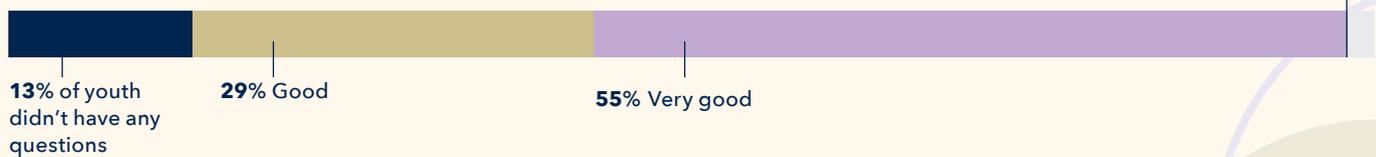
*Did CAC staff help you understand what to expect at the center?* **94% Felt staff helped**



*Were CAC staff good at listening to you?* **98% Felt staff listened**



*How good were CAC staff at answering your questions?* **84% Felt staff answered**



Caregivers trust CACs to help them and their children:



*“I trust that she will be there through the whole process. I know we’re not alone.”*

*“She was kind and explained to me what to expect. Gave me several opportunities to ask questions.”*



*“Everything was handled with care and sensitivity.”*



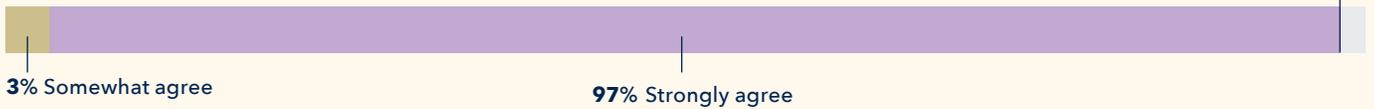
*The staff members at the center were friendly and pleasant.*

**100% Agree**



*When I came to the center, my child and I were greeted and received attention in a timely manner.*

**99% Agree**



*If I knew anyone else who was dealing with a situation like the one my family faced, I would tell that person about the center.*

**96% Agree**





*The process for the interview of my child at the center was clearly explained to me.* **99% Agree**



*My questions were answered to my satisfaction.* **99% Agree**



*After our visit at the center, I feel I know what to expect with the situation facing my child and me.* **95% Agree**



*I feel I have received information that has helped me understand how I can best keep my child safe in the future.* **95% Agree**



MDT members and their agencies trust the CAC model:

*“It provides a place to form trusting relationships with other agencies and professionals, which in turn allows us to best serve the families in our area.”*



*“The CAC employees are professional and a trusted resource for students who have been abused. Thank you for your important work!”*

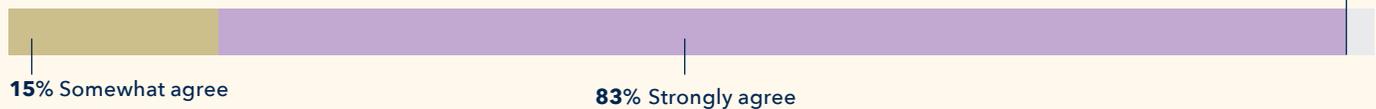


*“The team members trust other members in their area of expertise. Communication is solid.”*



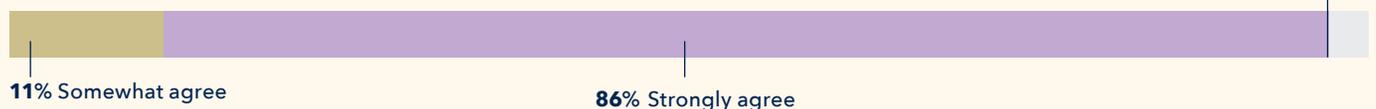
*Team members willingly share information relevant to our cases.*

**98% Agree**



*The Children’s Advocacy Center Model fosters collaboration on the multidisciplinary teams.*

**98% Agree**





*The center provides an environment where I feel safe expressing my concerns or making suggestions about the functioning of the multidisciplinary team.*

**95% Agree**



*Team meetings are a productive use of my time.*

**94% Agree**



*Other team members understand my role on the team.*

**95% Agree**



*All members of the multidisciplinary team are actively involved in cases relevant to their role.*

**95% Agree**



*Other team members turn to my agency for information, expertise, and direction.*

**95% Agree**



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# Improved MDT collaboration during the pandemic

MDT members met the challenge of a public health crisis

Despite the challenges brought by COVID-19, teams weathered the storm very well. Unlike widespread polarization in current society, the proportion of MDT members strongly agreeing that members demonstrate respect for the perspectives and informational needs of other team members increased by 2 percentage points (from **77%** in 2018 to **79%** in 2021).

And despite most teams switching to remote case review during the pandemic, according to a recent report based on 2020 NCA Member Census data regarding the expanded use of teleservices, there were no decreases in the productivity of team meetings and a slight increase in MDT members saying case review helps with work on cases (increased, with **67%** strongly agreeing in 2021 compared to **65%** in 2018).



*“I loved how  
accepted they  
made me feel. I  
felt like my story  
was valid.”*



AGE 13



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