



## Building Partnerships with Families

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a nationally researched and evidence-based model of home-based family therapy. The outcome-driven therapy involves all members within the family working together to prevent out-of-home placement, to intervene on behalf of family re-building, and to reunify the family unit. The program targets youth, aged 11–18, and their families at risk and/or presenting with delinquency, family conflict, truancy, violence, substance use, gang related behavior, and other behavioral disorders.

FFT therapists develop partnerships with families, operating on the belief that all families have strengths and are doing the best they can at any point in time. In order to accomplish this, FFT meets specific goals during three phases of the intervention.

- **Phase 1 – Engagement and Motivation:** In this phase, the therapist engages and motivates the family by decreasing negativity, blaming and hopelessness. The therapist creates with the family a family-focused problem definition that allows for alternative solutions to be possible.
- **Phase 2 – Behavior Change:** During phase 2, the therapist teaches specific skills for reducing and/or eliminating the problem behaviors and accompanying negative family relational patterns through individualized behavior change interventions.
- **Phase 3 – Generalization:** In the final phase, the therapist supports, maintains and generalizes changes across problem situations by increasing the family's capacity to utilize community resources and engage in relapse prevention.

Typically, FFT interventions include 8 to 12 one-hour sessions for mild cases, and up to 30 sessions for more difficult situations.



## About Our Clinicians

Master's level clinicians providing Functional Family Training undergo continuous training. Cayuga Centers has partnered with Tom Sexton, considered one of the pioneers of FFT clinical training, and continues to have direct access to training services. We currently have staff certified to train new staff.

## Program Target:

- At-risk youth are primarily between the ages of 11–18;
- The therapist meets with the family once a week, typically in the family home; more sessions are scheduled in high-risk cases;
- Regular attendance is vital, and we partner with our contracting agencies to engage families to keep appointments;
- The FFT therapist will mainly focus on what occurs among family members, and then generalize information out to other systems such as probation, school, community, etc.;
- The intervention is short-term; engagement and momentum are key factors to having successful outcomes.

## Measuring Results

In adherence to the model, the therapist provides follow up at 30 days, 3, 6 and 12 months, following standard questions and reporting of results. Reported results include:

- Increase in coping skills;
- Increase in problem-solving skills;
- Reduced rates of out-of-home placements;
- Improvements in family functioning;
- Decreased mental health problems for the youth offender;
- Favorable outcomes at cost savings to traditional mental health or juvenile justice services.

### Shayne Jervey

Director of Delaware Programs  
(302) 257-5849, Ext 3001  
shayne.jervey@cayugacenters.org

### Patricia Edwards

Assistant Director of FFT  
(302) 257-5851, Ext 3002  
patricia.edwards@cayugacenters.org

Cayuga Centers serves children and families throughout New York State, South Florida and Delaware, offering foster care, community-based interventions, behavioral health support services, respite, care management, and services for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

06-2020