



Short-Term Family Intervention Therapy

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a nationally researched and evidence-based model of home-based family therapy. The outcome-driven therapy is based on identifying and working with the strengths of the family to reach defined goals that will assist them in overcoming barriers. The highly individualized therapy model:

- Involves all family members in therapy working together to prevent the youth's out of home placement and address youth and family behaviors
- Offers a short term but intensive therapy schedule; the typical duration of MST is 4 months with an average of 3 therapy sessions weekly
- Builds a support network of peers and community services to aid family rebuilding, and will continue after the therapy sessions conclude

MST Versus Other Home-Based Family Therapies

Key to MST is understanding the term multisystemic. The word means pertaining to more than one system, and in family therapy, multisystemic refers to the multitude of systems affecting an adolescent's life. MST helps the youth and family define these systems, and then begin the process to eliminate negative factors, and build positive elements that will change family behavior. MST therapists look at the individual, the family members, the peers, the school and community environments, and begin the process of rebuilding systems that will strengthen family life.

New Protocol: MST-SA (Substance Abuse)

MST has been adapted for youth who are abusing drugs and alcohol in a therapy known as MST-SA. Therapists work in partnership with substance abusing youth and the family to identify the circumstances and elements that lead the youth to substance use. The plan is designed to keep the youth from excessive substance abuse. The program includes random drug testing, and caregivers are taught to spot and track substance consumption.

Measurable Outcomes

Outcomes of the therapy are clearly defined. In adherence to the model, the therapist provides follow up at 30 days, 3, 6, and 12 months. Expected outcomes include:

- Reduced long-term rate of criminal offending in serious juvenile offenders
- Reduced rates of out-of-home placements
- Increase pro-social activities
- Increase cooperation between parents and schools
- Increase parent monitoring and supervision
- Favorable outcomes at cost savings to traditional mental health or juvenile justice services

Program Target:

- The youth identified must be between the ages of 11–18 with a history of juvenile delinquency or serious PINS behaviors and at imminent risk of out-of-home placement
- The MST therapist meets with the entire family at each session; the focus is understanding the role that each family member plays, and what actions increase risk factors within the family. The therapist meets with the family three times per week, typically in the home
- The MST therapist focuses on defining family systems, and building a support network that will continue after therapy ends
- The intervention is short-term (4 months); family engagement and developing support networks are key factors to having successful outcomes