



# *Blueprints Promising Programs* FACT SHEET

FS-BPP03

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## Brief Strategic Family Therapy

Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT) adopts a structural family systems framework to improve youth's behavior problems by improving family interactions that are presumed to be directly related to the child's symptoms.

### Program Targets

The target population in general are children and adolescents between 8 and 17 years of age displaying or at risk for developing behavior problems, including substance abuse.

### Program Content

BSFT is a short-term, problem-focused intervention with an emphasis on modifying maladaptive patterns of interactions. Typical sessions last from 60 to 90 minutes, with 12-15 sessions over three months. Therapy is based upon the assumption that each family has unique characteristics that emerge when family members interact, and that this family "system" influences all members of the family, thus the family is viewed as a whole organism. The repetitive interactions, or ways in which family members interact and behave with regard to one another can be either successful or unsuccessful. BSFT targets these interaction patterns that are directly related to the youth's behavior problems and establishes a practical plan to help the family develop more effective patterns of interaction.

The three primary components of the intervention are:

- ≈ Joining: understanding resistance and engaging the family in therapy;
- ≈ Diagnosis: identifying the interaction patterns that encourage problematic youth behavior; and
- ≈ Restructuring: developing a specific plan to help change maladaptive family interaction patterns by working in the present, reframing, and working with boundaries and alliances.

### Program Outcomes

BSFT adolescents showed significant reductions in Conduct Disorder and Socialized Aggression from pre- to post-treatment, while group therapy adolescents showed no significant changes. There were also clinically significant changes in Conduct Disorder and Socialized Aggression favoring the treatment group over the control group.

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References

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- Szapocznik, J., & Williams, R.A. (2000, June). Brief Strategic Family Therapy: Twenty-Five Years of Interplay Among Theory, Research and Practice in Adolescent Behavior Problems and Drug Abuse. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 3(2), 117-134.
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