



Blueprints Model Programs FACT SHEET

FS-BPM06

1998 (Updated 08/2006)

Multisystemic Therapy

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is an intensive family- and community-based treatment that addresses the multiple determinants of serious antisocial behavior in juvenile offenders. The multisystemic approach views individuals as being nested within a complex network of interconnected systems that encompass individual, family, and extrafamilial (peer, school, neighborhood) factors. Intervention may be necessary in any one or a combination of these systems.

Program Targets:

MST targets chronic, violent, or substance abusing male or female juvenile offenders, ages 12 to 17, at high risk of out-of-home placement, and the offenders' families.

Program Content:

MST addresses the multiple factors known to be related to delinquency across the key settings, or systems, within which youth are embedded. MST strives to promote behavior change in the youth's natural environment, using the strengths of each system (e.g., family, peers, school, neighborhood, indigenous support network) to facilitate change.

The major goal of MST is to empower parents with the skills and resources needed to independently address the difficulties that arise in raising teenagers and to empower youth to cope with family, peer, school, and neighborhood problems. Within a context of support and skill building, the therapist places developmentally appropriate demands on the adolescent and family for responsible behavior. Intervention strategies are integrated into a social ecological context and include strategic family therapy, structural family therapy, behavioral parent training, and cognitive behavior therapies.

MST is provided using a home-based model of services delivery. This model helps to overcome barriers to service access, increases family retention in treatment, allows for the provision of intensive services (i.e., therapists have low caseloads), and enhances the maintenance of treatment gains. The usual duration of MST treatment is approximately 60 hours of contact over four months, but frequency and duration of sessions are determined by family need.

Program Outcomes:

Evaluations of MST have demonstrated for serious juvenile offenders:

- ∞ reductions of 25-70% in long-term rates of re-arrest,
- ∞ reductions of 47-64% in out-of-home placements,
- ∞ extensive improvements in family functioning, and
- ∞ decreased mental health problems for serious juvenile offenders.

Program Costs:

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MST has achieved favorable outcomes at cost saving in comparison with usual mental health and juvenile justice services, such as incarceration and residential treatment. At a cost of \$4,500 per youth, a recent policy report concluded that MST was the most cost-effective of a wide range of intervention programs aimed at serious juvenile offenders.

The information for this fact sheet was excerpted from:

Henggeler, S.W., Mihalic, S.F., Rone, L., Thomas, C., & Timmons-Mitchell, J. (1998). *Multisystemic Therapy: Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Six*. Blueprints for Violence Prevention Series (D.S. Elliott, Series Editor). Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado.

Multisystemic Therapy

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