

Multisystemic Therapy: Clinical Outcomes and Cost Savings

Program Overview

- Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a family- and community-based treatment that addresses the multiple needs of serious juvenile offenders, who are at high risk for out-of-home placement, and their families.
- MST focuses on changing the known causes and risk factors for offending, including characteristics of the individual youth, the family, peer relations, school functioning, and the neighborhood.
- Concurrently, MST builds protective factors. For example, MST helps families to develop natural support networks (e.g., friends, extended family, church, neighbors).
- MST is provided through a home-based model of service delivery that removes barriers to accessing services, provides families with intensive services, facilitates family involvement in treatment, and promotes the long-term maintenance of favorable changes.
- Specific interventions used within MST are scientifically-based, goal-oriented, and problem-focused.
- MST services are individualized to the family's strengths and weaknesses and address their needs comprehensively.
- MST is described fully in a treatment manual (Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland, & Cunningham, 1998) and put into operation through adherence to nine treatment principles.
- MST has stringent quality assurance mechanisms to ensure treatment fidelity.

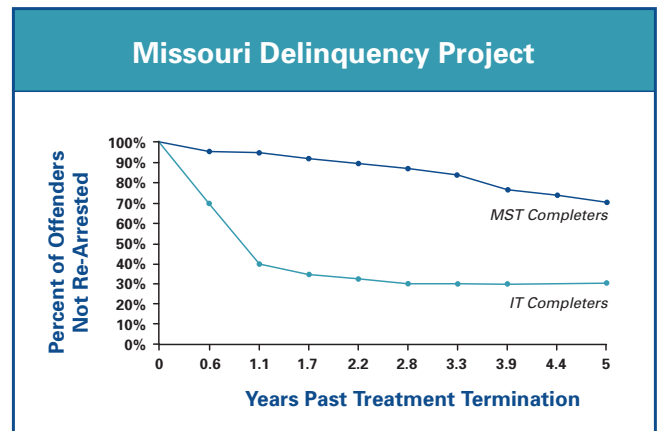
Clinical Outcomes

- MST is a well-validated treatment model (Kazdin & Weisz, 1998), with 16 published outcome studies (14 randomized, two quasi-experimental). These services included violent and chronic juvenile offenders, two substance abusing and dependent juvenile offenders, adolescent sexual offenders, three youth presenting serious emotional disturbance, maltreating families, and inner-city delinquents with chronically poorly controlled type 1 diabetes. Several other studies are underway.
- Outcomes and methodology of MST clinical trials have been reviewed favorably by the most prestigious and highly respected scholars, advocacy organizations, and research organizations in the nation—all of them independent of the MST treatment developers. These include:
 - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Elliott, 1998)
 - U.S. Surgeon General (U.S. DHHS, 1999; U.S. Public Health Service, 2001)
 - National Institute on Drug Abuse (1999)

- Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (2001)
- Stanton and Shadish (1997)
- Kazdin and Weisz (1998)
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (2003)
- National Mental Health Association (2004)
- National Institutes of Health (2004)
- President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003)

- The studies with long-term follow-ups showed that MST reduced the number of days in out-of-home placements by 47 percent to 64 percent in comparison with control groups.
- Compared with control groups, MST studies have consistently demonstrated improved family relations and family functioning.

A study of 200 chronic juvenile offenders showed reduced rates of rearrest:



A 14-year follow-up study of individuals, who were involved in MST as youth, had the following results:

Long-Term Outcomes

Missouri Delinquency Project: 14-year post-treatment outcomes

Individuals who had been involved in MST as a youth (average age at follow-up = 28.2 years):

- ✓ 59% fewer arrests
- ✓ 68% fewer drug-related arrests
- ✓ 57% fewer days in adult confinement
- ✓ 43% fewer days on adult probation

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Cost Savings

- Cost savings are achieved by targeting youth, who are at imminent risk for out-of-home placement, and then successfully preventing placement, while preserving community safety.
- The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2006) has concluded that MST is one of the most cost-effective of a wide variety of treatments designed to reduce serious criminal activity by adolescents.

Cost Effectiveness of MST

Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2006)

- Evaluating "Evidence-Based" options to reduce the future need for prison beds, save money, and lower crime rates.
- Estimated net taxpayers benefits for using MST in lieu of placement: \$18,213/youth
- Benefits of \$5.27 for every \$1.00 invested in MST implementation

For Further Information

For more information about research-related issues: www.musc.edu/fsrc.

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