

Research Précis

Edition 08 – 1

Winter 2009

Best Practices: Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities

Creating a better tomorrow...

Title: Multisystemic Therapy

Overview:

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a family-oriented, home-based program designed to reduce youth criminal activity, antisocial behavior, and substance abuse, and do these things at a cost savings compared to incarceration or out-of-home placement.

Target: Juvenile offenders ages 12-17

Extent/Duration of Program: Duration of treatment is typically about four months, and consists of several hours of contact per week.

Program Costs:

- MST does not have a prescribed or set curriculum.
- Staff training and program development assistance are provided by MST Services through licensing agreements. Information and costs are available on the Web site.

For further information, or to order:

MST Services
710 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard, Suite 200
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

Phone: 843-856-8226
Fax: 843-856-8227

E-mail: marshall.swenson@mstservices.com

Web site: <http://www.mstservices.com>

Principles/Approaches/Components: *Multisystemic Therapy* is based on the premise that the most effective way to help juvenile offenders is to help their families, and that these family members are valuable resources that can assist intervention in various interconnected systems (e.g., peer interaction, school, community) in which youth are involved and which ultimately impact their behavior. The program emphasizes the use of methods that promote positive and reduce negative social behavior, including substance abuse, in a manner that is dependent on each youth's particular needs (e.g., improve a caregiver's discipline practices, decrease the youth's interaction with deviant peers, improve the youth's school performance) in order to effect change in how offending youth function in their natural setting. The program components required of any locally implemented MST program consist of treatment (adhering to nine core principles), supervision (structure of onsite sessions and development of therapist competencies), expert consultation (role of the MST consultant), and organizational support (administrative issues in developing and sustaining a MST program).

Evidence-based Effectiveness: In numerous evaluation studies from 1991 to 1995, findings indicated that treatment group youths experienced a reduction in arrests and incarceration compared to other juvenile offenders. Furthermore, positive outcomes were shown to persist for two to four years after treatment began. Attempts to use MST with groups other than typical juvenile offenders (e.g., youth experiencing psychiatric crisis) have been mixed, suggesting that extensive program adaptations would be necessary in order to ensure effectiveness.

Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) connections:

E.x - Counseling, mentoring, referral services, and other student assistance practices and programs, including assistance provided by qualified school-based mental health services providers and the training of teachers by school-based mental health services providers in appropriate identification and intervention techniques for students at risk of violent behavior and illegal use of drugs.

B - Activities that involve families, community sectors, and a variety of drug and violence prevention providers in setting clear expectations against violence and illegal use of drugs and appropriate consequences for violence and illegal use of drugs.

A.iv - Activities that teach students to recognize social and peer pressure to use drugs illegally and the skills for resisting illegal drug use.

National Standards connections:

Grades 7 through 12

Health Education Standard 4 – Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Health Education Standard 7 – Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

National Health Education Standards, Second Edition: Achieving Excellence. American Cancer Society, 2007.

Counseling: Personal and Social Development Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

ASCA National Standards for Students. American School Counselor Association, 2004.

Recognition and additional reports:

The following organizations/institutions have recognized *Multisystemic Therapy*. The organizations are in alphabetical order and the status of the recognition is in parentheses.

Annie E. Casey Foundation (Families Court Award)

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (Model Program)

Promising Practices Network (Proven Program)

SAMHSA (Model Program)

U.S. Surgeon General's Reports on Mental Health and Youth Violence (Effective Program)

GENERAL NOTES: The intent of the above synthesis and correlations is to assist teachers and school administrators dedicated to using best practices to reduce violence and substance abuse among students. To our knowledge, the information was current upon publication. However, details pertaining to status of program recognition, research and findings, costs, and contact information are subject to change.

Correlations to the Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) federally approved activities and to national education standards have been limited in depth ("standard" level only) and breadth (number of standards and subjects) due to the encompassing nature of many programs that typically qualify as model or exemplary. The correlations listed should not be viewed as exhaustive.

For information on other effective programs for promoting safe and drug-free schools and communities, visit www.designedinstruction.com/learningleads/effective-sdfs-programs.html

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