

## **MULTISYSTEMIC THERAPY**

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is an intensive family and community-based treatment that addresses the multiple determinants of anti-social behavior in juvenile offenders. The MST approach views individuals as being nested within a complex network of interconnected systems that encompass the individual, family and extra-familial factors such as peer groups, schools, the community, and the courts and other service systems. MST works with youth ages 12 through 17 who have a history of arrests and/ or other externalizing behaviors.

The major goal of MST is to empower parents by equipping them with the skills and resources needed to independently address the difficulties that arise in raising teenagers. By doing so we have the greatest chance of being able to help young people cope with family, peer, school and neighborhood challenges..

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 may include strategic family therapy, structural family therapy, behavioral parent training, contingency management and cognitive behavioral interventions.

MST recognizes that each system of care plays a critical role in a youth's world and each system requires attention when effective change is needed to improve the quality of life for youth and their families.

### **Program Outcomes**

An Evidence-Based Practice (EBP), MST has proven successful in working with the most challenging youth and the circumstances surrounding them.

MST blends the best-practices of various clinical treatments, from cognitive behavioral therapy and behavior management training to family therapies. Evaluations of MST have demonstrated:

- Reduced long-term rates of criminal offending in serious juvenile offenders
- Reduced rates of out-of-home placements for serious juvenile offenders
- Extensive improvements in family functioning
- Decreased mental health problems for serious juvenile offenders
- Favorable outcomes at cost savings in comparison with usual mental health and juvenile justice services

Many experts believe that EBPs such as MST should be a standard for addressing the complex needs of juvenile offenders. MST consultants and trainers work with many provider agencies in helping effectively deliver MST services, setting up a network of partner organizations that are committed to the transport of the MST model with full integrity and fidelity.