

Multidimensional Family Therapy at a Glance

Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) is a family-centered, comprehensive treatment program for adolescents and young adults with substance use and related behavioral and emotional problems. This model is most effectively delivered as an outpatient or partial hospitalization (day treatment) program in the treatment of adolescents who are experimenting with or abusing substances, and/or those who exhibit co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders and other problem behaviors such as conduct disorder and delinquency.

MDFT therapists address four interdependent treatment areas to achieve effective clinical outcomes. Interventions are designed for the adolescent, the parent, the family, and systems such as school and juvenile justice. MDFT has been delivered in residential treatment settings, home-based counseling agencies, and child research centers throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe by community-based substance abuse, juvenile justice, mental health, and youth providers.

What the Evidence Tells Us

Comparing MDFT to other treatment approaches for adolescent substance use (such as cognitive behavioral therapy, adolescent group therapy, multifamily education, and residential treatment), the evidence shows that MDFT—

- ▶ Reduces substance use
- ▶ Reduces delinquency
- ▶ Reduces behavior problems
- ▶ Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression
- ▶ Improves educational performance

Results from experimental evaluations have shown MDFT to be more effective than other treatments at decreasing drug use and delinquency, internalized distress, and affiliation with delinquent peers. MDFT has also demonstrated improved academic performance and family functioning.

Why Your Organization May Consider Implementing MDFT

Your organization may consider implementing MDFT because it is an evidence-based practice, validated by clinical trials with significant positive outcomes in the treatment of adolescent substance use and problem behavior. Federal, national, and international organizations recognize MDFT as an effective model to reduce youth substance abuse and delinquency.

More Information on Implementing MDFT

- ▶ MDFT International Web site <http://www.mdft.org>
- ▶ The National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices Web site <http://legacy.nreppadmin.net/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=16>