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MULTIDIMENSIONAL FAMILY THERAPY INTERNATIONAL CONTRACTS WITH SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES TO HELP YOUTH AND FAMILIES WITH SUBSTANCE USE AND OTHER EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

MIAMI (Sept. 10, 2019) – [Multidimensional Family Therapy International \(MDFTI\)](#), a non-profit that provides training in a comprehensive, evidence-based, family-centered treatment for youth problems and disorders, has contracted with South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) Children and Family Services (CAF) to train therapists who serve youth and families at the State’s Community Mental Health Centers. MDFTI will implement the service, known as Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), in the State’s Community Mental Health Centers and provide quality assurance.

MDFT operates on the principle that a young person’s problems are multidimensional and addresses the individual, family, and environmental factors that contribute to drug use and behavioral problems. This [evidence-based intervention](#) is designed for youth with mental health, conduct, or substance use problems between the ages of 9 and 25. It has been implemented in a variety of public and private care and [treatment settings in the United States](#) and Europe and is supported by more than 30 years of National Institutes of Health-funded research.

MDFT services are typically provided on a weekly basis and can be provided at flexible times and locations. The services are designed to alter problematic patterns of interaction among family members and to increase pro-social and positive behaviors among youth and families. Services can promote healthy reunification with family after youth placement in an out-of-home setting.

Under the terms of the contract, MDFT will train up to 120 mental health professionals in the South Carolina Department of Mental Health to address the needs of children and their families who present with antisocial behaviors, school and family problems, substance abuse, delinquency, and emotional difficulties. Training will begin with the Coastal Empire Community Mental Health Center in Beaufort, Spartanburg Area Community Mental Health Center, Lexington County Community Mental Health Center, Santee-Wateree Community Mental Health Center in Sumter, and Catawba Community Mental Health Center. The trained mental health professionals will then deliver therapeutic interventions to youth and their families in home or community settings.

The expected outcome of training is to enhance SCDMH therapists' skills when treating adolescent patients' social, emotional, and behavioral functioning; prevent involvement, or further involvement, with the juvenile justice system; and to meet patients' needs in their communities, and significantly reduce the need for out-of-home placements such as foster care, residential treatment settings, psychiatric hospitals, juvenile justice facilities, or other group settings.

"MDFT has been transforming the treatment services landscape—nationally and internationally—for adolescents with mental health and substance use disorders needing specialized interventions. We're excited to make our clinically effective and practical approach available to youth and families in South Carolina," said Gayle Dakof, director, MDFT International.

"SCDMH staff are eager to learn and begin utilizing this evidenced-based practice that will help us engage caregivers as we treat children across our state," said DMH Deputy Director over Community Mental Health Services Debbie Blalock. "We know from many years of experience that if we do not engage families in the treatment we provide, we are not being as effective as we need to be."

MDFTI, with headquarters in Miami, Florida, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2009 by University of Miami professors: Dr. Howard Liddle, the developer of MDFT, and Drs. Gayle Dakof and Cindy Rowe who developed its associated training, implementation and sustainability model. It provides initial and ongoing implementation support to community settings in substance abuse, mental health, juvenile justice, and child welfare practice settings. The MDFT Academy, based in Leiden in the Netherlands, supports MDFT implementation in the Netherlands and throughout Europe. In addition to training providers through MDFT International, Liddle and colleagues at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine continue to develop new variations of the approach, study the model's long-term effects, and conduct research to improve MDFT.

The South Carolina Department of Mental Health's mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses, giving priority to adults with serious and persistent mental illness and children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. The Agency serves approximately 100,000 people with mental illnesses each year, approximately 30,000 of whom are children and adolescents. As South Carolina's public mental health system, it provides outpatient mental health services through a network of 16 community mental health centers and associated clinics, with locations in all 46 counties, and psychiatric hospital services via three State hospitals, including one for substance use treatment. In addition to mental health services, the Agency provides long-term care services in one community nursing care center and three State veterans' nursing homes.

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