



MULTIDIMENSIONAL FAMILY THERAPY (MDFT) FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Research shows that Young / Emerging Adults (ages 18-26):

- Have higher rates of mental health and substance use disorders, arrests, and recidivism than adolescents or adults age 26 or older.
- Experience significant barriers to accessing behavioral health services.
- Have high treatment dropout rates, and poor clinical outcomes.
- Rarely receive interventions specifically designed to treat their distinctive developmental and behavioral health needs.

MDFT effectively reduces substance use, including opioid use, and reduces recidivism and mental health symptoms, while at the same time improving vocational/educational and family functioning among young adults.

Outcomes among 284 young adults served in MDFT programs in the U.S. show promising effects with young adults and their families.

At the end of treatment:

- 88% of young adults were living in the community
- 86% had stable mental health
- 85% were abstinent from “hard” drugs
- 85% had no arrests
- 71% were in school or working
- 74% used marijuana or alcohol fewer than 10 days per month
- 79% were rarely or never violent/aggressive
- 98% of families did not regularly resort to violence
- 84% had stable family functioning



MDFT for young adults is also being piloted in Europe among incarcerated young adults ages 18 to 23. Early indications are very positive, with high participation rates and improvement in functioning.



The State of Connecticut has 4 programs specifically designed to serve teen and young adults through age 21 with (or at high risk for) Opioid Use Disorder (OUD): Wheeler Clinic – New Britain, Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR) – Waterbury, United Children and Family Services (UCFS) – Norwich, and CHR – Manchester.

Research indicates the MDFT is feasible and effective for young adults.

- 95% of young adults and their parents completed MDFT.
- Young adults showed a statistically significant (93%) reduction in days used any substances, and a 98% reduction in days used alcohol to intoxication.
- Young adults showed statistically significant improvement in vocational functioning from intake to discharge and 47% reduction in unemployment from intake to discharge.
- At discharge, 78% were employed (64% full-time, 14% part-time).
- Between intake and 18 months, 86% of young adults had no re-arrests.



“Honest to goodness we have seen a turnaround in these families that is near miraculous. The parents are coming into court and saying to us: ‘I can’t believe it. I’ve changed. My child changed. A whole new avenue of communication has opened up.’ What is so surprising it’s worked with families that were so fractured, I felt it would take years to get the parents and young adult speaking to each other even in a civil manner. Many of the parents were so wedded to their perception of their child and vice versa. I thought, my goodness, how in a period of 6 months were we going to change these very ingrained mindsets. And lo and behold, within the 6-month period we’ve seen a tremendous shift in the way these families are communicating with each other. That, in turn, creates compliance with the young adult with the other court requirements.”

-Judge Jeri Beth Cohen, State of Florida 11th Judicial Circuit