



North Texas Behavioral Health Authority (NTBHA)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Specialized Therapy Team Program Expands to Support At-Risk Youth in Dallas and Kaufman Counties

Media Invited to Launch Event on May 30 in Garland

Dallas, TX, May 28, 2024: The Multisystemic Therapy (MST) team is a specialized response team to support at-risk youth in need of intensive assistance. The North Texas Behavioral Health Authority (NTBHA) - the local behavioral health authority for the counties of Dallas, Ellis, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro, and Rockwall - launched its initial MST team in Ellis County in 2023 as a pilot program and has now been approved to launch additional teams in Dallas and Kaufman Counties. This was in large part due to the success of the Ellis County MST pilot program NTBHA implemented last year. The new teams are a result of the state's \$4.7 million allocation to fund seven new MST teams across the state of Texas.

MST is a proven family- and community-based treatment for at-risk youth aged 12 to 17 with intensive needs. It has proven most effective for treating youth who have committed or who are at risk of committing violent offenses, have serious mental health or substance abuse concerns, and are at risk of out-of-home placement. It is the only evidence-based treatment that has been shown to reduce violent crime among adolescents, bringing rates down by as much as 75%.

The program is a collaborative effort between the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority (NTBHA).

"MST has been an invaluable resource for both our Community Resource Coordination Group (CRCG) and Juvenile Probation Department," said Janis Burnett of Ellis County Juvenile Services and Ellis County representative for the NTBHA Board of Directors. "MST is an evidence-based program and has a proven track record for working with the whole family to keep youth in their homes while addressing difficult behavioral and emotional challenges," Burnett shared.

The MST program includes a team of specially trained therapists who provide intensive treatment, usually in the home, while focusing heavily on the involvement of parents and other caregivers. Team members remain on-call and available 24 hours a day and help the young person develop necessary skills to cope with family, school, and neighborhood stressors, with structured supervision and quality assurances to ensure progress is being made and maintained. A team consists of one supervisor and three or four therapists, with each therapist serving clients in various counties in their catchment areas.

The average treatment duration ranges from three to five months, during which therapists and provider agencies address the underlying causes of delinquent and antisocial behavior.

NTBHA successfully implemented its Ellis County MST pilot program in May 2023 with positive outcomes that included program completion, helping youth to remain in their homes, reduction of recidivism, reduction of adolescent antisocial behaviors and behavioral disorders in the home, community, and schools, as well as created improvements in family functioning. The success of the Ellis County pilot led to the state awarding NTBHA two additional teams as part of the program expansion across the state. NTBHA identified high need areas for the MST program services within Dallas and Kaufman Counties where they are expanding.

In the past year the Ellis County MST program has served a total of 23 youth. The program exceeded each of its target goals. The program outcomes included:

- 100% remained in the home (exceeding 90% target)
- 100% had no new arrests while in treatment (exceeding 90% target)
- 93.75% remained in school and/or employed (exceeding 90% target)
- 87.55% completed treatment (exceeding 85% target)

A success story from the Ellis County pilot program involves a 15-year-old at-risk of being placed outside of the home due to ongoing conflicts with the adoptive mother. The youth was referred to the Ellis County MST program while being screened for residential treatment. The youth was abusing marijuana, had a history of running away, and had multiple school sanctions. The MST therapist worked with the adoptive mother on budgeting, managing emotions, and establishing rules and expectations for the home. As a result, the youth began attending school regularly in an expedited education program, received passing grades, there is no longer drug abuse, and no verbal aggression. The youth and adoptive mother relationship has improved, and they are spending more quality time together. The MST therapist has played a vital role in advocating for the youth not to be placed in the Waco Center for the Youth, as well as advocating on behalf of the youth with the probation office to drop charges that could lead to the youth being placed outside of the home. The adoptive mother and youth completed 90-days of treatment with their MST therapist and chose to continue with services.

In addition to its singular capacity to reduce future violence, scientific literature clearly shows the effectiveness of MST, with 9 out of 10 young people served still living at home, in school or working, and avoiding follow-up arrests. Further, by keeping youth out of juvenile detention or hospitals, MST returns \$23.59 for every dollar invested in treatment.

As of September 2022, Texas has added a total of twenty-two (22) teams that operate through the Health and Human Services Commission.

MEDIA ADVISORY:

WHAT: The Mesquite and Garland MST program launch for Dallas County

WHEN: Thursday, May 30, 2024, 9:30 am to 12:00 pm

WHERE: Road and Bridge District Office 1
715 Rowlett Road, Garland, TX 75043

Guest speaker will be Melanie Duncan, Ph.D., MST-CAN Manager of New Program Development for MST Services.

Media interested in attending should rsvp to Jessie Rodriguez, JRodriguez@ntbha.org.