

# MDFT for Opioid Use and OUD

“For years I was dependent on drugs, and basically a zombie. I have no memory for 2 years of my life. MDFT was different. The counselors gave me respect and showed me that they actually cared. As I became more comfortable, I opened up more and discussed more of my problems. I stopped blaming my family for everything. I was finally feeling good about myself. I did not have to use drugs. I was getting good grades, going to school, going to work every day. I didn’t need drugs to block out my emotions. For once I was content in life.”

— Ryan, Received MDFT at Connecticut Junior Republic, Waterbury CT

## *Young people across the nation are losing their lives to opioids.*

- ✓ A stunning 1 in 5 adolescents report opioid use in the past 12 months, and young adults ages 18 -25 have the highest rates of prescription opioid use, heroin use and heroin use disorder.
- ✓ Research also shows that two out of three adults treated for opioid use disorder (OUD) first used opioids when they were younger than 25. Little progress will be made in addressing the national opioid epidemic without more effective and targeted interventions that identify and treat opioid use and OUD in adolescents and young adults – before it is too late.

**Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT)** is an evidence-based treatment that has proven effective in reducing youth substance use. Randomized clinical trials using the most rigorous research designs demonstrate MDFT’s effectiveness in ameliorating hard drug use, as well as marijuana and alcohol. To address the national opioid use epidemic in the United States, which has been exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MDFT has been adapted specifically to treat opioid use and OUD in youth. Core MDFT interventions are supplemented by opioid-specific interventions. The frequency of sessions, length of treatment, frequency and intensity of certain standard MDFT interventions are also increased.

## *MDFT for Opioid Use and OUD: Connecticut Demonstration Project*

Provider Participants: Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR), Waterbury; Wheeler Clinic, New Britain; Community Health Resources (CHR), Manchester; United Community & Family Services (UCFS), Norwich.

Youth Substance Use at Intake into MDFT: Using an average of 3.7 substances including opioids.

### **Clinical Outcomes at Discharge from MDFT**

- 88% reduced opioid use including 63% abstinent from opioids and all other hard drugs
- 62% improved mental health
- 62% reduced violence
- 57% improved school/vocational functioning

Multidimensional Family Therapy for Opioid Use and OUD shows considerable promise not only in harm reduction (i.e., 88% reduced their opioid and other hard drug use) but also in the elimination of opioid and other hard drug use in youth (63% were abstinent from opioids and other hard drug use at discharge). Moreover, there was meaningful improvement in several other key areas of youth functioning.

*These results suggests that MDFT for Opioid Use and OUD is a promising intervention that may play a critical role in addressing the youth opioid epidemic and should be implemented more widely.*

### To Learn More:

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