TFC Consultants and OMHSAS have worked collectively to provide MTFC providers with a guidance document that adheres to the model while meeting the expectations of Medical Assistance.

1. Exclusion Criteria:

TFC Consultants and OMHSAS acknowledge that although Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care is an evidenced based program that focuses on treating serious and chronic juvenile offenders, every child is not an appropriate match for the service. Youth that meet one or more of the following criteria should be excluded as an appropriate MTFC candidate:

- Absence of a permanency plan. *(For MTFC to work as intended, it is necessary for the MTFC program to work with those adults that will parent or support the youth after conclusion of the MTFC treatment.)*
- Youth outside of the age range for the model version being implemented in Pennsylvania (12 – 18).
- Youth that cannot safely be placed in the community and that are a danger to themselves or others.
- Actively Acute psychosis
- Active Schizophrenia
- Active Bi-polar disorders with psychotic features
- IQ under 70. *(It’s preferred not to set hard-and fast numbers, but rather assess referred youth on a case-by-case basis. The aforementioned serves as a guideline only)*
- Acutely homicidal or suicidal behavior.
- Substance use issues that are primary to other behaviors to be addressed.
- Sexual behavior(s) that is primary to other behaviors to be addressed.
- Youth who would need to receive other treatments concurrent with MTFC placement, except psychiatry as needed.

2. Reunification Overview:

Noting the significant role the bio-family plays in sustainability, it is recommended that reunifications efforts begin at the onset of service engagement. Communication with bio-families (specifically verbal and face to face) should not be restricted at any time during treatment, regardless of the child’s progress in treatment. Communication with the bio-family should be therapeutically beneficial and foster reunification from the onset of treatment.
Providers should evaluate each case to ensure that communications between the child and the bio-family prevent serious complications and do not adversely impact treatment progress.

3. Family Visits Specifically:

Families and youth can be assured that family visits are a cornerstone of MTFC. Noting their vitality to youth sustainability, MTFC staff will work with permanent families to arrange, manage and prepare for site visits to ensure that visits are therapeutically beneficial for both the family and the youth.

4. Drug and Alcohol Treatment:

In many instances, youth are screened for extensive Drug and Alcohol issues prior to program admission. Typically in MTFC, D&A issues are approached and treated as any other behavior problems by employing encouragement, reinforcement of pro-social alternatives to the unwanted behavior, providing predictable and consistent consequences for violations and a high level of supervision.

In the context of providing behavioral health treatment, behavioral health providers may engage in the following activities to address substance use:

- Engagement
- Prevention
- Education
- Motivational work
- Systemic interventions
- Skill-building
- Screening, assessment, and referral

Pennsylvania prohibits D&A treatment from being facilitated in a facility that is not licensed to provide such a service. If it is identified that a youth currently in MTFC is in need of D&A treatment for a significant D&A issue, they must be referred to a licensed D&A program for treatment and discharged from MTFC. Children who require treatment in a licensed D&A facility should undergo such treatment prior to placement in MTFC. Providing individual counseling to decrease substance use would be considered drug and alcohol treatment and would require drug and alcohol licensure. For example, the use of cognitive-behavioral techniques with the youth to reduce substance use would be considered treatment and would not be permissible without appropriate licensure.
5. Mail:

With a multi-faceted approach and a model that is robust enough to operate in real-life settings, MTFC programs must comply and manage behaviors within the applicable laws and regulations of the state's they are in. Pennsylvania's regulations for the residential care of children, strictly prohibits the opening of a client's mail absent a court order or reasonable suspicion that contraband, or other information that may jeopardize the child's health, safety, or well-being, may be enclosed.

If there is reasonable suspicion that contraband, or other information is enclosed that may jeopardize the child's health; mail may be opened by the child in the presence of staff. Additionally, incoming mail from Federal, State or county officials, or a child's attorney may not be opened or read by staff unless the child requests assistance. (§3800.32. Specific rights)