The Effectiveness of Multi-Systemic Therapy
Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) is an evidence-based model of intervention focused primarily on the child welfare and juvenile justice populations, tailored to meet the specific needs of the child and family. This summary describes outcomes for youth in Bucks, Delaware and Montgomery counties who discharged from MST in 2008 and 2009.

The baseline/pre- and post-measurement data used in the analysis is Magellan utilization claims data. The pre-measurement includes claims paid in the six months prior to the member’s MST treatment episode, while the post-measurement includes claims paid in the six months after the member’s discharge from MST.

The difference in service utilization between pre- and post-MST shows there was a reduction in the need for mental health (MH) inpatient admission, residential treatment facility (RTF) admission and CRR Host Home (commonly referred to as treatment foster care, or TFC).

- MH inpatient reduced by 6.5%;
- RTF reduced by 42%;
- TFC reduced by 0.2%; and
- 24-hour substance abuse treatment (rehab) increased by 5.3%.

A 42% reduction in the need for residential treatment is a significant success. Most noteworthy, MST had a substantial effect in reducing the need for RTF placements, particularly for males, who had a 54% reduction. It is encouraging that this finding demonstrates an example of a service intervention that led to more youth living in less-restrictive/less intrusive environments, residing with their families and in their communities.

Information provided by the providers on the Program Implementation Data Report (PIDR) recounts that the providers kept good adherence to the MST model overall and that youth had a greater than 70% completion of full treatment in 2008, 2009 and in the first portion of 2010.

- Both agencies had some positive outcomes, such as indicators of more youth remaining in school or working—which we know are indicators for future success. They also reported no new arrests, indicating the youth did not become further ingrained in the juvenile justice system. These two measures are significant in that they are strong indicators for the youths’ ability to be successful in the future, which is the ultimate goal of all treatment.

- Additionally, low vs. high rates of service delivery, measured as hours of billable activity each week, were found to affect outcomes: youth receiving more hours are also those with higher utilization of inpatient and RTF, both pre- and post-MST, suggesting that MST provides more contact with therapists for youth with severe needs.

Magellan shared the results of this study with the providers involved in the research. In collaboration with these providers, efforts were implemented to enhance the MST program to further address the needs of individual youth.