



NEWS

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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DJJ INVESTS SAVINGS FROM FACILITY CLOSURES INTO NEW EVIDENCE-BASED FAMILY THERAPY PROGRAMS ACROSS VIRGINIA *Multisystemic Therapy (MST) Makes Family Members Key Part Of Rehabilitation*

Richmond, VA, Oct. 10 – The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), using the savings realized from closing Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center earlier this year, is adding Multisystemic Therapy (MST), a highly-regarded evidence-based model, to its growing continuum of community-based services available to court-involved youth in traditionally underserved areas of the Commonwealth.

MST is a method of youth therapy that focuses on family members as long-term change agents, and is rated “effective” in the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Model Programs Guide. MST empowers the families of youths exhibiting antisocial and delinquent behaviors as full collaborators in the planning and delivery of treatment.

“In almost all cases, a child’s family is a critical part of their life and rehabilitation,” said DJJ Director Andy Block. “And yet, Virginia has lacked evidence-based family interventions in much of the state. With these new programs, and those we will add in the coming months, we will provide highly effective evidence-based programs for high-risk youth and their families, programs which research shows cost less, and gain better outcomes, than incarceration.”

MST therapists work intensively with up to six families at a time. They are available 24 hours a day, and they work in the communities where youth and families live. “There is a never-ending focus on engagement while working in tandem with primary caregivers and other stakeholders such as probation officers, courts, and children and family services,” said Dan Edwards, president of Evidence-Based Associates (EBA), one of DJJ’s regional service coordination companies charged with implementing MST.

“MST has proven itself effective time and again, because it targets the known causes of

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delinquency: family relations, peer relations, school performance, and community factors,” said Valerie Boykin, DJJ’s deputy director of community programs. “One of our key goals as we continue to transform our agency is to keep court-involved youth in their communities, near family support whenever possible, and out of an institutional setting. MST will play a major part in making this happen.”

The initial MST teams are located in Christiansburg, Martinsville, Waynesboro, and Woodstock, and include probation and parole referrals from the following cities and counties, all within a 90-minute drive:

- **Christiansburg MST Team:** Montgomery, Pulaski, Floyd, Radford, Carroll, Wythe, Roanoke City, Roanoke County, Salem, Smyth, Bland, Giles, Botetourt, Craig, Galax, Grayson.
- **Martinsville MST Team:** Martinsville, Henry, Patrick, Danville, Franklin, Pittsylvania
- **Waynesboro MST Team:** Waynesboro, Staunton, Augusta, Highland, Bath, Rockbridge, Greene, Louisa, Goochland, Lexington, Buena Vista, Charlottesville, Albemarle.
- **Woodstock MST Team:** Woodstock, Winchester, Harrisonburg, Warren, Frederick, Clarke, Shenandoah, Rockingham, Page, Fauquier, and Rappahannock.

DJJ plans to expand the MST program, as well as introduce Functional Family Therapy (FFT), an alternative and equally effective model of family intervention, to more than 100 jurisdictions by the end of 2017. Regional Service Coordination companies EBA and AMIKids will continue to contract with the DJJ administration to lead the implementation effort.

DJJ began a major transformation just over three years ago using research and data to introduce new practices and programs that have proven to provide better outcomes for youth. The transformation includes the development of a continuum of evidence-based services across the Commonwealth for youth before the court. The population of committed youth has dropped significantly in recent years, thus reducing DJJ’s need for correctional center beds. The continuum is being funded in part by reinvestment funds made available through the downsizing of DJJ’s large correctional facilities.