

MDFT: system-based therapy for young people



Young people with multiple problems, ranging from excessive substance misuse to frequent school absenteeism, from criminal behaviour to other transgressive behaviour? MDFT enables you to help these young people and those around them to understand their problems and to work together towards positive changes. This improves the problem behaviour, or it can even be eliminated altogether.

Impact on problem behavior

Behavioural change starts with the adolescent himself. At the same time, the different aspects of life often have a huge impact. MDFT therefore also assumes that problem behaviour has several causes. During treatment, the therapist therefore focuses on four areas:

- The adolescent
- the parents
- the family
- extra familial (e.g. school, work and free time, or the institution in which some young people live)

By gaining an insight into the problems of the adolescent in all of these areas, the aim is to improve functioning. The role of the adolescent himself is examined, but also the role that the family or, for example, the school can play.

Evidence based

The effectiveness of MDFT has been scientifically proven in various European and American studies. For example, various Dutch institutes participated in the European INCANT study. In America, MDFT has been supported by the results of twelve Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs). You can obtain more information at www.stichtingjeugdinterventies.nl.



*'MDFT offered me an extended hand which I was separate for'
(mother of an ex-MDFT client)*

Important elements: hope, opportunities and flexibility

To help the adolescent, MDFT is based on what is going well. How can this be expanded on and help to resolve the problems? Other important elements of MDFT are:

- tailored interventions
- create positive expectations
- celebrate successes with one another
- view crises and failures as opportunities
- find viable solutions, work in small steps
- multiple partiality
- facilitate serious and engaging discussions between the adolescent and parents

Also important is careful monitoring of the interventions to be undertaken. Is the therapist flexible and is he aware of what must be done immediately. With this approach, the focus is on achieving simultaneous improvement in all four areas.

Three phases

MDFT is an evidence-based intervention and will take around three to seven months. During this period, several meetings take place each week. The intervention consists of three phases:

- *The foundation for change: assessment, alliance building and motivation*
Work takes place towards a therapeutic alliance and motivation to change. The therapist gets to know the adolescent and the family, is familiar with the strengths and knows what they must change.
- *Guidance and support with change*
The therapist supports the family in discovering methods that assist in behavioural change and a reduction in problems. Family members learn how they can support one another with this. For each area, targets are set, evaluated and adjusted when necessary.
- *Solidify changes*
Consideration is given to how the adolescent and those around him can solidify the positive changes. They also learn how to cope with possible retrogression or a new problem and the therapist will ensure effective transfer or follow-up.



An MDFT team guarantees quality

Would you like to offer MDFT to your clients? If so, you need a team of specialists. An MDFT team comprises 3 to 6 therapists who have successfully completed the MDFT training. One of the team members is certified as a supervisor. The team is a sounding board for the individual therapists. This ensures that they keep one another on their toes and the quality is guaranteed.

By deploying an MDFT team:

- you work with a recognised family-based therapy
- you offer your clients a scientifically sound treatment approach
- you work with certified therapists who guarantee quality
- you have the opportunity to tap into the expertise of peers
- you are assured of quality; the execution of MDFT is supervised by SJI (Youth Interventions Foundation) trainers
- you are assured of solid support with practical matters

MDFT within your organisation?

Would you like to receive more information about MDFT and the possibilities of implementing this within your organisation? If you are in the Netherlands, please contact Youth Interventions Foundation +31(71) 5159672 or info@stichtingjeugdinterventies.nl.

Youth Interventions Foundation

MDFT Academy forms part of the Youth Interventions Foundation and is a licence holder of MDFT within Europe. SJI is responsible for the training, issues the licences and provides good refresher training to ensure it can continue to guarantee the quality of MDFT.

